

Election 2020

*What? So What? Now What?
A Reflection Guide for Small Groups*

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Introduction

To do service well, we need to be prepared. When we understand what we value, what the issues and needs are of our community, we can serve effectively and make sound choices. The same holds true for voting. Just as we can help you prepare to do service well, the Pace Center for Civic Engagement can support you in being an informed voter and active citizen.

Creating space to process our experiences, thoughts, emotions and learnings is a critical part of civic engagement. This guide serves as a resource for students, faculty, and staff planning to host conversations and engage in collective learning around the election of 2020. This guide is grounded in best practices for reflection, facilitation, small-group dialogue, and communities of practice¹ models.

If you have any questions about information in this guide, please feel free to contact Sara Gruppo at sgrupo@princeton.edu. As a resource to the Princeton University campus community, staff members in the Pace Center are available to provide guidance, consultation and training on best practices for service and civic engagement. If you are interested in connecting with a member of our team you can contact pace@princeton.edu.

Reflection

A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions. —Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States

Our feelings are our most genuine paths to knowledge. —Audre Lorde, writer, feminist, civil rights activist

Reflection is the process of deep thinking and consideration of an event or experience. Reflection can be done individually or with others, and creates space to make sense out of an experience.

Reflection is a deliberate and conscientious process that employs a person's cognitive, emotional, and somatic capacities to mindfully contemplate on past, present, or future (intended or planned) actions in order to learn, better understand and potentially improve future actions.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, a learning theory developed by David A. Kolb (1984), focuses on the premise that while the experience is important, the process of learning is just as significant, if not more significant, than the actual experience. According to Kolb, the learning

¹ Communities of practice are groups of people who share an area of inquiry and engage in collective learning. Communities of practice create connections, honor all participants' knowledge, and facilitate sharing of information. They can be formal or informal. To learn more about communities of practice, read [Communities of Practice: a brief introduction](#) by Etienne Wenger.

experience is broken into four main steps: the concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle provides a helpful framework for reflection and is the approach used by the Pace Center. When applied to reflection, the cycle can be broken into three manageable lines of questioning: *what*, *so what*, and *now what*.

What? This step focuses on an objective report of what happened. Without judgment, you describe the facts and events of your experience.

So What? Focuses on the interpretive details of the events or experiences. You can share your feelings, ideas, and analysis of the event or experience.

Now What? These questions are more focused on the broader implications of the event or experience, and how it will continue to influence your experience in the future while at Princeton or beyond.

**The Simplest
Experiential
Learning
Cycle**

DO IT.

Now What?

What will I do differently next time?

What?

What happened?
What were the results?

So What?

What do these
results imply?
How did I influence
the outcome?

compiled by Andrea Corney

www.edbatista.com/2007/10/experiential.html

Facilitation Tips & Resources

As you begin your preparation for facilitating a reflection conversation it is important that you take into consideration the dynamics of the group that you are convening. Groups typically progress through three stages. Understanding the characteristics of each stage will help you as a facilitator to support your group most effectively. The following tips and information are drawn from *Understanding Group Dynamics* (2012) by R.W. Toseland and R.F. Rivas and appeared in [Campus Compact](#)'s Community of Practice Facilitation Guide (Minnesota Campus Compact).

1. Beginning:

This group phase typically occurs during the first meeting (or two!). During this stage, group members may be nervous or anxious. They have yet to build trust and may be wary or noncommittal.

- a. Needs for this Stage in Group Formation:
 - i. Orientation
 - ii. Norms or Full Value Contract (see Appendix B)
 - iii. A sense of purpose
 - iv. Recognition of commonalities or differences
- b. How the Facilitator can Help:
 - i. Provide Structure and Answer Questions
 - ii. Model Norms and Be an Active Participant
 - iii. Make Connections
 - iv. Invite Open Conversations

2. Middle:

Once members have begun to orient themselves to the group, established norms, defined their purpose, and recognized commonalities, the middle phase begins. This is the longest group stage. At the beginning of this stage, members are still exploring their roles and the role of others; by the end, each member should have found their unique place in the group as well as acceptance and understanding from the other participants. It is also during this phase that the participants begin to recognize the full value of the group, take risks, and more fully share their thoughts and vulnerabilities with others.

