

Building Skills for Dialogue in Virginia Higher Education

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July 23, 2024



STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER
EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA

Presentation Outline

- **Constructive Dialogue Institute partnership**
- **Results from 2023-24 cohort**
- **2024 Day of Dialogue**
- **Next steps**

Constructive Dialogue Institute partnership

Constructive Dialogue Institute (CDI)

- **A national non-profit that helps colleges and universities transform their campuses into inclusive learning environments that support dialogue across differences.**



<https://constructivedialogue.org>

What is constructive dialogue?

- A form of conversation where people with different perspectives try to understand each other – without giving up their own beliefs – in order to live, learn, and work together.



<https://constructivedialogue.org/>

- **Six 30-minute lessons (online)**
 - Psychological concepts
 - Practical skills for dialogue
 - Real-life scenarios and interactive activities
- **Includes three optional peer-to-peer exercises and two quizzes**
- **Can be used by individual instructors at no cost**

<https://constructivedialogue.org/perspectives>

Institution-level Implementation

- **More likely to result in culture change**
- **Fee based on enrollment**
- **Subsidized by SCHEV**
 - 2023-24: SCHEV covered 50%
 - 2024-25: SCHEV covering 33.3%

Participating Institutions

- Christopher Newport U
- Danville CC
- George Mason U
- James Madison U
- Longwood U
- Norfolk State U
- Northern Virginia CC
- Radford U
- Richard Bland College
- U of Mary Washington
- UVA (2024-25)
- VCU (2024-25)
- Virginia Tech
- William & Mary

Results from 2023-24 cohort

Six outcome metrics

- **Affective polarization:** Dislike of those with different political views
- **Belonging:** Feeling accepted as part of a group
- **Conflict resolution:** Ability to disagree peacefully
- **Dichotomous thinking:** Tendency to think in terms of polar opposites
- **Intellectual humility:** Awareness that one could be wrong
- **Psychological safety:** Feeling safe to take interpersonal risks in a group

Learners improved on all outcomes

Outcome	Learners showing improvement (%)		Statistically significant?
	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	
Affective polarization	52	46	Yes (Fall & Spring)
Belonging	43	44	Yes (Fall & Spring)
Conflict resolution	44	41	No (Fall & Spring)
Dichotomous thinking	35	35	Yes (Fall & Spring)
Intellectual humility	46	37	Yes (Fall & Spring)
Psychological safety	40	50	Yes (Fall & Spring)

F23: 5,876 learners began, 74% completed

Sp24: 1,205 learners began, 75% completed

Patterns of improvement were similar across demographic groups

- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Sexual orientation
- First generation status
- Political views

Perceived Benefits

A majority of students self-reported:

- Applying skills in their personal or professional life
- More confidence communicating across differences
- More confidence having difficult conversations
- Gaining valuable professional and/or life skills
- More comfortable working with diverse others
- Building more meaningful relationships with their peers

2024 Day of Dialogue

May 30, 2024: Virginia Tech

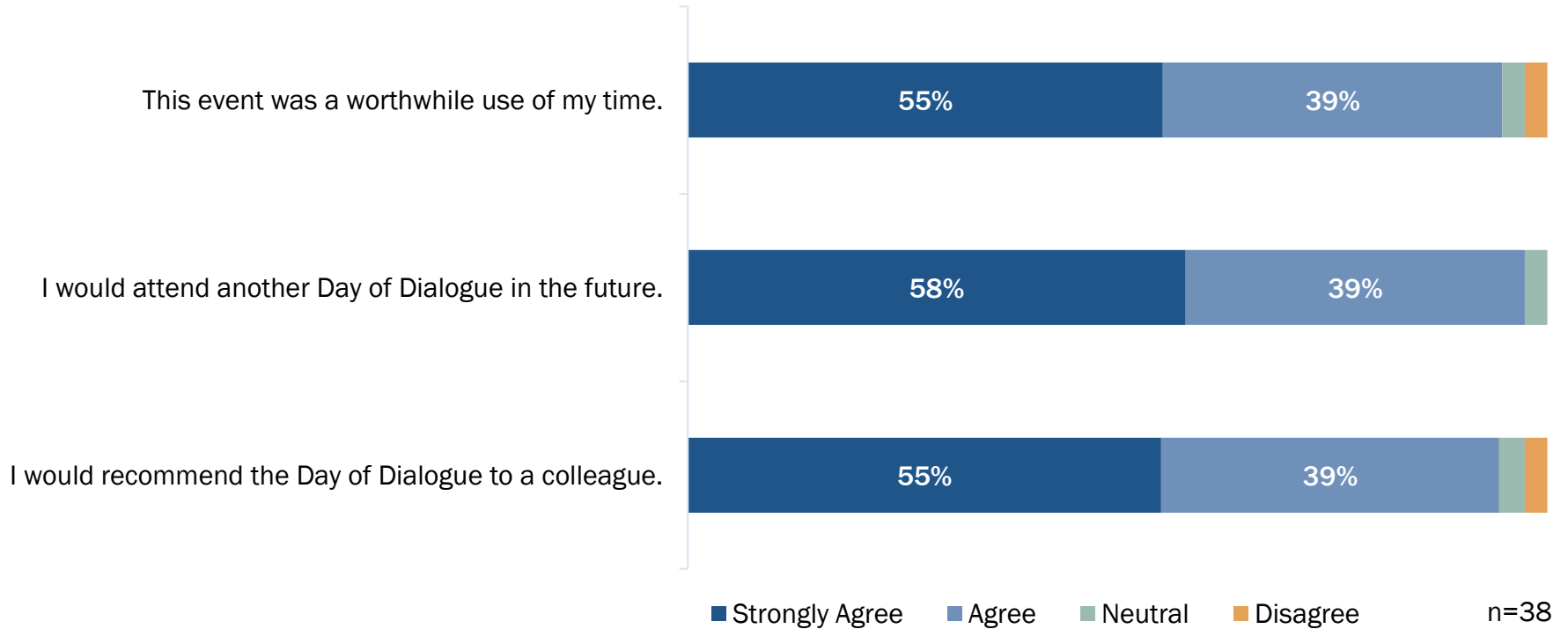
Focus on dialogue models

- Two experiential sessions
- Panel & table discussions
- Solutions-oriented activity

Approximately 100 attendees
from ~20 institutions



Participants were pleased



What they said

“Having the opportunity to speak with counterparts using the dialogue methods on their campus, getting this information firsthand was priceless.”

“I enjoyed the panel learning about different structured dialogue models. Being able to talk with professionals across the state was also incredibly helpful.”

“It was really interesting to talk about how dialogue and discussion is happening on other VA campuses. That community building was the most valuable part of the day.”

“I'm so grateful for low and no-cost professional development options.”

Next steps

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- **2024-25 CDI cohort**
 - 14 institutions participating
 - **College Debates & Discourse training**
 - A partnership among ACTA, Braver Angels and BridgeUSA
 - September 13, Virginia Military Institute
 - **2025 Day of Dialogue**
 - **VA250**

Questions/Discussion