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Reaching Consensus Isn't Easy: A Classroom Role-Play on Team Decision-Making

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Abstract

Reaching consensus is often more difficult than it appears, particularly when teams must navigate competing priorities, incomplete information, and time pressure. This experiential role-play engages small groups in a team decision-making scenario in which committee members must reach a unanimous agreement on allocating a one-time $100,000 institutional grant. Structural funding thresholds embedded in the scenario prevent equal distribution, forcing genuine prioritization and deliberation. Role-based confidentiality constraints, analogous to non-disclosure agreements, introduce information asymmetry mirroring real organizational conditions. Grounded in bounded rationality, social interdependence theory, and intragroup conflict research, the exercise is designed for upper-division undergraduate and graduate courses in organizational behavior, human resource management, leadership, and strategy, as well as any course in which group decision-making is a central topic. A structured four-part debrief connects observed behavior to established theoretical concepts. The exercise runs in a single 45- to 60-min synchronous session and requires no advance student preparation.

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Introduction

Collaborative decision-making is a core competency of business education, appearing across organizational behavior, human resource management, ethics, and strategy curricula. In today's increasingly collaborative and cross-functional business environments, graduates are expected to demonstrate their coordination and conflict management skills from Day 1 (LinkedIn Learning, 2025; World Economic Forum, 2023). Yet, students often have limited opportunities to practice consensus-building in realistic environments. Developing this competency requires direct experience with the conditions that make collective decisions hard.

In this classroom role-play, we draw on bounded rationality theory (March & Simon, 1958; Simon, 1955), social interdependence theory (Deutsch, 1949; Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2009), and research on intragroup conflict (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995) to recreate the conditions under which collective decision-making most commonly breaks down. Rather than allowing equal splits, the exercise surfaces the dynamics that make organizational decision-making genuinely difficult. Participants serve on a college allocation committee distributing a one-time $100,000 institutional grant. A shared pre-read memo establishes minimum funding thresholds, making equal distribution nonviable. Groups must prioritize, advocate, and deliberate to reach unanimous agreement. If consensus fails, the allocation reverts to central administration.

The exercise is appropriate for upper-division undergraduate and graduate courses in organizational behavior, human resource management, leadership, and strategy, consistent with prior work demonstrating the flexibility of role-play–based learning across instructional contexts (Bennett & Oksoy, 2019). It requires no advance preparation, runs in a single 45- to 60-min session, and scales across groups of three to five. Process-centered activities deepen learning by allowing students to experience consequences in real time (Conklin & Boulamatsi, 2020).

Theoretical Foundation

Classical models of rational decision-making assume that individuals identify all alternatives, evaluate them against consistent criteria, and select the optimal solution (March & Simon, 1958), yet group decision-making in organizations rarely unfolds this way. Bounded rationality theory offers a more accurate account (March & Simon, 1958): human decision-making is constrained by cognitive limitations, incomplete information, and time pressure, leading groups to settle for acceptable rather than ideal solutions—a process Simon (1955) termed satisficing. Managers routinely rely on simple heuristics rather than optimal strategies under these conditions, particularly when time pressure and uncertainty converge (Gigerenzer et al., 2022). In resource allocation

contexts, equal distribution is the prototypical satisficing heuristic: fast, superficially defensible, requiring no one to lose visibly. Left unchecked, satisficing produces decisions that feel like consensus but reflect little more than the path of least resistance.

