



More in
Common

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Civil Dialogue in Higher Education: Survey Insights

What Students and Faculty/Staff Think and Why It Matters

More in Common US • Memo prepared for the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations
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Executive Summary

Across a survey of 2,004 undergraduate students and 209 faculty and staff at four-year institutions, we find strong support for the idea of dialogue across differences, broadly positive impressions of dialogue-related language, and genuine personal interest in perspective-taking and engaging with unfamiliar ideas. At the same time, a substantial portion of respondents view their institutions' dialogue programs as add-ons or performative gestures, and most do not trust their programs to be genuinely open and politically impartial. The gap between support for dialogue in principle and skepticism about dialogue programs in practice is a defining tension in this data.

Key findings

1. **People want dialogue but don't trust their institutions to deliver it.** Only one in ten students (10%) describe their institution's dialogue initiatives as meaningful and genuine. More than half (55%) express uncertainty or little trust that a program run by their institution will be genuinely open and not politically motivated. Yet eight in ten students (81%) say they are personally willing to listen to very different political views. The problem is not demand but institutional trust.
2. **Workplace readiness is the most broadly effective framing for dialogue programs,** generating the highest engagement intent among both students (+32% net) and faculty/staff (+65% net), and performing well across ideological groups. While favorability differences are narrow (all five framings tested are broadly positive), engagement differences are large (a 40 percentage point range among students). Our results suggest framing choice is consequential for program uptake.
3. **Belonging, free expression, and free speech are the most positively received terms in higher education dialogue contexts,** including across ideological groups. Heterodoxy and pluralism are largely unknown or unclear. All dialogue-specific terms (civil dialogue, constructive dialogue, dialogue, dialogue across differences, dialogue across disagreement) are seen as positive (from +46% to +25% net) but vary more in perceptions of belonging (from +19% to 0% net).
4. **The main barriers to dialogue engagement are perceptions of social risk, compounded by a visibility problem.** Six in ten students (63%) are either unaware of dialogue programs at their institution or unsure whether one exists. The reasons they don't engage are dominated by social risk – fear of combative or unproductive argument (35%), social judgment (26%), and not feeling safe enough for honest disagreement (25%) – rather than time (13%) or personal relevance (13%) which rank near the bottom. For faculty/staff, the same social concerns appear alongside a distinct layer of institutional and professional risk.
5. **Free speech and dialogue are both wanted, but seen as in tension.** A plurality of students (34%) want both free speech protections and dialogue programs to fight polarization, rather than just dialogue (24%) or free speech alone (20%). Yet they are more likely to see the two as often in conflict (36%) than as reinforcing each other (27%). People value both, but don't see them as the same project, which suggests they should not be treated as interchangeable in messaging.
6. **Several insights diverge from prior research and challenge common narratives.** Conservative students, not moderates, show the lowest engagement intent with dialogue programs. Partisan coding, in either direction, does not appear to determine how well a term lands. And while nearly half of students (46%) perceive out-group peers as more extreme than themselves, this perception does not reduce their willingness to engage with dialogue programs.

About

Methodology

More in Common conducted this survey research on behalf of the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations from April 24 to May 26, 2026 via College Pulse. We sampled 2,004 undergraduate students and 209 faculty and staff at four-year institutions, with quotas targeting 50% from Top 50 US News-ranked institutions, 25% from institutions ranked 51–150, and 25% from unranked or lower-ranked institutions.

The margin of error is $\pm 2.2\%$ for students, $\pm 6.8\%$ for faculty/staff, and higher for subgroups. Subgroup analyses within faculty/staff should be interpreted with caution given the sample size.

We conducted subgroup analyses across all items examining ideology, gender, race, and institution tier using US News rankings. We found few meaningful subgroup differences across most items and demographic groups. Ideological differences were the most consistent exception, and we note findings where those differences were substantive.

More in Common

This report was conducted by More in Common US, part of a nonpartisan, international initiative aimed at building societies and communities that are stronger, more united, and more resilient to the increasing threats of polarization and social division. We work in partnership with a wide range of civil society groups, as well as philanthropy, business, faith, education, media, and government to connect people across lines of division.

www.moreincommonus.com

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Finding 1: People Want Dialogue But Don't Trust Their Institutions to Deliver It

One of the most consistent patterns across the survey is a gap between personal openness to dialogue and skepticism toward institutionally organized dialogue programs.

