
George Mason University

MISSION STATEMENT

The Center for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University is composed of scholars, practitioners, graduate students and organizations in the field of peacemaking and conflict resolution.

The mission of the Center is to advance the understanding and resolution of significant and persistent human conflicts among individuals, groups, communities, identity groups and nations through research, instruction, clinical and outreach activities.

Conflict Analysis and Conflict Resolution

At the heart of the Center's work is the systematic and ongoing analysis of the nature, origins, and types of social conflict, and of the processes and conditions requisite to the cooperative resolution of conflicts.

Conflict is defined as a natural and recurring part of all human social interaction, in which parties who believe they have mutually incompatible goals attempt to gain advantage over others through a variety of means, including force and violence. The assumption of the Center is that conflict is rooted, not necessarily in scarcity of resources and aggressive behavior, but in universal human needs for individual and cultural identity, security, and recognition, as well as in the policies and institutions of political and economic systems.

Conflict resolution refers to an analytical problem-solving process in which parties or their representatives are helped to resolve their disputes by trained third parties. Conflicts are considered "resolved" when the parties, having analyzed their conflictual relationships, jointly develop agreements which satisfy their basic needs and values, and, therefore, are durable and require no external enforcement. Resolution improves the relationships of parties when it is seen by them to meet standards of social justice, fairness, and self-determination.

Components of the Center.

The Center pursues its mission through four major components:

1. An instructional program offering the M.S. in Conflict Management and the Ph.D. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution (the latter is under review, expected to begin in Fall 1988), as well as training and short courses for general and specialized audiences.

2. Research and publication in conflict analysis and the theory and practice of conflict resolution. Major interests include the mapping of the field of peacemaking and conflict resolution; the study of deep-rooted conflicts and their resolution; the exploration of conditions which attract parties to the table; the role of third parties in dispute resolution; and the testing of a variety of conflict intervention methods in a range of national and international settings.

3. A clinical service program centered around the work of the Conflict Clinic, Inc. (a nonprofit corporation affiliated with the Center), Center faculty, associates, and graduate students.

4. An outreach component which seeks to promote knowledge of conflict resolution through lectures, conferences, workshops, and special briefings, as well as the work of the two national associations housed at the Center -- the National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution (NCPCR) and the Consortium on Peace Research, Education, and Development (COPRED).

The Center -- located in a growing and innovative university near one of the world's major capitals -- is supported by a Faculty Advisory Committee and an Advisory Board comprising friends of the Center.

These four components and support groups provide the critical mass required for the Center to lead the development of the field of peacemaking and conflict resolution in the coming decades.