The interpersonal dynamics that emerge during group deliberation, particularly the pressure to maintain relationships and avoid open disagreement, reinforce this tendency. Jehn (1995) established the foundational distinction between task conflict, centered on the substance of a decision, and relationship conflict, reflecting interpersonal friction. Groups that suppress the former to prevent the latter never genuinely deliberate. De Dreu and Weingart's (2003) meta-analysis demonstrated that even task conflict has predominantly negative effects on team performance in decision-making contexts, explaining why groups retreat to the equal-split heuristic; it suppresses the relationship conflict that task conflict can trigger. Rispens and Jehn (2023) found that high-performing teams exhibit moderate task conflict at the midpoint of group interaction, precisely the dynamic this exercise is designed to surface. Amason (1996) further distinguished cognitive from affective conflict, reinforcing that conditions producing genuine deliberation are fragile and socially costly (Dunn, 2024; Janis, 1982). The exercise's unanimous consensus requirement draws on social interdependence theory, which holds that positively interdependent goals promote more engaged group deliberation (Deutsch, 1949; Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2009). The result is consensus in appearance only, far more common in organizational life than most students recognize.

By integrating bounded rationality, social interdependence theory, and group conflict research, this exercise makes all three dynamics visible and unavoidable. Funding thresholds render equal distribution nonviable, forcing genuine prioritization. Role-based confidentiality constraints draw on the hidden-profile paradigm established by Stasser and Titus (1985), in which unevenly distributed information is systematically underweighted in deliberation. Unlike prior classroom implementations, which typically involve undisclosed factual information, the non-disclosure agreement (NDA)-based framing here introduces both information asymmetry and the social tension of deciding what to disclose. These design features also surface how incomplete information leads participants to fill gaps with assumptions that may reflect unconscious bias or in-group favoritism (Kahneman, 2011).

The exercise has been refined in response to student feedback from prior implementations, summarized in Appendix A, and extends a tradition of role-play simulations that surface group dynamics students rarely encounter through conventional instruction (Conklin & Boulamatsi, 2020; Egri, 1999; Humpherys et al., 2021; Robinson et al., 2026; Wooldridge et al., 2025).

Learning Objectives

After completing this exercise, students will be able to:

- demonstrate satisficing behavior through real-time participation in a constrained group decision-making context and articulate its effects on group outcomes;

- distinguish between genuine consensus and conflict-driven convergence on acceptable but suboptimal outcomes;
- analyze how information asymmetry and competing priorities shape group deliberation and final decisions;
- apply concepts of prioritization and tradeoff analysis to organizational resource allocation scenarios; and
- evaluate the structural and social conditions that were present during their group's decision-making process and propose at least one managerial intervention related to these conditions.

Instructions for Running the Exercise

Overview

Participants are assigned to groups of four, although groups of three to five are supported. Each receives a role card representing a distinct unit within a college competing for a share of a one-time $100,000 institutional grant. A shared pre-read memo establishes the allocation context and specifies minimum funding thresholds, making equal distribution infeasible. Groups must reach a unanimous agreement within a fixed time window. Failure to reach consensus reverts the allocation to central administration.

Logistics

Table 1 summarizes the key logistics for running the exercise. The exercise is well suited to face-to-face and synchronous online formats. Asynchronous delivery is not recommended because the time pressure of a live deadline is a core design feature of the activity. Instructors should treat the preparation phase as deliberation time rather than a procedural formality, as allowing a full 5 min to read and internalize roles meaningfully increases engagement and the quality of group dynamics. A full breakdown of timing is provided in Appendix B.

Step-by-Step Instructions

The exercise proceeds across three phases, with timing for all phases outlined in Table 2. In the preparation phase, the instructor distributes the shared memo (Appendix C) to each group and, privately, individual role cards to each participant. Each role card includes a primary priority, a stakeholder perspective, contextual information, and a confidentiality constraint. Participants are informed that portions of their role-specific information are subject to restrictions analogous to an NDA and must navigate the tension between transparency and constraint on their own, mirroring real organizational decision-making.

In the deliberation phase, groups work toward a unanimous decision on allocation. The instructor announces the time at the midpoint and prompts each group to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how close they are to consensus. This midpoint check

Table 1. Exercise Logistics.

Feature	Details
Group size	Three to five participants (four recommended)
Total time	45–60 min
Delivery format	Face-to-face or synchronous online
Advance preparation	None required
Materials	Shared memo (one per group), role cards (one per participant), Consensus Rating Sheet (Appendix D), Allocation Decision Sheet (Appendix E)

Table 2. Exercise Phases and Timing.