- a. Needs for this Stage of Group Formation:
 - i. Mutual Support
 - ii. Patterns and Structure (pre-read, check-in, etc)
- b. How the Facilitator can Help:
 - i. Become an equal member of the group, do not dominate the conversation
 - ii. Acknowledge and discuss power dynamics and how they may impact the group
 - iii. Help navigate conflict (if needed)
 - iv. Encourage sharing by all

- v. Maintain Group Norms

3. End:

At this point, the group has usually formed bonds and developed trust with one another. The facilitator can help prepare the group for closure through focusing on topics such as skills or lessons learned, ways to continue learning, or tangible goals for moving forward. Some group members may experience strong feelings around endings, and the facilitator can help navigate these by recognizing those feelings, reviewing group accomplishments, and beginning the process of closure well in advance of the final meeting.

- a. Needs for this Stage of Group Formation:
 - i. Time to prepare for the end
 - ii. Positive reminders
 - iii. Goals moving forward, next steps
- b. How the Facilitator can Help:
 - i. Make a plan for the end
 - ii. Highlight accomplishments
 - iii. Allow the group to share and honor each other, provide space for gratitude

Some additional tips to keep in mind:

- Your space or environment matter: encourage a distraction free environment whether virtual or in-person
- Framing and context are important: encourage the group to start with a shared reading, shared viewing experience or shared issue of concern (see Appendix C for sample discussion activities)
- Lead by example and always come prepared: share agendas or process ahead of time
- Active Listening: make sure that you and others are truly present and listening
- Time management: make sure that you keep the group moving forward and on task, consider things like “parking lots” for topics that come up but are not central to your conversation so that the group could return to it at another time
- Affirmation: being vulnerable, expressing opinions can be challenging, so acknowledge and affirm what has been shared
- Be Thoughtful & Genuine: express gratitude
- Uphold Full Value Contract or Group Norms: observe confidentiality

Additional National Resources & Models for Facilitating Challenging or Difficult Conversations:

- [Difficult Dialogues National Resource Center](#): The Difficult Dialogues National Resource Center (DDNRC) was founded in 2011 to ensure that college and university campuses remain places that protect freedom of expression, sustain academic freedom, promote

pluralism, and expand opportunities for constructive communication across different perspectives.

- [Living Room Conversations](#): Living Room Conversations is a non-profit organization founded in 2010 as a result of a bipartisan partnership focused on bridging divides through conversation.
- Intergroup dialogue (IGD) initiatives bring together students from two different social identity groups in a sustained and facilitated learning environment. As an educational method, IGD engages students to explore issues of diversity and inequality and their personal and social responsibility for building a more just society.
 - Nagda, B. A. 2006. Breaking barriers, crossing boundaries, building bridges: Communication processes in intergroup dialogues. *Journal of Social Issues* 62 (3): 553-576.
 - Zúñiga, X., B. A. Nagda, M. Chesler, and A. Cytron-Walker. 2007. Intergroup dialogues in higher education: Meaningful learning about social justice. *ASHE Higher Education Report Series* 32 (4). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Election 2020

This year's presidential election cycle is looming in the midst of a global pandemic, heightened political polarization, uncertain economic times, racial injustice, and the ongoing oppression and violence against Black Americans. It can feel overwhelming for many in our campus community due to the uncertainty of this moment. We also know that as a campus community we draw strength when we come together to listen, share, and learn. This is why reflection and dialogue are critical components to the civic engagement process.

It can be tempting to withdraw or avoid challenging conversations, but now more than ever it is important to engage across differences and through the lens of personal values.

Participating in reflection conversations pre- and post-election, can provide individuals and groups with a foundation as they consider the impact and importance of participation in the election. It also provides individuals with opportunities to articulate and explore their personal values.

