A Guide for Engaging Students in Campus Events

Preface

During the year Colorado State University plays host to a variety of programs, events, and speakers, most of which seek to engage critical thought, diversity in experience, and increase the opportunity for learning both inside and outside of the classroom. To help facilitate these types of learning opportunities, while mitigating harm and promoting dialogue, we provide the following resources for use when encouraging students to attend campus events, including CSUnite: No Place 4 H8.

The following pages offer resources to assist and encourage in classroom discussion specifically pertaining to CSUnite: No Place 4 H8, as well as promote proactive classroom conversations throughout the year.

Table of Contents

• CSUnite: No Place 4 H8 Event Information – Pages 2-3
• Utilizing Campus Events for Learning – Page 4
• Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or Controversial Topics – Pages 5-9
• Making the Most of “Hot Buttons” in the Classroom – Pages 10-12
• Exploring the Differences Between Dialogue, Discussion, and Debate – Page 13
• University Resources – Page 14
CSUnite: No Place 4 H8

Event Information
- All members of the campus community are highly encouraged to come together at 3 p.m. on Thursday, March 29, at Newton’s Corner (the large sculpture on Pitkin, just south of the Behavioral Sciences Building) for a short solidarity walk to the Lory Student Center Plaza. The event will begin at Newton’s Corner with opening remarks and then proceed to the LSC Plaza for a gathering and brief program.

- Classes will not be canceled for this event, but faculty are welcome to bring their students to participate. Resources are available for faculty who would like guidance on how to incorporate discussion around the Principles of Community and CSUnite into their courses that day. Administrative offices are encouraged to close, if possible, so that staff and student employees may participate in the event. Though participation is encouraged, it is not mandatory by members of the campus community.

Why are we doing this?
- Over the course of this year, our community has experienced a number of incidents that run counter to our Principles of Community: a noose hung in a residence hall, swastikas written on a Jewish student’s whiteboard, racist and sexist graffiti in various locations, attempts at recruiting by white supremacist groups through posters and flyers, and white supremacists gathering on campus to spread their views. These are known and reported incidents, while others, although not reported, have also caused harm and pain to members of our community and run counter to our Principles of Community.

- In participating in this walk and community gathering together, we reach across whatever divides us and accept our responsibility to uphold one another, to be alongside those who have been personally harmed by acts of hate and bias, and to acknowledge the harm such acts cause to all of us as members of this community.

- All of us, though we may believe differently about many things, can come together in support of our Principles of Community and in opposition to the corrosive impacts of hate on our character and our campus.

- We realize we cannot stop all words and actions of hate, delivered with malice, disrespect or disregard, but we can refuse to be silent as a response. Through CSUnite, we are demonstrating that everyone has a role, an opportunity, and a responsibility to confront acts of hate and bias when they occur.

- This event embodies our belief that love is stronger than hate, that diversity is fundamental to the nature and character of a university, and that Rams take care of Rams.
Is CSUnite supposed to solve all our problems and make everyone feel great about CSU?

- CSUnite is intended as a demonstrable statement of collective community and solidarity.

- CSUnite is not an end in itself; it is a symbolic act of solidarity that builds on the ongoing hard work across the institution that confronts ignorance and hate with education, knowledge, and understanding.

- CSUnite will include resources and tools for people who want to learn more about actions they can take every day to educate themselves, communicate more effectively across our differences, and support a more inclusive, safe, and welcoming CSU experience for all people.

- This event is just one small effort in a long journey we must undertake together, as members of this University community. It is a recognition of the serious issues we face, the need to mitigate and condemn these actions, and that it is past time for us to step up and do better together.

FAQs:

- **Who can participate?**
  All members of the CSU community and anyone who wants to demonstrate their support for helping all of our students, faculty, and staff know that they are welcome at Colorado State University – and that we collectively care about the safety, peace of mind, and well-being of all members of our campus community.

