

Post-Election Guidebook

Prompts for Faculty and Staff to Facilitate Conversations with Students

Below are suggested prompts to help you facilitate safe, respectful, and productive conversations surrounding the 2020 election. Prompts are categorized by scenario. See the end of this guidebook for election services the WellCat Counseling Center is providing.

Creating a Safe Space

What to Say (Do's):

"I anticipate the election is bringing up feelings for many of you. I understand that this is deeply personal for several of you. This is a space for you to talk about any fears or worries you have. I am here to listen."

► Students may not want to address their anxieties in that moment, but you are acknowledging them and opening the door for further conversation. Create a space for your students to talk and for you to listen.

"There are likely differing opinions and emotions among us. This is expected. However, I promise to treat each of you with respect regardless of our political views, and I expect the same from everyone else."

► Create an environment where students feel welcome and safe to express their viewpoints. You are leading by example. Do not let inappropriate comments go unanswered. Give feedback on the quality of communication, not the content of the opinion.

"This is an educational climate, so please keep an open mind. We are here to listen to and learn from each other. We

What Not to Say (Don'ts):

"This is not a place for politics."

► While it may be uncomfortable to facilitate these discussions, we cannot ignore the fact that this election will have an impact on our students. By shutting down conversation, students may feel unsafe and misunderstood.

"You can say whatever you want to here. Every voice is welcome."

► Giving students the freedom to speak is important, but it is dangerous without also providing rules to create a safe, respectful environment. Students can have opinions about whatever they want, but let students know that inappropriate comments are not welcome.

are not here to argue or change anyone's political stance."

► Encourage students to listen, hear each other's perspectives - particularly where they differ - and work to understand the experiences that generate these perspectives. Encourage open conversations.

Show You Are an Ally

What to Say (Do's):

"I know this may be scary for you to talk about. I want you to know that at this moment, you are safe. I value your courage to share your feelings with us. I am here for you."

► Being professional also means being human sometimes. Let students know that you are there for them as an ally. Let them know you value and respect them.

What Not to Say (Don'ts):

"If talking about the election is too much for you, then just listen."

► Regardless of whether a student chooses to share, your mission is to facilitate a safe and respectful environment. This also means monitoring for vulnerable students. Odds are even the quiet students are being impacted, so let them know you are there for them.

Conflict or Tension Arises Between Students During a Conversation

What to Say (Do's):

"I'm noticing some tension/conflict right now. Let's pause for a moment and remember our rule of respect. Emotions seem to be high right now. Where do you think this is coming from?"

► Anticipate disagreement and make it clear in advance that this is an inevitable part of a democracy. Criticizing makes addressing problems much harder and scapegoating much more likely. Remind students of this as needed if emotions run high.

What Not to Say (Don'ts):

Not mediating the conflict and intervening when the conversation proceeds to become intense and possibly harmful/hurtful.

► It is better to intervene the moment you sense tension rather than wait until it escalates. In some situations, it is beneficial to let students work things out on their own; however, in this instance, emotions will be close to the surface, so mediation will help maintain a healthy and safe discussion.

Siding with one student over the other to end the conflict.

► This may end the conflict, but it also alienates the student you sided against and possibly others. Alternatively, it could escalate the conflict. This could leave the student angry, embarrassed, insecure, or humiliated making the student feel as though they cannot share their opinions in class again. Rather than trying to end the conflict yourself, intervene and help the students come to a respectful conclusion.

The Opinions of the Professor and the Student Differ

What to Say (Do's):

"I know that we all have different opinions on politics, myself included. I will not treat you differently based on a difference of opinion."

► Neutrality is a good policy. Consider being particularly supportive of students with whom you personally disagree. This is to ensure that your own biases do not prevail. You also want to make them feel included in a context where they might otherwise feel uncomfortable.

What Not to Say (Don'ts):

"I am the professor, so I have acquired more knowledge and understanding about this subject matter than you."

► It is important to remember that even though you are a professor of knowledge and merit, do not take advantage of that to display your opinions about the subject matter. Remember, this is not a space to impose your views on students. This is a space to spur engagement/safely discuss others' perspectives and experiences to connect to one another in the classroom.

A Student Shares a Fear or Concern

What to Say (Do's):

"While I cannot give you reassurance that everything will be alright, I want you to know that I hear your fear/concern."

► You are not expected to have the "right" answer. In all likelihood, there is no "right" answer. Letting students know they are heard promotes yourself as an ally.

What Not to Say (Don'ts):

"Everything will be okay."

► While your intentions may be good here, this statement can be more harmful than helpful. It puts a silver lining on something that is deeply felt by the student and minimizes their experience. You are making a promise

you cannot keep and possibly invalidating the student's feelings.

"I understand you are feeling scared/worried, but at least you..."

► If you feel uncomfortable, you may want to focus on the positive, but this invalidates the student's feelings. When you use the phrase "at least," it really minimizes the student sharing something vulnerable with you or the class.

A Student Makes an Inappropriate Comment

What to Say (Do's):

"That was inappropriate. Remember we agreed as a class to be respectful of each other..."

► Be straightforward and reinforce the rules. You can choose to address the comment further, provided any information you give is accurate and unbiased. Remind the students of the expectations in your classroom to treat one another with respect, dignity, and that they must uphold these standards in the classroom.

What Not to Say (Don'ts):

Remain silent.

