

IUPUI Intergroup Dialogue Initiative

IUPUI has embarked on a campus-wide initiative of engaging in intergroup dialogue (IGD) with the goal to learn more and better about intergroup relations among all university employees and students in order to recruit new members and retain those who make up the campus community. Interest in the IGD initiative is broad based, including plans for curricular and co- and extra-curricular implementation for undergraduate and graduate students, all IUPUI employees, and community partners.

Intergroup dialogues are facilitated, face-to-face interactions between individuals from two or more social identity groups that have a history of conflict or potential conflict. It is a sustained communication process involving a series of meetings and emphasizing issues related to social justice, social group membership, identity, and the positionality (privilege and oppression) of groups. A dialogue typically involves 14-16 participants whose social identity provides general parity between the two groups represented (e.g., women & men; people of color & white people; LGBT persons & heterosexuals, etc.).

IGD dialogue processes are unique from other forms of dialogue in that they are co-facilitated by at least two persons, one each from the two social groups represented in the dialogue. In the classroom, co-facilitators are typically student peers who have received specialized training. IUPUI has sought assistance from the University of Michigan Program on Intergroup Relations (www.igr.umich.edu) to develop an IGD program on campus. Michigan's IGR program incorporates IGD principles and pedagogy into the undergraduate curriculum through a progression of three credit-bearing IGD/R experiences: (1st) an initial semester-long sustained IGD dialogue experience as part of the course curriculum; (2nd) a course specifically focused on developing students to serve as peer co-facilitators for a future IGD class section; and (3rd) a course in which they serve as peer co-facilitators for such a class.

The most effective dialogue processes involve the following four stages which are carefully structured to move in order: (1) forming and building relationships; (2) exploring differences and commonalities of experience; (3) exploring and discussing hot topics; and (4) action planning and alliance building. Research has shown that sustained intergroup dialogue processes like these, which support both cognitive and personal, experiential learning, fosters greater commitment among students to issues of diversity and social justice upon graduation compared to more traditional diversity education programs.

In a multiversity study, researchers evaluated the effects of intergroup dialogue on three major categories of learning outcomes – intergroup understanding, intergroup relationships, and intergroup collaboration and engagement – and compared them to learning experiences that were predominantly content- focused. They compared these effects between traditional content courses on race and gender and similar courses that included an intergroup dialogue component. Compared to students in traditional courses, students in dialogue courses showed: (1) “greater increases in awareness and understanding of both racial and gender inequalities and their structural causes;” (2) “greater motivation to bridge differences and greater increases in empathy;” and (3) “greater responsibility for ‘challenging others on derogatory comments made about groups’ and for participating in coalitions to address discrimination and social issues.”¹

¹ Nagda, B.A, Gurin, P., Sorensen, N., & Zúñiga, X. 2009. Evaluating Intergroup Dialogue: Engaging Diversity for Personal and Social Responsibility. *Diversity & Democracy* 12 (1), 4-6. (<http://www.diversityweb.org/DiversityDemocracy/vol12no1/vol12no1.pdf>)

IUPUI is committed to promoting an “inclusive campus climate,” as expressed in the *IUPUI Strategic Plan: Our Commitment to Indiana and Beyond* (<http://strategicplan.iupui.edu/>). One strategic action to fulfill this goal is to “require all students to engage in high-impact curricular and co-curricular experiences designed to enhance cross-cultural knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and skills as well as awareness of social justice issues and civic responsibility.” IGD processes are particularly accessible for use in the development of high-impact educational practices as advocated by the American Association of Colleges and Universities’ LEAP (Liberal Education and America’s Promise) Initiative (<http://www.aacu.org/leap/index.cfm>). These include first-year seminars and experiences, learning communities, diversity and global learning opportunities, service-learning and community-based learning.

IGD principles and practices can also serve as tools to put into better and broader practice various campus core values, as articulated in IUPUI’s mission. IGD can support campus efforts to (1) embrace and provide a climate of respectful inclusion for all members of the IUPUI community that enables them to participate and work toward making IUPUI a safe and enjoyable place to work and learn, and (2) make civic engagement a commitment that is especially mindful of responding to and respecting the needs of the greater Indianapolis communities. Intergroup Dialogue can also be integrated into the Principles of Undergraduate Learning (PUL). The PUL most emphasized in an IGD course is Understanding Society and Culture (#5) with a moderate emphasis on Values and Ethics (PUL #6) and an additional emphasis on Core Communication (PUL #1). An IGD course also fits well into the IUPUI undergraduate experience as articulated in the RISE to the Challenge, with special focus on Experiential Learning.

The IGD initiative is jointly supported by the Division of Finance and Administration and the Office of Academic Affairs which created in January, 2013 the IUPUI Office for Intergroup Dialogue and Civil Community (www.igd.iupui.edu). IGD is further supported by partners throughout the campus, including individuals from many divisions, departments, schools and units with specific roles, responsibilities and interests involving graduate and undergraduate curriculum and co-curricular learning development, staff and faculty professional development, research, and civic engagement and community outreach.

To date, many individuals have participated in IGD dialogue processes, including dialogues on race, gender and sexual orientation, with some of these individuals engaging in additional opportunities to develop as IGD peer facilitators. An IGD Steering Committee has formed with representatives from numerous schools and academic and administrative units to provide leadership and guidance with IGD planning and implementation. Faculty are beginning to incorporate IGD pedagogy and practices in their courses and syllabi, including faculty teaching first-year experience courses, faculty recipients of an IGD-track Curriculum Enhancement Grant through the Center for Teaching and Learning, and faculty participating in an IGD Community of Practice. The IGD model is also being incorporated into co-curricular development for Residence Advisors as well as the work of the Social Justice Scholars through the Office of Student Involvement. The IGD/CC Office and its partners also continue to facilitate sustained dialogues and related training, presentations and programs that provide enriching experiences and exposure to IGD as a promising practice to develop cultural competence and promote inclusion.

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