- **Will classes be cancelled?**
  No. Faculty are welcome to bring their classes to participate in the event. Resources will also be available for faculty who are unable to adjust their courses but still want to acknowledge the event and its purpose with their students. Faculty and students in buildings around the periphery of the event should be prepared for some potential disruption related to crowds and noise from the event.

- **What about students who have to work?**
  Like any large event, not everyone who wants to participate will be able to. Educational resources are available online for those who are interested but cannot attend.

- **Do I have to register to participate?**
  No.

- **Is this a political event?**
  No. These issues transcend politics and impact all of us. People of all political viewpoints are encouraged to stand up and help make the statement that CSU is No Place for Hate.
Utilizing Campus Events for Learning

- Extra Credit Assignments: If you are going to ask students to attend a program for extra credit, provide an opportunity for students to debrief the event. While attending an event or writing a paper on the event does allow for individual reflection, by incorporating time in your course to discuss responses to the event, you provide an opportunity for deeper dialogue and learning to occur.
  
  o Examples of questions to promote discussion:
    ▪ What are your initial thoughts or feelings about the event?
    ▪ What are two-three questions you have after attending the event?
    ▪ How has this event impacted our community members differently?
    ▪ How can you apply what you have learned from the event to this course?

- Engagement vs. Being a Spectator: If you are asking students to attend an event, particularly a cultural event, encourage them to fully engage in the event. This will help to bridge the gap between participants and spectators, with the goal of increased understanding of difference. Through encouraging our students to engage rather than spectate, we increase the likelihood of increased understanding across identity and avoid putting event participants in the position of being watched and observed as if they are specimens.
  
  o Examples of engagement include:
    ▪ Asking students to attend the CSUnite: No Place 4 H8 event and discuss with students present their thoughts or responses to what is happening.
    ▪ Having students attend a Diversity Symposium workshop and actively participate in the workshop, rather than just observe.

- Infusing into Curriculum: If your curricular plans do not allow you to have your students actively attend certain events, consider how to engage your students in related conversations that are happening on campus throughout the year. For a complete list of campus events visit the University Calendar.
  
  o Examples of questions to promote curricular application:
    ▪ How do campus conversations relate to our current course content?
    ▪ Are there recent events on campus that illustrate what we have been learning?

- Utilizing Ground Rules: Establishing Ground Rules or Community Guidelines can be tremendously useful in establishing expectations regarding communication, behaviors, and mutual respect throughout the semester. Ground Rules can be provided in a course syllabus or they can be constructed with the class. It may necessary, and useful, to revisit the Ground Rules throughout the semester, particularly before entering into a potentially difficult dialogue.
  
  o See “Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or Controversial Topics” for example Ground Rules
Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or Controversial Topics

The following guidelines can help instructors facilitate classroom discussion around controversial issues. Whatever the context, it is helpful to structure such discussions in a way that defines boundaries for the process and provides some degree of closure within the classroom. Such discussions are an especially important time to explicitly discuss expectations for respecting a range of perspectives and experiences in the room.

Spontaneous Discussions: Dealing with the Unexpected

It is wise to be prepared to respond to the possibility that a student will raise a controversial issue in class unexpectedly. Immediate response is called for, if only to decide what to do next:

- Acknowledge the student who raised the issue while noting that students may vary in their responses.
- Decide whether you are ready and willing to engage with the topic right away.
- Quickly assess whether the class would like to spend time sharing views about the topic.

If students want to have a dialogue, and you want to wait on it, schedule a discussion for a later class and suggest ways that students could prepare.

Planned Discussions on Controversial Topics

Planning a discussion on a controversial topic or issue benefits from consideration of the following topics, each of which is addressed below:

Identifying a clear purpose

Starting a discussion with clearly articulated objectives can help shape the nature of the discussion and link it to other course goals.