► Ignoring the comment tells your students this behavior is acceptable. It is best to intervene and address it right away.

Make a joke.

► Humor can sometimes be used to diffuse tension, but in this situation, it could be detrimental and will likely add to the tension.

A Student Comes to You Needing Additional Support

What to Say (Do's):

"This sounds like a difficult experience for you. Thank you so much for sharing that. I am so sorry you had to experience that/are feeling this way, but I am so glad you are here talking about it with me. I support you and I would really like to help you get in contact with other supports and resources on campus that can be there for you."

► Check in with students. For some students, the dangers they fear are very

What Not to Say (Don'ts):

"I'm sorry, but I cannot help you with this."

► Acknowledging that you are not equipped to further support a student is important. However, if a student's needs go beyond your scope, you can and should refer them to campus resources. Take the additional step to help them find the appropriate support.

real. Work with them to identify those they can go to in a time of need. Encourage them to seek out someone they trust/are comfortable speaking to and can utilize as a support person. You can help them find positive ways to address their fears, such as visiting the Counseling Center (see below for further information). Remember to make sure you have these resources readily available to be able to help the student access them efficiently and as quickly as possible.

"This sounds like a heavy, personal issue. I can make extra time after class and make myself available whenever you need if you need someone to talk to."

► Know your role. If a student comes to you needing additional support, it is not your job to facilitate the entire process on your own. Be aware of your limitations and do not overextend yourself. You should be familiar with campus resources, so you can refer vulnerable students to those who can provide that additional support.

WellCat Counseling Center Election Services

The WellCat Counseling Center is offering a number of different support services for students via Zoom providing care and support for the 2020 election. If you have a student who would be a good fit for any of these available drop-in counseling sessions or workshops, simply have them call the WellCat Counseling Center at 530-898-6345 and ask to schedule an appointment for the event they are interested in.

Drop-In Counseling Services: The WellCat Counseling Center is happy to offer students one on one drop-in counseling sessions providing care and support for the 2020 election.

► October 20th and November 10th.

Drop-In Meditation Group: Feeling stressed, overwhelmed and anxious about what the future holds? Join the club, or in this case, attend this drop-in group! This group combines meditation and mindfulness techniques along with other useful tools to help calm the nervous system and enhance feelings of resilience and resourcefulness.

- Wednesday October 28th 2:00pm (Tara)
- Thursday October 29th 12:00pm (Angie)
- Monday November 2nd 11:00am (Angie)
- Tuesday November 3rd 12:00pm (Tara)
- Wednesday November 4th 2:00pm (Tara)
- Tuesday November 5th 3:00pm (Angie)
- Monday November 9th 11:00am (Tara)
- Tuesday November 10th 1:00pm (Angie)

Election Oasis: Overwhelmed with the constant stream of information about next week's election? Looking for a place to disconnect for a little while and learning health coping strategies? Join WCC psychologist Courtney Chambless as we explore concepts from Positive Psychology that can help us learn to cope during these times of uncertainty.

▶ Friday October 30th 11:00am

What just happened?: Is your head still spinning as you try to make sense of the election? This drop-in support session is a place to receive support and connection while navigating a uniquely difficult period of time.

▶ Wednesday November 4th 4:00pm

▶ Friday November 6th 4:00pm

Drop-In Poetry Support Group-Healing Through Messages of Hope: For those in search of an alternative way for healing through writing and poetry. This support service offers a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere in which students are able to explore their written expressions and emotional responses related to the daily stressors and global chaos affecting all of us. This space invites the poets, non-poets, writers, non-writers and listeners alike to participate in a collective healing process to promote hope and well-being. No students will be put in a position where they will be forced to share their literary work. If students would like to bring in writings or poems they have already written and would like to share they are welcome to do so.

▶ Thursday November 5th 3:00-4:30pm

▶ Thursday November 12th 3:00-4:30pm

Drop-In Support Group (Dreamers): A supportive place for DACA/Dreamer students to discuss stress related issues such as xenophobia/racism, deportation fears, finances/ employment, family issues and identity concerns.

▶ Every Tuesday 1:30-2:30

Drop-In Healing Centered Yoga: Emotional dysregulation, discomfort within our bodies, and disconnected relationships, can be common occurrences in an era where we are surrounded by uncertainty, loss, trauma and social injustices. This drop-in support services provides a safe space of compassion and acceptance, while we engage in interoception or sensing into our internal body through breathing and slow gentle yoga movements. All attendees will be expected to have their video and audio function off; only the facilitator will have their mic and video on.

▶ Every Tuesday 4:30-5:30

Other Election Events/Resources:

For Students...

Women of Color Voting This Election: An Instagram Live facilitated by WellCat Safe Space

▶ October 27 at 12:30pm

Four-Quadrant Political Ideology Diagnostic Training (Webinar):

Contact fourquadsorg@gmail.com

▶ October 30th, 12-2 pm

Harassment, First Amendment, Remote Locations and Social Media (Webinar):

▶ October 30th 1:30-3

For Faculty and Staff...

Engaging in Difficult Conversations While Listening with Compassion:

Zoom link, Meeting ID: 824 4828 8781, Passcode: 347681

▶ October 27 at 3 - 4pm

For the Chico State Community...

Holding Space: Unpacking the Election (Associated Students):

▶ November 5 at 1-2pm