

From a First-Year Seminar to the First-Year Dialogue

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Goals of Presentation

- Engage participants in an intentional reflection on role of a “seminar.”
- Introduce participants to Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) and framework of an IGD.
- Utilize assessments from own journey to demonstrate potential learning from student dialogue.



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Reflection Time



- What does a seminar course look like?
- What are the benefits of a seminar?
- What are your impressions of a “dialogue course”?



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Saint Louis University

- Catholic Jesuit University located in St. Louis, MO
- Total Undergraduate Enrollment: 8,687
- Total Freshmen Enrollment: 1,578
- No University-wide Core Curriculum
- U101 is extended orientation model first-year seminar
- Approximate enrollment in U101 is 890 (56%)



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Developing Crisis within U101

- Within end-of-semester evaluation, over 90% of respondents perceived that U101 course helped to connect with campus resources, to self-reflect, and to begin engaging with SLU community.
- Only 60% of respondents agreed that all freshmen should take the course.
- The basis of this project stemmed from a critical need to review and revise the curricular and instructional approach within U101 so that the course can **more effectively impact** the freshmen students.



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Reflection Time



- How would you describe the status of your first-year seminar?
- What are elements you know that you need (or want) to improve?



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Intergroup Dialogue (IGD)

- Goals of an IGD course:
 - Consciousness raising
 - Building relationships across differences and conflicts
 - Strengthening individual and collective capacities to promote social justice
- Four Stages:
 - Forming Relationships
 - Exploring Differences
 - Exploration of Hot Topics
 - Planning for and enacting Social Change
- Reference: Zuniga, X., Nagda, B.A., Chesler, M., and Cytron-Walker, A. (2007). Intergroup Dialogue in Higher Education: Meaningful Learning about Social Justice. ASHE Higher Education Report: Volume 32, Number 4.



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Overview of First-Year Dialogue

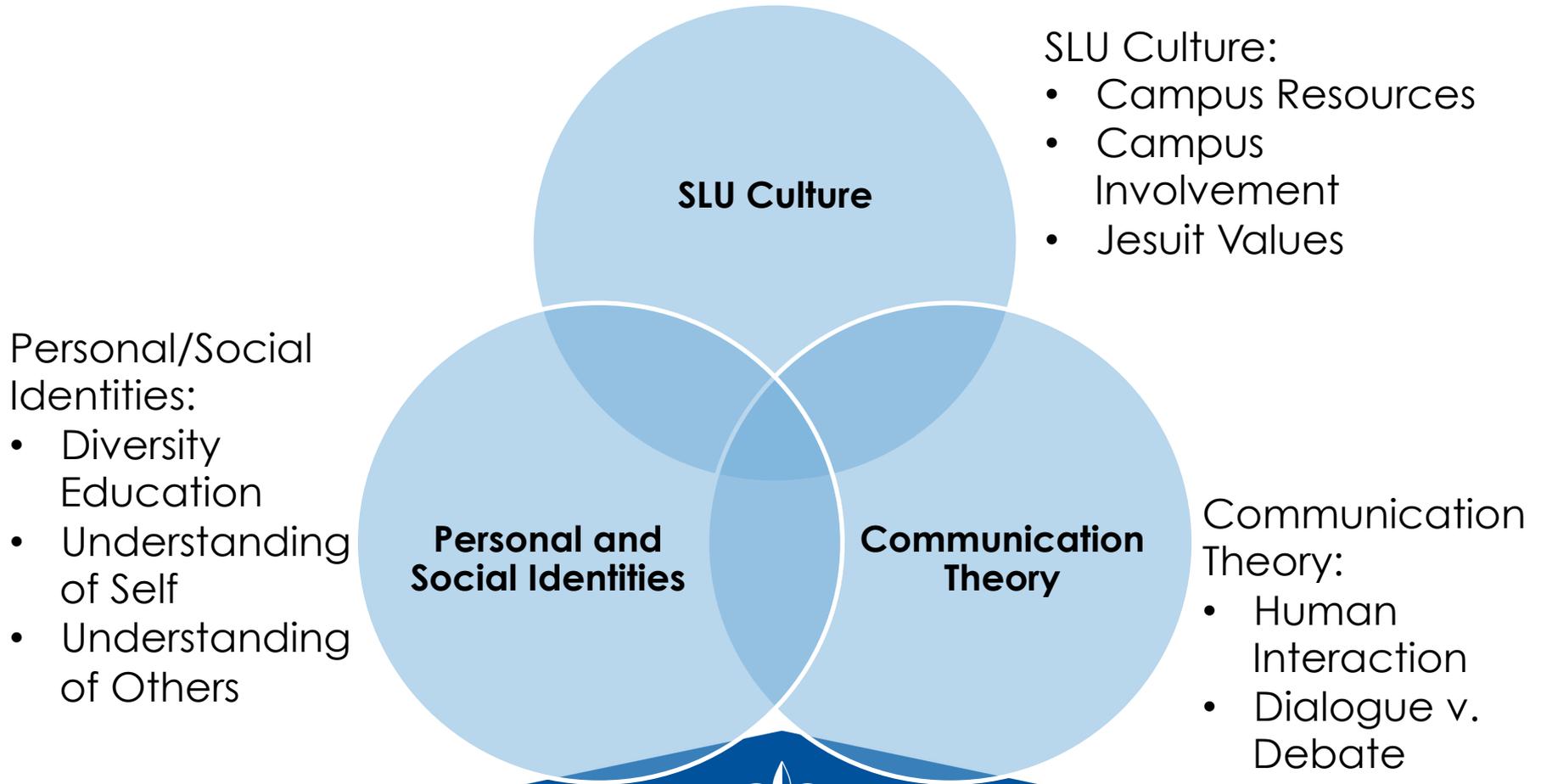
- First-Year Dialogue is a 3-credit, discussion-based, pilot course designed to merge elements of first-year experience, college student transitions, and Intergroup Dialogue pedagogy.
- Using communication theory, the course engages students in a dialogue process with the purpose of exploring personal and social identities and determining how the identities impact the experience as a SLU student.
- The course is taught by a faculty or staff member, who serves as the primary instructor, and two upper-class students.



