



Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative

Integrating Democratic Deliberation into the Classroom

An Introduction to the Collaborative

Interested in improving discussions in your classes? By design, many of our classrooms – and especially our seminars – invite students to grapple with matters over which persons, for good reasons, may disagree. In fact, one might say that classroom life at **a college like ours exists partly to promote a culture of good argument** where diverse positions on philosophical, political, interpretive, aesthetic, social, and scientific claims are welcomed as the primary fuel for activating intellectual community.

However, **productive disagreement is a complex and challenging goal** to put into practice. Saturated by debates we witness on mass media, we tend to think of disagreement as an anxious or even distasteful event, leading us to consider everyday argument among the least effective modes of interaction. The public sphere is awash in bitter exchanges that displace real inquiry with sensationalism, causing us to eschew rather than welcome the collaboration of multiple perspectives, contrasting views, and competing claims.

As part of the **Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative**, over 60 faculty members from 28 higher education institutions have endeavored to integrate such collaboration into their courses in the face of these challenges. During their year-long fellowship, these faculty learned about deliberative pedagogy theories and techniques, embedded them into their own deliberative course plans and syllabi, and then taught these new deliberative courses.

The faculty fellows share their questions, insights, and lessons learned with one another, and then reflect on their experiences in [blog posts](#) on the website of the [Deliberative Citizenship Initiative \(DCI\)](#), which has organized the Collaborative with support from the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS), The Duke Endowment, Davidson's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations. As Associate Professor of Religion at Davidson College and Collaborative member Rachel Pang commented, "One of the best things about participating in the DeeP Collaborative was the chance to engage with a group of experienced and creative pedagogues at Davidson and other ACS institutions."

Through the generous support of the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), **the DCI will host a fifth year of the DeeP Collaborative in 2026-27**. Two faculty members from each institution that has been accepted to join the Deliberative Citizenship Network (DCN) will join the Collaborative. To learn more about the DCN and how your institution can apply, visit [here](#). Any faculty member who wishes to enhance their ability to embed more deliberation about questions and issues involving important disagreements in their classes should encourage their institutions to join the DCN. More on the background, goals, and expectations of the Collaborative is provided below.

Good Argument and the Liberal Arts

Academic life thrives on the ground of difference. In fact, it is difficult to envision how we can continually deepen and expand our knowledge without active challenges to the status quo, reasoned consideration of contrasting analyses, or the delineation of opposed interpretations. We wish to support our students' involvement in constructive disagreements as an expected feature of academic life and a vital disposition for democratic living.

Both in **their professional and public lives**, our students will need to navigate disagreements, either as participants in (often complex and protracted) deliberations and as leaders who help others weigh claims with clarity and fairness. The capacity to engage in civil debate, discriminate among values, and communicate freely with others in the realm of ideas are highlighted as key features of a liberal arts education in Davidson's Statement of Purpose and in many other institutions' mission statements.

Why Deliberation?

Valued since classical times, **deliberation** is the social practice of collectively considering multiple and contrasting positions on a matter of wide interest in order to determine (if possible) agreed-upon ways of thinking or acting in the face of a shared dilemma. Such deliberation is a prized skill in public and intellectual settings and is a sensibility that liberally educated students have long been known for. It embodies an eagerness to approach important questions with equanimity, however thorny and challenging they may be.

Rooted in the Latin term for *weighing*, **deliberation differs from both discussion**, which denotes two or more persons sharing thoughts on a particular topic, **and from debate**, which involves a contest of opposing arguments to determine a winner. Both are important forms of public discourse, but deliberation asks more from its participants than either discussion or debate. Deliberators wish to become deeply familiar with **others' positions**, to locate the **assumptions** upon which others' determinations rest, and to value experiential, methodologic, and technical **evidence** as supports for their claims. It aims for open and honest exchange, mindful of the many ways in which interlocutors can talk past one another or too hastily conclude a conversation that might profitably be sustained.

In academic parlance, our classrooms are characterized either as lecture- or discussion-based, but the dynamism of good discussion tends to be hard-won and its techniques unclear. **How many of us have tried to assemble the necessary ingredients only to have the event fall below our expectations?** Indeed, even the best-planned class discussions may easily devolve, the guiding question on the table dissolving into a proposition for single-minded debate. Or, we find that a discussion becomes more performative than transformative, students rushing past one another's claims with little deep listening taking place and with that few opportunities to reconsider or revise one's initial position.

DCI 2026-2027 Deliberative Pedagogy Collaborative

If you are interested in overcoming these obstacles and learning new ways to improve and deepen the quality of discussions in your classes, we encourage you to apply to encourage your institution to apply to join the Deliberative Citizenship Network (DCN). Each DCN institution will be able to send two faculty members to participate in **the DCI's 2026-2027 Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative as a Faculty Fellow**. The Collaborative is designed to make it possible for faculty to explore pedagogical approaches focused on enhancing classroom deliberation in the face of complex, difficult, or seemingly intractable disagreements (what deliberation theorists call “wicked problems”).

The DeeP Collaborative allows faculty members to examine their own practices, to learn new techniques for bringing constructive disagreement into the classroom, and to imagine how deliberation may enliven the learning outcomes of their courses.