Personal willingness to engage is high. Eight out of ten students (81%) say they are personally very or somewhat willing to genuinely listen to political views very different from their own in a dialogue setting. Less than one out of twenty (5%) say they are not at all willing. Faculty/staff show a nearly identical profile (83% willing).

But trust in their institutions to conduct programs is low. Only one in twenty students (6%) trust their institution a great deal to run a genuinely open and not politically motivated dialogue program. More than half (55%) express uncertainty or low trust (not very much/not at all/not sure). Faculty/staff show a strikingly similar pattern (7% trust a great deal vs. 54% uncertain or low trust).



And skepticism of dialogue initiatives overall is high. When asked to describe dialogue initiatives at colleges and universities generally, only one in ten (10%) of students call them meaningful and genuine. Three out of ten (34%) students call them a minor or add-on effort, and another three out of ten (27%) call them mostly symbolic or performative. The picture is similarly skeptical among faculty/staff (34% symbolic or performative, 22% minor or add-on).

The trust gap matters for engagement. Lower institutional trust is associated with markedly lower willingness to engage with dialogue programs across most framings, even when favorability holds up reasonably well. Among low-trust students (those who say they trust their institution "not very much" or "not at all" to run a genuinely open program), net favorability drops only modestly for most framings, but net engagement falls sharply. For example, the personal frame drops from +65% to +59% in net favorability, but falls from -8% to -30% in net engagement. The pattern suggests that while low-trust students recognize dialogue programs as a good idea in the abstract, they don't want to participate because they don't trust the program to be run well. Among faculty/staff, low-trust respondents show similarly large drops in net engagement, with drops ranging from 12 to 51 percentage points depending on framing.¹

¹ Low-trust faculty/staff results shown in Appendix Figure A1.

Dialogue Framing by Trust for College Students

Framing	All			Low Trust		
	Net Pos	Net Engage	L vs R	Net Pos	Net Engage	L vs R
community	+72%	+15%	+32% L	+69%	+12%	+32% L
inquiry	+73%	+14%	+25% L	+64%	-7%	+16% L
workplace	+70%	+32%	+31% L	+64%	+15%	+35% L
personal	+65%	-8%	+28% L	+59%	-30%	+24% L
civic	+62%	+10%	+33% L	+44%	-17%	+36% L

Low Trust = 'Not very much' or 'Not at all' on {institutional_dialogue_trust} ("If your institution organized a dialogue program, how much would you trust it to be genuinely open and not politically motivated?"). Net Pos = % Very/Somewhat positive - % Very/Somewhat negative. Net Engage = % Very or Somewhat Likely - % Very or Somewhat Unlikely to participate.

Finding 2: Framing Shapes Engagement with Dialogue Programs

We randomly assigned each respondent to one of five framings of a hypothetical dialogue program and asked about favorability, likelihood of participation (or support, for faculty/staff), and perceived partisan alignment. The framings all started with the following text: "Some universities are expanding efforts to help students engage constructively across differences, whether through classroom experiences, skills training, or structured programs. Programs like these can have different goals. In this case, the program is designed to..." Respondents were randomly assigned one of the following five frames:

1. **[inquiry]** "build intellectual skills by engaging with different perspectives in order to disagree better."
2. **[community]** "build a more cohesive and connected campus by encouraging respectful conversation across differences."
3. **[civic]** "prepare students for being citizens in a democracy by teaching them how to engage constructively with people who hold different views."
4. **[workplace]** "equip students with skills valued in the workplace, including listening across differences, navigating disagreement, and collaborative problem-solving."
5. **[personal]** "help students handle disagreements in their personal relationships and family life, including with people whose views differ from their own."