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Overview of First-Year Dialogue



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Outcomes of First-Year Dialogue

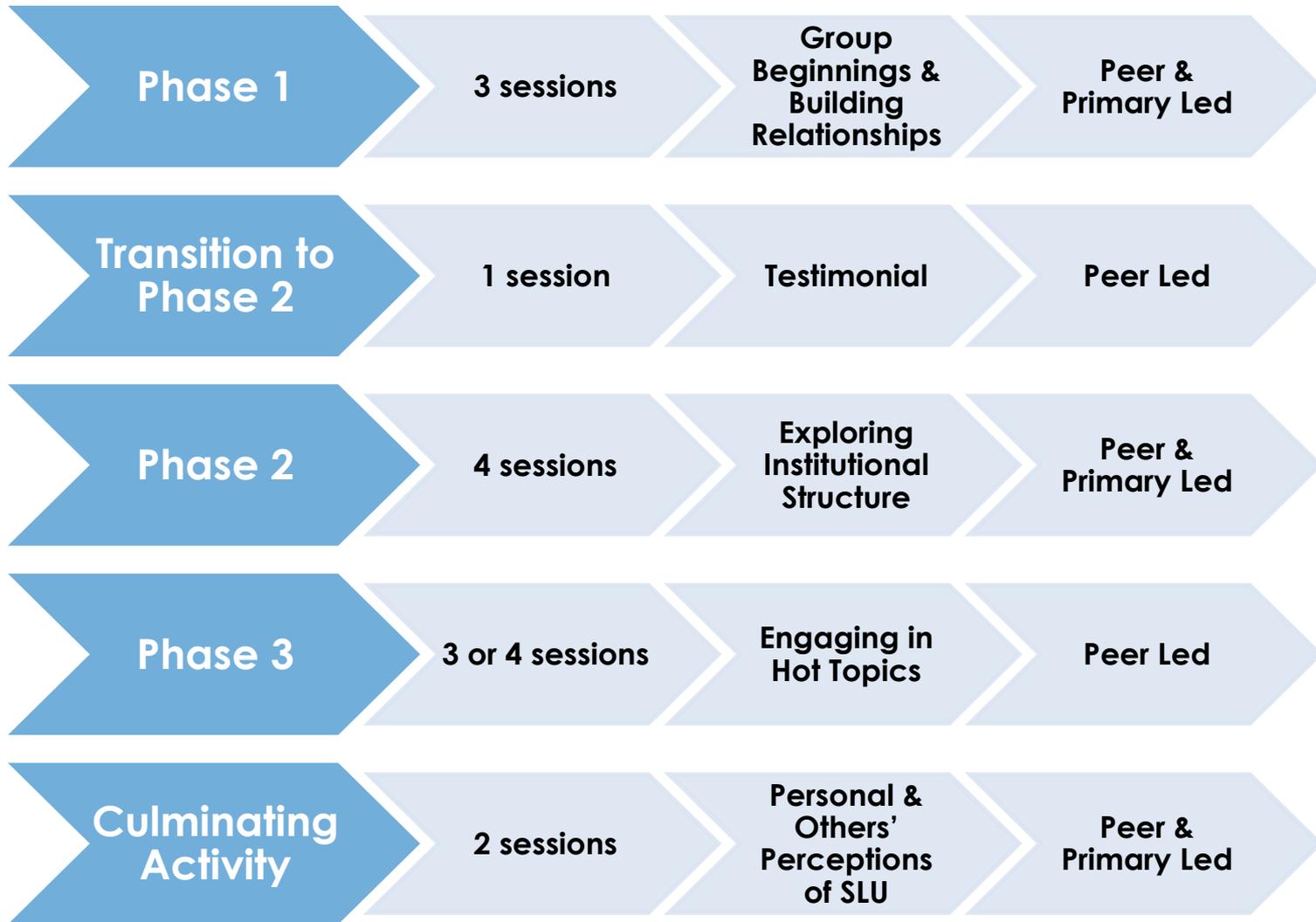
- Develop an understanding of personal and social identities to explore what it means to be a SLU student.
- Develop communication skills that will help navigate between the culture of SLU on interpersonal and community levels.
