

Got conflicts? Call SCSU for help

By Tracey Compton

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St. Cloud State University is providing dispute-resolution services to companies, organizations and community members involved in conflict situations.

The Institute for Alternative Dispute Resolution will provide facilitated conversations, formal mediation, facilitated retreats, training, workshops and coaching.

The nonprofit venture is designed to be affordable for all segments of the community, from neighborhood groups to individuals, said Theresia Fisher, institute director.

"The focus of this institute is to open accessibility of mediation and related dispute-resolution services to the community, which is really the state of Minnesota," Fisher said.

The institute is at the Center for Continuing Studies on campus.

Institute mediators are community members contracted on an as-needed basis.

All are certified by the Supreme Court Roster of Qualified Neutrals.

The institute also will provide training for those who want to become mediators using the same criteria.

The university began work on the center in June at the request of St. Cloud State President Roy Saigo and Provost Michael Spitzer, Fisher said.

It is modeled after the university's internal alternative dispute-resolution program, which started about spring 1995 with help from the Minnesota Bureau of Mediation Services.

"It was (created) because there were a lot of conflicts on campus, and we couldn't seem to get a handle on them," Fisher said about the internal ADR program.

Back then, a lot of time was spent engaged in the conflict, but the internal model has proved to be a huge success, she said.

On Oct. 25, the institute co-sponsored a workshop on land annexation between cities and townships in the St. Cloud area.

Fisher expects more demand for ADR services in that area. "The Institute for Alternative Dispute Resolution is consistent with (the university's) strategic plan and takes the brain power of the university and connects it with extension services," Fisher said.

Information

The Institute will host a training workshop from **8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.** Feb. 29 called "Understanding Conflict." It will be open to the public and will cost \$195. The next mediation skills certification class is April 24-27.