Framing	Students			Faculty / Staff		
	Net Pos	Net Engage	L vs R	Net Pos	Net Engage	L vs R
community	+72%	+15%	+32% L	+51%	+51%	+44% L
inquiry	+73%	+14%	+25% L	+70%	+64%	+40% L
workplace	+70%	+32%	+31% L	+75%	+65%	+20% L
personal	+65%	-8%	+28% L	+68%	+51%	+34% L
civic	+62%	+10%	+33% L	+71%	+55%	+38% L

Net Pos = % Very or Somewhat positive – % Very or Somewhat negative. Net Engage = % Very or Somewhat likely – % Not very or Not at all likely (students); % Very or Somewhat likely – % Not likely (faculty/staff).

Favorability differences across framings are narrow and all positive. Among students, net favorability ranges from +62% (civic) to +73% (inquiry) — an 11-percentage-point spread, with all five framings in clearly positive territory. Among faculty/staff, the range is +51% (community) to +75% (workplace). The concept of a dialogue program is broadly appealing, regardless of how it is framed.

Engagement differences are large. Among students, net engagement ranges from -8% (personal) to +32% (workplace) — a 40-percentage-point spread. The personal framing is the only one where more students say they would not participate than would. Among faculty/staff, the net engagement range is smaller and all positive, from +51% (community and personal) to +65% (workplace). Framing choice is consequential not for whether a program is seen as a good idea by students, but for whether they will show up.

Workplace is the strongest framing across both audiences. Framed around skills valued in the workplace, this framing generates the highest engagement among students (+32% net) and faculty/staff (+65% net). It performs well across ideological groups, with it being the only frame that has more conservative students reporting wanting to engage than not (+15% net).²

Inquiry and community are strong secondary framings. Framed as building intellectual skills by engaging with different perspectives to disagree better, inquiry generates +14% net engagement among students and +64% among faculty/staff, roughly in second place behind a workplace framing for both audiences. Community, framed as building a more cohesive and connected campus, generates similarly high scores for students (+15% net engagement, +72% net positivity) and faculty/staff (+51% net engagement, +51% net positivity).

Personal framing consistently underperforms. Framed around handling disagreements in personal relationships and family life, this framing generates net negative engagement among students (-8%) and tied for weakest engagement among faculty/staff (+51%). As a default institutional framing it is not recommended.

All framings are perceived as left-coded. This is consistent with the term perceptions findings. Importantly, this does not appear to suppress support: high partisan association and high favorability coexist across framings, even among conservative students and faculty/staff. Practitioners should not expect to find a framing that is perceived as politically neutral; the goal is to find framings that are broadly appealing despite some partisan association, which workplace achieves most effectively.

² Student dialogue framing results by ideology shown in Appendix Figure A2.

Finding 3: Key Terms in Higher Education Are Broadly Positive

We asked respondents to rate 22 terms commonly used in higher education contexts on four dimensions: impression (positive or negative), sense of belonging to the term (for me or not for me), clarity (clear or unclear), and partisan association (left- or right-coded). Throughout this report, we use net scores because they capture both positive and negative in a single number. They are calculated as the percentage of positive responses minus the percentage of negative responses (e.g., Net Belonging = % “for me” minus % “not for me”).

Term Perceptions by College Students										
Term	Very Positive Somewhat Positive Neither Somewhat Negative Very Negative Not familiar					Net Positivity	Net Belonging	Net Clear	L vs R	
Dialogue-specific Terms										
Civil dialogue	25	30	24	8	2	12	+46%	+19%	+35%	+18% L
Constructive dialogue	24	31	23	10	4	9	+41%	+10%	+45%	+18% L
Dialogue	25	23	40	7	2	23	+40%	+14%	+69%	+15% L
Dialogue across differences	22	25	28	9	4	12	+34%	+6%	+31%	+23% L
Dialogue across disagreement	14	27	30	14	3	11	+25%	+0%	+31%	+10% L
Civil discourse	13	22	33	15	4	13	+16%	+3%	+35%	+9% L
Related Terms										
Belonging	47	24	18	7	3	2	+61%	+22%	+76%	+38% L
Free speech	37	30	18	7	2	5	+57%	+13%	+74%	+3% R
Free expression	41	26	19	7	4	3	+57%	+15%	+69%	+24% L
Inclusion	48	22	12	10	4	4	+56%	+14%	+74%	+61% L
Democracy	33	29	21	10	5	3	+47%	+20%	+70%	+36% L
Intellectual diversity	31	27	20	9	3	10	+46%	+13%	+42%	+39% L
Academic debate	28	28	26	9	3	7	+45%	+16%	+64%	+19% L
Bridging/bridge-building	20	26	25	6	3	20	+37%	+5%	+14%	+26% L
Intellectual inquiry	25	23	28	8	3	12	+37%	+24%	+23%	+19% L
Centers for civic thought/leadership	17	29	26	6	4	19	+36%	+1%	+5%	+26% L
Open inquiry	18	26	31	7	2	16	+35%	+9%	+10%	+17% L
Viewpoint diversity	18	26	29	8	3	16	+34%	+7%	+35%	+34% L
DEI	30	18	19	13	5	14	+30%	+7%	+54%	+60% L
Ideological diversity	16	28	28	12	4	12	+29%	-1%	+36%	+34% L
Pluralism	8	16	31	8	2	35	+14%	-4%	-23%	+16% L
Heterodoxy	1	6	20	5	1	64	+1%	-2%	-68%	+1% L