- Determine sense of personal responsibility to the SLU community.



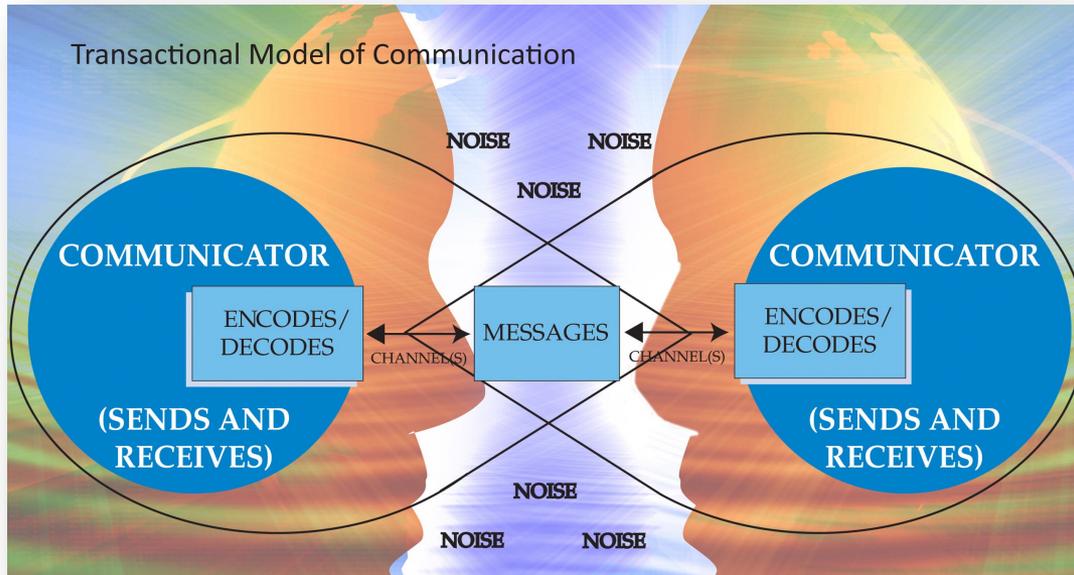
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Framework of First-Year Dialogue



Framework of First-Year Dialogue



Continuously revert back to Communication Theory:

- What are the messages being sent?
- What are the messages being received?
- What noises collude the messages?