Specifically, it enables faculty to:

- Design new courses and redesign existing courses so as to sequence reading assignments, writing assignments, and research activities in ways that feature interpretive, analytic, or other epistemic disagreements as objects of study.
- Improve the quality of classroom conversations about public and/or intellectual issues by teaching students deliberative techniques, including how to stage a deliberation as an event that enhances the learning outcomes of a course, how to use deliberation as a way to research a history of claims and evidence about a contestable subject, and how to enact empathetic listening, social reasoning, and ethical argument.
- Bring issues of wide public interest into the classroom so that students may glimpse the vicissitudes of civic debate and identify for themselves the challenges of good argument in the face of ideological, cultural, and identity-based difference.

Participating Faculty Fellows can do so by deeply embedding deliberation-related learning outcomes, assignments, readings, and classroom activities into their course. This holistic approach can be highly effective, and we prefer that faculty develop such “deliberation-involved” courses in their work with the Collaborative. However, they might also develop short “deliberation modules” that expose students to the processes and principles of deliberation without integrating it throughout a course. To learn more about these options, please see the DCI's [Pathways to Deliberation in the Classroom](#).

The DCI understands that cultivating a broadly diverse community is crucial to its educational mission and to its foundational commitment to leadership and service. The DCI is thus committed to welcoming diversity of thought and experience in its cohort of Faculty Fellows. We seek out applications from talented faculty, staff and students from diverse cultures, ethnicities, races, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, ages, national origins, political viewpoints, socio-economic backgrounds, and abilities.

What is the Deliberative Pedagogy Collaborative?

A community of faculty members – Faculty Fellows – dedicated to learning about and utilizing innovative ways that foster productive deliberation in their courses

What are the Collaborative's goals?

Members of the Collaborative will:

1. Engage with the deliberative pedagogy literature to understand both broad frameworks and approaches and specific tools and techniques for improving the quality of student deliberations
2. Apply these approaches and techniques by integrating deliberation into one of their courses
3. Engage with one another about introducing deliberation into the classroom
4. Reflect on and share their deliberative pedagogy experiences with their colleagues and the public

What will the Faculty Fellows members of the Collaborative do?

- **Summer Reading:** Collaborative members will read selections related to deliberative pedagogy from several books provided by the DCI.
- **Deliberative Pedagogy Orientation Workshop in August 2026:** Members of the Collaborative will attend an all-day, in-person, interactive and hands-on workshop on **August 12-14, 2026** to review and apply the basic principles and practices of deliberative pedagogy (food, accommodations, and travel will be covered for DCN participants). The workshop begins with a dinner on the first day and ends with lunch on the third day.
- **Deliberation Facilitator Training Program in Fall 2026:** Members will attend two 4-hour training sessions on **Sunday, August 30, 2026** and **Sunday, September 6, 2026** from 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm EST that will introduce them to the skills and techniques of effective deliberation facilitators. Virtual and in-person attendance is possible.
- **Deliberative Pedagogy Skills Workshops:** Members will also attend one additional advanced workshop each semester (approximately one hour long) that will provide a deeper dive into specific pedagogical techniques. Topics will be determined according to members' interests. These workshops will be scheduled in August 2026.
- **Development of a Deliberation Module or Deliberation-Involved Course (New or Existing):** During Fall 2026, members will incorporate deliberation-related learning outcomes, activities, assignments, and readings into a new or existing course, preferably one that they will offer in Spring 2027.
- **Collaborative Meetings and Readings:** The Collaborative will meet as a group four times (2x each semester) to discuss assigned readings related to deliberative pedagogy and their progress on their course development. When faculty apply to the Collaborative, they will be asked to indicate their availability to meet for one hour on weekday afternoons at 4:30 pm, Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 11 am, and Friday afternoons between 12:30 and 4:30 pm during the weeks of October 19, November 9, January 11, and April 26.

- **Faculty Partner Meetings:** In between the larger cohort meetings, members will meet up with their faculty partner(s) 2x during each semester to discuss their efforts to incorporate deliberation into their courses. These meetings will be held the weeks of October 26, December 7, February 8, and April 5 based on the times faculty partners indicate they are available. In these meetings, we will work to connect faculty from the same or adjacent disciplines to enhance the pedagogical and professional value of the Collaborative experience while also fostering opportunities for inter-disciplinary exchange of ideas within the Collaborative as a whole.
- **Blog Post or Video Blog about Deliberation-Based Course Innovation:** Collaborative members will either write or record a blog post describing their experience developing and teaching deliberation-involved course.
- **Deliberation Assessment Summary and Materials:** Members will submit a short summary of how they evaluated student performance on their deliberation-related anonymous survey from the DCI to their students asking them about their deliberation experiences in the course (faculty will be welcome to add additional questions to the survey). They will also share any (anonymized) reflections from their students about their deliberations in your class.
- **Department Presentation or Panel Discussion:** Collaborative participants will also make a presentation to their department about their work with the Collaborative and/or participate in a panel discussion for their wider college community to learn about how they have embedded deliberation into their courses.

With the exception of the Orientation Workshop that all participants must attend in person, all other Collaborative workshops and meetings will be hybrid – participants will be able to participate either remotely or in-person.

Is there a stipend for participating in the Collaborative?

Faculty Fellows will be eligible for a **faculty stipend from their institution** for participating in the DeeP Collaborative and serving on their campus DISCOURSE Team as part of their institution's participation in the DCN. The default amount for these stipends is \$2000, but the exact amount will depend on each institution's policies and procedures.

Please visit the DCI's webpage on [Deliberation Across the Curriculum](#) and this announcement about the Deliberative Citizenship Network (DCN). For more information, please direct any questions to Graham Bullock (grbullock@davidson.edu), the Faculty Director of the DCI and Project Director/Primary Investigator of the DCN.