Net Positivity = Very/Somewhat positive – Very/Somewhat negative. Net Belonging = Definitely/Mostly for people like me – Definitely/Mostly for people unlike me. Net Clear = Very/Somewhat clear – Very/Somewhat unclear.

Among six dialogue-specific terms, civil dialogue and constructive dialogue perform the best. For students, civil dialogue leads on net positivity (+46%) and belonging (+19%), and constructive dialogue is close behind (+41% positivity, +10% belonging). Both are reasonable defaults for describing dialogue initiatives, and are similar or outperform just “dialogue” (+40% net positivity, +14% net belonging). Dialogue across differences, dialogue across disagreement, and civil discourse perform considerably lower (+34%, +25%, and +16% net positivity) and should be used with caution. Faculty/staff results³ broadly align, with constructive dialogue (+48% net positivity) and civil dialogue (+37%) performing comparably to “dialogue” itself (+41%). The remaining dialogue terms again trail considerably (+27% to +16% net positivity).

Among the other tested terms, the most positively received are belonging (+61% net positivity among students), inclusion (+56%), free expression (+57%), and free speech (+57%). These are also the clearest terms; belonging and inclusion are understood by nearly 9 in 10 students. Notably, belonging and inclusion score positively even among conservative students, despite being perceived as left-coded (belonging: +19% left association among conservative students; inclusion: +58%). This dissociation between partisan perception and personal reception is one of the more practically important findings: respondents may recognize that a term carries ideological associations without those associations undermining their own positive response to it.

Heterodoxy and pluralism are outliers in the wrong direction. Heterodoxy has near-zero net positivity (+1%) and the worst net clarity score (-68%) by a large margin for students. Pluralism scores +14% net positivity but -23% net clarity, suggesting that even among those who recognize it, its meaning is contested. Heterodoxy scores similarly poorly among faculty and staff (-5% net positivity, -58% net clarity), while pluralism scores higher on net positivity (+31%) but still shows confusion on meaning (0% net clarity). Practitioners should avoid both terms in communications to higher ed audiences.

Almost all terms tested are perceived as somewhat left-aligned. Free speech is the only term with a close to partisan-neutral profile among students (+3% conservative-aligned); and this does not appear to suppress its strong net favorability (+57%, second-highest performing term). Even among conservative students, terms perceived as left-aligned still perform well. Belonging, for example, is seen as +19% left-aligned by conservative students yet still earns +58% net positivity among that group. The finding that practitioners may find counterintuitive is that dialogue language does not need to be perceived as nonpartisan in order to be favorable.

Finding 4: The Main Barriers Are Awareness and Social Risk

Understanding why people do not engage with dialogue programs is as important as understanding what framings attract them. The barriers indicated in this data challenge some common assumptions about what prevents participation.

Awareness of institutional dialogue programs is limited, itself a barrier. Less than one out of five students (14%) say their institution clearly and visibly offers dialogue programs. A quarter (26%) say they aren’t sure whether a program even exists at their institution. The practical implication is that the pipeline to participation has two distinct problems: a visibility and infrastructure gap that keeps most people from ever encountering a program, and a social-psychological barrier that operates among those who do. Addressing only one will not be sufficient.

