Sullivan’s Conflict Management degree programs continue to grow

Sullivan University was one of the first to offer a master’s degree in conflict resolution. There are now more than 80 graduate-level conflict resolution programs in the United States. There are numerous trends supporting the growth of these programs, including the need for organizational leaders, international peace initiatives, cross-cultural studies, and public administration. Moreover, with their communication and problem-solving skills, graduates of these programs find careers in management, as negotiators, facilitators, or arbitrators, and as victims’ rights and public policy specialists. Locally, these trends are supported by information collected from a focus group of hiring and human resources managers who unanimously said they value communication skills, conflict resolution skills, negotiation skills, and conflict management training.

Two comprehensive new course offerings

The field of conflict management is continually growing and emerging, and the Master of Science in Management (MSCM) program is keeping up with the times. One of the new course offerings is DRC 542 Conflict Coaching for Leaders. This course is designed to help organizational leaders empower their employees to manage conflict productively. Sometimes, we don’t know what we don’t know, and so we end up contributing to conflicts by stirring the pot. Learning that there is a better way to deal with unproductive conflicts will help organizations improve their profitability. For example, absenteeism alone costs American companies approximately $300 billion a year. Additionally, productivity costs result in $80 billion in lost revenues per year. While not all of these costs are directly related to unresolved conflict, many studies indicate that employees miss work and reduce their organizational commitment when they feel they are treated unfairly.

“Gaining my bachelor’s degree was a challenge and a true sense of accomplishment. Perhaps part of it was my own preconceived notions, but I thought I should have earned my bachelor’s degree back when I was in my 20’s,” Terri recalled. Graduate school was next. “Gaining my bachelor’s degree was just playing catch-up for me – and a necessary step to get to where I really wanted to be in the MBA program,” stated Terri. Once again, Sullivan was her choice. Terri spoke candidly about her enrollment in Sullivan’s Graduate School.

Enjoyed her experience

“As with most things in life, there are challenges and rewards to the experience,” admitted Terri, adding, “Having just attained my bachelor’s degree, there, I knew most of the instructors and administrators at Sullivan, which helped me navigate the experience in a more pleasant and efficient manner. I also knew many of the other MBA candidates. I certainly enjoyed the small class sizes and the caliber of professors at Sullivan. Having completed my undergraduate degree in three years by working full-time during the day and attending classes full-time at night, I was ready to slow things down when I reached the graduate level and choose to attend part-time, taking one class per quarter. While it was painful at the 18-month mark when my contemporaries graduated, I feel I did the right thing because I enjoyed the experience so much more.”

A sign of respect

Terri graduated in 2005 with her Master’s in Business Administration (MBA) degree. “It did not have an immediate impact on my career, such as through a new job or a promotion. I do believe, however, that it did give me a great deal of respect in my professional community. Company owners, co-workers and business associates respect the degree and what it takes to achieve it,” Terri explained. “I gladly answered questions prefaced by ‘you have an MBA, what do you think about …’ to which I was happy to give a thought and respond. In addition, I believe it has given me greater confidence in myself and my ideas. I, too, respect the degree and I am pleased of myself for accomplishing it. Currently I am on track to advance within my organization.”

Good advice for others

“Faced with uncertainty in all I do. While I push myself to be all that I can be and explore all my interests, I want to enjoy the journey,” said Terri. She continued, “Time with family and friends, as well as dedication to your current position, are just as important as your GPA. I often reminded myself that each class completed was more forever; the knowledge was mine to keep, as was the grade. Even broadening my knowledge and understanding of the world around me makes me a better leader to the goal. It is important to appreciate that all these experiences bring to us. I suggest using Sullivan’s Graduate School to network with instructors, guest speakers and classmates, learn about area employers from your classmates; research and write papers on topics you are truly interested in – perhaps a paper you could submit to your employer for use in your own company.”

“Advancing through the short walk across the stage to receive two Sullivan degrees. To me, it was worth every class I took, every paper I researched, every PowerPoint presentation I did – my Sullivan experience is priceless!”