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Timeline of Implementation

DREAMING &
DESIGNING

- ✓ September through December: Creation of the Framework for the U101 course and a sample syllabus; Process of determining the feasibility of successfully creating a new course by fall 2014.

ELICITING
FEEDBACK

- ✓ January through February: Discussions with Division stakeholders to elicit feedback about the course and targeted individuals to instruct the course.

IMPLEMENTATION

- ✓ March through April: Implemented trainings and assessments.
- ✓ June through July: Summer registration process.
- ✓ August: Additional trainings on curriculum.



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Reflection Time



- Where do you want to see change within your first-year seminar?



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Assessment Methods

- Pre and Post Self-Assessment
- Rubrics for Common Assignments
 - Journal Reflections (3)
 - Out-of-Class Assignments (2)
 - Testimonial
 - Final Paper
 - Group Project
- Rubrics for Participation



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Findings: Three Themes

**Group
Process**

**Intersection
between
Group &
Individual**

**Individual
Development**



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Group Process: Community & Teamwork

- 86% of students indicated they considerably/completely understand the impact of their personal actions on the University Community.
- 86% of students indicated they were confident in their ability to work through disagreements and conflict.
- 91% of students indicated the course had an impact in understanding that groups composed of people from different backgrounds can work together in positive ways.

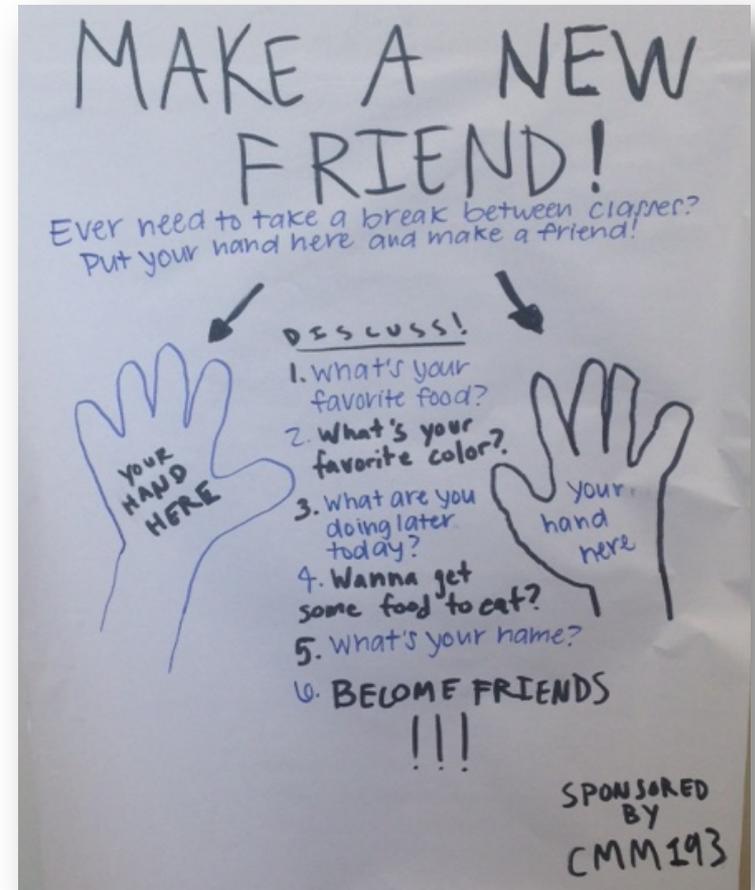


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Group Process: Community & Teamwork

