



COLLEGE DEBATES AND DISCOURSE ALLIANCE

Curricular Toolkit

Transformative Debate & Dialogue for the Classroom and Campus

Revised October 2025



Braver Angels

BridgeUSA 



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Introduction

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), Braver Angels, and BridgeUSA have forged an acclaimed national program – the **College Debates and Discourse Alliance** – that teaches students how to honor ideological diversity, foster civil discourse on college and university campuses, and equip themselves as leaders to carry the movement forward. The free exchange of ideas constitutes the lifeblood of American higher education, and our programming aims to facilitate honest, authentic, respectful dialogue on the most controversial and challenging issues facing our society, preparing students to be informed, engaged, thoughtful citizens.

Since our launch in 2018, we have held hundreds of campus and classroom debates, workshops, and training events engaging thousands of students at 100+ colleges and universities. Grounded in theory and practice, we have developed a highly collaborative approach with faculty and students to organize events around topics usually chosen by the students themselves. Each event has its own unique qualities and, in the context of the classroom, is tailored to the course objectives and learning outcomes of a given instructor or professor. At present, we run a robust hybrid of in-person and online (Zoom-based) events, which, for the classroom, we implement according to

instructor preferences and course structure.

Our partnerships with college and university faculty are expanding, with more instructors and professors connecting with us to incorporate our civil discourse programming into their curricula and lesson plans. Our Curricular Toolkit, generously funded by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations and designed by faculty for faculty, is available to anyone who wants to work with us to implement an engaging classroom debate or workshop for students. Your toolkit includes the following components:

- A [step-by-step guide](#) for getting started with constructing a class assignment and determining which program offering would be best for your classroom.
- Fact sheets describing our core offerings: [Braver Angels College Debates](#) and [A Braver Campus Dialogue \(ABCD\) Workshops](#).
- Resources for creating and implementing a rigorous class assignment.

We are here to help! If you have questions or need assistance adapting this programming to your course, contact CD&D Curricular Fellow Dr. Bryan Paul at wbpaul@GoACTA.org.



Meet the Alliance Partners



American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA)

ACTA is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting academic excellence, academic freedom, and accountability at America's colleges and universities. Launched in 1995, we are the only organization that works with alumni, donors, trustees, and education leaders across the United States to support liberal arts education, uphold high academic standards, safeguard the free exchange of ideas on campus, and ensure that the next generation receives an intellectually rich, high-quality college education at an affordable price.



Braver Angels

Braver Angels is leading the nation's largest cross-partisan, volunteer-led movement to bridge the partisan divide for the good of our democratic republic. Since 2016, Braver Angels has engaged thousands of people of all ages and levels of education in transformative discussions and debates to overcome polarization and difference. We have a proven record of overcoming the obstacles to reasonable and productive disagreement amongst a wide variety of audiences.



BridgeUSA

BridgeUSA is a multi-partisan student movement that champions viewpoint diversity, responsible discourse, and a solution-oriented political culture. We are developing a generation of leaders that value empathy and constructive engagement because our generation will bear the cost of polarization and tribalism for years to come. The purpose of BridgeUSA is to build a community — one in which students from across the ideological spectrum can engage as a group working together to understand—to bridge—the various perspectives behind the important political and social issues of our time. We rise above party. We do not force unity or compromise. We believe in the Bridge Mindset: viewpoint diversity, constructive engagement, and a solution-oriented political culture.



GETTING STARTED

A Step-by-Step Guide

The CD&D Alliance values collaboration and respects the authority and autonomy of faculty in their pedagogy. The following guide offers a step-by-step process by which faculty of any academic discipline can work with us to plan and implement our programming in the classroom.

Step 1: Connect with CD&D

Contact CD&D Curricular Fellow Dr. Bryan Paul at wbpaul@GoACTA.org to schedule an initial phone or Zoom conference. During this meeting, you will:

- Introduce yourself, your course, and desired learning outcomes for your students.
- Identify/confirm a day and time you would like to hold an event in your class.
- Determine which program offering/format would be best for your classroom:
 - [Braver Angels College Debate](#) (see page 9)
 - [A Braver Campus Dialogue \(ABCD\) Workshop](#) (see page 32)
 - In-person or via Zoom
- Discuss the process for developing a debate resolution or workshop guiding question.
- Discuss how to construct a rigorous class assignment for a debate or workshop using the resources provided in your toolkit.

The CD&D team will connect you with a trained chairperson who will facilitate your debate or workshop and assist with further preparation. If interested in completing chair training yourself, we can discuss and help with that as well.

Step 2: Introduce assignment to students

Provide an overview of the assignment within the context of your class (syllabus, LMS module, etc.). Adapt it according to the unique subject matter and stated objectives of your course.

Goals

- Discuss tough topics, meaningfully, with people who disagree.
- Foster understanding across perspectives.
- Honor diversity's role in our democracy.

Guidelines

- This is not about winning or losing; it is about understanding.
 - Be humble rather than hostile.
 - Listen with empathy rather than criticism.
 - Use “I” language, not “you” language.
 - Use your own words, not popular slogans.
 - Display openness, both as you share and as you listen.
-

Step 3: Identify possible topics

For a Braver Angels college debate, it is typically best to brainstorm a few controversial topics that will elicit an array of viewpoints from your students. Consider local, national, and international topics. Current events and conflicts covered in your class can often provide good ideas. See our [debate resolution development toolkit](#) for a list of sample debate topics that the CD&D team has crafted and vetted with students and faculty.

For an ABCD workshop, it is typically best to brainstorm a few topics where consensus exists on an issue and students desire to delve deeper into possible solutions. You also can draw on literature and events covered in your class, ensuring that students are grounded in the same set of facts and source material. Several sample topics can be found in our [ABCD workshop guiding question development toolkit](#).

Step 4: Select the topic

After identifying a few possible topics that can be used for your debate or workshop, the next step is to select your official topic.

First, convert your topic choices into debate resolutions—declarative propositions that allow for stances in the affirmative (for the resolution) and the negative (against the resolution)—or workshop guiding questions—interrogative prompts that drive deeper, nuanced discussion.

For example, if the topic of your debate is about whether artificial intelligence (AI) provides more benefit than harm to humanity, you would write your resolution as:

Resolved: AI provides more benefit than harm to humanity.

If, however, you are conducting an ABCD workshop on the same topic, you could write your guiding question as:

How can AI be best used to benefit more than harm humanity?

In this case, you are crafting the question to lead students toward a solutions-oriented dialogue.

Whether a resolution or a guiding question, you will want to keep the final version clear and broad enough to elicit a variety of viewpoints. See [page 20](#) for debate resolution development guidelines and [page 34](#) for guidelines on developing workshop guiding questions.

You will then take your possible resolutions or guiding questions and put them to a vote. You can poll students online, using this [Google form](#) that can be sent to them, or conduct a poll in class, drawing on the questions in the Google form. The results should help you identify which topic is most interesting to your students and, in the case of a debate, will offer a balanced number of participants speaking in favor of and against the resolution. This will be your official topic for debate or dialogue.

Step 5: Create a brief

Some students may be nervous about speaking in front of their peers. There are many reasons for this. Regardless of what is driving their fears, preparation is key for building confidence.

Each student should research the topic selected and create a brief for the side they favor (debate) or solutions they espouse (workshop). In the case of a debate, a student's brief should have well-constructed arguments that are supported with evidence and examples that provide appropriate emotional appeals. In the case of a workshop, a student's brief should reflect serious consideration of the problem and articulate possible constructive solutions for it. Additionally, for both formats, students should be encouraged to share their lived experiences whenever possible. See [page 14](#) for a debate brief template and [page 43](#) for a workshop brief template.

Step 6: Select initial speakers

Opening speakers set the experience in motion and provide a model for other students, inspiring them to share their own arguments and thoughts and ask questions of speakers. For debates, opening speeches can be up to four minutes long, with adaptation as needed. For workshops, there is no need to preassign opening speakers, though you can ask certain students in advance to be ready to speak up if the conversation wanes.

You should be selective when choosing who will deliver the first four debate speeches: two for the affirmative, two for the negative. At least 1-2 weeks before the day, approach students whom you think will perform this important role well.

To further inform and equip you in this process, we will now provide descriptions of a Braver Angels college debate and A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD) workshop, with accompanying resources for creating and implementing a rigorous class assignment.

A young man with dark hair, wearing a white Nike hoodie, is speaking in a classroom. He is gesturing with his right hand, pointing upwards. In the background, other students are partially visible, including one with curly hair wearing a blue shirt.

RESOURCES AND GUIDES

Braver Angels College Debate

In this section, we provide templates and guidance for integrating a Braver Angels college debate into your course. Content includes:

- Description of Braver Angels college debates
- Sample assignment language for your syllabus and/or LMS course shell.
- Sample rubrics for evaluating debate briefs and student participation.
- Model for crafting debate briefs, with samples.
- Guidelines for selecting a debate topic and developing a resolution.
- Guidelines for chairing a Braver Angels college debate.
- Testimonials from faculty and students that have hosted/participated in Braver Angels college debates.

Please feel free to adapt any of this content according to your own classroom needs, course schedule, and pedagogical preferences.



What are Braver Angels College Debates?

Braver Angels college debates provide a transformative experience for students, highlighted by deep listening, critical thinking, and thoughtful communication. Engaging with their peers in a guided setting, students debate around polarizing topics and come away with profound appreciation for free expression and viewpoint diversity.

What does a Braver Angels College Debate look like?

Braver Angels college debates are not competitive or performative events. They are immersive and highly participatory, inviting everyone in the room to freely express themselves in a collective search for truth. Conducted in a light parliamentary format and chaired by trained experts, they teach students to express their views, frame persuasive arguments, and engage respectfully around the most challenging political and social issues dividing our nation today.

- Debates are held in classrooms or campus settings, in-person or on Zoom. They typically run between one hour to two hours and can accommodate small or large groups of students.
- They are led by an experienced chairperson, trained by the CD&D team.
- Students, faculty, or the hosting organization select a topic for their debate. Guided by the CD&D team, they craft a resolution from the topic that will elicit a balanced split of opinions.
- The debate is launched by a set of opening speakers, chosen in advance to speak in favor of or against the resolution.
- Each speaker takes two to four minutes to present their argument, and then answers questions from audience participants, who address their questions to the chair.
- After the opening speeches conclude, all participants in the room are invited to make speeches and ask questions. The debate ends with a lively debriefing session.