Examples of general objectives include:

- Connecting the topic with course material, including fundamental concepts and strategies for analysis and thoughtful reflection
- Increasing awareness about the topic by providing information that is not generally addressed in informal discussions
- Promoting critical thinking by helping students to understand the complexity of the issues
- Enhancing skills for dialogue that students can take into other venues
- Relating classroom discussion to the roles that students have as citizens within the university community and larger society

More specific objectives for discussion about social conflicts, especially those involving language of hate or bias, may focus on policies, social conventions, or civic responsibilities, including the following:
• Examining and developing positions on issues of social policy, university policy, or social convention.
• Identifying a core problem underlying social conflicts and exploring possible answers to the problem.
• Analyzing the root causes or reasons for a social conflict (i.e., a past-oriented discussion).
• Exploring possible consequences or implications of a conflict (i.e., a future-oriented discussion).
• Planning effective actions to reduce such incidents and/or to support vulnerable populations.

(This second list is adapted from Ronald Hyman, 1980, In *Improving Discussion Leadership*. New York: Columbia University, College Teachers Press.)

**Establishing ground rules or guidelines**

In class, instructors can either work with students to generate ground rules or discussion guidelines, or they can present a set of guidelines and then work with students to accept or modify them. Referring back to these community agreements can be very helpful if discussion becomes tense. Some suggestions include the following:

• Listen respectfully, without interrupting.
• Listen actively and with an ear to understanding others' views. (Don’t just think about what you are going to say while someone else is talking.)
• Criticize ideas, not individuals.
• Commit to learning, not debating. Comment in order to share information, not to persuade.
• Avoid blame, speculation, and inflammatory language.
• Allow everyone the chance to speak.
• Avoid assumptions about any member of the class or generalizations about social groups. Do not ask individuals to speak for their (perceived) social group.

It is important that students agree on the ground rules before discussion begins.

**Providing a common basis for understanding**

Providing students with a common basis for understanding from the start will help keep the discussion focused and provide concrete case studies or examples. For instance, you can assign readings on a specific conflict, instruct students to select their own readings to bring to class, or show a video clip to prompt discussion. Another option is to have students review materials during class and follow up with a structured discussion.

You can also draw upon students' own knowledge to establish a common basis:

• In class, ask students to identify key points of information, stating their source. (You can ask students to do this individually and then pool the information, or you can simply elicit information from the class as a whole.) Make a list of these for the whole class.
• Use this elicitation as a time to distinguish evaluative, “loaded,” comments from less evaluative statements, and from statements of personal opinion or experience. Acknowledge how difficult it may be to make these distinctions at times.
• In order to identify and situate threads of discussion that are extraneous to the focus, or are very speculative, ask for and identify information that students would like to know to clarify their understanding on these questions or tangents, even if that information is not available.

Creating a framework for the discussion that maintains focus and flow

Because any social conflict or controversy is a complex topic, it is important to create a framework for the discussion in addition to having clearly defined objectives. Your framework can be a guide, balancing the need to have clear purpose and direction while being open to student observations and interpretation.

The following strategies can help you maintain the focus and flow of the discussion:

• Begin the discussion with clear, open-ended but bounded questions that encourage discussion.
  o Avoid “double-barreled questions” which pose two problems simultaneously, or “hide the ball” questions that search for a specific answer.
  o Ask questions that prompt multiple answers rather than short factual responses or simple “yes” or “no” replies.
• Prepare specific questions to use if the class is silent or hesitant about speaking. Some examples include: “What makes this hard to discuss?” and “What needs to be clarified at this point?”
• Encourage students to elaborate upon their comments where needed. With probing questions, an instructor can prompt students to share more specific information, clarify an idea, elaborate on a point, or provide further explanation.
• Be prepared to re-direct the discussion if students go beyond the intended focus. Drawing attention to the readings or reminding the class about the discussion objectives are useful management techniques.
• When students raise points that are extraneous to the focus, note that these are important but tangential. Recap them at the end of class as other topics to think about on one’s own, to validate student contributions.
• Recap the key discussion points or issues at the end of class, in writing if possible.

Including everyone

To include all students’ perspectives can be challenging in a whole group discussion, especially if students are dealing with unfamiliar or controversial material. Moving beyond a whole group discussion format allows all students to participate and helps prevent the most talkative or opinionated students from dominating the conversation. Using small groups, your class can hear from students who may not speak otherwise, including those who may see their views as marginalized as well as those who want to explore ideas they are not sure about.