As noted above in the facilitation section, a great practice for starting conversations is around a shared reading, shared viewing experience (ie - the debates), or shared issue of concern. Below you will find some suggested resources to help you in preparation for hosting a conversation around the election, as well as, general national voter engagement and election resources. Additionally, in the attached Appendix A you will find some reflection questions for starting the conversation.

Resources for finding relevant readings or issue guides (listed in alphabetical order):

- [Campus Engagement Election Project](#): candidate, issue, and primary guides
- [Institute for Democracy and Higher Education \(IDHE\)](#): recently released “*Making Sense of...*” guides
- [Princeton University Library LibGuides](#)
- [SolutionsU - Solutions Journalism](#): connects you to solutions stories about responses to the world’s challenges.

Example topics to theme reflection conversations:

Although not required, a theme can be helpful in creating structure for a reflection conversation especially for newly forming groups.

- Around a social issue (ie - immigration, policing, healthcare, etc.)
- Around learning more about the candidates or ballot questions
- Around issues of election integrity
- Around the election results
- Around a case study
- Around democracy itself and what it means for the 2020 election

Resources for advocacy and community organizing (listed in alphabetical order):

- [Andrew Goodman Foundation Digital Organizing Toolkit](#)
- [Brennan Center for Justice Protect Election 2020](#)
- [Democracy Matters Organizing Toolkit](#)

Additional Election & Voting Resources (listed in alphabetical order):

Please note, given the number of organizations dedicated to voter engagement and the election, we are not able to capture them all in this guide. If you have a particular need or are looking for a specific type of resource that you do not see reflected, please reach out to Sara Gruppo at sgrupo@princeton.edu.

- [ALL in Democracy Campus Challenge](#)
- [Andrew Goodman Foundation](#)
- [APIA Vote](#)
- [BallotReady](#)
- [Black Youth Vote](#)
- [Campus Election Engagement Project](#)
- [Civic Nation](#)
- [Interfaith Alliance: Protecting Faith and Freedom](#)

- [League of Women Voters: Vote 411](#)
- [The Voter Participation Center](#)

Appendix A: Sample Reflection Questions

The following examples are meant to serve as starting points. You are encouraged to craft your own questions that contain more context and nuance. These questions are meant to highlight the different lines of questioning.

What? Without judgment, you describe the facts and events of your experience, reading, or shared viewing.

- Describe something new you learned.
- Describe something that surprised you.
- What did you observe?
- What are the pressing needs?
- Describe the issue of concern.
- What are the results?

So What? Focuses on the interpretive details of the events or shared experiences. You can share your feelings, ideas, and analysis of the event or experience.

- Why is this important?
- How does this align with your personal values?
- What are some of the possible solutions or outcomes?
- What impact will this event or decision have on your community? On yourself?

Now What? These questions are more focused on the broader implications of the event or experience, and how it will continue to influence your experience in the future while at Princeton or beyond.

- What do you still need to learn?
- How can you educate others or raise awareness?
- Describe a vision you have for the future.
- What do you want to make sure that you remember?

Appendix B: Sample Group Norms through a Full Value Contract (FVC)

One of the first things a group should do when coming together for the first time is set norms and expectations. In the Pace Center, we often do this by building a full value contract as a group.

A Full Value Contract is a mutual contract or agreement between group members that defines how the group will function together. The goal of a “Full Value Contract” (FVC) is to have a group contract that “fully values” each member of the group. It is a process where the group agrees to find positive value in the efforts of its members. It is usually expressed by encouragement, goal setting, group discussion and spirit of forgiveness and confrontation.

This agreement encourages:

- Valuing of Self
- Valuing of Each Other
- Valuing of the Learning Community
- Valuing of the Learning Experience

Principles of an FVC:

