**Preparing for and Having the Separation or Termination Discussion**

**Gather necessary paperwork and other items**

* Separation or dismissal letter (HR will facilitate the letter from the President)
* Grievance or other relevant policies or attachments
* Have a box ready for personal belongings if they will need it quickly

**Script your talking points**

* Plan on a 5- 10 minute meeting; anything beyond 10 minutes is probably too long and needs to be moved along
* Script each of the talking points you need to make
* Plan on sticking to the script unless there are forward-thinking process questions
* Key component of the meeting is that the decision is final and now we need to talk about helping the employee exit gracefully and respectfully
* Practice pivoting back to that script
* Do not make extraneous comments
* Be kind, respectful and firm
* Don’t apologize – it implies you are not supportive of the decision and it might be the wrong one
* Plan to collect keys, swipe cards, technology, etc.

**Anticipate the response**

* It is very hard to predict the response but if there is a potential for an angry or violent outburst, additional planning may be necessary
* Have HR in the room for the meeting. Discuss the potential responses.
* Discuss the option to resign if it comes up or if it might be advantageous for us to suggest as an option

**Identify the right time and location for the meeting**

* Privacy and a time when co-workers are not around work best
* Meet in HR if necessary
* Work with HR on how best to inform the employee about the meeting and purpose

**Starting the meeting**

* Get to the point immediately with tact and both gentleness and firmness (resolve). Even if an employee is expecting it, this will be a shock to them
* Explain the reason for the meeting, go through your script and cover the key points from the letter
* Give them the letter and time to read it (as much as they need)
* Ask them if they have any questions

**Plan for the first moments and the full day after the meeting**

* How will the person get their personal belongings?
* What message do you send to co-workers and the department?
* Get the EPAF done immediately
* Cut off electronic access as soon as it is appropriate
* If the separation is immediate, who will help the employee with what they need?
* For contentious situations or immediate terminations, don’t let the employee just walk out by himself or herself. Have a plan to assist the employee, monitor movements (if necessary). Work with HR on the kindest way to do this without incurring additional institutional risk
* Move on to the transitional stage of collecting items, any time sheet issues and a graceful departure

**Anticipate questions and practice redirecting back to the purpose of the meeting**

* If they ask why, cite the exact language in the NCA and/or final letter
* If they want to blame, debate or argue, politely listen for a few minutes, document what is said and pivot back to the script
* If they want express emotion like tears, sadness, anger (at appropriate levels), acknowledge their feelings with words like I can (or do) understand how you are feeling.” Have Kleenex ready and pivot back to the script

**Hot Button Rebuttals**

Discrimination, retaliation or harassment

* If they cite any of these, tell them that they can file a complaint with HRAI, document what they say and move on

Medical issues, disability

* If they mention these, tell them HR is immediately available to work with them on it, refer them to HR and move on

“My Lawyer…” or “I’ll sue”

* Acknowledge their right to file an internal grievance (if applicable), contact an attorney or exercise their legal rights, document it and pivot back to the script

**Sample Script**

Name, thank you for meeting us today.

*(Explain why the extra people are in the room, e.g. HR is here in case you have any process questions.)*

This meeting is to inform you that on my recommendation, the University has decided to *(describe action using same words in the separation/dismissal letter)* effective *(describe effective date)*

*(Describe any additional points, especially those covered in the letter, like the date benefits end, the need to use accrued vacation prior to separation, payout of annual leave and the date they will get their final check. Describe clearly to what date and time they will be paid their regular pay)*

We have a letter for you and would like you to take as much time as you need to read it.

*(Present the letter)*

Do you have any questions?

If you have additional benefit questions, please work with the HR benefits specialists.

*(Describe any remaining administrative or procedural tasks or responsibilities like final time sheets)*

Now we need to talk about the best way to get you your personal belongings and collect the items we need to collect. Do you have a preferred way? (*Discuss doing it after hours or having the university do it for the employee)*

Person’s Name will help you gather your personal belongings.  *(If she says she doesn’t want to get them now, they can be boxed up and she can make arrangements to pick them up either in Designated Person’s office at a later time or at HR).*

I wish you the best of luck in the future.