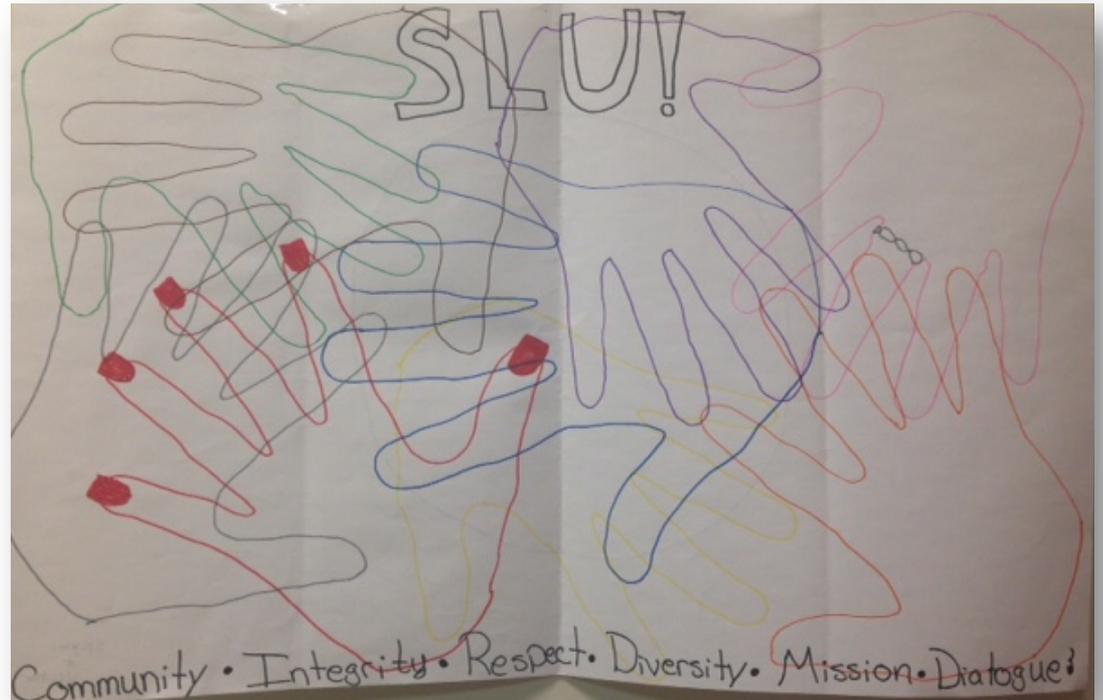
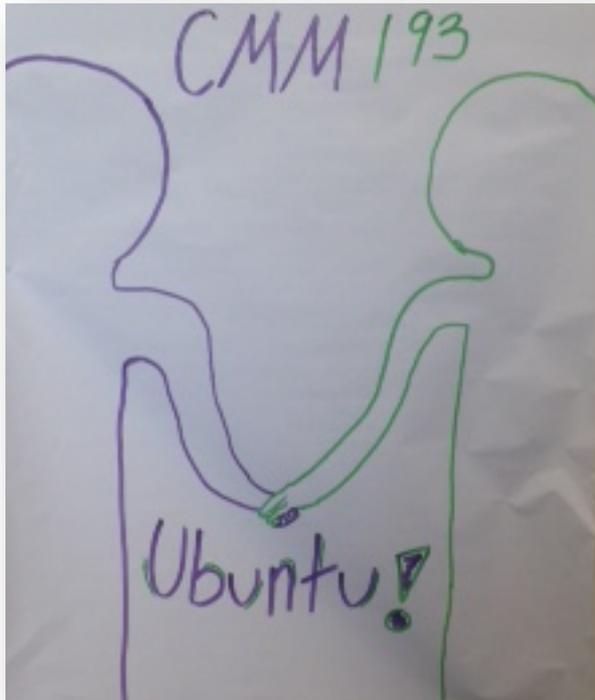
- Demonstrated ability to work within group:
 - “Pulled his weight and helped a lot.”
 - “[Was] actively engaged in interviews [and] was observant regarding noise and body language.”
 - “Made sure we stayed in touch [through the project]”
- Class assignments demonstrated their belief in community/teamwork



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Group Process: Community & Teamwork



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Individual Development: Self-Awareness

- 64% of students demonstrated proficient or exemplary ability to define values and beliefs that influenced decision to attend college. By end of semester, 81% of students demonstrated proficient or exemplary ability to define personal values as it related to being part of SLU community.
- 91% of students felt they could considerably or completely identify their personal values and beliefs.
- 94% of students felt they considerably or completely recognized the impact of their beliefs on everyday life.