What are the responsibilities of students, faculty, or organizations that want to host a debate?

- Students and faculty choose the date, time, and location for a campus or classroom debate.
- Guided by the CD&D team, they select a debate resolution and recruit opening speakers.
- For campus debates, the CD&D team can create Eventbrite listings, flyers, and promotional materials to help students publicize the event on campus.
- To plan debates as an engaging classroom assignment, faculty use our Curricular Toolkit.
- Here is an hour-long [e-Course](#) to help you learn how to chair your Braver Angels college debate.

Students and faculty nationwide have explored an expansive range of debate topics.

Examples include:

Is social media misinformation a threat to democracy?

UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE

Should assault weapons be banned from campus?

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE – KNOXVILLE

Should the government provide healthcare for all citizens?

FROSTBURG STATE UNIVERSITY AND ALLEGANY COLLEGE OF MARYLAND

Is ChatGPT harmful or helpful to higher education?

LINN-BENTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Should police departments be defunded or reformed?

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Should Americans receive Universal Basic Income?

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-CHICAGO

Should our university mandate COVID-19 vaccinations?

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Should parents have the primary say in their child's publicly funded education?

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Should the death penalty be abolished?

UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

Should the U.S. send troops abroad to protect democracies in peril?

XAVIER UNIVERSITY



For more info, visit:

goacta.org/initiatives/college-debates

If you are interested in hosting a campus or classroom debate, contact:

Bryan Paul: wbpaul@GoACTA.org

Doug Sprei: dsprei@GoACTA.org

Mark Urista: uristam@linnbenton.edu



SAMPLE

Braver Angels College Debate Classroom Assignment

This assignment will have two parts: 1) constructing a brief, and 2) participating in a class debate. The resolution everyone will be using for this assignment is: [insert resolution here]. You will need to choose whether you support or oppose this resolution.

Brief

Create two arguments that support your stance on the resolution. Remember, each argument must include a claim, source, and evidence.

- Each claim should be a single declarative sentence.
- Each source should be credible. Clearly label the source, the source's qualification, and date of publication. Do not use the same source twice.
- Your evidence from the source should be succinct and only contain the relevant information that is necessary for supporting the claim.

You also need to write an explanation under each argument. Each explanation should provide a concrete example and analysis for your argument.

Here is a [template](#) for you to create your brief. In addition to your two arguments, you will need to provide a definition of key terms in the resolution, a one-paragraph summary of the controversial issue that will be debated, and a one-paragraph central narrative that provides an overview of your position on the resolution. See the following [model](#) for an example of the brief you will need to create. (Please note that it has examples for both sides of a resolution.)

Your brief and speech during the debate will be evaluated using the rubrics below.

Debate

We are scheduled to have a final synchronous class session during our final exam session. Please be prepared to deliver a four-minute speech and provide at least one question directed towards another student who has delivered a speech. Your brief should help you organize your thoughts so you can be clear, concise, and substantive. Please practice delivering your information in advance. To help you listen and participate, you will be given an argument tracking sheet. More details will be provided at the start of our class session.





Rubrics

The following sample rubrics can be scaled to whatever point value you assign, and weighted according to your course goals.

Brief Rubric

| | Effective | Moderate | Ineffective |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Summary of Issue | Student provides a concise summary of the debate issue and defines key terms. | Student somewhat demonstrates they understand the debate issue and defines some key terms. | Student fails to demonstrate they understand the debate issue and does not offer a clear and engaging opening statement. |
| Argumentation | Brief contains two well-constructed arguments. Each contains a claim, source, and evidence. | Brief contains one well-constructed argument. It contains a claim, source, and evidence. | Arguments in the brief are poorly constructed. |
| Sources | Student has a credible, properly labeled source for each argument. | Student has a credible, properly labeled source for a single argument. | Arguments lack credible sources that are properly labeled. |
| Examples and Stories | Brief contains an engaging example or story after each argument. | Brief contains an engaging example or story after one argument. | Brief does not contain any engaging examples or stories. |



Debate Rubric

| | Effective | Moderate | Ineffective |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Organization | Speech has a clear intro, body, and conclusion and is delivered within the assigned time. | Speech is satisfactorily structured and is delivered within the assigned time. | Speech is poorly structured, difficult to follow, and is over or under the assigned time. |
| Argumentation | Student delivers two strong arguments with proper oral citations. | Student delivers one strong argument with a proper oral citation. | Student does not deliver strong arguments with proper oral citations. |
| Examples and Stories | Student shares an engaging example or story after each argument. | Student shares an engaging example or story after one argument. | Student fails to provide any engaging examples or stories during their speech. |
| Civility | Student displays civility towards other debate participants. | Student struggles to listen to others or keep cool during debate. | Student displays blatant hostility during the debate. |
| Participation | Student asks two questions during the debate. | Student asks one question during the debate. | Student does not ask any questions. |

Template for Debate Brief

Resolution:

Opening Statement:

Claim 1:

Source:

Evidence:

Explanation:

Claim 2:

Source:

Evidence:

Explanation:

Closing Statement:

Bibliography

Sample Braver Angels College Debate Briefs

Student's first and last name

Resolution: The costs of higher education outweigh the benefits.

Affirmative Speech

Opening Statement: Almost all of us have been told that a college education is the ticket to success. However, declining enrollment numbers suggest that many are starting to question this proposition and view the costs of a college education outweighing the benefits. Personally, I've seen several friends decide to enter the workforce rather than go to college. Today, they make more money and have less debt than other friends who earned bachelor's degrees. After researching this topic, I believe the evidence clearly demonstrates that many people would be better off not attending college.

Claim 1: College graduates are burdened with a high amount of debt.

Source: Project on Student Debt (**source**)

The Institute for College Access and Success (**qualification**)

projectonstudentdebt.org published October 2012 (**source & date**)

Evidence: "Two-thirds of college seniors who graduated in 2011 had student loan debt, with an average of \$26,600 per borrower."

Explanation: After completing college, many graduates envision traveling, purchasing a home, and buying goods like a new vehicle. Unfortunately, these purchases can end up being out of reach due to monthly student loan payments. My brother graduated 10 years ago and is still paying off his student loans. He has been unable to buy a house and is still driving his 1999 Honda Accord. Additionally, a large amount of debt can contribute to chronic stress, anxiety, and depression. My brother feels hopeless and often questions his choice to attend college.

Claim 2: Students don't learn much in college.

Source: Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa (**source**)

Professors of Sociology (**qualifications**)

NYU & Univ. of VA (**backing**)

Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses (**source**)

Published January 2011 (**date**)

Evidence: "About 45% of students showed no statistically significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing during their first two years of college."

Explanation: College is supposed to help students learn and grow. However, this data demonstrates that this doesn't occur for nearly 1 in 2 undergraduates. Many of the college classes I took involved memorizing a bunch of information and regurgitating it for a test or quiz. Taking classes with “easy A” instructors pretty much guarantees that if you do just enough work, you'll be able to pass with at least a C. Overall, most of the GE classes I took during my first two years of college felt meaningless and simply satisfied boxes I needed to check off my graduation worksheet in order to get a degree.

Closing Statement: Education is important. However, college isn't the only place to get it. The abundance of resources available to the public today allows almost anyone to educate themselves without racking up a larger amount of debt. Libraries offer a large and diverse range of books, artwork, and music that are featured in college classes. YouTube has an impressive collection of lectures from well-respected scholars that are equivalent, if not better, to what you would hear in a classroom. Additionally, many companies provide boot camps and apprenticeships to help you acquire the skills necessary to secure a good-paying job. This training is more focused on real-world skills than what you'll find in most college courses. They tend to be cheaper, too. Across the nation, we're seeing a drop in college enrollment for a good reason, the costs of higher education outweigh the benefits.

Bibliography

Claim 1: “Student Debt and the Class of 2011 -Ed.” *Project on Student Debt*, The Institute for College Access and Success, Oct. 2012, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED537338.pdf>.

Claim 2: Arum, Richard, and Josipa Roksa. *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Student's first and last name

Resolution: The costs of higher education outweigh the benefits

Negative Speech

Opening Statement: College is popular for a simple reason: the benefits far outweigh the costs. Despite recent criticism, evidence shows that higher education offers a ladder of upward mobility to those who graduate. Moreover, college offers an opportunity for transformational growth that will help an individual develop agency and thrive in an increasingly complex world.

Claim 1: College graduates with a BA earn more than those with less education.

Source: Pew Research Center (**source**)

Non-partisan fact tank (**qualification**)

The Rising Cost of Not Going to College (**source**)

Published on February 11, 2014 (**date**)

Evidence: “The median income for young adults with a B.A. is \$45K compared to \$30K for those with a two-year degree or some college and \$28K for those who only have a high school diploma.”

Explanation: College may be expensive, but the extra money a graduate will earn provides more than enough money to pay off student loans and enjoy a middle-class lifestyle. My cousin paid off his student loans in less than five years and today has a good job, a house, a retirement plan, and money for travel and leisure. His brother only has a high school diploma, rents an apartment, has no savings or investments, and lives paycheck to paycheck.

Claim 2: College trains the mind for a globalized world that is constantly evolving

Source: A.G. Lafley (**source**)

Former Proctor & Gamble Chairman (**qualification**)

Supply Corps Officer, US Navy (**backing**)

Huffington Post article: *A Liberal Education: Preparation for Career Success* (**source**)

Last updated on February 5, 2012

Evidence: “Completing a broad liberal arts curriculum should enable a student to develop the conceptual, creative, and critical thinking skills that are the essential elements of a well-exercised mind.”

Explanation: It's very rare for a person to work with the same organization for their entire career. Jobs are also changing at a rapid pace--many of the positions that people will be applying for a decade from now either don't currently exist or require problem-solving skills that few people possess. College teaches a person how to think and is one of the best ways to prepare for an uncertain future. During the Great Recession of 2008, my girlfriend was a graphic designer and her firm laid off a bunch of people. She kept her job and was promoted to a newly created position. Her supervi-

sor said it was because she was consistently the only employee who stayed on top of software updates and was not only able to teach herself but was also able to train others. My girlfriend credits her experiences in college as developing her ability to do this.

