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Reconciling differences : conflict management strategies of catholic college and university presidents
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Abstract

Catholic college and university presidents lead at the confluence of academic authenticity and religious faith. They attempt to frame and define changing realities in institutions that have become increasingly secular, and subjected to many of the same problems common to higher education in the public sector. External pressures, including recent efforts to strengthen the Catholic identities of these institutions, have added a measure of complexity to leadership roles and challenged the conflict management skills of institutional executives. The purpose of this study was to develop a profile of conflict management behaviors of US Catholic college and university presidents. The profile revealed four factors that were common to managing conflict with both faculty and trustees: avoidance, smoothing over differences, compromise, and collaboration. A bureaucratic forcing factor was linked to faculty conflict, and a defensive assertiveness factor emerged for conflict with trustees. Presidents seldom employed a bureaucratic forcing strategy with faculty, but defensive assertiveness was the

24.4.2025

second most frequently adopted strategy in conflict with trustees. Collaboration was the most frequently used strategy for dealing with both faculty and trustee conflict. Some differences in conflict management approaches were noted in terms of gender, lay-clergy status, years of experience, and institutional size. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)