

## **14. Description of Coalition Building Exercise**

The purpose of this exercise is to simulate, through a role-playing activity, the process of defining one's interests and/or stake in an issue and moving from there to identify natural “allies” and build coalitions around the issue.

Step 1: Identify a “public issue” of concern on your campus.

Step 2: Brainstorm together the individuals, offices, or student groups on campus that would need to be at the table in any resolution of the identified issue. When consensus is reached about a particular “stakeholder,” write the name of the individual/office/group down on an index card. (The number of stakeholders identified should be equal to the number of participants involved in this exercise).

Step 3: Hand out one of the cards to each participant. Each stakeholder should take a few minutes to formulate that individual's or group's beginning response to the issue in question. After giving time to formulate your basic “line” or arguments, begin circulating, and without identifying who you are, share with other stakeholders your own position(s) and listen to those of other participants playing their own stakeholder roles.

Step 4: Figure out which participants would likely be allied with you based on what you hear from each, and which would likely be opponents or challenges in building a

coalition to get the issue addressed in ways that closely align with your own interest. Group together according to coalitions.

Step 5: Come together as an entire group and allow each participant to share their position and who they see themselves allied with. Try to guess which individual/group each participant has represented in this simulated exercise.

Debriefing/Reflection Questions: What did you learn from this simulation about coalition building? What was the most difficult challenge for you in deciding which coalitions to form? Who was your “most surprising ally,” from your perspective?