Closing Statement: I showed up at my local community college as a high school dropout who could barely hold a job. At the time, I was immature, had poor time management, and no direction in life. During my time in community college, I grew into a mature, responsible, and goal-oriented individual. I ended up transferring to a university and, today, have a good-paying career I love that was made possible by the experiences and social network I gained from higher ed. I've seen this story play out time and time again and believe it can be experienced by anyone who is committed to benefiting from their college journey. This is why I believe the benefits of higher ed outweigh the costs.

Bibliography

Claim 1: "Education: The Rising Cost of Not Going to College." *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project*, Pew Research Center, 11 Feb. 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/>.

Claim 2: Lafley, A.G. "A Liberal Education: Preparation for Career Success." *HuffPost*, HuffPost, 5 Feb. 2012, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/a-liberal-education-prepa_b_1132511.

Braver Angels College Debate – Argument Tracking Sheet

Debate Topic:

Date: _____

[illegible]

Debate Topic and Resolution Toolkit

Developed by the College Debates and Discourse Alliance

What is a Braver Angels college debate resolution?

Simply put, a resolution is a statement that forms the basis for constructive arguments and discussion in a debate. It is a choice about where to *start* the debate, enabling speakers to express their diverging views on a given issue. As they unpack the resolution, opening speakers typically inspire deep listening and critical thinking in the debating audience, inviting others to express views of their own and explore rich complexities and nuances that inevitably unfold.

Resolutions must be formatted as “Resolved: [statement that takes a side].” For example, “Resolved: Guns keep people safe.” or “Resolved: Healthcare is a human right.” This ensures that there can be arguments made affirming and negating the statement.

Note: The selection of resolutions does not, in any way, reflect a statement of values on behalf of the College Debates and Discourse Alliance, its partner organizations, or representatives.

Why is topic selection / resolution development important?

The selection of a topic and formulation of a resolution are paramount to the success of a Braver Angels debate. A great resolution will accomplish two main objectives:

- Elicit a balanced split of opinion among debate participants.
- Inspire people on both sides of the issue to make their case.



A good resolution is often:

- Short and simple, avoiding clauses and qualifiers.
- Neither too broad nor overly specific.
- Relevant within a specific community, state, or society generally.
- Idea-descriptive rather than factual; you want to discuss ideas, NOT argue about facts!
- Actionable – pointing to an action that can be taken, not just to an attitude.

Some ways to phrase a resolution...

- “Should” / “should not”:
 - For example, “Campuses should regulate speech.”
- “More harm than good” / “more good than harm”:
 - For example, “Regulating speech on campuses will do more harm than good.”
- “Is” / “is not” , “Are” / “are not”:
 - For example, “Cancel culture is a threat to higher education.”

How to Select a Topic and Develop a Resolution



Brainstorm with members of your classroom or campus community

Think about issues that are highly salient on your campus, in your community, or in the nation more broadly. What are students, faculty, and staff currently talking about? While creating a long list of topics is a good place to start, narrowing it down to issues that elicit personal stories and lived experiences often creates the conditions for compelling speeches and an engaging debate between participants with differing views. You can brainstorm topics directly or come up with questions you hope the debate will help you explore, and then frame resolutions that will help steer the conversation in that direction.

- Before polling, with guidance and feedback from the CD&D national team, narrow down your topic list into 4-5 clear and concise resolutions.

Poll your potential audience

Poll potential participants beforehand to determine which resolution will work best in a specific classroom or campus environment. Follow these important steps:

1. Copy the CD&D [Google poll](#) template, and insert your selected resolutions.
2. Share the poll, using some or all of the methods below.
 - a. Send the poll to potential participants via email and message boards.
 - b. Create a “Save the Date” flyer with a QR code linking directly to the poll and post it in high-traffic areas on your campus.
 - c. Share the poll on social media.
 - d. Identify campus allies that can help you spread the poll even further.
3. Once the poll has been in circulation for **1-2 weeks**, review the results and complete the following steps to finalize your resolution.

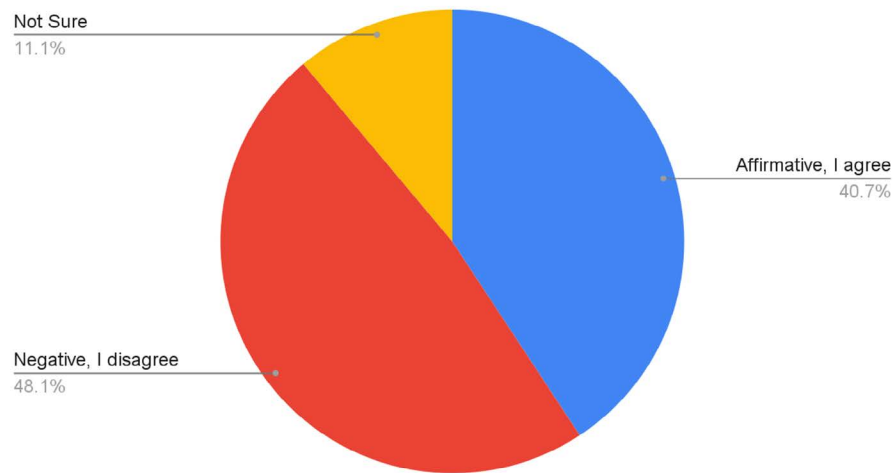
Note: More poll responses will help to better gauge which resolution will work best for your classroom or campus community. Aim for 30-60 responses.

Select resolution

Generally, a good resolution shows a balanced split in opinion. Look for resolutions that have roughly equal proportions of respondents who are in the affirmative and in the negative of the statement. A good balance might look like this:

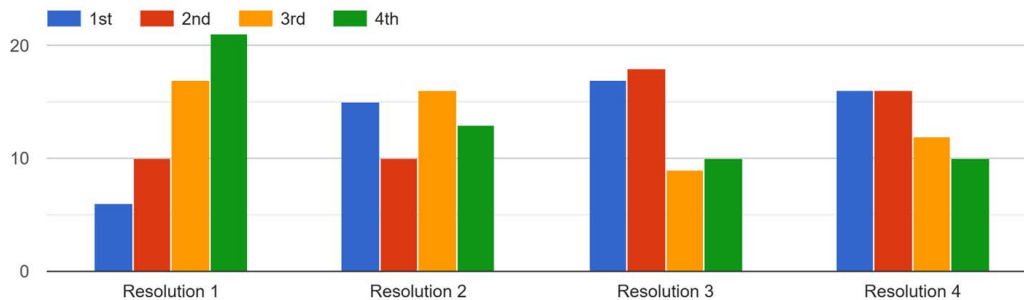
Finally, consider how a resolution ranks in popularity among the others. Ideally, a resolution will be the most

Which side of "[Insert Resolution]" are you on?



polarizing and the most popular. However, oftentimes, this is not the case. **Gauge popularity only from resolutions that show a relatively close division of opinion.** *Eliminate resolutions that are heavily skewed one way or the other.*

Please rank the above list



Examples of Collegiate Debate Resolutions by Topic:

Following is a list of resolutions *written as questions*. In this format, they often serve as headlines in promoting our debates to drive student attendance and encourage participation. As previously noted, when you debate the topic, you will debate a decisive statement that puts participants in either the affirmative or the negative. This will typically involve moving the word “should” or “is” to make the question a statement.

Speech and free expression:

- Should colleges disallow controversial speech that could be construed as hate speech?
- Should college campuses disinvite speakers whose ideas can be construed as cancellable?
- Should colleges impose limits on speech on their campuses?
- Should social media corporations have control over what is said on their platforms and who can use them?
- Is cancel culture erasing free speech in America?
- Is social media misinformation a threat to democracy?
- Does regulating social media content do more harm than good?

Abortion:

- Do the rights of a pregnant adult take precedence over the rights of a fetus?
- Should abortion have no restrictions within the United States?

Healthcare:

- Is healthcare a human right?
- Should our college require COVID vaccination for students and staff?
- Do public health considerations outweigh individual civil liberties?
- Should government provide healthcare for all citizens?

Gun control:

- Should the U.S. implement more restrictive gun laws to reduce crime?
- Should assault weapons be banned?
- Should average U.S. citizens be able to possess semi-automatic guns?
- Should the Second Amendment be abolished?
- Do gun-free zones make people safer?
- Should colleges and universities allow concealed carry on campus?

Education:

- Should schools teach Critical Race Theory?
- Do online college classes do more harm than good?
- Should colleges adopt a zero-tolerance policy for academic dishonesty?
- Does society unfairly prioritize sports over music and arts programs?
- Is ChatGPT a threat to higher education?
- Should student loan debt be forgiven?
- Should colleges and universities maintain institutional neutrality on social and political issues?

Do gun-free zones make people safer?

A Braver Angels debate for Western Carolina University students, faculty, and staff

WHERE: FORSYTH BUILDING, ROOM 101
WHEN: MONDAY, APRIL 23RD AT 6:00 PM

Food and refreshments will be provided at 6:00 pm, debate will begin at 6:30 pm

For further info, contact
Diana Esters at desters1@catamount.wcu.edu or
Kevin Lavery at klavery1@catamount.wcu.edu
To register: use the QR code on this flyer

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UBALT DINE & DEBATE SERIES

SHOULD THE US GOVERNMENT REQUIRE CITIZENS TO VOTE?

A Braver Angels debate at University of Baltimore in Collaboration with UBalt Votes at the University of Delaware

When: Feb. 27th, 2024 12-2pm
Where: Student Center Lobby

Food & refreshments provided
To register, use the QR code on this flyer
For further info, contact Elizabeth at

Should the use of AI in law enforcement be restricted?

A Braver Angels Debate for students, faculty, and staff at the University of Delaware

WHEN: MARCH 15TH, 2024 AT 6:30 PM
WHERE: MCDOWELL HALL 112

Food & refreshments will be served.
To register for this free debate, use the QR code on this flyer.

For further info, Contact Andrew

Should the U.S. government implement reparations for historic racial injustices?

A Braver Angels debate for Denison students, staff and faculty in collaboration with the Linkins Center for Intellectual Engagement

When: Thursday, October 26th - 11:30-11:15
Where: Shepardson College Room (Slayter 4th Floor)

To register for this free event, use the QR code on this flyer

SPONSORED BY
Braver Angels BridgeUSA DENISON

Immigration:

- Should our immigration laws be changed to allow for quicker citizenship?
- Should children born on U.S. soil to non-citizens automatically have U.S. citizenship?
- Should the U.S. adopt a completely open borders policy?
- Should the U.S. build the southern border wall?