For students, the top barriers are about social risk and psychological safety. Not wanting to get into a combative or unproductive argument ranks first (35%), followed by worry about

³ Faculty/staff results for term perceptions are shown in Appendix Figure A3.

being socially judged or cancelled (26%), not feeling safe enough for honest disagreement (25%), and feeling awkward or anxious talking to people they don't know (23%).⁴ By contrast, not having enough time (13%), not seeing it as relevant (13%), and not having enough opportunities (7%) rank near the bottom. The barriers that dominate are social and personal repercussions and not logistical.

Barriers to Dialogue Reported By Students

"What, if anything, might make you hesitant to engage in campus dialogue? Select up to three reasons."

Barriers



For faculty and staff, the barrier profile is similar but carries an additional institutional and professional risk layer. The top faculty/staff barrier is worry that conversations will not make a meaningful difference or could escalate and become unproductive (38%), the same combativeness concern that tops the student list. But immediately below that are concerns that are distinct to the faculty and staff roles: worry about public involvement with politically sensitive programs (32%), distrust of institutional leadership to handle conflict fairly (31%),

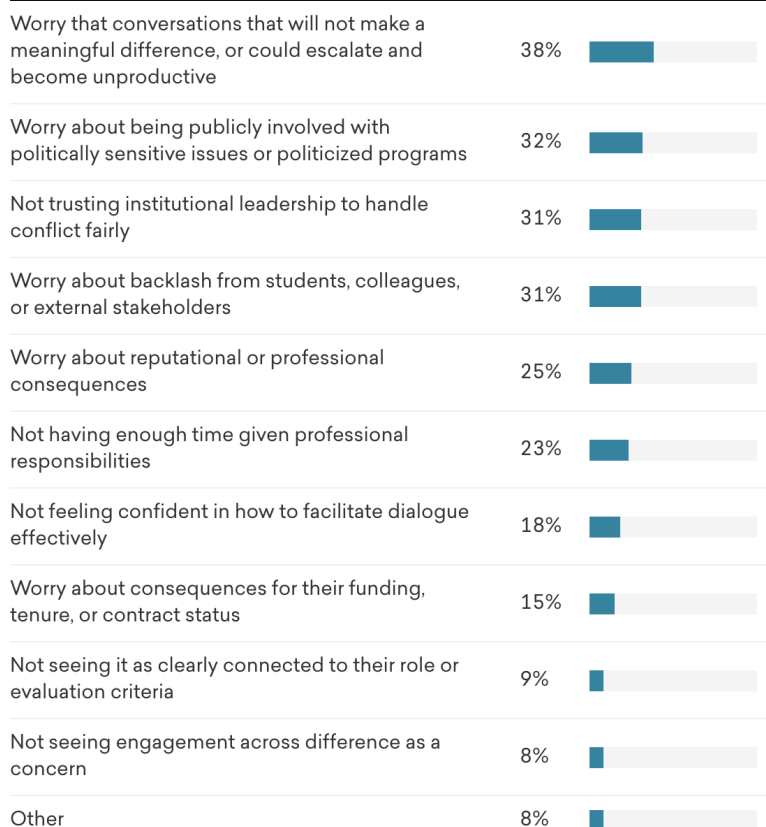
⁴ Conservative students have the same top three barriers as most students, though fear of being socially judged or cancelled (39%) tops their barriers. Barriers by ideology for students are shown in Appendix Figure A4.

worry about backlash from students, colleagues, or external stakeholders (31%), and worry about reputational or professional consequences (25%).

Barriers to Dialogue Reported By Faculty/Staff

"What, if anything, might make you hesitant to participate in or organize campus dialogue? Select up to three reasons."

Barriers



The biggest perceived threat to dialogue differs by audience. Students name peer social pressure or shaming as the single biggest threat (26%), followed by fear of public exposure (14%). Faculty and staff name state or federal political pressure (19%) — a concern that is much less prominent among students (8%). This suggests that the external political environment weighs heavily on faculty and staff in ways that do not register as centrally for students.

Conditions for dialogue are cultural, not merely programmatic. When asked what conditions are most essential for dialogue to function well, the top student response is a campus culture where people feel safe to disagree without fear of social punishment (34%), followed by a shared understanding that open dialogue is a core part of higher education (27%), and protection from harassment without shielding people from uncomfortable ideas (23%). These are cultural conditions that require visible institutional commitment and sustained norm-setting.

