

# Laura C Smythe, M.A., M.A., J.D.

~ *Managing Conflict and Enhancing Understanding* ~

## Education:

- \*The University of Wisconsin Law School *J.D. conferred with honors.* May 1997
- \*The Supreme Court of Wisconsin (judicial intern) Fall 1996
- \*The University of Wisconsin *M.A. in Latin American and Iberian Studies.* December 1992
- \*Mediation training at National Conference on Peacemaking & Conflict Resolution June 1991
- \*The University of Wisconsin *M.A. in Political Science.* May 1991
- \*The College of Wooster *B.A. in Spanish* May 1990

## Achieved:

- 1) Improved communication systems, developed conflict management policies, enhanced organizational integrity, and organizational capacity, improved employee retention and engagement, successful change management and increased organizational flexibility for diverse organizations through more than a decade of consultation and coaching.
- 2) Established viable budget from budget deficit in one calendar year in first year as Executive Director
- 3) Improved individual mediator success rate through coaching and developing mediators who feel more confident about their skills
- 4) Procured two grants and expanded services to include elder mediation and mediation of harassment claims
- 5) Taught students to learn how to learn and who consistently told me they learned more with me than with any previous professor
- 6) Improved communication among teachers, parents, students and administration
- 7) Coached teachers to develop leadership skills within their classroom and within their departments
- 8) Applied for and secured approval from Department of Homeland Security to host international foreign exchange students
- 9) Enhanced learning and acquisition of real-life skills for students through creation of new school programs (including peer mediation program and service learning incorporated into various curricula)
- 10) Improved student self-esteem by creating and teaching a 7-year conflict resolution curriculum for grades K – 12
- 11) Increased student responsibility through creation of student discipline policy
- 12) Improved teacher consistency regarding teacher support of social and emotional development of students
- 13) Satisfied clients who referred me to friends
- 14) Satisfactory resolution for clients in over 95% of mediations personally mediated

## Experience:

- 1) 18 years of experience consulting with organizations to diagnose cultures, analyze systems, manage change, develop leadership and create conflict management systems that are transparent and ethical
- 2) 19 years of experience as a mediator
- 3) 16 years of experience training educators and professionals in conflict resolution and conflict management
- 4) 4 years of experience working as Executive Director of a non-profit community mediation center
- 5) 6 years of experience teaching graduate students online and teaching undergraduate students in person and online
- 6) 4 years of experience as a school administrator (Deputy Head of School of an international school)
- 7) 7 years of experience as a K – 12 teacher (taught both ethics and elementary math)
- 8) 7 years of experience as an attorney in private practice

## **Work History:**

***University of Wisconsin – Green Bay*** *September 2015 – December 2016 (Professor)*

**September 2015 – Present** I created the content for, and teach, “Mediation and Conflict Resolution” and “Small Group Communication” to undergraduate communication majors.

***Communication Connections, LLC*** *January 2015 – Present (Founder/CEO)*

**2015 – Present** I founded a consulting company to work as an Organizational Culture Diagnostician. This means that I work alternately as a coach, conflict management consultant/ombudsperson/trainer both to determine whether or not an organization’s culture is what the leaders want it to be and to create purposeful change plans and transparent conflict resolution systems. I help decision-makers to identify whether or not their organizational culture supports their organization’s mission and goals. I help owners, leaders and employees to create systems of communication and policies that support the goals of the organization in an honest and transparent and ethical manner and I help to develop employee capacity.

***University of Wisconsin Law School*** *August 2014 – Present (Director of Pro Bono Programming)*

**2014 – Present** I am responsible for ensuring quality pro bono programming for law students, cultivating and sustaining community partnerships and enhancing the practice of pro bono law among practicing attorneys.

***Wisconsin Department of Health Services*** *September 2013 – Present (Educator/Trainer)*

**2013 – Present** I am working with the Department of Health Services to train staff at Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) throughout the state of Wisconsin in mediation and communication skills.

***Mediation Center of Greater Green Bay*** *December 2011 – September 2015 (Exec. Director)*

**2012 – September 2015** I was responsible for ensuring the quality of our mediation services, for coaching our volunteer mediators, for maintaining a constructive relationship with Brown County Circuit Courts regarding the small claims mediation services we provided and for developing and ensuring collaboration with various organizations within the community to improve conflict resolution services available in Northeast Wisconsin. I was also responsible for fundraising, grant writing and working with the Board of Directors to ensure that our budget was both viable and adequate.