Assorted topics:

- Should monuments that are perceived as symbols of racism, such as Confederate statues, be removed from public view?
- Should police departments be defunded?
- Should local governments defund police departments and redirect funds toward alternative solutions for public safety?
- Should there be term limits for the Supreme Court?
- Do requirements for voter identification cards and restrictions on mail-in ballots suppress the voting rights of minorities?
- Should non-discrimination laws take precedence over religious liberty?
- Should women in the U.S. military be assigned combat roles?
- Should the U.S. military intervene in response to human rights violations?
- Should the minimum wage be raised at the federal level?
- Should transgender athletes compete in sports according to the sex they were assigned at birth?
- Should gender-affirming healthcare only be accessible to individuals post-puberty?
- Should Americans receive Universal Basic Income?
- In the U.S., should the states develop their own climate change policies?
- Should the drinking age be lowered to 18?
- Should physician-assisted suicide be legalized?
- Does AI provide more benefit than harm to humanity?
- Does the two-party system in American politics do more harm than good?



DOES A COMMITMENT TO CIVILITY TAKE CARE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ISSUES?

A Braver Angels debate open to the VMI community—cadets, faculty, staff and alumni

When: September 25, 2023 from 7:30 to 9:30pm
Where: Hall of Valor, CLE

For more information, contact:
COL Dimitrova-Grajski / Dimitrova-grajski@vmi.edu

To register, use the QR code on this flyer



SHOULD COLLEGES ADOPT A NEUTRAL STANCE ON POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES?

A Braver Angels debate for LBCC students, employees, and community members

When: Thursday, Jan 25th
3:30-5pm PT

Where: "This event will take place via Zoom"

To register, use the QR code on this flyer
For further info, contact



Do Smaller Colleges and Universities Provide a Better Overall Experience?

A Braver Angels Debate for students, faculty and staff presented by Vikings Vote
Supported by the College Debates and Discourse Alliance

WHEN: THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 6 - 8 PM
WHERE: RIDLEY STUDENT CENTER, ROOM 206

Chk. R-A dinner will be provided to all who RSVP!

For info, contact:

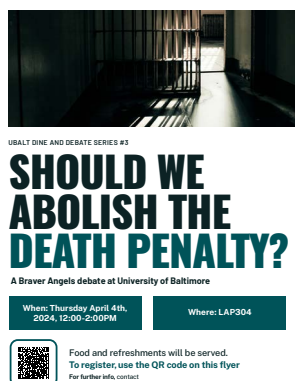


Is social media misinformation a threat to democracy?

A Braver Angels debate in collaboration with the Barnes Family Foundation and the UNCG Political Science Department

WHERE: BRYAN BUILDING, ROOM 111
WHEN: TUESDAY, FEB 27TH AT 6:30 P.M. ET

Food and refreshments will be provided at 6:00 p.m.

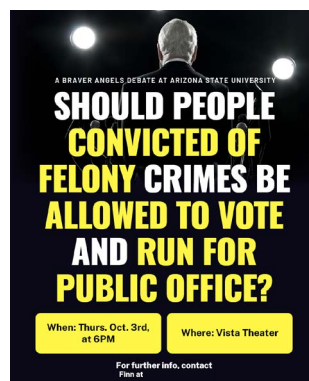


SHOULD WE ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY?

A Braver Angels debate at University of Baltimore

When: Thursday April 4th, 2024, 12:00-2:00PM
Where: LAP304

Food and refreshments will be served.
To register, use the QR code on this flyer
For further info, contact



SHOULD PEOPLE CONVICTED OF FELONY CRIMES BE ALLOWED TO VOTE AND RUN FOR PUBLIC OFFICE?

A Braver Angels Debate at Arizona State University

When: Thurs. Oct. 3rd, at 6PM
Where: Vista Theater

For further info, contact
Fin at



Should the U.S. government provide free healthcare for all citizens?

A Braver Angels debate for students, faculty and staff
Sponsored by the Hoffberger Center for Ethical Engagement

When: November 30th 7 pm
Where: Islander Hall 160

For further info, contact



What is the role of students in protecting free speech on college campuses?

A Braver Campus Dialogue in collaboration with Think Again and UIC

WHEN: Friday March 28th @noon
WHERE: Newcomb 480

Lunch provided
For more information, contact

CS&P THINK AGAIN UIC



CD&D Debate Chair Opening Speech Guidelines

Following completion of the Chair Training e-Course and our comprehensive apprenticeship process, the gavel is now passed to you!

Debate Chairs are responsible for introducing and facilitating Braver Angels college debates to audiences that are often unfamiliar with their unique format. Before the debate is called to order, the Chair must ensure that those in the room know what to expect.

By including the following important aspects in your opening speech, you, as Chair, will successfully educate those in the room on our format and rules, ensuring a smooth debate experience for all.

Introduce CD&D and the Braver Angels Format

1. Welcome those in the room to the [College/University] debate on [selected topic].
2. Introduce yourself and the College Debates and Discourse Alliance.
 - The CD&D Alliance is a joint initiative between three national non-profit organizations:
 - **American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA)**
 - **Braver Angels**
 - **BridgeUSA**
 - Our goal is to help students, faculty, and community members develop the skills of meaningful civil discourse and promote a culture of free expression on college campuses across the nation.
3. Thank any local organizers, allies, sponsors, and funders.
4. Introduce the Braver Angels debate style and format:
 - What a BA debate is NOT:
 - NOT a spectator event
 - NOT competitive

- NO winners or losers
- NO hierarchy. . . students, faculty, administrators, community members are ALL in equal standing in this space. ALL are encouraged to participate!

▸ BA debates ARE:

- A collective search for truth
- A tried and tested method for enabling productive conversation around the most pressing and divisive issues in our nation today.
- Our number one rule: Say what you believe!
- Sharing personal experiences is highly encouraged.
- Listen to understand, instead of listening to respond.

5. The debate **resolution**...

- IS a starting point for conversation, NOT a value statement

Teach Rules of Parliamentary Procedure / How we're doing this...

6. Address the Chair

- "Right now, you may call me [*my name*]. When the debate starts, you will address me as 'Madame, Mister, or Honorable Chair'."

7. Speeches

- We will start with a speech in the **Affirmative** of up to 4 minutes long
 - Followed by 2–3 questions from the body
- Followed by a speech in **Negation** of up to 4 minutes long
 - Followed by 2–3 questions from the body
- Alternating Affirmative then Negation, with space for questions in between throughout the debate.
- After first opening speakers that help ignite thinking on the resolution, the Chair will ask for speeches from the body.
 - * This is where participation is key! Invite the body to jot down notes as they listen to others speak and gather their thoughts on a potential speech of their own.
- The Chair may call for shorter speeches of 2–3 minutes as the debate goes on to ensure that as many people as possible can speak on the topic.
- At the Chair's discretion, a "lightening round" of speeches as short as 1 minute can be invited, allowing students to speak to any aspect of the topic that interests them.

8. Managing time

- The gavel is a tool the Chair uses to keep the debate within the rules and ensure a fair experience for all.
 - **1 tap** means a speaker has **30 seconds** to conclude their remarks.
 - **2 taps** signify the speaker's **time is up**. The speaker is asked to conclude their remarks in a sentence or two.
 - Continuous taps mean the speaker's turn is over and must cease speaking immediately so the debate can continue in a timely manner.

9. Questions

- **IMPORTANT: Address the Chair – NOT the Speaker!**
 - Third-person references: "The Speaker, the Lady, the Gentleman," etc.
 - Why? It keeps the temperature down and minimizes the chance of questions being interpreted as personal attacks.
- Questioners are allowed **30 seconds**.
 - Questioners MUST pose an actual question!

- If questions start to sound like an opinion or a speech, the Chair will interrupt and ask the speaker to either rephrase as a question or raise their hand when the time comes for additional speeches on the resolution.

- **Demonstrate addressing the Chair with a pre-selected member of the body.**

10. Snaps, Taps, and Pats

- Public speaking is hard. Many people need a little support and encouragement. Instead of clapping, the body can offer support for an idea or a speaker by:
 - Snapping
 - Tapping their hand on a table or foot on the floor
 - Patting their legs
 - Showing jazz hands (for online debates)
- *This keeps the debate fun and participatory!* Encourage those in the room to exercise this element of the debate.
- Ask for a demonstration:
 - “If everyone understands what that sounds and looks like, please use it now.”

11. Ask if anyone has questions before you begin.

Call the Debate to Order

12. Thank the brave opening speakers!

13. With the bang of the gavel:

- “I now call this debate to order”
- “Resolved: (read the resolution)”
- Call on the first speech in the AFFIRMATIVE

14. Keeping track of time is important! Make sure you have the ability to time each speech, and be mindful when you need to bring the debate to a close.

Closing the Debate

15. Announce the last set of speeches beforehand so people know the debate is coming to an end.

- “*With that, our final speaker is thanked. I now call this debate to a close. However, we are not done yet!*”
- Invite people to remain seated for a **10-15 minute debriefing** session.

16. Announce you are no longer to be addressed as Mister, Madame, or Honorable Chair. This is a more free-flowing conversation about the debate experience.

- “The debrief is not a time to continue debating the topic, but to instead reflect on the experience as a whole.”

17. Popcorn around the room, hearing feedback from the audience.

- Ask the body to share:
 - *What they liked*
 - *What they learned*
 - *What they would tell someone about this experience who has never participated in a Braver Angels debate before*

18. Once the conversation ends, thank participants, partners, sponsors.

19. Gather email addresses and other contact information from all those interested in continuing this work on campus!

Congratulations! You have successfully chaired a Braver Angels college debate! Be sure to contact your CD&D counterpart to share a head count from the event and set a debate debrief meeting.

