

CASE

Organizational Power and Politics

Jose Gonzalez, a Hispanic man, was highly sought after receiving his PhD in accounting. Today, he is a tenured professor at a small teaching college in the Midwest.⁸⁰ The Department of Accounting (DA) has nine faculty members; it is one of five departments in the School of Business (SB). The accounting department chair is Helen Canton, who is in her first year as chair. Six faculty members, including Jose, have been in the department longer than Helen. Helen likes to have policies in place so that faculty members have guides for their behavior. On the college-wide level, however, there is no policy about the job of graduate assistant. Helen asked the dean of the SB about the policy. After a discussion with the vice president for academic affairs, the dean told Helen that there is no policy. The vice president and dean suggested letting the individual departments develop their own policy regarding what graduate assistants can and cannot do in their position. So, Helen made developing a policy for graduate assistants an agenda item for the department meeting.

During the DA meeting, Helen asked for members' views on what graduate assistants should and should not be allowed to do. She was hoping that the department could come to a consensus on a policy. It turns out that Jose was the only faculty member using graduate assistants to grade exams. Two other faculty members speak out against having graduate assistants grade exams. They believe it is the professor's job to grade exams. Jose makes a few statements in hopes of not having to correct his own exams. Because his exams are objective, requiring a correct answer, Jose believes it's not necessary for him to personally grade the exams. He also points out that across the campus, and across the country, other faculty members are using graduate assistants to teach entire courses and to correct subjective papers and exams. Jose states that he does not think it fair that he can no longer use graduate assistants to grade objective exams when others are doing so. He also states that the department does not need to have a policy and requests that the department not set a policy. However, Helen states that she wants a policy. Jose is the only one to speak in favor of allowing graduate assistants to grade exams, although three others made no comments either way. But, after the meeting, one other member, Joel Corman, who said nothing during the meeting, tells Jose he agrees that it is not fair to deny him this use of a graduate assistant.

There was no department consensus, as Helen hoped there would be. She said that she would draft a department

policy, which will be discussed at a future DA meeting. The next day, Jose sent a memo to department members asking if it is ethical and legal to deny him the same resources as others are using across the campus. Jose also states that if the department sets a policy stating that he can no longer use graduate assistants to correct objective exams, he will appeal the policy decision to the dean, vice president, and president.

Support your answers to the following questions with specific information from the case and text, or with other information you get from the Web or other sources.

1. (a) What source of power does Helen have, and (b) what type of power is she using? (c) Which influencing tactic is Helen using during the meeting? (d) Is negotiation and/or the (e) exchange tactic appropriate in this situation?
2. (a) What source of power does Jose have, and (b) what type of power is he using during the meeting? (c) Which two influencing tactics is Jose primarily using during the meeting? (d) Which influencing tactic is Jose using with the memo? (e) Is the memo a wise political move for Jose? What might he gain and lose by sending it?
3. What would you do if you were Helen? (a) Would you talk to the dean, letting her know that Jose said he would appeal the policy decision? (b) Which influencing tactic would this discussion involve? (c) Which political behavior would the discussion represent? (d) Would you draft a policy directly stating that graduate assistants cannot be used to grade objective exams? (e) Would your answer to (d) be influenced by your answer to (a)?
4. (a) If you were Jose, knowing you had no verbal supporters during the meeting, would you have continued to defend your position or agreed to stop using a graduate assistant? (b) What do you think of Jose sending the memo? (c) As a tenured full professor, Jose is secure in his job. Would your answer change if you (as Jose) had not received tenure or promotion to the top rank?
5. (a) If you were Jose, and Helen drafted a policy and department members agreed with it, what would you do? Would you appeal the decision to the dean? (b) Again, would your answer change if you had not received tenure or promotion to the top rank?

6. If you were the dean of the School of Business (SB), knowing that the vice president does not want to set a college-wide policy, and Jose appealed to you, what would you do? Would you develop a school-wide policy for SB?
7. At what level (college-wide, by schools, or by departments within each school) should a graduate assistant policy be set?
8. (a) Should Joel Corman have spoken up in defense of Jose during the meeting? (b) If you were Joel, would you have taken Jose's side against the other seven members? (c) Would your answer change if you were or were not friends with Jose, and if you were or were not a tenured full professor?

CUMULATIVE CASE QUESTIONS

9. Which level(s) of analysis of leadership theory is (are) presented in this case (Chapter 1)?
10. Is it ethical for graduate students to correct undergraduate exams (Chapter 2)?
11. Which of the four Ohio State University leadership styles did Helen use during the department meeting (Chapter 3)?

CASE EXERCISE AND ROLE-PLAY

Preparation: Read the case and think about whether you agree or disagree with using graduate assistants to correct objective exams. If you do this exercise, we recommend that you complete it before discussing the questions and answers to the case.

In-Class DA Meeting: A person who strongly agrees with Jose's position volunteers to play this role (can be female) during a DA meeting. A second person who also agrees with the use of graduate assistants correcting exams plays the role of Joel (can be a male). However, recall that Joel cannot say anything during the meeting to support Jose. One person who strongly disagrees with Jose—who doesn't want graduate assistants to correct exams and who also feels strongly that there should be a policy stating what graduate assistants can and cannot do—volunteers to play the role of the department chair (Helen) who runs the DA meeting. Six others who are neutral or disagree with graduate assistants grading exams play the roles of other department members.

The ten role-players sit in a circle in the center of the room, with the other class members sitting around the outside of the circle. Observers just quietly watch and listen to the meeting discussion.

Role-Play: (about 15 minutes) Helen opens the meeting by simply stating that the agenda item is to set a graduate assistants policy stating what they can and cannot do and that he or she hopes the department can come to a consensus on a policy. Helen states his or her position on why graduate students should not be allowed to correct exams and then asks for other views. Jose and the others, except Joel, jump in anytime with their opinions.

Discussion: After the role-play is over, or when time runs out, the person playing the role of Jose expresses to the class how it felt to have everyone against him or her. Other department members state how they felt about the discussion, followed by observers' statements as time permits. A discussion of the case questions and answers may follow.

VIDEO CASE

Employee Networks at Whirlpool Corporation

Since 1911, Whirlpool Corporation has grown from a small company to a global corporation, with manufacturing locations on every major continent worldwide. Like many organizations, one of Whirlpool's strategies for creating a culture of pluralism is encouraging the formation of employee network groups. These are voluntary groups formed around primary dimensions such as gender and ethnicity, which meet regularly to focus on business issues. The groups are also a resource to the employees by providing a supportive community, decreasing social isolation, and promoting career

development. Further, they help retain employees by providing them a forum for expressing ideas. These discussions often spark new ideas that benefit the company as a whole.

1. Using the Whirlpool Corporation Web site (<http://www.whirlpoolcorp.com>), identify the employee network groups at Whirlpool and the mission of each.
2. Do you think Whirlpool's encouragement of employee networks works for or against creating a culture of diversity? Explain your answer.