***University of the Rockies*** *March 2011 – August 2014 (Adjunct Professor)*

**2011 – August 2014** I taught online graduate students (both M.A. and Ph.D.) conflict resolution, conflict management, ethics, legal and ethical issues in conflict management, law and ethics in helping professions, business leadership and organizational leadership and learning.

***University of Phoenix*** *March 2011 – September 2013 (Adjunct Instructor)*

**2011 – September 2013** I taught college students political science, business law, critical and logical thinking, ethics & social responsibility and history.

***The Academy of the Fox Cities, Inc.*** *September 2003 – June 2010 (Deputy Head of School / Teacher)*

**2003 – 2010** I created a unique 7-year curriculum and taught *Ethics: Conflict Resolution and Communication Skills* to students in grades K – 12.

**2005 – 2007** I taught elementary math

**2006-2010** I served as Deputy Head of this small, international, private school in addition to teaching duties. I initiated and developed:

- a school-wide service-learning program for all students in grades 1 – 12;
- procedures and policies for students and teachers alike to bring grievances forward and to resolve them constructively;

- a Peer Mediation Program for the school; and

- approval from the Department of Homeland Security for the school to host foreign exchange students.

I served as a facilitator among students, teachers, parents and administration when misunderstandings occurred.

I created opportunities for learning from moments of frustration and miscommunication.

I used my legal knowledge and experience to review policies, procedures and best standards of practice.

I worked with students and teachers every day to ensure quality of learning.

***The Sutter Law Firm***

*November 1998 – December 2005 (Associate Attorney)*

**1998 – 2005** I practiced law as an associate attorney responsible for clients in business law, estate planning and probate, and mediation. I utilized strong communication skills to represent clients' interests and managed a variety of cases simultaneously with exceptional organizational skills required to meet multiple crucial deadlines.

**Community Service and Recognition:**

**\*Wisconsin State Bar – Board Member Dispute Resolution Section** *August 2014 – March 2017*

I was elected to serve on the Board of Directors of the Dispute Resolution Section of the State Bar.

**\*NAFCM (National Association for Community Mediation)** *August 2013 – March 2017*

I was elected to serve on the Board of Directors of this national organization to represent and support community mediation and community mediation centers in this country.

**\*Office of Lawyer Regulation** *August 2003 – December 2008, March 2011 - Present*

I was selected by the Wisconsin Supreme Court to serve on the District 10 Committee, a component of the Wisconsin Lawyer Regulation System.

**\*CASA of Brown County** *April 2011 – May of 2015*

I was a volunteer Court-Appointed Special Advocate for abused and neglected children.

**\*Richmond Elementary School** *October 2010 – June 2011*

I was a volunteer math tutor at a local elementary school.

**\*Wisconsin Association of Mediators (WAM)** *April 2005 - April 2008*

I was elected to serve on the Board of Directors for a three-year term.

**\*WAM / Peer Mediation Institute** *November 2003, 2004, 2005*

I led educational workshops with elementary students, middle-school, and high-school students (and their teachers) on the sources of conflict and how to resolve conflict peacefully utilizing various communication skills and knowledge.

**\*Association for Conflict Resolution** *June 2003 – June 2008, January 2011 - Present*

I am an active member of the Workplace Section of ACR and also served on the Advisory Council for the International Section.

**\*RESTORE: Community Restorative Justice Project** *April 2003 – December 2005*

I served as Vice-President and member of the Board of Directors. RESTORE provided mediation services for neighborhood disputes and victim-offender conferencing for victims of crime, and the offenders, only if both parties were interested.

**\*United Way Fox Cities** *Spring 2002 – May 2007*

I served as a member and as Chair of the Strengthening Families Community Impact Panel.

**\*Winnebago Conflict Resolution Center** *Spring 1998 – June 2008, January 2011 – October 2011*

I was a volunteer mediator with the center. I received 40 hours of mediation training from the center in the spring of 1998 in order to qualify as a mediator with their program, and received annual training thereafter.