

Dialogues Across Difference Workshop

March 5, 2024

<https://diversity.ucdavis.edu/dialogues-across-difference>

Participant Breakout Groups Feedback:

1. Syllabus Language & Setting Expectations–First Class Meeting

- Identify Principles of Community a good starting point, it's not a lot of language for syllabus, simple;
- Putting disclaimer about 'discomfort' (students should expect a reasonable amount of)
- Activity to do with own students on first day, norm setting, and civic dialogue; important characteristics:
 - Respect for differing
 - Actively listening
 - Empathy
 - Open-mindedness
 - Step up, step back (air time and ideologically)

2. Supporting Faculty and TAs

- The need for trainings on this campus and to really think intentionally about different populations that need training and adjust accordingly;
- For example TAs do heavy lifting, what are existing mechanisms, there is an orientation, and 1-unit course in some departments;
- CEE has some training;
- A need to provide training for administrators that have more intersections in academic spaces b/c way in which their role is policy setting; an important need to recenter conversation away from risk management; mindful academic freedom is rights and responsibility; train administrators that interface with faculty

3. Handling Disruptive Statements in Class

- Provide support to faculty who experienced the disruptive speech.
- The responsibility to articulate/handle well in the moment of an instance of disruptive speech is very real and difficult that can create more harm if mishandled;
- My first answer is shut it down, has to sometimes so it doesn't escalate; yet at the same time pause, let someone sit in what they just said
- Redemption is important, a student who made a mistake may need an opportunity to redeem themselves and not be labeled unredemptive

- An emotionally charged situation and being reflective emotionally cool and objective is helpful but easier said than done
- Give permission to end the class, sometimes that's just what we need to do

4. Creating teaching moments

- Discomfort does not mean harm; uncomfortable is to be expected; a person can be uncomfortable but still be "safe"; safety is freedom from harm
- It is really important to build trust at the outset. Some instructors spend a significant amount of time doing this. If we have been honest and transparent, we will have a strong starting point for having difficult conversations.
- Strategies for building trust for large classes with 100-300 students: How do you do that? Strategies include:
 - Emailing the students weekly to ask how they are doing.
 - Asking the student to fill out simple, short Google surveys (for bonus points) on how they are coping, etc. (The data can be collected in spreadsheets).
- Even if you fumble a teachable moment, you can go back and try to fix it, this contributes to transparency about why the fumble occurred or why the issue raised contention; revisiting will be if you have already built the requisite trust;
- Separate facts from stories.
- It seems that there has been little person-to-person conflict resolution or problem-solving, since the isolation imposed by Covid, and this has created an additional challenge.