

# GUIDELINES FOR COLLABORATION

---

## *The Dean's Perspective*

It is important to remember that when committees are established for a specific task, individual relationships often change. People who have known each other for years are asked to think together in a different way, and to become a collaborating community that addresses such differences. It is vital that the early life of the group be built around openness and trust, with procedures, time frames, work plans, and schedules established democratically.

Ownership connects to trust. Everyone needs to feel that her or his individuality is acknowledged, even as the group joins together for the larger goal. Those in the leadership roles, particularly the project shepherd, must probe for disagreement and diversity of perspective. This persistent examination of difference builds trust in a common enterprise, and enfranchises all involved. Your aim should be to keep the planning process as far as possible from partisan and parochial skirmishes and encounters.

Some guidelines:

- ◆ Make sure it is clearly understood at the very outset what the “givens” are, what is not subject to adjustment.
- ◆ Don’t let people settle too early into a conception of the project. Before stating solutions or developing basic designs, have people state their own needs and hear those of others.
- ◆ Make people talk through conflicts honestly and clearly. Don’t try to keep people from fighting; worry rather about insuring they fight fair. Don’t let conflicts smolder unexpressed, even if they are based in cleavages of long-standing. Don’t let anyone’s voice be muted, and don’t let anyone seize the high ground—whether or not that putative high ground is of “extraordinary importance” or “prudent economy.”
- ◆ Seek consensus, not decisions by narrow majorities. Try not to let anyone luxuriate in the role of the permanent minority. Finding consensus may involve finding a common language. Help people talk across the boundaries of expertise, particularly between academics and construction people. Restate each side’s view in ordinary words; you will be corrected—try again.
- ◆ Put off decisions that aren’t ready to be made. Move things along, but do not hurry. However, respect the schedules of architects, engineers, and construction firms.