Finding 5: Free Speech and Dialogue Are Both Wanted, But Seen As In Tension

The relationship between free speech protections and dialogue initiatives is a live question in higher education, with some institutions and advocates treating them as complementary and others as competing priorities. Our data suggest that most respondents see them as related but not interchangeable, and that this has practical implications for how programs are framed and communicated.

A plurality of respondents wants both free speech protections and dialogue programs to fight polarization. When asked to choose between stronger free speech protections and more dialogue programs as tools for reducing polarization, one out of three (34%) students say both equally, the most common response. Meaningfully fewer students choose dialogue programs alone (24%) or choose free speech protections alone (20%). This pattern holds across audience and political ideology⁵.

"If a college or university could prioritize only one of the following to reduce division and polarization among students, which would you choose?"

	Students	Faculty / Staff
Stronger protections for free speech and open expression	20% 	15% 
More dialogue programs	24% 	25% 
Both equally	34% 	36% 
Neither, something else is needed	11% 	20% 
None of the above	11% 	4% 

Respondents are more likely to see free speech and dialogue as in conflict than as reinforcing. More than one of three (36%) of students say free speech and dialogue across differences are often in conflict; fewer say they reinforce each other (27%) or are not sure (23%). Combined with the finding that many respondents want both, this suggests that wanting both does not mean students see them as working in tandem. This may instead reflect a sense that each addresses something the other doesn't. Framing that positions a dialogue program as a mere extension of free speech values, or presents the two in conjunction without acknowledging their potential tension, may not resonate and could seem naïve to respondents.

Both free speech protections and dialogue initiatives in higher ed face similar legitimacy questions. When asked whether dialogue initiatives primarily serve to make institutions look good (a cynical interpretation) or primarily strengthen learning (a good-faith interpretation), a plurality (32%) choose the cynical take over the good-faith take (18%). When asked the same question about free speech protections, a plurality again (32%) choose the cynical interpretation (vs 20% who choose the good-faith). Skepticism about institutional motives

⁵ Political ideology results shown in Appendix Figure A4.

extends past a dialogue-specific problem to free speech issues, suggesting a general institutional credibility problem.

What the Data Did Not Support

Several hypotheses informed by prior research were not supported in this data, and these null findings are worth naming explicitly for practitioners who may be working from assumptions shaped by that literature.

Moderates do not show lower engagement intent. [Prior research](#) finds that moderates are less comfortable discussing controversial topics, which suggests that moderates may be less likely to participate in campus dialogue due to social risk. In this data, conservatives—not moderates—show the lowest engagement intent with dialogue programs.⁶ Moderates do show social risk aversion, but no more so than liberals or conservatives. Designing programs specifically to attract moderates may not be necessary.

Perceiving outpartisans as more politically extreme does not reduce engagement with dialogue programs. Almost half (46%) of students perceive students with different political views as somewhat or much more extreme than their own views, a meaningful false polarization signal. But this perception does not predict lower willingness to engage with dialogue programs, despite [prior research](#) that would suggest otherwise. The barriers data suggests why: the top concerns are about how the conversation will go (combaticiveness, social judgment, safety for honest disagreement) and not about how different the other person's views are.

Out-partisan alignment does not suppress favorability. Terms and framings perceived as aligned with the opposing political side are not necessarily seen unfavorably. For example, conservative students perceive the term belonging as left-aligned yet still rate it highly favorable. The assumption that respondents will discount language they associate with the other political side is not supported here among higher ed audiences: perceived partisan alignment and personal favorability operate somewhat independently.

Recommendations

Treat the trust and legitimacy gap as a design problem, not a messaging problem. The trust gap — 81% personally willing to engage but only 45% trusting their institution — and the fact that a third of students and faculty/staff see dialogue initiatives as mostly symbolic or performative both reflect the same underlying issue: a mismatch between what institutions say and what they do. Aspirational messaging about dialogue won't close this gap. The Constructive Dialogue Institute's [research on building cultures of dialogue](#) points to concrete levers: predictable and evenly-applied policies rather than reactive, case-by-case responses; an ecosystem approach that builds norms and continuity of relationships, rather than relying on one-off events; giving students and faculty a genuine role in shaping programs through advisory input, co-design, or student-led facilitation; and visible leadership modeling. Symbolic support without follow-through, resources, or willingness to defend dialogue principles under pressure will reinforce the very skepticism this finding identifies.

