# Healthy Discourse

Discussion & Definition: What is healthy discourse?

Potential Minefields:

“Safe space” – What does this mean? In what ways will it be safe? Healthy discourse involves conflict that can feel risky or unsafe.

“Brave space” – Does this imply that those who choose not to engage are cowards? There may be other reasons people choose not engage other that lack of courage.

“Confidentiality” or “What is said in the room stays in the room.” -Careful about promising confidentiality. It becomes less reasonable the bigger the group. Is it even enforceable (especially at a public University)? Confidentiality can become coercive when imposed.

Case Study?

Things to consider:

Intentions of the participants: Other intentions

Purpose of discussion: Dialogue (Decision-making?)

Nature of the topic: Topic likely to generate heat and passion?

Framing of the question – “False equivalencies, both sides”

Differential impact on particular constituents

Scope of discussion

Format

Air time- by individual or position?

Size of the group:

Physical Environment

Expectations ahead of time

Presence of Impartial Facilitator/Mediator

Expectations around confidentiality / privacy

Expectations about actions or outcome

Tips:

Make it voluntary

Clarify Scope and purpose: Specifically Dialogue. Interest in

Clear and Fair expectations around Voice – work this into format

Err on the side of fewer people

Frame the topic in a way that’s agreeable to everyone.

Address false argumentation – Ad hominems, etc.

“Ouch” Rule

Call for a break rule

Practice Reflective Listening

Intention vs. Impact

Consider an Impartial Facilitator/Mediator

Resources:

The Art of Gathering

Difficult Conversations

Crucial Conversations

Essential Partners (<https://whatisessential.org/>)

UCR Ombuds Office (<http://ombuds.ucr.edu>)

RACE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFhDidan9Vc> (From Ellen at UCSF)