



E-PARCC

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Syracuse University

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration

Tobacco Settlement Distribution Simulation Teaching Note

Learning Objectives: Through an experiential exercise, students will learn about the challenges of effective political management during a simulation involving the distribution of scarce public resources under tight time constraints. They will experience the difficulty elected officials, government and non-profit agencies and other stakeholders face in advancing a public agenda; the importance of early identification of stakeholders and discerning stakeholder values and perspectives; the power of collaboration with stakeholders to accomplish common goals; the importance of compromise in advancing the public agenda; and the stress associated with the political process due to media scrutiny, and inadequacies of time and financial resources.

The Tobacco Settlement Distribution Simulation is best managed by two instructors who (unlike the students) do not assume a character, but float among the students offering encouragement, advice and occasionally injecting a dose of "difficulty." (For example, the instructors may remind members of the legislature that they must meet in accordance with the State of Confusion's Open Meeting Law. They might inform the Governor's Chief of Staff that the Governor's appointees are attempting to "cut deals" that may be inconsistent with the Governor's own agenda, or they may tip the reporter that a secret deal may be in the works by an elected official). The simulation usually takes approximately three hours to complete. Completion is defined as the legislature passing a budget that may or may not be signed by the Governor, followed by a press conference for all participants during which the legislature and/

This simulation was an honorable mention winner in our 2007 "Collaborative Public Management, Collaborative Governance, and Collaborative Problem Solving" teaching case and simulation competition. It was double-blind peer reviewed by a committee of academics and practitioners. It was written by Linda Blessing and Bette F. DeGraw of Arizona State University and edited by Laurel Saiz. This case is intended for classroom discussion and is not intended to suggest either effective or ineffective handling of the situation depicted. It is brought to you by E-PARC, part of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University's Collaborative Governance Initiative, a subset of the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC). This material may be copied as many times as needed as long as the authors are given full credit for their work.

or the Governor reveal the budget results. After the press conference, the instructors hold a debriefing with the students, who cease being in character, about the experience and the lessons learned.

At the start of the exercise, students are each given the general description of the State of Confusion and its challenge to distribute Tobacco Settlement monies. Students are also given the list of characters; they may find it helpful to jot down which students are assigned to the characters. Students are each assigned a role and asked to stay in character throughout the exercise, which enhances the learning experience and adds some fun as well. Students are not given the description of other students' roles. Through networking with other characters, individuals learn about other stakeholders' values and goals and usually form coalitions that may aid in achieving their own goals. It is extremely helpful for the students to wear a name badge with their character's name. Additionally, tables with name tents should be set up within the room for members of the House and Senate and for the Governor's Office, since most students will attempt to meet with these individuals. Further, assigning a white board to the newspaper reporter to post headlines only of hypothetical articles is important. Elected officials often find a white board or flip chart useful for posting upcoming public hearings.

The number of students assigned a specific role is very flexible; however, the elected officials and the reporter roles are quite essential. The simulation is especially effective for classes of 10 to 20 students. The roles of some government and non-profit agencies are described as having a lead person, such as an agency head, and a deputy of sorts, which allows for teams to work together on the same goals. If the class is smaller, the deputy positions can remain unassigned. At the beginning of the exercise, it is helpful if the instructors provide coaching to the elected officials and the reporter. The elected officials need to understand the exact time deadline they face in passing a budget to the Governor and that ideally they will strive to pass a budget, requiring at least three of the four members of the legislature to be in agreement, that the Governor has agreed to sign. Occasionally, the Governor may threaten to veto the proposed budget. The reporter should be encouraged to have some fun posting headlines that will keep the pressure on elected officials and others to conduct themselves in appropriate ways, such as in accordance with the Open Meeting Laws. It is often helpful for the instructors to make sure elected officials are aware of the headlines that are posted about their conduct or the process to keep the experience lifelike. However, it is quite appropriate for the reporter to have fun developing the headlines and to add to the pressure of the exercise.

Students should have fun with the exercise, even though they will generally express frustration with trying to accomplish their character's goals under such tight time constraints, mirroring the real-world situation in public administration today. Obviously there is no right or wrong solution to the exercise and students may be evaluated on their degree of participation leading to their own learning and/or their contribution to the learning of fellow students.