

**OPSEU Local 560  
Your Seneca College  
Faculty Union**

Dec 4, 2014

Contact your union at:  
[union@opseu560.org](mailto:union@opseu560.org)  
or  
416-495-1599  
<http://opseu560.org>



### Talking to your Chair

Good managers know how to have conversations with employees that leave both parties on a collegial footing and able to continue working together.

In a conversation with your manager, use charge-neutral language. This is a dispassionate yet personal way of speaking that avoids putting people on the defensive. Careful choice of words and a neutral tone of voice keep communication safe for all concerned. Stick to facts rather than emotions, and speak of principles rather than personalities.

For example:

Chair: You deliberately did X when I told you to do Y. (confrontational)

Faculty: I sent an email proposing to do X; in the absence of a response telling me otherwise, I did X and sent an email saying I had done that. There were no specific instructions to do Y instead of X. (neutral, fact-based)

# THE LOCAL EXPRESS

## Dealing with Difficult Chairs

Are you dealing with a manager suffering from *micromanagitis* or *authoritarian personality disorder*? We can help!

Occasionally we become aware of management behavior that is, in our view, not particularly conducive to maintaining an effective and positive working environment for our members.

In looking at this we start with the proposition that Article 6 of the Collective Agreement gives management the right to manage, and that includes the right to manage badly. However, we all know that bad management leads to other problems.

Micromanaging, requiring you to report everything you do to the manager, rigid controls that disregard your professional judgment and discretion, and bureaucratic procedures that waste time and accomplish nothing useful — these are all examples of inept management that gets in the way of you doing your work efficiently.

This kind of behavior does not necessarily violate the Collective Agreement. But there are ways to deal with it:

- Try to record, via email, your communications with this type of manager, and keep a dated note of oral communications. A hardbound notebook is great for keeping track of who said what, and when.
- Ask the manager to confirm by email or in writing any order or demand that appears particularly inappropriate and/or unnecessary.
- If you are called into a meeting where it appears the manager is levelling criticism, ask if this matter is disciplinary. If the manager says it is, or is evasive, tell him or her that you are entitled to union representation and ask to adjourn the meeting until a union rep can be present. If the manager refuses, that refusal may be grievable as an interference with your rights under the Collective Agreement. If the manager says the meeting is NOT disciplinary, but then proceeds to harshly criticize your work, keep calm, and write up detailed notes about that conversation afterward. It's also okay to tell the manager you need some time to respond to these criticisms.
- At some point, a manager's obtrusiveness or negative behavior may amount to workplace bullying or harassment, and as such is grievable under Article 4 of the Collective Agreement, though merely providing occasional feedback on your work does not constitute harassment. Frequency, tone and attitude make the difference.

Report any behavior that you think is inappropriate, annoying, or hinders you in doing your work efficiently and effectively to your area steward, to the Chief Steward, Larry Olivo at [lolivo@opseu560.org](mailto:lolivo@opseu560.org) or to the union at [union@opseu560.org](mailto:union@opseu560.org). We can advise if there is a grievable violation, and if not, what alternative strategies might be helpful in resolving the problem.