Phase	Activity	Time
Preparation	Distribute memo and role cards; independent reading	5 min
Deliberation	Group allocation discussion with midpoint check-in	20–25 min
Reporting	Groups report final allocation or declare impasse	3 min
Debrief	Structured four-part instructor-led discussion	20–25 min
Total		48–60 min

encourages reflection and strategy adjustment, and ratings can be referenced during the debrief to discuss how groups self-assessed relative to their actual outcome. Participants record their current allocation and consensus rating on the Consensus Rating Sheet (Appendix D). The instructor announces again when 5 min remain. At the close of deliberation, each group completes the Allocation Decision Sheet (Appendix E) before the reporting phase begins. In the reporting phase, each group briefly reports its final allocation or declares an impasse before the debrief begins. A full step-by-step instructor guide is provided in Appendix F.

Variations

An undergraduate adaptation using a student government framing is provided in Appendix G. Group-size configurations are summarized in Table 3. The core scenario, shared memo, and funding constraints remain identical across all configurations. For online synchronous delivery, breakout rooms replicate the in-person experience with no modification to materials or timing. Role card confidentiality is maintained by distributing individual assignments via private message before students enter breakout rooms. Instructors may consider QR codes linked to role cards hosted on a course platform as an alternative. Instructors teaching in business school contexts may frame the committee as a divisional budget committee, substituting functional-unit labels such as marketing, operations, human resources, and finance for the academic-unit roles provided. Role card templates are included in Appendix H.

Table 3. Group Size Configurations.

Group size	Roles included	Role omitted
Three participants	Academic Programs, Research and Innovation, Student Experience	External Relations
Four participants (recommended)	Academic Programs, Research and Innovation, Student Experience, External Relations	None
Five participants	All four primary roles plus Operations and Facilities	None

Instructions for Debriefing the Exercise

The debrief is structured around four sequential moves, each building on the previous, and is expected to take 20 to 25 min. The deliberation is rich with observable behavior, and the debrief connects that behavior to course concepts.

Outcomes

Begin by having each group report its final allocation or declare an impasse. Record decisions visibly for the class, on a whiteboard or shared screen, so students can see variation across groups. Ask groups that reached consensus whether everyone genuinely agreed or someone conceded to end the conversation. Ask groups that declared an impasse where the discussion broke down. This phase takes 3 to 5 min and sets the empirical foundation for everything that follows.

Process

Shift the discussion from what was decided to how the group got to the decision. Useful prompts include: Where did the first real disagreement emerge? Who proposed the first concrete allocation, and how did the group respond? How did the funding thresholds in the memo shape your discussion? Students frequently report that the constraints forced conversations they would not otherwise have had. If a group reached an equal allocation despite the thresholds, invite them to walk through their reasoning aloud. Treat this as a teaching moment rather than a correction.

Explanation

Introduce satisficing here by name. Ask students whether their final decision was the best possible allocation or the first one everyone could accept. Most groups will recognize the latter, which opens the door to Simon's (1955) framework without requiring a lecture. Follow with the question about conflict avoidance: Did you agree because you were convinced or because you wanted the conversation to end? Kaner's

(2014) Gradients of Agreement offers a useful structured tool here, operationalizing the distinction between genuine consensus and reluctant compliance across a five-point continuum from Loathe It to Love It. To deepen the conceptual discussion, Amason's (1996) distinction between cognitive and affective conflict connects directly to what students just experienced.

Application

Close the debrief by moving from the exercise to the organization. Ask students where these dynamics show up in their student experience (e.g., clubs, sports teams) and/or professional experience (e.g., work or internships). Budget meetings, selection committees, strategic planning sessions, and performance review calibrations are contexts in which satisficing and conflict avoidance produce consequential outcomes. A strong closing prompt is: What does a manager do when their team is satisficing toward a bad decision? This question has no clean answer and tends to generate the richest discussion of the session. Additional debrief questions and suggested student responses are provided in Appendix I.

