Mediation Case Study

Reddale College of Technology

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General Instructions

Reddale College is a major further education institution. It has a good reputation based on years of excellent performance by its students in several fields. Its governance is overseen by a Board of Management.

Professor Jo/Joe Tynan (JT) is Dean of the School of Fine Art. JT was appointed three years ago, having come from a post in the USA. JT is a forward-thinking, rather radical leader who is keen to enforce a new way of delivering educational services through the College.

Dr Win/Will Stafford (WS) has been at the college for many years. WS studied at the college and shortly after graduation became a junior lecturer. WS has worked up to being Head of the Division on Graphic Design in the School of Fine Art. WS is a traditionalist, keen to maintain the disciplines and approaches which worked well in the past. WS applied for the post of Dean twelve years ago when the post was previously advertised. At that stage WS was deemed to be too young and inexperienced for the post and was advised by the recruitment agency to gain experience elsewhere. WS remained at the college and applied again for the post of Dean three years ago, losing out to JT. WS was bitterly disappointed not to be appointed. Since JT took over as Dean, the working relationship between JT and WS has been poor.

At the end of the last term, an incident occurred where WS addressed a group of potential funders of a new project in the School and expressed the view that "avant garde shallow leadership" could be the downfall of an institution. While not referring to JT directly, everyone present among the staff assumed that WS was referring to JT. JT confronted WS and asked WS if WS was referring to JT. WS replied: "If that's what you want to hear, take it as you wish".

JT was incensed at this assumed challenge to JT's leadership. WS refused to withdraw his statement. JT approached the chairman of the Board of Management and sought WS's dismissal. The chairman invited JT to instigate formal disciplinary proceedings. JT did so. The proceedings have become protracted. There has been an appeal by JT against a finding by the Disciplinary Board that the complaint is unfounded. Lawyers are involved.

The Board of Management has expressed concern about the impact on the college. The senior staff in the School of Art are unsettled. People are taking sides. The dispute seems to have taken on a life of its own. There are other serious management issues which seem to be obscured by this matter. The press is having a field day. The potential funders have backed off and the project is in doubt.

The Board of Management has approached Core Mediation seeking a mediator to try to help resolve this difficult matter between JT and WS. Prior to the mediation, the mediator has had a short telephone conversation with JT and WS, simply to confirm arrangements. They have signed the agreement to mediate. Both have given the mediator a sense that neither of them is comfortable with mediation and that each is extremely reluctant to make any concessions.

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