1. Work together to achieve both individual and group goals.
2. Adhere to certain group behavior guidelines. These guidelines must be discussed and agreed upon by the group or they will be meaningless. This is an important part of the process for groups to engage in, for no longer are the “rules” coming only from the leaders in charge, but from one’s own peers.
3. Give and receive honest feedback. Group members agree to be confronted when their behaviors do not match identified goals. Similarly, each person agrees to confront others when a behavior does not match what they identified as goals. “Confront,” as used here, means that one cares enough about oneself and others to communicate and provide feedback in a fashion that will be productive. Withholding or refusing honest, respectful feedback may be viewed as an example of devaluing one’s self and/or others.
4. Increasing awareness of disrespecting ourselves or others and making a conscious effort to confront and work toward changing this behavior should be part of the contract. Again, the use of appropriate confrontation is an essential ingredient of the Full Value Contract. However, group members must learn how to confront self and others in an

open and responsible manner. Essentially, confrontation is a challenge to look at one's behavior, to look at the discrepancy between what one says and what one does, or to view the degree to which we are honest with ourselves and with others.

Introduce the idea of the FVC, engage your group to contribute ideas, then ask each member to signify agreement. It is important to explain the rationale for setting an FVC with the group:

- It sets strong expectations for behavior.
- The FVC serves as a contract for group norms.
- It establishes a baseline to measure how the group is performing.
- To some extent the FVC doesn't "come up" until someone is not living it and you ask "Well, are you living up to the FVC by that statement?"

Example of Virtual Activity for creating an FVC:

1. Have people collaborate on a virtual medium (ex. Google Slide/Doc) 3-5 goals for being part of this group or what they hope to accomplish.
2. Have each person sign their name to the document. Give the option of inserting personalized images/iconography that individuals see as representing them. It is up to you and the space that you see fit.
 - a. Have everyone add 1-3 things that *each individual* will contribute or bring to the group by their name.
3. Go around the group and have people share their goals and intentions. Ask the group if there is any feedback about points shared by individuals. It's also a time for brainstorming and discussion to define and refine the group's goals.
4. Now talk a bit about the actions, boundaries, and guidelines that they will need to implement to reach their goals. Add these to the FVC and add an asterisk to be able to tell them apart from the initial goals. Some guidelines will also be goals. This helps pave the way for talking about managing behavior and natural consequences.
5. Now have the group look again at the totality of what they have created.
6. Reemphasize that the group is there to support each other towards achieving these goals and holding each other accountable.

***Reference the Full Value Contract if any issues arise in the group.**

The group norms below are adapted from the UCSF Meeting Optimization Program's SOM Culture of Leadership Initiative, a list of common norms from highperformanceteams.org, and "Respect Differences? Challenging the Common Guidelines in Social Justice Education" by Ozlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo. This list is extensive but not exhaustive; your group norms can be as in-depth or as broad as the group determines is necessary. This list has also appeared in the [Campus Compact](#) Community of Practice Facilitation Guide.

- Treat each other with dignity and respect.
- Differentiate between opinion—which everyone has—and informed knowledge, which

comes from sustained experience, study, and practice.

- Notice your own defensive reactions and attempt to use these reactions as entry points for gaining deeper self-knowledge, rather than as a rationale for closing off.
- Recognize how your own social positionality (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality, ability) informs your perspectives and reactions.
- Be genuine with each other about ideas, challenges, and feelings.
- Trust each other. Have confidence that issues discussed will be kept in confidence.
- Do your best to actively participate in the sessions.
- Facilitators will open up a space in which people have information and are comfortable asking for what they need.
- Practice a consistent commitment to open and honest sharing of your experiences and ideas.
- Listen first to understand, and don't be dismissive of the input received when we listen.
- Avoid territoriality; think instead of the overall good for all.
- Don't allow the discussion of issues, ideas, and direction to become a personal attack or return to haunt other members in the future.
- Present problems in a way that promotes mutual discussion and resolution.
- Be vulnerable and risk being wrong sometimes. Thoughtful discussion is expected.
- Practice and experience humility – each of us may not have all the answers.
- Promise to come prepared so that you demonstrate value and respect for the time and convenience of others.
- Expend the effort to practice all of these norms and to care enough about the group and its work to confront each other, with care, compassion, and purpose, when a group member fails to practice these norms.
- Observe confidentiality – nothing said in this group will be attributed to an individual in another setting.