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Individual Development: Self-Awareness

- Students ability to describe personal and social identities at a proficient/exemplary level increased from 78% during the 4th week of classes to 96% by the end of the semester.
- 91% of students indicated that they agree or strongly agree that they think about the influence of their personal and social identities on who they are.
- 86% of students felt confident in their abilities to examine the sources of biases and assumptions.



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Intersection between Group & Individual

- 87% of students were observed and evaluated as always coming prepared to each session.
- 66% of students were observed and evaluated as always practicing active listening.
- When students evaluated their confidence on attributes related to communication, the following were those in which students responded at a **higher level of confidence** than at the beginning of the semester:
 - Hearing different points of view
 - Learning from other students
 - Hearing other students' personal stories
 - Working through disagreements and conflict



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Intersection between Group & Individual

Indicate the extend to which each of the communication processes occurred during the course.	Quite a bit or Very much
Sharing my views and perspectives	88.57% of respondents
Hearing different points of view	91.43% of respondents
Learning from other students	94.29% of respondents
Hearing other students' personal stories	97.14% of respondents
Appreciating experiences different from my own	88.58% of respondents



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Course Satisfaction

- 91% of students rated their experience in the First-Year Dialogue as an excellent or good experience.
 - 76% of students rated experience in U101 as excellent or good
- 88% of students agreed or strongly agreed that First-Year Dialogue should be a requirement for all incoming students.
 - 68% of students agreed or strongly agreed that U101 should be a requirement for all incoming freshmen.
- Students contributed the following as the most important factors related to their learning:
 - 91% indicated the peer instructors served as important factor
 - 88% indicated small group setting was important factor



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Peer Instructor Development

How effective were your peer instructors in the following areas?	Fairly/Extremely Effective
Modeling good communication skills	91.18% of respondents
Actively involving me in the learning process	91.18% of respondents
Encouraging group/class members to talk to each other, not just to instructors	91.18% of respondents
Handling conflict situations	88.23% of respondents
Encouraging us to continue the discussion when it became uncomfortable	94.12% of respondents



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Peer Instructor Evaluations

PASK	Areas of Growth from Pre- to Post-experience
Passion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal reason for serving in role (+50%)• Ability to share feelings with others (+25%)
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Security of status and privilege (+23.33%)• Awareness of the impact of social identity group memberships on myself (+30%)• Awareness of my triggers (+45%)
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to utilize others' support (+33%)• Ability to receive feedback (+21.43%)
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge of theories to inform and guide (+43.33%)• Knowledge of group dynamics on processes (38.33%)



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Reflection Time



- What learning would you like to see within your first-year seminars?
- How will you reach those learning goals?



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Future Implications

- Course will continue into Fall 2015 (6 sections).
- Structure of the course provided the flexibility to discuss current events occurring in St. Louis.
- We need to alter curriculum to more effectively connect the history of the University with the discussions on institutional structure.
- We are working to establish a permanent course number with the Department of Communications. This provides opportunities to tie the course into Arts & Sciences core.



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Challenges

- Lack of University core curriculum
- Recruitment of students to enroll in the course
- Financial resources: faculty remuneration
- Inconsistencies across Primary Instructors
- Divide between Academic & Student Affairs: connection to communication theory



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Reflection Time



- What is one step you can take to start your journey?
- Who is one ally you need to spark change?



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What we learned...

- We were ambitious.
 - Understanding the political factors involved with changing the course.
 - Understanding the climate by which others understood U101.
 - Creating and implementing a course within one year.
- We need to concentrate on peer instructors.
 - Leadership from the peers was key to the success.
 - Peers were able to successfully facilitate the course.



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