

# THE 2024 ELECTIONS GUIDE

**Prepare Your Campus, Address Concerns,  
Promote Respectful Engagement  
and Raise Awareness**

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SAMPLE

## Finding Common Ground PROGRAM

Being intentional about finding common ground and widening our circles rather than solely focusing on what divides us takes on even more importance during times of political dissonance. The following program can help in this pursuit.

### TO DO:

- Pair up participants using a random method, such as those with birth dates closest to one another or those who both pick the same number out of a hat. It's important that these assignments be random.
- Then, discuss the importance of appreciating and learning from our differences, while it's also important to see what we have in common. This activity will help participants do just that.
- Give the pairs pen and paper to record their findings.
- Let them know that they have 15 minutes to find as much common ground as possible, whether it's their birth order, race, age, major, music preference, sports team affinity or any other factors. Encourage them to look at multiple angles of one another's personality and humanity!
- After the 15 minutes are up, ask willing participants to share what they learned when talking with their partner. Was this a simple task? Difficult? Why was that?

We all have differences and commonalities that make up the fabric of our campus and greater community. Sometimes focusing on those traits we share can help us get to the meatier discussions about those characteristics that make us different — and special, indeed.

**“One of the most important practices you can do this year is to ‘us’ all ‘thems’... I mean finding common ground with every person — especially those you fear or are angry with or who are simply very different from you. These days, this practice is more important than ever.”**

– Rick Hanson in his *Just One Thing* newsletter, as published in *Greater Good Magazine*

### OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Watch this short video about a Bridging Differences experiment where two people from opposite sides of the political spectrum discover what they have in common. It could easily be replicated on campus: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_7vxBR477rI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7vxBR477rI).

**Source:** *Greater Good Magazine* from UC Berkeley, 2/21/20

## Helping Targeted Students Feel Safe DISCUSSION PROMPTS

When there is unrest on campus and divisive topics are being debated both in and out of the classroom, some students will likely feel targeted. It may be LGBTQIA+ students, those from certain racial backgrounds, conservative or liberal students, women or men, or others.

A key consideration for campus faculty and staff is how to help these targeted students feel safe. Facing bias, derogatory comments and physical threats can greatly impact any student, creating an unwelcoming educational environment. It's imperative that we take intentional measures to prevent students from weathering this type of discrimination or threat.

### FOR DISCUSSION:

So, what are some ways to help targeted students feel safe during this political season — and beyond? Consider this for group discussion with starter questions such as...

- What types of incidents on our campus have created safety concerns for certain targeted groups?
- What was our response?
- What did we do well and what could we have done more effectively?
- What has the potential to make students feel unsafe during this election season?
- How can we proactively address these types of situations?
- And what can we do reactively, in the moment?

### HELPING STUDENTS FEEL SAFE

Here are some ideas to add to the discussion...

- Listen to students talk about *why* they feel unsafe
- Create a reporting hotline and respond to concerns right away
- Discuss these issues with key student leaders so they can trickle down to other students
- Hold open office hours for students to come talk directly with you
- Check in regularly with students in your organizations, classes, work environments and more
- Host programs about various safety initiatives on campus and how to access them
- Actively market the fact that threatening or harming others amidst protests, disagreements, speaker engagements and more is against campus policy — and, potentially, the law
- Work with campus law enforcement to enhance their sensitivity and awareness about effectively working with certain targeted groups

See page 34 for related information regarding handling Discrimination, Stereotype Threat and Minority Stress.

## Facilitating Difficult Conversations IDEAS

As an educator, you regularly facilitate learning opportunities. When potentially contentious topics such as politics, diversity, social justice and more arise, however, the conversations can sometimes be more difficult and require a certain touch.

Some strategies to help you facilitate these difficult conversations can include...