Make programs visible and address deeper barriers. Many students don't know a dialogue program exists, so increasing visibility is a necessary first step. But once aware, students still hesitate over fear of unproductive argument, social judgment, and lack of psychological safety. Addressing these means building structural commitments into programs themselves:

⁶ Framing crossed with ideology results is shown in Appendix Figure A4.

clear facilitation norms, confidentiality structures, and conversation skills training. Addressing faculty/staff barriers of personal and reputational risk requires attending to the institutional climate directly: explicit leadership backing and modeling, protections from retaliation, and insulation from political pressure.

Develop audience-specific communications. Faculty/staff are broadly positive across all framings tested, so framing choice matters less for faculty/staff-facing communications. Workplace and inquiry perform best for faculty/staff, but even the weakest framings remain strongly positive. Framing choice matters considerably more for students, where engagement varies widely depending on framing. Student-facing communications should lead with workplace, inquiry, or community depending on program fit.

Lead with civil dialogue or constructive dialogue as default language. These terms score well on positivity, clarity, and inclusivity across ideological groups. They are modestly left-coded, but this does not suppress conservative favorability. They score similarly in net positivity to plain "dialogue," though they may benefit from brief framing or context given their lower clarity scores. Heterodoxy and pluralism should be avoided in public-facing communications due to low familiarity and clarity.

Use workplace, inquiry, and community framings for program communications. Workplace generates the highest engagement among students and faculty/staff, and is the only framing tested that holds conservative student engagement in positive territory. Where a program's substance genuinely fits a workplace-skills framing, it is the safest default. Where it doesn't, inquiry and community remain reasonable choices, performing comparably to workplace on favorability and engagement overall. Civic framing performs less well than inquiry and community, but is still generally positive on both favorability and engagement. Avoid personal framing as a primary frame.

Appendix

Figure A1

Dialogue Framing by Trust for Faculty/Staff

Framing	All			Low Trust		
	Net Pos	Net Engage	L vs R	Net Pos	Net Engage	L vs R
community	+51%	+51%	+44% L	+18%	+6%	+47% L
inquiry	+70%	+64%	+40% L	+62%	+52%	+24% L
workplace	+75%	+65%	+20% L	+50%	+14%	+21% L
personal	+68%	+51%	+34% L	+47%	+18%	+41% L
civic	+71%	+55%	+38% L	+91%	+36%	0%

Low Trust = 'Not very much' or 'Not at all' on (institutional_dialogue_trust) ('If your institution organized a dialogue program, how much would you trust it to be genuinely open and not politically motivated?'). Net Pos = % Very/Somewhat positive - % Very/Somewhat negative. Net Engage = % Very or Somewhat Likely - % Very or Somewhat Unlikely to support

Figure A2

Dialogue Framing by Ideology for Students

Framing	Liberal			Moderate			Conservative		
	Fav	Eng	L-R	Fav	Eng	L-R	Fav	Eng	L-R
inquiry	+82%	+21%	+30%	+77%	+33%	+25%	+53%	-27%	+24%
community	+79%	+20%	+37%	+83%	+17%	+21%	+62%	-2%	+26%
civic	+73%	+19%	+40%	+53%	+10%	+35%	+53%	-21%	+30%
workplace	+80%	+47%	+38%	+67%	+13%	+31%	+66%	+15%	+19%
personal	+75%	0%	+35%	+52%	-21%	+24%	+57%	-30%	+21%

Fav = Net Favorability (Pos minus Neg). Eng = Net Engagement (Likely minus Not likely). L-R = Left minus Right.

