Curmudgeons in the Community College



Session on Curmudgeons

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Definition of a Curmudgeon

- Contrarians who think otherwise
- Cantankerous naysayers
- Self-appointed gadflies
- Quite vocal and opinionated
- Collaboration and civility not held in high esteem
- Prefer debate and circular discussion to solving problems and consensus



National Study

- 375 community college presidents
- 77 respondents—20.5% return rate

97% indicated they had known a curmudgeon who fits the definition.

18% indicated they had known 10 or more.



Who Are the Curmudgeons?

How many are male?

58%

How many are female?

2.5%

38% of respondents indicated males and females are equally represented.



Who Are the Curmudgeons?

Classified Staff, Mid-Level Management, Executive Administrators, Student Services, Full-Time Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, Students, & Trustees

Full-Time Faculty	82%
Mid-Level Management	6.4%
Trustees	3.8%
Students	2.5%



Who Are the Curmudgeons?

Career & Technical Education, Community

Services, Student Services, Library

Services, Humanities & the Arts, Social

Science, Mathematics, Other

Humanities & the Arts 27%

Social Science 27%

Other 16%

Career & Technical Ed. 6%

Mathematics 5%



Study Phase Two

- The 77 respondents were invited to complete written answers to 4 questions.
- Twenty-two respondents did:
 - a. Behaviors
 - **b.** Motivation
 - c. Damage
 - d. Strategies to mitigate damage



Impact on the College

86% of the respondents indicated that the impact on the college of curmudgeons they had known was either negative (49%) or highly negative (36%)



Damage of Curmudgeons Slow or Stop Change

- They undermine efforts to implement innovative programs and processes.
- They slow down decision making.
- Everything takes longer, and frustration rates are higher.
- They have highly negative impact on institutional morale.



Damage of Curmudgeons Create an Unhealthy Environment

- They can be a thorn in the side of the college for years.
- He changed the dynamics and positive atmosphere of the college.
- They created an unhealthy culture that has taken years to repair—after they retired.



Damage of Curmudgeons Undermine Mutual Respect & Trust

- They tend to intimidate new or less vocal faculty.
- They love to create and spread rumors about administrators.
- I was amazed at the level of disinformation and chaos they could create.



Damage of Curmudgeons Create Adversarial Relationships

- Their behavior encourages people to take sides.
- They are so nasty other faculty are afraid to confront them.
- Faculty quit attending senate meetings because of their outbursts.
- An insidious cancer eating away at our efforts to change and improve.

Strategies to Mitigate Damage Connect Personally

- I usually win them over by respecting their positions and following through on what I promise.
- Nothing I or others have tried works because curmudgeons do not want to help; they only want to disrupt and destroy.
- His browbeating trumps my attempts.

Strategies to Mitigate Damage Isolate the Curmudgeons

- Physically relocate them and limit access to others.
- Focus on their negative impact on students and the college.
- As more faculty took ownership of our initiatives they began to take a stand, and they isolated the curmudgeons.

Strategies to Mitigate Damage Create an Inclusive Culture

- Create structures for ideas to come from any level of the organization.
- Invest heavily in staff development.
- Kill them with data.
- Institute governance structures that include all groups—make it harder for curmudgeons to just attack the president.

Strategies to Mitigate Damage Ensure Transparency

- The best antiseptic for a lie is to shine a light on it.
- The more transparent the organization, the less credibility curmudgeons will have.
- With my trustee curmudgeon I shared every communication and request from any trustee with all trustees.

Strategies to Mitigate Damage Invest in the Change Agents

- Support the change agents with promotions, special assignments, and professional development.
- Invest heavily in orientation and mentoring of new employees.
- Use the 90—10 rule. If less that 10% participate make the incentives so attractive they wish they had.

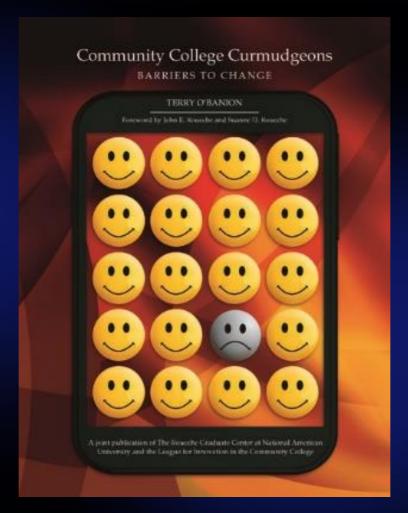
Barriers to Change

Curmudgeons are barriers to change and innovation:

Curmudgeons slow change. Curmudgeons resist change. Curmudgeons fear change.



Community College Curmudgeons



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