Conclusion

Group decision-making under constraint is among the most consequential challenges managers face, yet it remains difficult to teach through traditional instruction alone. This exercise gives students direct experience of what makes collective decisions hard and provides a framework for understanding what they observed. By removing the equal-split default, the activity creates conditions under which satisficing and conflict avoidance naturally emerge and become visible.

The value of the exercise lies not in the allocation decision students reach but in the process they experience getting there. Students leave having lived an experience working and figuring out critical group dynamics firsthand rather than encountering them as abstract concepts, and the structured debrief is what experiential learning theory identifies as the mechanism through which durable learning occurs (Kolb, 1984).

While the exercise has worked well in different classroom settings, we note two boundary conditions that warrant acknowledgment. The college committee scenario may limit transfer to private-sector contexts, although instructors can bridge this gap during the application move by prompting students to identify analogous professional situations. The consensus norm, NDA framing, and institutional hierarchy also reflect a particular national and organizational culture, and instructors using the exercise outside North America should consider adapting the scenario and debrief prompts accordingly. Extended adaptation guidance is provided in Appendix F.

Reaching consensus is not supposed to be easy. This exercise ensures it isn't and that students understand why.

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Appendix A

Student Feedback From Prior Implementation

The following feedback was collected during classroom implementations of an earlier version of this exercise across two course sections in 2025, encompassing approximately 40 students in undergraduate principles of management courses. Responses reflect student experiences with the original design and directly informed the structural revisions described in this manuscript, including the introduction of funding thresholds and the replacement of hidden agendas with role-based confidentiality constraints akin to NDAs.

Table A1. Summary of Student Feedback.

Theme	Description	Frequency
Role Engagement Gaps	Undergraduate students were less likely to fully inhabit assigned roles and often treated the activity as a coordination task rather than a negotiation.	2 of 2 Sections
Low Perceived Stakes	Students viewed losses as abstract and were reluctant to advocate strongly without clear personal or institutional consequences.	2 of 2 Sections
Default Equal Allocation	Most groups chose to split funds evenly to avoid losses, thereby reducing conflict and strategic behavior.	2 of 2 Sections
Need for Explicit Consequences	Feedback emphasized the need for concrete, role-specific consequences (e.g., loss of leadership, delayed graduation, reputational risk) to increase perceived stakes.	2 of 2 Sections
Insufficient Role Conflict	Roles lacked explicit opposition or incompatible priorities, allowing students to reconcile goals too easily rather than negotiate trade-offs.	2 of 2 Sections
Emotional Motivation Weakness	Secret motivations were perceived as insufficiently intense; stronger identity-based and emotional hooks were recommended to increase engagement.	2 of 2 Sections
Recommendation for Incentive Framing	Suggestions included simulated grade pressure or public commitments to heighten urgency and investment in role outcomes.	1 of 2 Sections
Overall Structural Effectiveness	Despite engagement challenges, instructors reported that the role-play ran smoothly and showed strong potential with revised role framing.	2 of 2 Sections

Appendix B

Materials and Instructor Preparation

Materials Checklist

- One printed memo per group, or projected on screen for face-to-face delivery; shared digitally via chat or course platform for online synchronous delivery.
- One role card per participant, distributed individually and privately.
- Whiteboard, shared screen, or flip chart for recording group decisions during the reporting phase.
- Timer visible to participants during the deliberation phase.

- One Consensus Rating Sheet per group (Appendix D), completed at the deliberation midpoint.
- One Allocation Decision Sheet per group (Appendix E), completed at the close of deliberation.

Instructor Preparation Checklist. Before class, instructors should:

- Assign participants to groups and determine role assignments in advance to avoid using deliberation time for setup.
- Print role cards and memo, or prepare digital versions for online delivery.
- Prepare a visible timer, either a physical timer, a projected countdown, or a shared screen timer.
- Identify a method for recording group decisions visibly during the reporting phase, such as a whiteboard column for each group.
- Review the extended debrief questions in Appendix I and select prompts appropriate for the course level.
- For online delivery, prepare private messages containing each participant's role card text before the session begins.