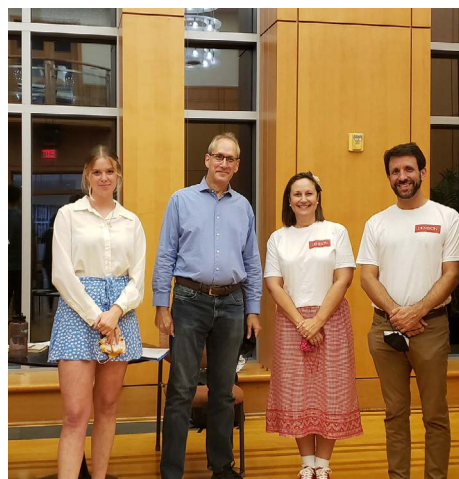


BRAVER ANGELS COLLEGE DEBATE

Testimonials

"I can't tell you how proud I am of the way my students all participated in today's debate on the resolution, 'Science compels us to accept that the human condition should be improved by genetic engineering.' It was an experiment, and I would say it was a good experiment. They looked at the resolution from many points of view and spoke clearly and courageously about how they viewed it. I think we all came away more thoughtful and enlightened. Now that they know the format of the Braver Angels debate, I am guessing the next one will go even better and not only be a good experiment, but a great one."

**-RANDY WAYNE, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PLANT BIOLOGY
CORNELL UNIVERSITY**



"The BA classroom debates were a huge success. I was so impressed by the nuance and vulnerability my students displayed during the conversation. At the end, at least a third of the class indicated they had changed their minds about something because of the speeches. My students decided they wanted to debate on the issue of abortion. I don't normally allow this because I want students to learn to think for themselves, not just to parrot what they've heard on the news or at church. I genuinely believe this was the most nuanced and genuine debate I've ever heard about abortion. I will definitely be conducting a BA debate again, and I'm planning to see about expanding it into more classrooms at my university."

**-WHITNEY GENT, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA**

“Any initial apprehension that the students may have had to open up was quickly overcome once the debate began to unfold. It became immediately clear, given the non-confrontational model of directing all questions and responses to the chair, that they were in a ‘safe space’ to speak freely about difficult and, at times, conflicting opinions on the sensitive topic of assisted suicide. The effect of debate on the students as well as the faculty has been thoroughly positive. For many of the students, the debate marked the first time that they felt comfortable in a public setting, not only to speak their minds, but also to listen to opinions with which they disagree. . . Everyone who participated in the event unanimously agreed that they would like to have another Braver Angels debate and hoped that this would become a regular event at Molloy University.”

**-HOWARD PONZER, PROFESSOR AND HONOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR, PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT CHAIR
MOLLOY UNIVERSITY**

“We hear from many students that hyperpolarization and negative media coverage are driving them away from politics. The Braver Angels debate offered them a different model: one in which they could discuss a controversial issue in a safe space. It was so inspiring to see students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, listen deeply and respectfully to each other, and come away energized and enthusiastically asking Salem State to do this again soon.”

**-VANESSA RUGET, PROFESSOR, POLITICS,
POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY**

“As an instructor, I was exceptionally pleased. It was a fantastic opportunity to give a large class of 180 students the chance to feel like they were participating in a meaningful debate. Our end-of-quarter evaluations also highlighted how much students valued this opportunity. I would happily include this again in my class. Given the impacts on civility and format, next time around I would actually put the Braver Angels debate earlier in the quarter. Thank you all again for helping my class so fundamentally. It was the highlight of the class and the quarter.”

**-MATT MCGARRITY, TEACHING PROFESSOR,
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON**

“The College Debate and Discourse Alliance Curricular Toolkit has been a great starting point for developing a classroom experience that gets students engaged with the issues that lurk beneath the surface of most disciplines, even the technical ones. I have used an adaptation of the Braver Angels Debate format in the Ethics in Computing course I teach for 4 semesters, and it has been an invaluable tool for getting students actively involved in discussing important ethical issues in computing. The Toolkit is easily adaptable to fit different subjects and the pedagogical needs of different types of courses. I would also strongly recommend completing the Debate Chair Training eCourse to get a fuller understanding of how the Braver Angels Debates work and how you can use them in your course.”

**-DAVID WRIGHT, SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW, DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE
NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY**



"I found Braver Angels's way of debating to be very productive and I enjoy that I'm able to learn both sides of an issue. I can be more knowledgeable and more confident in deciding my opinion on an issue because I've learned from both perspectives . . . I always come out of the debates feeling very energized and happy, and I find that to be the case with the participants as well."

**-ALETHIA UNDERHILE, STUDENT
DAKOTA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY**

"Participating in a Braver Angels Debate during my senior year of undergrad was an enriching and formative experience, one that I wish I had discovered earlier in my academic journey. These debates help serve an essential function of our democratic society by fostering an environment where we can challenge and be challenged by each other's beliefs in a constructive manner. This experience solidified my own beliefs while also expanding my understanding of others' perspectives. Since participating in that debate, I've carried the lessons with me and have been able to apply the insights and communication skills I gained in countless other settings, from discussions with friends and colleagues, academic environments, even everyday conversations with strangers."

**-RIANDA WENTHER, STUDENT
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI**



RESOURCES AND GUIDES

Braver Campus Dialogue Workshop

In this section, we provide templates and guidance for integrating A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD) workshop into your course. Content includes:

- Description of A Braver Campus Dialogue.
- Guidelines for selecting a topic and developing a guiding question.
- Assignment templates, with sample language and rubrics, for your syllabus and/or LMS course shell.
- Model for crafting workshop briefs.
- Guidelines for chairing an ABCD workshop.
- Testimonials from faculty and students that have hosted/participated in ABCD workshops.

Please feel free to adapt any of this content according to your own classroom needs, course schedule, and pedagogical preferences.



A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD) Fact Sheet

A workshop by the College Debates and Discourse Alliance

The College Debates and Discourse Alliance is pleased to introduce a new format of civil discourse programming for college campuses and classrooms:

A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD). Drawing inspiration from traditional Braver Angels college debates and workshops, BridgeUSA conversations, and visionary collaboration with Braver Angels co-founder Bill Doherty, ABCD workshops enable participants to delve into the nuances of the most pressing social and political challenges of our day.

Braver Campus Dialogues foster solution-oriented conversations in which participants discover that differing viewpoints are not obstacles but essential components in addressing our

most controversial issues. Guided by an experienced moderator, participants navigate the intricate complexities of an issue, gain deeper understanding of its root causes, and explore potential solutions.

Workshop Elements

This 90-minute workshop includes an introduction and debrief session guided by a trained moderator. The moderator opens the session by introducing participants to the programming and guidelines for engagement. Participants then move into the main conversation, which consists of two parts.

To conclude, participants enter a debrief session. This final phase of the workshop is an informal and inspiring opportunity for

“You don’t really know your own viewpoint unless you know the best objections to it. This workshop promotes a kind of ‘passionate humility’: a willingness to advocate with conviction for the best solutions to pressing problems while accepting the uncertainties inherent in all public policies.”

–DR. BILL DOHERTY,
Braver Angels co-founder

participants to reflect on the experience and share their thoughts with the group. Once done, the moderator thanks everyone for their participation and brings the workshop to a close.

| Part 1: Introducing the Issue | Part 2: Solution-Oriented Conversation |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>What is at the heart of this issue for you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection• Group discussion <p>During Part 1, participants share their personal perspectives on the issue.</p> | <p>What solution(s) would best address this issue?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection• Group discussion <p>During Part 2, participants consider the merits of different proposed ideas.</p> |

Frequently Asked Questions

Why was this format created?

Traditional Braver Angels college debates are structured around respectful argumentation. Participants express their viewpoints on polarizing topics from a place of affirmation or negation. While this format has been widely embraced and implemented in higher ed, many of our debates have revealed that students are drawn toward further avenues of questioning and exploration beyond the “pros” and “cons.” After a debate, we often hear, “What’s next?” Students consistently signal interest in issues that invite discussion around nuances rather than debates around differences. They also express a strong desire to engage in solution-oriented conversations. This workshop empowers them to do so and, we hope, leaves them with a sense that they can bring constructive ideas and solutions to the table.



How is this different from a Braver Angels college debate?

This model does not use the traditional negation and affirmation format of Braver Angels college debates. While the respectful atmosphere and light parliamentary format of our debates is maintained, the conversation that unfolds is distinctly animated by a spirited exploration of issues, ideas, and solutions.



What topics are good for this format?

- The new workshop format is designed for participants to explore open-ended questions and multifaceted topics that don't have a traditional yes-or-no answer.
- Participants are given the opportunity to explore complex, nuanced issues, and possible actions that governments, NGOs, communities, individuals, and institutions could take to address or work towards addressing the issue at hand.
- Examples of issues that naturally resonate in this format include: climate change, diversity, mental health, public safety and policing, among others.

What are the best settings in which to conduct an ABCD Workshop?

The ABCD Workshop can be implemented in both campus-wide and classroom settings.



A BRAVER CAMPUS DIALOGUE

Guiding Questions Toolkit

Developed by the College Debates and Discourse Alliance

What is A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD) guiding question?

A **guiding question** is the starting point and “spark plug” for a solution-oriented conversation. It allows for a multitude of possible answers and is the basis on which ideas can be developed and discussed. The ABCD workshop is designed to inspire deep listening and critical thinking, inviting participants to express views of their own and explore the complexities and nuances of the workshop topic.

The most successful ABCD workshops are based on a premise that students generally agree on, recognizing an issue/problem (i.e., it exists, it matters, it needs to be solved), and providing an opportunity to explore how to approach or solve it. For example, students may agree that toxic polarization is detrimental to the health of U.S. democracy, and necessitates conversation, but disagree on its possible causes and/or remedies.



Why is guiding question development important?

The selection of a topic and formulation of a guiding question are paramount to having a successful ABCD workshop. A great guiding question will accomplish the following objectives:

- Elicit diverse perspectives to fuel a wide-ranging, vibrant discussion.
- Motivate multiple individuals to participate and express their authentic views.

Note: All examples and sample guiding questions in this document do not, in any way, reflect a position on behalf of the College Debates and Discourse Alliance, its partner organizations, or representatives.

When developing a guiding question for your ABCD workshop, you should strive to keep it:

- Open-ended, avoiding simplistic or binary (“Yes/No”) thinking. Neither too broad nor overly specific.
- Solution-oriented, fostering constructive discussion among participants on practical ways to address, resolve, or respond to the issue at hand.
- Clear and concise, ensuring universal comprehension and focused conversation.
- Broad, allowing for an exploration of the nuances of the topic, and for a variety of viewpoints to be expressed.
- Non-combative, encouraging participants to engage respectfully with each other.

