



Campus Compact

Iowa & Minnesota

Constitution Day Dialogue Background

About Constitution Day

All educational institutions that receive Federal funds are required to hold an educational program about the U.S. Constitution for its students. According to the U.S. Senate, Constitution Day was established “to encourage all Americans to learn more about the Constitution.” Congress established Constitution Week in 1956 “to begin each year on September 17th, the date in 1787 when delegates to the Convention signed the Constitution. In 2004, Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia included key provisions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of Fiscal Year 2005 designating September 17th of each year as Constitution Day and requiring public schools and governmental offices to provide educational programs to promote a better understanding of the Constitution.”ⁱ

Why Dialogue

In a context of polarization and distrust, conversations about shared values and our nation’s founding documents are deeply important for developing collaborative relationships, Constitutional knowledge, civic agency, and our democracy’s future. Last year, Minnesota Campus Compact (MNCC) worked with campus leaders and community partners to pilot a series of local dialogues across the state with the goal of increasing students’ capacities to listen respectfully to the ideas of others and engage in both constructive and critical discussion of public questions. After a successful 2018 launch, the initiative is growing to include Iowa and Minnesota campuses in 2019.

- 93% of the public agrees that the nation has a civility problem¹
- Higher education institutions across the country are increasingly incorporating the theory and practice of dialogue across different dimensions of the curriculum, co-curriculum, pedagogy, and administration and governance.²
- Dialogue equips students, faculty and staff with the skills to build shared understanding of challenges, to empathize with experiences very different from one’s own, and to create positive change from collaboration.
- Dialogue as pedagogy can enhance student learning, feelings of belonging, and skills for a globalized workforce.³
- Dialogue in college can impact students’ post-college civic and community engagement.⁴

¹ <https://www.webershandwick.com/news/amid-political-party-conflict-individuals-agree-erosion-of-civility-is-harming-our-democracy/>

² <https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol6/iss1/art9/>

³ https://compact.org/resource-posts/dialogue-resources-for-higher-education/#_ftn2

⁴ <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mjcs/3239521.0017.103/1>

Planned Activities

As of August 12, 2019, thirteen campuses are confirmed hosts of Constitution Day Dialogues. Each participating college or university determines its specific plans. Dialogues are organized using whatever dialogue models and addressing whatever specific topics the local team determines is best. Here are a few examples:

- Augsburg University, Gustavus Adolphus College, Inver Hills Community College, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis College, Minnesota State University, Mankato, and South Central College will all host dialogues on the topic of the census, some using the ["2020 Census: We all count. Will we all be counted?"](#) dialogue guide, and others using other models.
- Simpson College will host a Dialogue on religious freedom and the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment as part of its week-long First Amendment Days programming.
- St. Catherine University will host a "Shake it up with the Sisters" dialogue on the topic of immigration with students and the Sisters of St. Joseph.
- The University of Northern Iowa will host campus-wide dialogue on school segregation in the United States today.
- Read more about other campus's activities here: <https://mncampuscompact.org/resource-posts/constitution-day-dialogue-campuses/>

Partners

Minnesota Campus Compact worked in collaboration with the Minnesota Higher Education Network to develop the ["2020 Census: We all count. Will we all be counted?"](#) dialogue guide. Special thanks to Metropolitan State University's Masters in Advocacy and Political Leadership program, including faculty director Adrienne Falcón and graduate interns Ben Baglio and Nima Hussein, and the State of Minnesota Demographer's Office.

Dialogue Year-Round

Year-round and throughout the state, campuses are using dialogue and deliberation strategies both inside and beyond the classroom as tools for civic education and community problem solving. Iowa and Minnesota are home to many leaders and innovators in this work, and information about some of the many dialogue approaches and strategies are available here: <http://mncampuscompact.org/what-we-do/initiatives/dialogue-initiative/>

About Iowa & Minnesota Campus Compact

Iowa & Minnesota Campus Compact strengthens the capacity of colleges and universities to fulfill the public purposes of higher education through its network of 57 campuses. This includes educating students through community and civic learning experiences and making an impact in communities through reciprocal partnerships that address community-identified goals. IAMNCC creates partnership opportunities, supports quality programming through professional development, and promotes the importance of the civic mission. For more Minnesota information visit mncampuscompact.org. For Iowa opportunities, visit iacampuscompact.org.

ⁱ <https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/ConstitutionDay.htm>