BUILDING CAPACITY FOR CRITICAL DIALOGUE FACILITATION AMONG FACULTY AND STAFF

AAC&U Network for Academic Renewal Conference
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Roadmap

- Introductions
- Organizational profile
- The need to build capacity for critical dialogue facilitation
- Dialogue Facilitation Lab framework and outcomes
- Questions for deliberation
- Closing
Introductions

• Introduce you to our institutional context, the need to build capacity for critical dialogue facilitation

• Discuss development of the Dialogue Facilitation Lab and its curriculum

• Encourage you to deliberate your own institutional context and next steps to build capacity

• Answer questions
Organizational Profile

Oregon State University

- 30k+ students, significant growth in last decade
- Corvallis main campus, branch campuses in Bend, Newport, Portland; extension offices
- Land grant, research focused, strength in STEM
- PWI, though increasingly less so

Oregon is a state of contrast

- Perception of mostly white v. quite diverse along many social identities
- Perception of liberal utopia v. a long history of displacement and discrimination
Organizational Profile

Office of Institutional Diversity
- Opened in early 2016 in response to student advocacy and activism
- First Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer hired June 2017
- 7 professional staff members; part-time faculty fellow and student employees
- Office portfolio includes: (1) implementation and assessment of university diversity strategic plan, (2) DEI education, outreach, and consultation, (3) signature event coordination, (4) community outreach, and (5) leadership of university Bias Response Team
What is dialogue?

- A framework to explore ideas through inter-and intra-group exchange
- A container for collaborative deliberation
- A practice that emphasizes personal experiences, listening, and a willingness to make mistakes
- A pathway to find common ground, which is not the same as agreement
- A means to attend to power, with a focus on social identity
What is dialogue?

• When we sit together in a circle and talk with each other, sometimes we are dialogue, but frequently we are not

• Dialogic practice is as much about creating the necessary conditions for dialogue as it is about dialogue itself

• Dialogue is like writing poetry, deceptively simple, but building skill and training is necessary to do it well
The need to build capacity

• Long history of dialogue at OSU
  • Classrooms
  • Co-curricular spaces
  • Professional development groups
  • Processing critical racial incidents
  • Recently, central to community conversation about whether to rename campus buildings

• Lack of access to consistent dialogue facilitation learning creates limited access to qualified facilitators
The need to build capacity

- Reflected in feedback from students, faculty and staff
  - Need for applied knowledge skills to navigate critical conversations in classrooms, workplaces
  - Desire to transform social justice framework into action to create change (inside and outside the institution)
- Reflected in institutional data
- Reflected in university's priorities and diversity strategic plan goals
The need to build capacity

- Over 75% of teaching faculty believe it is their role to enhance appreciation for human difference, but more than half do not believe they are prepared to deal with conflict related to difference (Stolzenberg, et al., 2019)

- Investment in dialogue facilitation is central to creating institutional capacity to respond to critical incidents and ongoing institutional change (Kezar & Fries-Britt, 2018)

- Dialogue enhances organizational conditions necessary for student success (Ibid.)
Dialogue Facilitation Lab

• Ten-week professional development opportunity open to all faculty, staff and graduate students
• Two-day intensive orientation, followed by two-hour weekly dialogue sessions designed and facilitated by participant dyad teams
• One-on-one meetings with instructors to assess progress and process
• 70+ applications, 15 participants selected, mix of academic faculty, professional faculty, classified staff, graduate students
Dialogue Facilitation Lab Goals

- Raise confidence and capacity of faculty, staff, and graduate assistants to facilitate cognitively and emotionally complex learning spaces
- Dynamically train facilitators to support strategic dialogic efforts and respond nimbly to emerging community needs
- Cultivate dialogic practices throughout diverse functional areas
- Grow and sustain a community of practice which maintains continued development for dialogue facilitation
Dialogue Facilitation Competencies

• Twelve competency areas related to different aspects of dialogue facilitation
• Adapted from Nagda (2007) and Maxwell, et al. (2012) works on dialogue facilitation
• Upcoming publication of competencies by OSU’s Jeff Kenney and Chris Hughbanks in *Issues of Social Justice*
Guiding Skills

Creating Space for Difference & Dialogue

Co-Facilitation

Integrating Content & Process
Empowering Skills

- Naming & Framing Emotions
- Co-Creating & Sharing Power
- Productive Use of Self
Process Skills

- Bridging Dialogue to Action
- Cultivating Connection within and across Difference
- Connecting the Personal with the Structural
Procedural Skills

Setting Space

Setting Agenda, Expectations, and Tone

Anticipating & Responding to Participants’ Needs
Creating Space for Difference & Dialogue

Competency:
- Creates environments where divergent and convergent experiences and perspectives emerge
- Utilizes empathy to support and challenge participants within their own identity groups
- Engages multi-partial rather than neutral or partial facilitation
- Surfaces power dynamics in the group between co-facilitators and members as opportunities for learning

Practice Examples:
- Encouraging participants to share personal experiences
- Acknowledging and affirming diverse contributions
- Reflecting and probing to encourage greater depth
- Managing and balancing voices and contributions among individuals and social groups
Co-Creating & Sharing Power

Competency:
• Sustains interactions which are less facilitator centered and more participant/group centered
• Helps participants realize dual roles as learners and teachers
• Encourages participants to engage and facilitate one another
• Affirms participants' own naming of issues and intergroup dynamics; encourages participants to name power dynamics.

Practice Examples:
• Jointly guiding content and process with participants
• Encouraging participants to take roles in leading dialogue
• Redirecting questions which seek an "expert answer" to the entire group for everyone's thoughts on the issue
Lab Topics

- Power and hierarchy at OSU
- Queering the academy
- Free speech and protest protocols
- Appreciative exploration of social identity
- Utility of institutional diversity statements
Outcomes and Lessons

Positive experiences across the board; increased efficacy, confidence, awareness

Progress towards a sustainable culture of dialogue at OSU

Lab graduate referrals to design dialogues

Additional Lab scheduled for summer to accommodate demand

Essential for Lab to have a home in OID with steady funding
Questions to deliberate

What is the current capacity for critical dialogue facilitation at your institution?

How would creating additional capacity help you advance your work?

What barriers/supports to building capacity exist at your institution?
Questions?

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