Physical Setting Requirements. No special setup is required. Groups of three to five should be seated together and separated enough from other groups to allow independent deliberation. For online synchronous delivery, breakout rooms of three to five participants replicate the in-person experience without any modifications to materials or timing.

Appendix C

Shared Pre-Read Memo

Memorandum

TO: Allocation Committee Members
FROM: Office of the Dean
RE: Strategic Allocation Guidance

The college has received a one-time allocation of $100,000 to support strategic initiatives. The Allocation Committee has been convened to recommend how these funds should be distributed across units.

Based on prior discussions with department chairs and administrative leadership, several key priorities have been identified:

- Strengthening academic programs and curriculum support.
- Supporting research and innovation infrastructure.
- Enhancing student engagement and experience.
- Improving external visibility and partnerships.

It is also understood that many proposed initiatives require a minimum level of funding to be viable. Preliminary estimates suggest that:

- Academic and program development initiatives may require approximately $50,000 to be fully implemented.
- Research and infrastructure investments may require approximately $40,000.
- Student-focused initiatives may be implemented at varying funding levels depending on scope.

As a result, not all priorities can be supported simultaneously, and trade-offs will be necessary. The committee is expected to develop a unified recommendation.

> **Important: If consensus is not reached within the allotted time, decision-making authority will revert to central administration. The committee will lose its ability to influence how these funds are allocated.**

Note**:** *Each committee member has access to role-specific information. Portions of that information are subject to internal confidentiality restrictions analogous to an NDA. You will need to determine for yourself what you share and what you do not*.

Appendix D

Printable Consensus Rating Sheet

Consensus Rating Sheet

Current Allocation Plan:	**Amount Allocated**
Academic Programs	$_____
Student Experience	$_____
Research and Innovation	$_____
External Relations	$_____
Operations/Facilities (if applicable)	$_____

Describe the current allocation plan:_____

_____

How close is your team to a unanimous consensus: (Circle the appropriate number)

1	2	3	4	5
(Not at all close)				(Consensus Reached)

Appendix E

Printable Allocation Decision Sheet

Allocation Decision Sheet

Did your team reach a unanimous decision: Yes No

Final Allocation Plan:	**Amount Allocated**	**Notes**
Academic Programs	$_____	_____
Student Experience	$_____	_____
Research and Innovation	$_____	_____
External Relations	$_____	_____
Operations/Facilities (if applicable)	$_____	_____

Describe the final allocation plan:_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix F

Step-by-Step Instructor Guide

Before Class. Print one copy of the shared memo per group, or prepare to project it on screen for face-to-face delivery. For online synchronous delivery, share the memo digitally via chat or course platform before opening breakout rooms. Prepare one role card per participant, distributed individually and privately. If running online, prepare private messages containing each participant's role card text. Assign participants to groups and determine role assignments in advance to avoid using deliberation time for setup. For groups of three, omit the External Relations role. For groups of five, add the Operations and Facilities role.

Step 1: Distribute Materials (5 Min). Distribute the shared memo to all participants simultaneously. Distribute role cards individually and privately. Instruct participants to read their materials without discussing them with other group members. If running online, send the role card text via private message before opening breakout rooms.

Raising the Stakes. To increase student investment in the outcome, instructors may consider introducing a class-wide consequence tied to group performance. For example, if a majority of groups reach consensus within the time limit, a low-stakes quiz may be removed from the syllabus or bonus points awarded to the class. This approach increases perceived stakes, encourages more authentic advocacy within roles, and surfaces the behavioral dynamics the exercise is designed to produce.