Common ways to phrase a guiding question include:

- “How...?”
 - For example, “*How should we act as peacemakers in a politically divided nation?*”
- “What...?”
 - For example, “*What are the most impactful ways to address climate change?*”
- “Under what circumstances...?”
 - For example, “*Under what circumstances should AI be used in higher education?*”

Note: It is likely that your guiding question will include can or should as part of it. These are modal verbs, which [Merriam-Webster](#) defines as “a verb that is usually used with another verb to express ideas such as possibility, necessity, and permission.” When deciding how to craft your guiding question, you should consider how your word choice will affect the meaning/interpretation of the question, and thus, of the topic at hand and anticipated direction of conversation. [The UNC-Chapel Hill Writing Center](#) provides other helpful tips on modal verb function and selection.

From experience, we have found that using “can” is better for discussions that:

- Weigh the plausibility of different ideas.
- Focus on more localized issues where individuals might have the most direct impact.

Using “should,” in contrast, is better for conversations that:

- Explore different moral imperatives that point to “ideal” ways of addressing a problem.
- Are grounded in broader issues that individuals may or may not have immediate, direct control over.

How to Select a Topic and Develop a Guiding Question

Brainstorm with members of your campus community. Think about issues that are highly salient on your campus, in your community, or in the nation more broadly. What are students, faculty, and staff currently talking about? What political, economic, social, or cultural problems are students eager to address/solve? While creating a long list of topics is a good place to start, narrowing it down to issues that elicit personal stories and signify consensus on the state of a problem/exigency often creates the conditions for compelling remarks and an effective, engaging dialogue among participants.

Once you have determined a few broad topical areas or issues, consider what you as an organizer hope the dialogue will focus on. Different phrasing of the guiding question will lead to different conversations. While there are often unique aspects of a topic that may be of interest, the guiding question should remain broad enough to encourage a wide exploration of topical nuances, allowing for unique aspects to be explored, but preventing the pigeonholing of the conversation into one restricted area. At the same time, keep the phrasing clear and concise and avoid qualifiers when possible.

- Finalize your guiding question with guidance and feedback from the CD&D national team.





Brainstorming possible sub-questions

When initially brainstorming guiding questions, some organizers may want to develop sub-questions to encourage participants to focus on different aspects of the topic. However, the ABCD format is best suited for one guiding question, and a strong guiding question will ideally encompass any sub-questions that may arise.

With your guiding question now selected, you can brainstorm possible sub-questions, as desired, with the moderator. These follow-up questions are not formally established or stated at the beginning of the workshop; however, it can be helpful to think through some sub-questions that may be raised by the moderator or participants as conversation unfolds. The moderator may prompt conversation with the introduction of relevant sub-questions as appropriate.

For example:

Guiding question: *Under what circumstances should the United States become involved in international conflict?*

Possible sub-questions: *How successful has U.S. involvement in the world been to date? What are the best approaches to international relations?*

Guiding question: *What role should law enforcement play in our community?*

Possible sub-questions: *What factors allow (or prevent) law enforcement from fulfilling its duty to the community? How should our community reform local law enforcement?*

Sample Guiding Questions

The following is a list of sample guiding questions to consider as you organize your own ABCD workshop. We encourage you to word or reword questions in a way that will be most applicable and appropriate for your community.

Abortion

- How should abortion be regulated in the United States?

Campus and Community Specific

- How can our political differences strengthen our community?
- How can our campus create a supportive and inclusive environment for all students?
- What is the best way for campus communities to respond to evolving DEI policies?
- What are the most impactful and productive ways for the university community to engage with the Israel-Palestine conflict?

Climate Change

- What is the most impactful way to address climate change?

Elections and Polarization

- How can we ensure that our government officials serve their constituents?
- How should we improve the American electoral process?
- How can we best support and reduce political anxiety?

Homelessness

- How can we address homelessness in the community?
- What are the most impactful ways that our city can support homeless/unhoused populations?

Immigration

- Under what circumstances should people be deported from the United States?
- How should immigration policy be reformed in the United States?
- What should be done to address illegal immigration?

International Conflict

- How should the United States engage with Israel and/or Palestine moving forward?
- What actions should the international community take to mitigate conflict in the Middle East?
- Under what circumstances should the United States become involved in international conflict?




To what extent should economic growth be prioritized over combating climate change?

A Braver Campus Dialogue for UNC-Wilmington students, faculty, and staff
In collaboration with the UNCW Library

When: Thursday, April 3rd at 4:30 pm
Where: Discovery Hall 1070

Snacks and refreshments will be provided
To register, use the QR code on this flyer
For information, contact Sam Halbrecht or McKenna Beard at

 SPONSORED BY
The Barnes Family Foundation




Under what circumstances is it acceptable to use AI in higher education?

A Braver Campus Dialogue for UNC Pembroke students, faculty, and staff

WHEN: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5TH at 5:30 PM
WHERE: UNIVERSITY CENTER ANNEX

Food will be provided at 5:30; Dialogue begins at 6:00 pm
For further info, contact Kai Anderson at or Ciara Smith at

This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.
Please contact the Accessibility Resource Center, Oxendine Administrative Building, Room 110, or call 910.521.6695.





What is the best way for campus communities to effectively respond to evolving DEI policies?

A Braver Campus Dialogue at University of Cincinnati

WHEN: April 10th 12:30-2 pm ET
WHERE: Clifton Court Hall 5280

Pizza and drinks will be provided at 12 pm
For more information, contact:





How can we preserve the Great Salt Lake?

A Braver Campus Dialogue for Utah State University
Sponsored by the Heravi Peace Institute

WHEN: March 27th, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

WHERE: David B. Haight Alumni Center

Refreshments will be provided.

For more information, contact: Bryan Paul at



Mental Health

- How can college campuses better support student mental health needs?
- How should colleges change their approach to supporting student mental health?
- What policies and practices could help to address the mental health crisis?

Policing and Public Safety

- How can law enforcement best engage with their community?
- What role should law enforcement play in the community?
- What should be done to reduce gun violence in America?

Sexual Harassment

- How can fraternities and sororities help contribute to a safe environment for all students?
- What should be done to reduce sexual harassment/violence in our community?
- How can universities better promote campus safety?

Social Media

- How can we mitigate the potential threats of social media?
- What should be the role of social media in politics?
- How should we weigh the benefits and risks of social media for our community and democracy?



Transforming the Classroom Experience with Braver Angels Debates and Dialogues

A Curricular Toolkit workshop for college faculty, featuring a classroom debate brought to you by the College Debates and Discourse (CD&D) Alliance

WHEN: Friday, January 31, 12:30 - 2pm ET

WHERE: (Zoom link to be provided)

For more information, contact: Valerie Dornhues-Griff at



ISRAEL AND PALESTINE: CONFLICT, CRISIS AND DIALOGUE How should the US support Israel and/or Palestine moving forward?

WHEN: Wednesday Feb 12th @6:30pm

WHERE: L101 (Kassiri Center)

Food and refreshments provided

For further info, contact



What's next?

If you have further questions or interest in hosting an ABCD workshop on your campus, contact:

Sadie Webb at swebb@goacta.org
or Doug Sprei at dsprei@goacta.org.

COLLEGE DEBATES AND
DISCOURSE ALLIANCE



Braver Angels



A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD) Workshop Assignments

The following assignment and rubric templates are options for instructors and professors to consider as they integrate the ABCD workshop into their courses. Each assignment template has a summary, purpose statement, special instructions, and sample description. Please feel free to use and adapt these assignments as you wish.

Pre-ABCD Workshop Paper

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| Summary | This pre-workshop paper assignment asks students to articulate their current thoughts on the selected workshop topic, drawing from readings, class discussions, and their own lived experiences. |
| Purpose | To help students prepare for the workshop by ruminating on any course readings and/or other literature relevant to the workshop topic selected. |
| Special instructions | <p>Instructors and professors should have a workshop topic selected in advance, whether before the semester starts or in conversation with their students early on.</p> <p>This assignment can be structured around course readings or students' independent study of other relevant literature.</p> |

Description

To prepare you for our ABCD workshop, and ensure a productive discussion, you will write a paper evaluating the topic/problem. You will address the following prompts:

- Based on your readings, what is the current state of [insert workshop topic here] as you see it? (approx. 2-3 pages)
- Which author(s) provide the best solutions to the problem? Is there a solution not provided that you think would be better? (approx. 2-3 pages)
- What has been your personal experience with [insert workshop topic here]? How does this lived experience influence your position on this issue? (approx. 1-2 pages)

You will submit this paper prior to the workshop on [insert due date here].

Pre-Workshop Small Discussion Groups

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| Summary | This assignment involves organizing students into groups (or even a single group) on a Learning Management System course page or some other platform so that they may post responses to discussion prompts provided by the professor. The discussion prompts would pertain to the course subject (readings, etc.) and the ABCD classroom workshop topic selected. |
| Purpose | To help students practice critical thinking and civil discourse in preparation for the workshop. |
| Special instructions | <p>Discussion prompts are written questions that spark the sharing of ideas and encourage engagement with, and understanding of, course content and fellow students. Prompts should be clear, concise, and compelling, helping students learn key concepts and arguments.</p> <p>Instructors and professors should have prompts crafted and added to their Learning Management System's course discussion boards prior to the class start date. These prompts can be weekly or biweekly in nature.</p> <p>Instructors and professors can have students discuss prompts as an entire class or in smaller groups. If the latter is selected, professors should assign students to discussion groups well before any prompt is published. They can rotate group members or keep them the same, as desired.</p> |

Description

To prepare you for our ABCD workshop, you will respond to specific prompts that I will post to our [insert LMS here] discussion board on a [weekly or biweekly] basis. Prompts will be drawn from course readings and inspire group discussion on problems and solutions related to [insert workshop topic here]. Prompts will be published at the start of the week, with approximately [insert desired number here] prompts assigned in total.

For each prompt, you will evaluate the argument advanced in a particular book or article. You will provide *at least one* main comment (i.e., how much you agree or disagree with the problem/solution described) and *at least one* reply to a fellow student's comment (i.e., concurring with or critiquing their position). *At least one* of your replies should be a question or a challenge to your classmate's comment. In posing a question, you could ask for additional information or clarification (e.g., What past experiences led you to see the issue in this way? To clarify, when you write _____, do you mean that _____?) or encourage deeper thinking on the subject, noting specific variables or circumstances (e.g., I'm curious as to how you would account for _____ in your assessment of _____. How would a change in _____ affect your stance?). In raising a challenge, you could correct misunderstanding of the content/argument (e.g., You claim that _____, but according to the reading, _____), point out specific **logical fallacies** (e.g., By stating _____, you are committing a logical fallacy known as _____), or explore any unintended consequences or other negative factors you observe (e.g., Based on this thinking, I'm worried that _____). You must provide evidence for every challenge you raise.