Appendix C: Sample Discussion Activities

There are countless ways to facilitate effective reflection and discussions with your group. Perhaps the easiest and most natural way is to simply lead a group discussion. However, there are also other effective activities that can help to lead to more robust discussion. Below are some possible activities that can be used to facilitate reflection with your group beyond the large group discussion model.

Circle of Voices: This activity can be found in *The Discussion Book: 50 Great Ways to Get People Talking* by Stephen D. Brookfield and Stephen Preskill. It is an excellent and short exercise to elicit participation from all group members at the beginning of a session.

- Give a prompt.
- Provide participants 2 minutes to think on their own, then form a small group.
- 1st round: Each person responds. Keep it to 1 minute! No commentary. No response.
- 2nd round: Cross talk. Participants are only allowed to respond to what someone said in the first round, and they have to start with either “I noticed” or “I wonder.”
- Closing: Any new perspectives or new questions?

One Word: Every group member shares one word that encapsulates how they felt about their experience or shared reading that day.

Pair and Share: Group members break off into pairs. Each pair will be assigned a specific question to answer and discuss before returning to the bigger group to share their findings, thoughts, and opinions.

Journaling: If students are feeling particularly uncomfortable sharing out loud with their peers, providing time to journal on their own could be a good way to spark conversation. Allow students 10 minutes to journal to themselves, and then come back together as a group to share what they reflected on. If you are going to allow time for journaling, make sure that this is not the sole source of reflection. Since a huge part of reflection is about learning from the perspectives of others, we want to make sure that students are still able to discuss what they have personally reflected on in their journaling time.

Appendix D: Additional Campus Resources

Princeton University has partnered with [TurboVote](#) as part of the [Vote100](#) initiative to assist in making voting easy. TurboVote makes sure you always know when elections are happening, and have the information you need to vote with confidence. Sign up to receive election reminders, get registered to vote, and apply for your absentee ballot.

Additional election resources:

- [Princeton Election Consortium](#)
- [Princeton Gerrymandering Project](#)
- [Voter and Election Information](#), Office of Community & Regional Affairs

Here are some additional Centers & Offices at Princeton that can assist you or your group in civic engagement and learning. This list is robust but not exhaustive. At Princeton, service is embedded throughout the University:

- [Office of Community & Regional Affairs](#) serves as the primary liaison between the University and the communities in which it resides on a wide variety of local and regional issues, as well as, plans special events such as [Communiversities](#) and [Community & Staff Day](#)
- [Office of Diversity and Inclusion - Campus Life](#) has a focus on social justice education specifically engaging students in understanding identity, difference, and community through exploring social equality, access, and individual and systemic oppression.
 - [Carl A. Fields Center for Equality & Cultural Understanding](#)
 - [LGBT Center](#)
 - [Women*s Center](#)
- [Office of Religious Life](#) along with providing spiritual counseling, the Office of Religious Life supports students in the broadest kinds of exploration of religion, ethics, public policy and community well-being.
- [Office of Sustainability](#) cultivates an ethos of sustainability at Princeton that inspires action at all scales in service to humanity and the world.
- [Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students](#) (ODUS) works to enrich the co-curricular experience by cultivating in our students the capacity for responsible citizenship and effective leadership and by promoting the well-being of self and others while upholding the values of integrity, respect, and inclusion that will prepare them for service and success in a global society.
 - [Student Organizations](#)
 - Residential College Councils
 - [Butler College](#)
 - [First College](#)

- [Forbes College](#)
 - [Mathey College](#)
 - [Rockefeller College](#)
 - [Whitman College](#)
- [Undergraduate Student Government](#)
- [Vote100](#)
- [Program for Community Engaged Scholarship](#) (ProCES) connects students' academic work with their interests in and concerns for our local, regional, national, and international communities. Students participate in community-engaged learning in courses or, in a more in-depth manner, as part of program-funded junior or senior independent work.
- [Princeton Varsity Club](#) implements and supports programs that provide Princeton varsity student-athletes with opportunities to achieve, to serve and to lead.
- [The Keller Center](#) creates [societal impact](#) through [entrepreneurship](#), [design & design thinking](#), and [innovative education](#)
 - [Tiger Challenge](#)