Step 2: Introduce the Exercise (2 Min). Before deliberation begins, provide the following instructions verbally or in writing:

You are a member of a college allocation committee responsible for distributing a one-time $100,000 grant across competing priorities. Each of you represents a different unit with distinct needs and perspectives. Your group must reach a unanimous decision about how the funds will be allocated. If your group does not reach consensus within the time limit, decision-making authority will revert to central administration, and your committee will lose its ability to influence the outcome. Your role card contains confidential information subject to internal restrictions, similar to those in an NDA. You will need to decide for yourself what to share and what not to.

Step 3: Begin Deliberation (20–25 Min). Start the timer visibly. Announce the midpoint and have them fill out the Consensus Rating sheet, and announce again when 5 min remain and remind them to fill out the Allocation Decision sheet. Do not intervene in group deliberations. If a group reaches consensus early, encourage them to revisit their decision and stress-test it before time expires rather than disengaging.

At the midpoint, prompt each group to pause and rate their current consensus level. A simple one-to-five numerical scale works well, with one meaning no agreement and five meaning very close to an agreement. Alternatively, instructors may use Kaner's (2014) Gradients of Agreement, asking each participant to indicate whether they Loathe It, Lament It, Live With It, Like It, or Love It regarding the current proposed allocation. This provides richer qualitative data for the debrief than a numerical rating alone and maps directly onto the satisficing discussion that follows.

Step 4: Reporting (3 Min). Ask each group to report their final allocation on a whiteboard or shared screen. Record all group decisions visibly so the full class can see variation across groups. Note which groups reached consensus and which declared an impasse.

Step 5: Debrief (20–25 Min). Proceed through the four structured debrief moves outlined in the manuscript. Extended debrief questions and instructor guidance are provided in Appendix I.

Limitations and Adaptation Guidance. The college allocation committee scenario may limit students' ability to transfer lessons to private-sector contexts. During the application move of the debrief, prompt students to identify analogous budget meetings, hiring committees, or resource allocation decisions from their own professional experience to bridge this gap. The consensus norm, NDA framing, and institutional hierarchy embedded in the scenario also reflect a particular organizational culture. Instructors using the exercise outside North America, or in cultural settings where direct disagreement is discouraged, or consensus carries different social meaning, should consider adapting the scenario framing and debrief prompts to ensure the activity's dynamics translate meaningfully for their students.

Appendix G

Undergraduate Variation

This variation adapts the exercise for undergraduate courses by replacing the college allocation committee scenario with a student government framing that may feel more immediately relatable to early undergraduate participants. All other elements of the exercise remain identical, including the funding thresholds, confidentiality constraints, unanimous consensus requirement, and debrief structure.

Scenario. Your student government association has received a one-time $100,000 allocation to support campus initiatives. A committee of student representatives has been convened to determine how the funds should be distributed. Each member represents a different campus organization with distinct priorities and needs. The group has been given authority to propose an allocation, but the decision must be unanimous. If the committee fails to reach an agreement, the university administration will reassign the funding, removing the committee's ability to influence the outcome.

Role Adjustments. The roles are adapted as follows:

Graduate Role	Undergraduate Role
Academic Programs Representative	Academic Affairs Representative
Student Experience Representative	Student Life Representative
Research and Innovation Representative	Science and Innovation Representative
External Relations/Advancement Representative	Community Engagement Representative
Operations/Facilities Representative	Campus Services Representative

Note. Instructors using the undergraduate adaptation should replace accreditation references in the Academic Programs role card with more familiar language, such as program funding or course offerings, to ensure accessibility for students unfamiliar with accreditation processes.

The shared memo, funding thresholds, and confidentiality constraints are reworded to reflect the student government context but retain the same structural constraints. Instructors may adapt role card language accordingly, using the graduate role cards in Appendix H as a template.

Appendix H. Role Card Templates.

Academic Programs Representative
Priority: Curriculum development and academic program support.
Perspective: Long-term value comes from strong academic offerings.
Confidential: A key program faces accreditation risk without additional resources.
Constraint: Program review and accreditation details are not shared broadly.