Your responses should be insightful and relate directly to the prompt, to the best of your ability. However,

keep in mind that these should not be essays. Your responses should be concise, or approximately [insert desired number of paragraphs] per comment.

Generally, the prompts will be designed to gauge your understanding of the material and encourage critical thinking and reflection on the themes or arguments raised in the readings. It will also be an opportunity for you to practice the art of constructive disagreement. Remember that your responses will inform your thinking going into our workshop, and the quality of your responses here will directly affect the quality of our discussion then, so please take them seriously. Also remember to be intellectually humble and kind when engaging with each other online. At the same time, try to have fun with it. Enjoy thinking creatively and deeply on the material, connecting it to the ideas and topics you care about most.

ABCD Workshop Brief

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| Summary | This assignment is crucial to student success in the ABCD classroom workshop. The brief offers a framework for students to organize and clarify their thoughts on the workshop topic. Instructors and professors are encouraged to use or adapt the brief template provided below. Rubric templates for evaluating student briefs and workshop engagement are also provided below for your use and adaptation. |
| Purpose | To help students prepare for the workshop by encouraging them to become informed on the selected topic beforehand. |
| Special instructions | <p>Instructors and professors should have a workshop topic selected at least 1-2 weeks in advance.</p> <p>Instructors and professors, with support from CD&D Curricular Fellow Dr. Bryan Paul or library staff, could instruct their students on best practices for online research.</p> |

Description

To make our ABCD workshop as robust and meaningful as possible, you will read up on the workshop topic selected and prepare a brief that will help you better understand the issue and spark your own ideas for discussion. Your brief will consist of the following elements:

- An explanation of *what is at the heart of the issue for you* (i.e., your personal opinion on the issue, why this issue matters to you and how it connects to your own lived experience)
- A description of *two root causes of the problem*, including a summary of each cause, an evaluation of each source used, and observations on how closely each source narrative aligns with your own personal experience
 - Source evaluation should consider: (1) the level of expertise attached to the source, (2) how objective it is, (3) how close to the issue it is (primary source, secondary source, etc.), and (4) how recent it is.
- A description of *two solutions proposed to fix the problem*, including a summary of each solution, an evaluation of the pros and cons for each solution (at least two pros, at least two cons suggested), and a list of references

You will submit your brief on [insert due date here]. You must have a copy of it with you on the day of our ABCD workshop.

To help you listen and participate, you will be given a discussion tracking sheet.

Template for Workshop Brief

Topic:

What is at the heart of this issue for you?

Based on your research, what are the root causes of [insert problem based on topic]?

Cause 1:

Summary of Cause 1:

Source Evaluation:

Personal Reaction:

Cause 2:

Summary of Cause 2:

Source Evaluation:

Personal Reaction:

What solutions have been proposed to fix [insert problem based on topic]?

Solution 1:

Pros/Cons:

References:

Solution 2:

Pros/Cons:

References:

Brief Rubric

| | Strong | Moderate | Weak |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Summary of Issue | Student provides clear, thoughtful summary of the issue and what is at the heart of it for them. | Student provides a summary that somewhat demonstrates their understanding of the issue. | Student fails to demonstrate they understand the issue and what it means to them. |
| Causes of the Problem | Brief contains two well-articulated causes of the problem. Each contains a summary, source evaluation, and personal observation. | Brief contains one well-articulated cause of the problem. It contains a summary, source evaluation, and personal observation. | Causes in the brief are poorly articulated and evaluated. |
| Solutions to the Problem | Brief contains two well-articulated, constructive solutions to the problem. Each contains a summary, description of the pros and cons, and a reference list. | Brief contains one well-articulated, constructive solution to the problem. It contains a summary, description of the pros and cons, and a reference list. | Solutions in the brief are poorly articulated and unconstructive. |

Workshop Engagement Rubric

| | Strong | Moderate | Weak |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Delivery | Student speaks clearly and understandably with ideas drawn from brief. | Student speaks somewhat clearly and understandably with some ideas drawn from brief. | Student speaks poorly with minimal use of brief. |
| Civility | Student displays civility towards other workshop participants. | Student struggles to listen to others or keep cool during workshop. | Student displays blatant hostility during the workshop. |
| Participation | Student speaks in both parts of the workshop, with one comment and/or question per part. | Student speaks in one part of the workshop, with one comment or question. | Student does not speak in the workshop. |

A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD) – Discussion Tracking Sheet

Workshop Topic: _____
Date: _____



Part 1: Introducing the Issue

| What is at the heart of this issue for you? | What is at the heart of this issue for your fellow participants? |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | |

Part 2: Solution-Oriented Conversation

What is *your* proposed solution? _____

| Speaker | Proposed Solution | Point of Agreement/Concern | Possible Question |
|---------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
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Post-ABCD Workshop Reflection Paper

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| Summary | This paper assignment invites students to reflect on their experience with the ABCD classroom workshop. |
| Purpose | To help students process and internalize the workshop by having them share what they thought of the experience, what they learned, and what they will do next based on the discussion. |
| Special instructions | <p>Instructors and professors should have students complete this assignment shortly after the workshop date (ideally no later than a week after).</p> <p>If this is something you want to have students do, we recommend sharing these questions with students before the workshop.</p> |

Description

Having now participated in A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD) workshop, you will write a paper reflecting on the experience and discussion. You will address the following prompts:

- What did you think of the overall experience? What did you like about it?
- What did you learn about the topic/issue discussed? What opinions or insights stood out to you?
- What did you hear that you disagreed with, and why?
- What did you hear that changed your perspective on the issue, and how/why?
- What would you like to see happen as a result of this discussion? Which of the proposed solutions (if any) could you see as being successful?

You will submit this paper on [insert due date here].

Post-ABCD Workshop Policy Paper

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| Summary | This paper assignment gives students the opportunity to convert insights and solutions from the ABCD classroom workshop into possible policy action that could be taken at an institutional level. Students would write the paper as if it were going to be submitted to key decision makers (public officials, college or university administrators, etc.). |
| Purpose | To help students take opinions expressed during the workshop and formalize them into a possible policy proposal. |
| Special instructions | Instructors and professors can have students write this paper on their own or in pairs. |

Description

Having now participated in A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD) workshop, you will write a policy paper that fleshes out one of the solutions proposed in our class discussion and provides a recommendation for official action. Your paper will consist of the following sections:

- Introduction / Rationale (approx. 1 page)
 - Address the goals and motivations for the paper, with reference to why the issue in question is so important
- Background (approx. 1-2 pages)
 - Describe the current situation, how we got here, and why the issue has not been resolved yet
- Policy Options (approx. 3-4 pages)
 - Present and evaluate 1-2 viable options to solve the problem, exploring the pros and cons of each option
- Policy Recommendation (approx. 2 pages)
 - Provide a proposal for how to proceed based on your analysis and evidence
 - This could be a single policy option or a synthesis of different policy options
 - Outline the specific steps for how to implement your recommendation
- Conclusion (approx. 1 page)
 - Reiterate why this issue matters and what will happen if we fail to act

You will submit this paper on [insert due date here].

Post-ABCD Workshop Multimedia Assignment

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| Summary | This assignment invites students to use multimedia tools to delve deeper into the ABCD classroom workshop topic. It would give students a chance to be creative, hands-on, and personable in their research and analysis. |
| Purpose | To help students further explore the workshop topic in a creative, audience-focused way. |
| Special instructions | <p>Instructors and professors should ensure that they have sufficient, independent technical scaffolding in place prior to students' completion of the assignment. Find one possible guide here.</p> <p>Instructors and professors can have students complete this assignment on their own or in pairs, though pairs are recommended.</p> <p>This assignment is best suited for instructors and professors who have multimedia experience or have sufficient time to learn and/or find resources that will aid students in their work. (Note: The CD&D Alliance is not a resource for multimedia or technical support.)</p> |

Description

Having now participated in A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD) workshop, you will produce a video or podcast that builds on the ideas and points raised in our classroom discussion on [insert workshop topic here]. Your podcast will consist of the following content:

- A cold open that introduces the topic and summarizes its relevance to listeners (1-2 minutes)
- A substantive conversation focused on [insert problem here] and its causes, consequences, and possible remedies (12-15 minutes)
 - Option 1: Describe the current situation, evaluate 1-2 viable solutions, and outline specific steps to achieve lasting change
 - Option 2: Interview a professor or other professional with expertise on [insert topic here]
 - Option 3: Invite 2-3 other students from outside class into the conversation, gauging their own opinions on [insert problem here] and possible solutions
- A conclusion that summarizes the segment and provides a clear call to action for listeners (1-2 minutes)

You will submit this paper on [insert due date here].

Post-ABCD Workshop Civic Engagement Activity

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| Summary | This assignment gives students an opportunity to bring the ideas and solutions discussed during the ABCD classroom workshop to a public audience. Options for this assignment will vary based on faculty preferences and community circumstances. |
| Purpose | To teach students how to communicate/apply ideas discussed in the classroom to a public audience, inspiring community action. |
| Special instructions | <p>Instructors and professors should have students complete this assignment in small groups.</p> <p>This assignment is best suited for workshop topics that address local or state issues, with scaffolding for civic education.</p> |

Description

Having now participated in A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD) workshop, you will work with a few of your classmates to bring ideas and solutions discussed in class to the attention of public officials and/or fellow citizens. This project will require the following:

- Additional research on local/state procedures for civic action related to [insert workshop topic here]
- Brainstorming and planning sessions
- Project coordination and execution
- Presentation to the class on work completed and potential impact

Options for consideration include:

- Letter-writing campaign
- Petition effort
- Collecting items/materials from campus community
- Policy report/recommendations for local officials
- Appearance/testimony at city hall or board meeting
 - Could provide letters, petition, and/or policy recommendations as part of appearance
- Collaboration with local organization or campus club
- Hosting special event or service project

You will need to complete your project by [insert due date here]. In-class presentations will take place on [insert date here].



A Braver Campus Dialogue Moderator Guide

After the completion of our ABCD Moderator training and apprenticeship, you're now ready to lead A Braver Campus Dialogue (ABCD)!