- Consistently treat everyone with respect, dignity and care.
- Create an environment where participants are encouraged to share honestly.
- Set up ground rules for respectful discourse from the very beginning and revisit them regularly.
- Encourage people to be aware of their own biases and assumptions, as well as how these may influence their behaviors and emotions.
- Acknowledge that everyone in the room has past and/or current experiences that impact their views on issues of politics, diversity, social justice and more.
- Keep an eye on body language to assess if someone needs assistance during a difficult conversation.
- Encourage participants to explore their reactions and to find respectful ways to express them.
- Make sure equity and inclusion are in play so all participants have an opportunity to contribute and feel heard.
- Acknowledge and validate people's thoughts and feelings, whether you agree with them or not.
- Show students how to argue passionately, yet with respect, so they can learn how to disagree without personalizing their opinions to a specific person, ideology or group.
- Summarize what is being discussed at different intervals so that everyone is on the same page and not just pursuing their own agenda.
- Never operate from a condescending perspective that communicates you are the authority and know so much more than participants do.
- Communicate that you are a work in progress, too, and that you are working to deepen your own cultural competence, awareness and understanding of a variety of issues.
- Redirect conflict when it arises, but don't squelch it. Instead, agree to take a break if things get too heated, with the expectation that everyone will return to the conversation calmer and ready to engage positively.
- Hold participants accountable for harmful or offensive comments and behaviors.
- Demonstrate how to respond effectively after making an exclusionary or prejudicial comment — don't just expect that participants will know how to do this.

### IMPROVING YOUR APPROACH

What three things would you like to do more effectively as a facilitator of difficult conversations?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



## Becoming a Successful Advocate WORKSHEET

When it comes to a cause that you firmly believe in, how can you be an effective advocate?

**MY CAUSE IS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Know What You are Advocating For.** Can you clearly and simply articulate your cause and message? Do you know what you are supporting — and why?

**Try It:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Use Technology to Your Advantage.** Do you know what technology your audience is most likely to use? How can you spread the word effectively using social media and other tech forums?

**Try It:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Immerse Yourself.** Have you heard from people who are directly impacted by the issue you're advocating for?

**Try It:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Focus Your Message.** To have a more lasting impact, can you identify a concise, specific, to-the-point version of your message?

**Try It:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Show Others That You Care.** Do you personally stand by your message? How do you show that you care about real issues and solutions? Are you willing to share stories to show your level of investment and passion?

**Try It:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Work with Others.** Are you collaborating with other people and organizations on this cause to make your message stronger?

**Try It:** \_\_\_\_\_

An **advocate** is typically someone who publicly supports a cause. They may also work to influence policy and laws through various strategies and information, encouraging leaders to act.

Sources: Borgenproject.org; Time.com, 10/20/13; *The Guardian*, 1/12/16



## Talking with People Instead of AT Them HANDOUT

The distinction between talking WITH people versus AT them can make a great difference in how your interactions with others go, especially when it comes to hot topics that can get contentious.

### TALKING WITH PEOPLE

VS.

### TALKING AT PEOPLE

Gathering their opinions, ideas and thoughts	Telling them <i>your</i> opinions, ideas and thoughts
Treating them as engaged, insightful beings	Treating them as people who need to be told what to do
Pausing to listen to their point of view	Focusing on getting your message across without actively listening
Allowing for give and take so it's a true conversation	Having your speech be more like a monologue or lecture
Putting the focus on basic concepts so conversation can follow	Putting the focus on changing attitudes
Being open to having your perspective change	Having your mind made up
Paying attention to non-verbal cues so you're tuned in to them	Not paying attention so you may miss the opportunity to give the other person a chance to respond or provide feedback
Realizing that you still have a great deal to learn	Assuming you have all the answers
Being viewed as humble, caring and approachable	Being viewed as arrogant, callous and unapproachable

Source: Perspectives at quickbase.com, 4/3/13

# Why Voting Matters

## WHY VOTING MATTERS

*We shape the outcome only if we provide input.*

- 1 It enhances the chance that those in charge will speak for you
- 2 It reminds politicians who they serve
- 3 It sparks positive change and shifts the tide
- 4 It shows your commitment to the common good
- 5 It impacts important decisions about healthcare, education, the economy, jobs, infrastructure, the health of our communities and more
- 6 It doesn't make you a passive bystander, leaving the responsibility to others
- 7 It demonstrates that you're hopeful, positive and engaged
- 8 It's a way to make your voice matter

“Vote because it is the one absolutely necessary step toward any better place. It reminds public servants about the public they serve. It dilutes the power of big donors and narrow interests. It builds civic muscles we need all through the year to serve our neighbors and strengthen our communities.”

*- Nancy Gibbs, director of the Shorenstein Center and visiting Edward R. Murrow professor at Harvard Kennedy School*

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Sources: CBS News, 11/5/18; TIME, 10/25/18