Some methods for increasing the number of discussants include:

• The Round: Give each student an opportunity to respond to a guiding question without interruption or comments. Provide students with the option to pass. After the round, discuss the responses.
• Think-Pair-Share: Give students a few minutes to respond to a question individually in writing. Divide the class into pairs. Instruct the students to share their responses with group members.
Provide students with explicit directions, such as “Tell each other why you wrote what you did.” After a specified time period, have the class reconvene in order to debrief. You can ask for comments on how much their pairs of views coincided or differed, or ask what questions remain after their paired discussion.

- **Sharing Reflection Memos:** Prior to the discussion, have students write a reflective memo in response to a question or set of questions that you pose. As part of the discussion, ask students to read their memos, and/or share them in pairs or threes.

With each of these methods, the instructor can play an important role of summarizing or synthesizing the various responses and relating them to the discussion objectives.

**Being an active facilitator**

To keep a discussion focused and purposeful, it is important to be an active facilitator rather than a passive observer. Be careful to maintain some control but not over-control. Your role as an active facilitator can include rewording questions posed by students, correcting misinformation, making reference to relevant reading materials or course content, asking for clarification, and reviewing main points.

Students may expect their instructors to express their own point of view, or they may ask explicitly for this view. In deciding how to respond, instructors should consider their comfort in expressing personal views, and also the impact such expressions will have on this and future discussion in class. For instance, will sharing your perspective usefully model the way one can take a stance on a complex topic, or will it more likely shut down those students who may disagree with you? Or, will your sharing of your perspective helpfully respond to comments that marginalize or devalue students in your class?

**Summarizing discussion and gathering student feedback**

It is very important to save time at the end of class to conclude by summarizing the main points of the discussion. Students are more likely to feel that a discussion was valuable if the instructor, with the help of the class, synthesizes what has been shared or identifies the key issues explored.

To obtain student feedback about the quality of the discussion and to identify issues that may need follow-up, you can save the last five minutes of class for students to write a Minute Paper. Ask them to respond to some or all of these questions:

- What are the three most important points you learned today?
- What important questions remain unanswered for you?
- What did you learn specifically from what someone else said that you would not have thought of on your own?

Review the student responses before your next meeting with the class. During the next class, briefly summarize the student feedback and thank the students for their participation.
Handling issues that involve the instructor's identity

Discussing an issue of social conflict can involve the instructor's identity in a number of ways. Students may make assumptions about the expectations an instructor has in leading the class discussion. Assumptions may be based on the students' perception of the instructor's identity, on the way that the instructor has handled other class sessions, and on their personal interactions with the instructor.

In addition, some issues and events may trigger reactive responses in an instructor, and students may say things and speak in ways that trigger emotional reactions. Instructors need to be aware of the possibility (or even the likelihood) of having an emotional response, even if a discussion is thoughtfully planned. Recognizing the response and the trigger as such will help an instructor to stay even-tempered in leading the discussion. To handle statements that trigger emotional responses, instructors will want to draw on techniques that will allow them and the class to step back and gain perspective (e.g., naming the triggering issue, giving oneself time by asking students to do a brief writing exercise, working with the class to reframe or contextualize the triggering statement). If an instructor needs to let such a moment simply pass by, it is important to find time later to talk through the experience, and to address the triggering issue with others who are outside of the class.

In the event that one or more students try to draw the instructor into an emotional response, the ground rules for discussion can play a vital role, and the instructor can model constructive behavior in demonstrating how to unpack such a heated moment by reviewing what had led up to it, in pointing out differences between baiting, debating, and discussing, and/or steering the discussion into a more useful direction.
Making the Most of “Hot Moments” in the Classroom

Hot moment: a sudden eruption of tension or conflict in the classroom or studio. How might you handle such a moment? How can you use it as an opportunity to advance student learning?