Research and Innovation Representative
Priority: Research infrastructure, technology, and innovation capacity.
Perspective: Investment in research drives long-term institutional reputation.
Confidential: Critical research equipment has failed, delaying active projects.
Constraint: Equipment failure details and project impact are confidential.

Operations/Facilities Representative
Priority: Physical infrastructure, facilities maintenance, and space.
Perspective: Infrastructure supports all other initiatives and requires consistent investment.
Confidential: Several facility issues will worsen without immediate intervention.
Constraint: Facility condition assessments and maintenance priorities are confidential.

Student Experience Representative
Priority: Student engagement, retention, and campus experience.
Perspective: Visible student-facing initiatives have the greatest immediate impact.
Confidential: Internal data shows a recent decline in student engagement metrics.
Constraint: Engagement data and performance metrics are confidential within the unit.

External Relations/Advancement Representative
Priority: Institutional visibility, partnerships, and external engagement.
Perspective: Funding should prioritize initiatives demonstrating impact to external stakeholders.
Confidential: Future donor support may depend on how this allocation is used.
Constraint: Donor expectations and partnership details are confidential.

Appendix I

Extended Debrief Questions and Instructor Guidance

Table A2. Debrief Questions, Instructor Guidance, and Potential Student Responses.

Move	Question	Instructor guidance	Potential student response
Outcomes	What allocation did your group reach, and did everyone genuinely agree?	Record all group decisions visibly. Note variation across groups and use it as evidence that the scenario does not produce a single obvious answer.	"We agreed on $50,000 for academic programs and split the rest, but honestly, I just went along with it near the end."
Outcomes	If your group declared an impasse, at what point did the discussion break down?	Treat impasses as valuable data rather than failures. Ask the group to identify the specific disagreement that proved irresolvable.	"We could not agree on whether research or academic programs should get priority, and we ran out of time."
Process	Where did the first real disagreement emerge in your group?	Listen for whether the disagreement was substantive or interpersonal. This sets up the cognitive versus affective conflict distinction later.	"As soon as someone said we should just split it equally, someone else pushed back because of the thresholds in the memo."
Process	Who proposed the first concrete allocation, and how did the group respond?	Note whether groups rewarded or penalized the first mover. First proposals anchor subsequent discussion and often shape the final outcome disproportionately.	"I proposed something specific, and everyone kind of reacted to mine instead of starting fresh."
Process	How did the funding thresholds in the memo shape your discussion?	If students did not engage with the thresholds, ask them to revisit the memo together and walk through the math. This is the moment to surface the structural constraint explicitly.	"Once we realized equal splits did not work with the thresholds, we had to actually choose priorities."
Explanation	Was your final decision the best possible allocation or the first one everyone could accept?	Introduce satisficing here by name. Connect to Simon (1955) without requiring students to have read it.	"Probably the first one we could all live with. We did not really explore other options once we had something on the table."
Explanation	Did you agree because you were convinced or because you wanted the conversation to end?	Introduce cognitive versus affective conflict here using Amason (1996). For undergraduates, plain language works better: Were you debating the decision or managing the relationship?	"I think I just wanted it to be over. I did not feel like arguing was going to help."
Explanation	What role did your confidential information play in how you participated?	This question surfaces the NDA mechanic directly. Students will vary widely in how they handled confidentiality, generating rich comparative discussion.	"I was not sure what I was allowed to say, so I kind of hinted at it without saying it directly."
Application	Where do these dynamics show up in professional settings?	Prompt students with specific organizational contexts if needed: budget meetings, hiring committees, performance review calibrations, and strategic planning sessions.	"This reminds me of budget meetings where everyone agrees in the room, but nothing actually gets decided."
Application	What does a manager do when they recognize their team is satisficing toward a bad decision?	This question has no clean answer and typically generates the most generative discussion of the session. Let it run.	"Maybe slow it down and force people to justify their position instead of just accepting the first compromise."