As the moderator, participants will follow your lead on how to approach the conversation and interact with one another. By incorporating the following key aspects in your opening speech, you, as Chair, will effectively educate those in the room on the ABCD format and rules, and set the stage for a respectful and productive workshop.

Introduce CD&D and the ABCD Format

1. Welcome those in the room to the [College/University] dialogue on [selected topic].
2. Introduce yourself and the College Debates and Discourse Alliance.
 - The CD&D Alliance is a joint initiative between three national non-profit organizations:
 - **American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA)**
 - **Braver Angels**
 - **BridgeUSA**
 - Our goal is to help students, faculty, and community members develop the skills of meaningful civil discourse, and promote a culture of free expression on college campuses across the nation.
3. Thank any local organizers, allies, sponsors, and funders.
4. Introduce A Braver Campus Dialogue style and format:
 - ABCD Workshops are NOT:
 - NOT a spectator event
 - NOT competitive/ NO winners or losers
 - NO hierarchy. . . students, faculty, administrators, community members are ALL in equal standing in this space. ALL are encouraged to participate!
 - ABCD Workshops ARE:
 - A tried and tested method for effectively exploring causes, nuances and possible solutions for the most pressing social and political issues in our nation today.
 - Our number one rule: *Say what you believe!*
 - Sharing personal experiences is highly encouraged.
5. Introduce the Guiding Question:
 - This is the question we will seek to answer, but not every response has to answer it directly; it's merely a starting place for conversation.
6. Inform Participants of the Flow of the Workshop
 - This conversation will be broken into **two parts**:
 - Part 1:** Reflect on the issue at hand and explore perspectives on it, asking participants to share what's at the heart of the issue for them.
 - Part 2:** Explore the merits of different solutions and have an opportunity to respond to other participants' proposed solutions.

Explain the Rules of Engagement and Parliamentary Procedure

7. Rules for Engagement

- Why do we follow these rules and norms?
 - To ensure we have a respectful and productive environment.
 - To provide as many people as possible a chance to speak and be heard.
- **Four Core Norms:**
 1. **Listen to listen, rather than listening to respond.**
 2. **Do not interrupt or have side conversations.**
 3. **Participants are not representatives of groups they belong to. They will not be characterized based on a group identity, nor asked to speak for groups they are a part of.**
 4. **Critique the perspective, not the person, using parliamentary procedure.**

8. Parliamentary Procedure

1. Address the Chair:

- *“Right now, you may call me [your name]. When the workshop starts, you will address me as ‘Madame, Mister, or Honorable Chair’.”*

2. Timing Speeches:

- The gavel is a tool the Chair uses to keep the workshop within the rules and ensure a fair experience for all. **Each speaker will be given up to 2 minutes.**
 - **1 tap** means a speaker has **30 seconds** to conclude their remarks.
 - **2 taps** signify the speaker’s **time is up**. The speaker should conclude their remarks.
 - Continuous taps mean the Speaker’s turn is over and must cease speaking immediately so the workshop can continue in a timely manner.

3. Questions and Responses:

- **IMPORTANT: Address the Chair – NOT the Speaker!**
 - Third-person references: “The Speaker, the Lady, the Gentleman,” etc.
 - Why? It keeps the temperature down and focuses the conversation on the ideas being shared, not the individual sharing them.
- During Part 2, you will have a chance to ask questions of speakers and respond to their proposed solutions.
 - Participants will get up to 2 minutes to ask a question, respond to a proposed solution, or present a possible challenge or critique.
 - After that, the original speaker will have 1 chance to respond and we will move on to the next question or critique.
 - Remind participants to keep these respectful, and remember to address the chair!
- **Demonstrate addressing the Chair with a pre-selected member of the body.**

4. Snaps, Taps, and Pats:

- Public speaking is hard. Many people need a little support and encouragement. Instead of clapping, the body can offer support for an idea or a speaker by:
 - Snapping, tapping their hand on a table or foot on the floor, or patting their legs
- This keeps the workshop fun and participatory!
- Ask for demonstration: *“If everyone understands what that sounds and looks like, please use it now.”*

9. To conclude, we will have an informal **debrief** session, where we reflect on this experience as a whole.

- **Emphasize!** The debrief will not be a time to continue the conversation on the topic, so if you want to contribute to the conversation, make sure to do so during the time for speeches!

10. Ask if anyone has questions before you begin.

Running the ABCD Workshop

Call the Dialogue into Order

Part One: Introduce the Issue [20 Minutes Total]

- Explain the purpose and introduce the question, **“What’s at the heart of this issue for you?”** [~5 Minutes]
 - The goal is to stimulate thinking and hear how others in the room understand the topic. This is an opportunity to explore beliefs, reflect on causes, and consider the various aspects of the issue.
 - Some aspects of this may include:
 - How do you think about and understand different causes of this issue?
 - What are your personal beliefs related to this issue?
 - What are the different aspects of this issue that are important to consider?
- Partner Share [5 Minutes]
 - Invite everyone to take a moment to reflect, and then turn to a partner and share.
 - Instruct participants to form pairs; however, ensure that no one is left out.
 - **No more than 3 to a group!**
- Speeches on the issue [~10 Minutes]
 - Call the group back together using your gavel and ask participants to share with the group what’s at the heart of this issue for them.
 - There is time for approximately 5 speakers.
 - Each speaker has up to 2 minutes to share.
 - **There are no questions for speakers in Part One.**

IMPORTANT TIP: **Take brief notes on what is shared during this part so you, as moderator, can use them is necessary to re-spark dialogue if conversation wanes in Part 2.*

Part Two: Solution-Oriented Conversation [50 Minutes Total]

- Thank speakers from Part 1 for getting the conversation started, and inform the audience that it is now time to explore the merits of different solutions.
 - **Re-read the Guiding Question**
 - Remind participants that after another partner share, they will have the opportunity to share proposed solutions with the larger group and receive feedback from their peers.
- **Partner Share [5 Minutes]**
 - Invite participants to take a few moments to think and reflect on how they would answer the question.
 - Instruct participants to form pairs, ideally with someone they had not shared with during Part 1.
 - No more than 3 to a group!
 - Remind participants *that this is not a chance to debate the merits or beliefs surrounding this question.* We are simply trying to encourage people to think critically and hear from others on the topic.



- **Group Conversation [45 Minutes]**
 - Call the group back together and ask for volunteers to share their proposed solutions with the group.
 - Remind participants that:
 - They are not a representative of their group and should still only speak for themselves.
 - Each speaker has up to **2 minutes** to share.
 - Following a speech, participants have up to **2 minutes** each to ask a question and/or, raise a point of concern, challenge, potential drawback or unintended consequence.
 - The original speaker then has up to **2 minutes** to respond before moving to the next question or concern.
 - After ~30 minutes, announce that you have time for 1 or 2 more speakers.

**Reference your notes from Part One to re-spark the conversation as needed!*

Debrief and Closing the Workshop [10-15 Minutes]

After thanking the final speaker, call the dialogue to a close and move into debrief.

- *“With that, our final speaker is thanked. I now call this dialogue to a close. However, we are not done yet!”*
- Have remain seated for a 10–15 minute informal de-brief session.
- Announce you are no longer to be addressed as the Chair. This is a more free-flowing conversation about the experience.
 - *“The debrief is not a time to continue debating the topic, but to instead reflect on the experience as a whole.”*

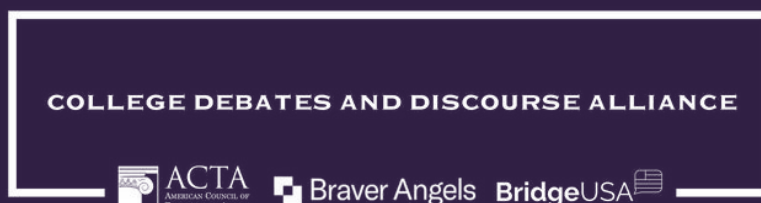
- **Ask the body to reflect and share on the following questions:**

- ***What did you like?***
- ***What did you learn?***
- ***What would you tell someone about this experience who has never participated in an ABCD Workshop before?***

- Popcorn around the room, hearing feedback from the audience.
- Once the conversation ends, thank participants, organizing partners, sponsors.
- Gather email addresses and other contact information from all those interested in continuing this work on campus!

Congratulations! You have successfully moderated A Braver Campus Dialogue!
Be sure to contact your Program Coordinator to share a head count from the event, and set up an event debrief meeting.

For more information, contact info@collegediscourse.org





ABCD WORKSHOP

Testimonials

“Overall, I found the workshop to be a valuable experience. I appreciated how it allowed us to have an open and honest dialogue about a difficult topic like homelessness. It was clear that everyone was trying to learn from each other and find solutions together, even though we all had different perspectives. The breakout rooms were particularly helpful because they gave us a chance to discuss our ideas in smaller groups, which made it easier to share and receive feedback.”

-STUDENT
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

“I enjoyed this exercise very much. I found the format good for hearing voices in the class that are sometimes hesitant to speak up.”

-STUDENT
CALVIN UNIVERSITY

“I was thrilled to pilot the ABCD Workshop in my classroom. The College Debates and Discourse Alliance team was incredibly helpful and a joy to work with. Students loved the moderator-guided format as well as the opportunity to hear people’s stories. They were actually seeing things in action. The pre-workshop assignment templates provided worked really well, too, effectively preparing my students to talk productively in that 75-minute period. One of my students said that the workshop was the most impactful experience that they had all semester in the class. Another student, at first adamant in their stance on the topic, reported afterwards that they know now that it is more complex of an issue than just what they thought it was. A truly transformative experience!”

-APRIL CHATHAM-CARPENTER
PROFESSOR AND CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

“The ABCD workshop is a terrific pedagogical technique that has real potential to prepare and empower students for campus leadership and life in politics. It provides a set of questions, a framework, and a template that helps students better develop skills for learning and life: better listening, more thorough engagement, confidence to address controversial topics constructively, deeper learning, and solutions-oriented conversations. Overall, a great help for my students to achieve these objectives within the classroom structure.”

-DOUG KOOPMAN
SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW AND PROFESSOR EMERITUS, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND ECONOMICS
CALVIN UNIVERSITY



Thank you for your interest in the College Debates and Discourse Alliance!

Want to bring better, transformative debate and dialogue
to your classroom or campus?

Contact us today.

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COLLEGE DEBATES AND DISCOURSE ALLIANCE



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