General ideas to consider:
● Think ahead about how you might handle challenging classroom dynamics -- and what aspects of your course content might produce them.
● If tensions arise, do acknowledge them, in the moment or later.
● Be flexible with your plans: if students are intensely attuned to an issue, consider giving it more time and attention than you’d anticipated. Can you use the intensity to facilitate students’ learning?

“Know yourself. Know your biases, know what will push your buttons and what will cause your mind to stop. Every one of us has areas in which we are vulnerable to strong feelings. Knowing what those areas are in advance can diminish the element of surprise. This self-knowledge can enable you to devise in advance strategies for managing yourself and the class when such a moment arises. You will have thought about what you need to do in order to enable your mind to work again.”
--Lee Warren (Derek Bok Center, Harvard), “Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom”

******************************************************************

Specific strategies to consider:
● If tensions arise, let yourself take a moment to decide whether to address the issue immediately, take it up separately with individual students, or raise it in the next class meeting. Try counting silently to 10 before speaking or reacting.

● If you feel unprepared to deal with a question, comment, or topic in the moment, mark it as something the class will come back to at the next meeting – and then raise it at the next meeting when you feel more prepared.

● Remind students of your discussion or participation guidelines. If you haven’t already established them, propose a few key guidelines to keep the conversation moving forward out of the hot moment—e.g., no personal attacks, openness to hearing a range of perspectives, accountability for the effects of our words on others.

● Invite students to move around the room, write or sketch quietly, or take a few deep breaths, just to change the energy in the room before diving back in. Sometimes simply naming and then breaking the tension by doing something different with our bodies or minds can be very helpful for moving forward productively with a difficult conversation.

● Find a way to connect the hot moment to course topics or learning goals. What does the big emotion in the room suggest about the importance of the topic you’re teaching? Can course materials help inform, anchor, or delimit the discussion that follows a hot moment? Are there learning objectives in your course related to critical thinking, perspective taking, or precise framing of an argument that can be reinforced through the ways you invite students to engage?
- Where appropriate, seek to **clarify student comments** that have sparked tension. Students sometimes say inadvertently insulting or marginalizing things when they are struggling to understand a new perspective or feeling the intellectual discomfort of having their familiar views challenged. If you think a comment is coming from such a place of cognitive struggle, you might give the student a chance to explain the thought process behind their remark (“What do you mean by X?” or “I heard you saying Y; is that what you meant to say?”). At this point you can ask the class if anyone would like to respond to the comment, while considering the ground rules that have been previously agreed to. The goal for this moment is to build understanding that individuals come from different places and we might disagree as we are dialoguing and gaining knowledge.

- **Provide a basis for common understanding** by establishing facts and questions about the topics raised in the tense moment. You can share key information yourself or invite students to do so. You might write categories on the board (“what we know,” “what is disputed,” “what we want to know more about”) and elicit items for each category, either individually or from the whole class. If you’re able, you can also explain or have the class identify why a given topic or language choice feels high stakes, especially if you think some students do not understand or respect other students’ emotional responses.

- Give students some time to **gather their thoughts in writing** about the perspective, topic, or exchange in question before discussing it as a group. You might ask them to connect it to course materials or concepts. Writing can be especially helpful when students respond to tension with silence. You could ask them to consider, “Why is this topic so difficult to discuss?” or “What do you feel like you can’t say aloud right now?” You might collect such anonymous writings to help you make a plan for returning to the topic at another time.

- **Try to depersonalize** positions of disagreement that have emerged among students (e.g., instead of referring to “what X said vs. what Y said,” referring to “this disagreement about such-and-such” or “the use of phrase/word X in this context”). This can help minimize unproductive defensiveness and invite more students into the conversation. Similarly, asking for **additional possible points of view** (e.g., “We’ve heard perspectives A and B -- how else might one think about this question?”) can helpfully move the conversation away from particular speakers to the ideas or perspectives they are raising. You can also depersonalize by acknowledging when a widely-held view has been raised: “Many people share this perspective. What might their reasons be?” And then: “And why might others object to or feel disrespected by this view?”

