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Yes

Commentary

By Terry O’Banion, Published April 15, 2015

In 2014, Terry O’Banion completed the first survey of its kind on pres curmudgeons, their behaviors and motivations, and the damage they do. “Curmudgeons in the Community College: Barriers to Change.” This

“CAVE” people was how one respondent described curmudgeons — (Advertisement are italicized) captures the essential core of a curmudgeon:

- On any given subject, they are right and you are wrong. No middle ground is simply not possible.

A number of respondents echoed this same theme about the behavior of

- In my experience, regardless of the issue, a curmudgeon takes a negative
- Curmudgeons with whom I have worked at different colleges see their as grievances. They appear to gain satisfaction from disrupting or

The word “negative” was the most used word to describe the behavior of

- Their motives are most often centered on self and approached with a
- They just want attention even if it is negative.
- Curmudgeons are negative in their approach to solving issues.

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O’Banion will report the results of his study at the [AACC Annual Conference](#), will join him for discussion.

Resistant to change was one of the top characteristics respondents used to live in the past and had difficulty in adjusting to changes in education to change.

Advertisement The story may be apocryphal, but one president shared the story of an incident with faculty and remarked to one of the older members, “Harry, I bet you’ve never had one, and I have been against every damned one of them.”

Respondents commented on the resistance to change as a major behavior

- They object to every new initiative because they oppose all change.

- They grieve everything that can be grieved to halt change.
- There is constant yearning for some bygone era in which they felt more comfortable.

The president's gadfly was a major theme cited by respondents — not surprising since the respondent characteristic of curmudgeons is their propensity to confront authority. In the community college, the chairs, faculty senate presidents, etc.), but the president is the most visible and the most often attacked. Presidents had to do with how curmudgeons perceived the president's actions or behaved toward them.

- They have a great desire to “stand up to the man.”
- They are the ones who, when faced with the facts, still do not believe anything the administration is doing, tearing down the organization rather than building it up. They complain that the leaders do not listen.
- When not making a direct attack against the president's character or integrity, the curmudgeon spreads information and events he is hearing from all the campus “chatter and noise going on out there.”

In summary, curmudgeons can be organized into three key groups: those who are virtually against everything the president does, those who are neutral, and those who are friendly to the president. From this brief review it is also possible to identify some of the primary tactics used by curmudgeons.

- Curmudgeons often use humor and sarcasm as weapons.
- Intimidation is one of their primary tools.
- They are often aggressive and belligerent against anyone who disagrees with them.
- Faced with new initiatives they like to point out past failures: “We tried that before and it did not work.”
- They use body language (eye-rolling, quizzical looks and shoulder shrugs) to make their point.
- Curmudgeons are smug and surly and almost always negative.
- They move with ease between rational and irrational positions.
- They are unwilling to listen to alternative viewpoints.
- They are often disruptive when others are making a point.
- Curmudgeons are usually rude, condescending, patronizing and unprofessional.
- They like to push the buttons of others.
- Curmudgeons are the ultimate contrarians.
- Curmudgeons are bullies.

These are the kinds of behaviors that contribute to a negative climate on a campus that slows and stops progress. We have not identified or studied them, but it is clear that curmudgeons have considerable impact on other faculty and on college leaders — in a negative way.

As we learn more about who they are and what they do we will be better prepared to mitigate the negative impact and turn it into positive impact.

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