Figure A3

Term Perceptions by Faculty/Staff

Term	Very Positive Somewhat Negative	Somewhat Positive	Neither Very Negative	Not familiar	Net Positivity	Net Belonging	Net Clear	L vs R
Dialogue-specific Terms								
Constructive dialogue	21	36	30	6 3 3	+48%	0%	+64%	+33% L
Dialogue	24	26	41	4 4	+41%	+4%	+74%	+17% L
Civil dialogue	14	34	26	11 14	+37%	+6%	+31%	0%
Civil discourse	20	23	30	14 2 11	+27%	+7%	+45%	+18% L
Dialogue across differences	18	21	41	10 5 5	+23%	-18%	+44%	+36% L
Dialogue across disagreement	12	25	34	16 6 6	+16%	-6%	0%	+16% L
Related Terms								
Democracy	57	19	24		+76%	+30%	+78%	+49% L
Intellectual inquiry	44	24	15	6 12	+62%	+21%	+35%	+29% L
Free expression	39	29	24	8	+61%	-5%	+79%	+18% L
Belonging	45	20	15	10 10	+55%	-12%	+50%	+50% L
Free speech	44	22	22	10 2	+54%	+5%	+80%	+10% R
Bridging/bridge-building	27	31	23	12 8	+46%	0%	+46%	+50% L
Intellectual diversity	27	24	34	7 7	+44%	+2%	+51%	+17% L
Academic debate	23	37	23	11 6	+43%	-3%	+71%	+6% R
DEI	32	30	11	20 2 5	+39%	-18%	+77%	+70% L
Centers for civic thought/leadership	10	36	36	5 5 8	+36%	+13%	+23%	+13% L
Inclusion	39	16	24	18 3	+34%	-16%	+95%	+76% L
Pluralism	25	12	34	6 22	+31%	+3%	0%	+28% L
Open inquiry	26	14	40	5 5 10	+31%	+12%	+5%	+5% L
Viewpoint diversity	16	30	27	14 3 11	+30%	-16%	+46%	+8% L
Ideological diversity	13	20	29	18 9 11	+7%	-2%	+42%	+7% L
Heterodoxy	5 5	24	11 5	50	-5%	-5%	-58%	+11% L

Net Positivity = Very/Somewhat positive – Very/Somewhat negative. Net Belonging = Definitely/Mostly for people like me – Definitely/Mostly for people unlike me. Net Clear = Very/Somewhat clear – Very/Somewhat unclear.

Figure A4

Barriers to Dialogue Reported By Students by Ideology

"What, if anything, might make you hesitant to engage in campus dialogue? Select up to three reasons."

Barrier	Avg	Ideology			Lib-Con
		Lib	Mod	Con	
Not wanting to get into a combative or unproductive argument	37%	41%	29%	30%	+11%
Worry about being socially judged or “cancelled”	27%	22%	29%	39%	-16%
Not feeling it is safe enough for honest disagreement	25%	25%	20%	30%	-5%
Feeling awkward or anxious talking to people I don't know	24%	27%	23%	16%	+11%
Not feeling confident in how to navigate difficult conversations	20%	23%	17%	13%	+11%
Worry that something I say could be recorded or shared publicly	18%	16%	21%	21%	-5%
Worry that the program may be politically biased	17%	15%	21%	21%	-6%
Worry about hearing offensive or harmful views	16%	20%	10%	9%	+11%
Worry that my views will be challenged or criticized	15%	15%	17%	15%	0%
Not having enough time	13%	13%	14%	13%	+0%
Not seeing it as relevant or worthwhile	13%	13%	12%	14%	-1%
Not having enough opportunities to participate	7%	8%	7%	6%	+1%
Not sure	3%	3%	5%	4%	-1%
None of these	2%	2%	2%	3%	-2%
Other	1%	1%	1%	0%	+0%

Figure A5

"If a college or university could prioritize only one of the following to reduce division and polarization among students, which would you choose?"

	Undergraduates			Faculty / Staff		
	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Stronger protections for free speech and open expression	20%	19%	23%	13%	28%	15%
More dialogue programs	26%	21%	25%	29%	17%	20%
Both equally	34%	40%	31%	37%	38%	32%
Neither, something else is needed	11%	8%	9%	21%	10%	20%
None of the above	8%	11%	12%	0%	7%	12%

Cell values = % selecting each response within ideology group. Excludes 'Not sure' and missing. Rows in questionnaire order.