- Help students in conflict **find common ground**. This might mean identifying a shared value (“I hear that you both care deeply about achieving X, but you have strongly divergent ideas about how to get there”) or asking the class to (“What do these perspectives have in common? How do they differ?”).

- Where possible, **give students the benefit of the doubt** when they speak words that seem to devalue or discount other people or perspectives. “I don’t think this is what you intended, but…” “You may not realize how this sounded...” “I hear that you’re primarily making a joke, and yet...” While giving benefit of the doubt, you can also **explain the potential impact of given language choices**: e.g., “The word X is a label that’s often objected to by those it’s used to describe because ...” “I could easily imagine that your use of that metaphor would feel like an insult to
people who ...”

- **After discussing intense issues**, guide students to reflect individually and/or collectively on the issues raised and the perspectives they heard on these issues. Consider using a questionnaire where students can share what they appreciated about the conversation, what they learned from it, and what remains unresolved.

- **Talk outside of class** with the students most directly involved in the moment, to show your commitment to their success in the course, to help them learn from the experience, and to learn from them more about their experience of the discussion.

- **Connect with your own support network**, especially if you felt targeted or personally affronted by whatever emerged in your classroom. It can be very helpful to process your responses with trusted colleagues or friends in order to return to the classroom with confidence and optimism.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In DISCUSSION we try to...</th>
<th>In DEBATE we try to...</th>
<th>In DIALOGUE we try to...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present ideas</td>
<td>Succeed or win</td>
<td>Broaden our own perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek answers and solutions</td>
<td>Look for weakness</td>
<td>Look for shared meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuade others</td>
<td>Stress disagreement</td>
<td>Find places of agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlist others</td>
<td>Defend our opinion</td>
<td>Express paradox and ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share information</td>
<td>Focus on ‘right’ and ‘wrong’</td>
<td>Bring out areas of ambivalence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solve our own and others’ problems</td>
<td>Advocate one perspective or opinion</td>
<td>Allow for and invite differences of opinion and experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give answers</td>
<td>Search for flaws in logic</td>
<td>Discover collective meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieve preset goals</td>
<td>Judge other viewpoints as inferior, invalid or distorted</td>
<td>Challenge ourselves and other’s preconceived notions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge feelings, then discount them as inappropriate</td>
<td>Deny other’s feelings</td>
<td>Explore thoughts and feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen for places of disagreement</td>
<td>Listen with a view of countering</td>
<td>Listen without judgment and with a view to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid feelings</td>
<td>Discount the validity of feelings</td>
<td>Validate other’s experiences and feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid areas of strong conflict and difference</td>
<td>Focus on conflict and difference as advantage</td>
<td>Articulate areas of conflict and difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retain relationships</td>
<td>Disregard relationships</td>
<td>Build relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid silence</td>
<td>Use silence to gain advantage</td>
<td>Honor silence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted by Tanya Kachwaha 2002 from Huang-Nissan (1999) and Consultant/Trainers Southwest (1992)
University Resources

- Office of the Vice President for Diversity (970) 491-6849
- Office of the Provost (970) 491-6614
- The Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT) (970) 491-4820
- CSU Health Network counseling services available during business hours at (970) 491-6053 and 24/7 assistance at (970) 491-7111
- Student Case Management available at (970) 491-8051
- CSU Health Network Spiritual Care Services available at (970) 495-4223
- Residence Life staff are always available to offer assistance and support

Student Diversity Programs and Service offices:

- Asian Pacific American Cultural Center
- Black/African American Cultural Center
- El Centro
- Native American Cultural Center
- Pride Resource Center
- Resources for Disabled Students
- Women and Gender Advocacy Center
- International Programs

If you are concerned about someone in the campus community, you can use the Tell Someone website (http://supportandsafety.colostate.edu/tellsomeone) or call (970) 491-1350 to make an anonymous referral.

To report a bias-related incident, use the Incident of Bias reporting system at http://supportandsafety.colostate.edu/incidents-of-bias or call (970) 491-1350. In both cases, professionals on campus will follow up to offer resources as appropriate.