

Sponsored by:



Achieving the Dream &

UHD Center for Public Deliberation

2009

Achieving the Dream at UHD



**DIALOGUE TO
ACTION CIRCLES
ISSUE GUIDE**

2/25/2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

About this Dialogue to Action Circle Guide.....	2
Why Talk about College Student Success?	3
Why Use Dialogue to Action Circles to Talk about Student Success?.....	4
Why Might a Dialogue to Action Program Work at UHD?	5
Where Will this Lead?	5
How Dialogue to Action Circles Lead to Action and Change.....	6
Steps in the Dialogue to Action Circle.....	7

DISCUSSION MATERIALS

Session 1: What Does a Good Education Mean to Each of Us?	8
Session 2: Why are Some of Our Students Not Succeeding?	14
Session 3: Picture a Community Where All Students Can Do Their Best	20
Session 4: What Specific Actions Do We Want to Take?	26

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Action Forum: Moving from Dialogue to Action	34
Tentative Agenda for Action Forum.....	35

About this Dialogue to Action Circle Issue Guide

This guide for public problem solving was adapted, with permission, from the Everyday Democracy issue guide book titled, “Helping Every Student Succeed: Schools and Communities Working Together.” The Dialogue to Action Circle Program created by Everyday Democracy is considered a best practice in the public deliberation field. In recent years, hundreds of communities across the country have used Dialogue to Action Circles (formerly known as “Study Circles”) to address racism and racial equity, school reform, growth and development, town budgeting and governance, police-community relations, immigration, and a range of other public issues.

This guide has also been supplemented with material from Dr. Thomas Workman’s UHD Faculty and Student Focus groups and from information from the Achieving the Dream website.

This issue book was compiled by:

Windy Y. Lawrence, Ph.D.

Director, UHD Center for Public Deliberation
Associate Professor of Communication Studies



INTRODUCTION

All across the U.S.A., people are concerned about a large number of young adults who are unable to attain a college education. We want the best for our country and for all of our citizens to have the chance to realize the dream of a college education.

We know, however, that many students are not doing well. Up to 50% won't graduate from high school, and those that do enter college are often underprepared and lack basic reading, writing, and math skills. This dialogue to action circle program will help us work together to help every person here at UHD have the opportunity to succeed.

To reach this goal, all of us must be involved: students, full-time and part-time faculty, administration, staff, and community members from all walks of life. If we listen to each other and work together, we will have a better chance of finding solutions that help students do their best in college.

Why Talk about Student Success?

When we look at UHD graduation rates, we see who is succeeding and who is not. But understanding why some students succeed more than others is far more difficult. We all have different ideas and views about why some students do not do as well.

How will a Dialogue to Action Circle Program work at UHD?

It ...

- will host five circles at the same time.
- will have each circle made up of eight to thirteen people from different backgrounds.
- will meet together for four, two-hour sessions.
- sets its own ground rules. This helps people respect each other and get results.
- considers the issue from many points of view.
- helps people see where they agree and have common ground.
- is led by student facilitators who won't take sides, and who help manage the discussion. They are not there to "teach" or "educate" the group about the issue.
- starts with personal stories, then helps the group look at a problem from many points of view. Next the group talks about how they want things to be. Finally, they make plans for action and change.
- is led by UHD CPD Student Associates, who are enrolled in a service learning course, COMM 4390, taught by Dr. Windy Lawrence, Director of UHD CPD.

Here is what some people think are the roots of the problem:

- There is not enough money.
- Teaching methods and styles.
- Some students have unrealistic expectations about the demands of the university.
- The university is not prepared for the larger social problems of our students.
- College students often face personal life challenges (work, lack of family support, health problems, financial challenges, burnout, etc.)
- Some students have a sense of entitlement to higher grades despite limited effort and energy.
- Faculty inflexibility to student personal or academic challenges.
- Inadequate academic preparation for college coursework.
- University and College system-based issues (advising, financial aid, other services).
- Students who have become convinced that they are not smart enough to succeed academically.

Here is what people see as the solutions to the problem...

- Raise standards and hold students accountable.
- Increase opportunities for teaching improvement and faculty evaluation.
- Students, faculty, staff, administration, and community members working together for student success.
- More diversity in faculty and staff.
- More programs that address faculty and student support needs.

Why Use Dialogue to Action Circles to Talk about Student Success?

UHD has been working with Achieving the Dream (ATD), which is a multiyear national initiative created to help more college students succeed, complete courses, and earn certificates degrees. ATD is built on the belief that broad institutional change – informed by student achievement data – is crucial to achieve this result. ATD works to create a “culture of evidence” that focuses academic activities through assessment, evaluation, and inquiry.

ATD at UHD have recently partnered with the UHD Center for Public Deliberation (UHD CPD) to create a Dialogue to Action Circles program. Dialogue to Action Circles is a term used to describe a democratic process for community change which has small-group dialogue at its heart. Dialogue to Action Circles invite many people from all walks of life and all parts of the community to work together to address community issues. We believe this program can help in the following ways:

- By helping more students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members become aware of existing programs, like Achieving the Dream, they can open up those programs to more students.
- Participants in the Dialogue to Action Circles can bring new energy and ideas into current programs. They can also expand and improve these programs and identify needs that have not been met.

Why might a Dialogue to Action Program work for UHD?

- People care about their communities. They want to make things better.
- Complex problems call for many kinds of solutions.
- People from all backgrounds and all parts of society have something to offer.
- When everybody is included in public life, everybody benefits.
- When people talk with each other face-to-face, they get to know each other and trust each other. New ideas and plans are born.
- When people consider different points of view on a complex issue, they find common ground and better solutions.
- When people know their voice counts, they are more likely to take part in creating and carrying out ideas for change.
- The more people who are involved, the bigger the impact.
- Change of any sort is stronger and deeper when people work together.

Where Will This Lead:

In the last session of each dialogue to action circle, people will develop ideas for action. These ideas will be presented at a UHD community “action forum,” where administrators, decision makers, and members of Achieving the Dream will be present. This will take place after all the circles finish. At this final meeting, each group will present and explain their action ideas. At the action forum, a range vote will be taken to see where the energy is for moving forward and to create a reasonable number of items to create task force groups around. Those people who want to stay involved will work together to put these ideas into action.

How Dialogue to Action Circles Lead to Action and Change

The table shows some of the kinds of change that can happen.

Kind of change	How does it happen?	Example
Changes in individual behavior and attitudes.	Better understanding of the issues and of one another inspires people to “make a difference.”	A participant in a community-wide program on racism decides never again to let racist remarks go by without a comment.
New relationships and networks.	Trust and understanding develop between participants in the dialogue.	Following dialogue to action program on community-police relationships, young people and police officers hold weekly meetings.
New working collaborations.	Individuals and organizations develop new relationships and new ideas for new solutions.	After circles on neighborhood issues, residents, police officers, and mental health advocates create an emergency team to help mentally ill people who wander the street.
Institutional Changes	Leaders and/or members of an institution gain new insights in dialogue to action circles that lead to changes within the institution and in the larger community.	After doing dialogue to action circles on race, leaders of several banks work with others to improve banking services to communities of color.
Changes in public policy	Public officials help organize forums and pledge to work with citizens to implement action ideas. <i>OR</i> Public officials take part in the organizing and dialogue, and gain new insights that have an impact on their policy making. <i>OR</i> Information from the forums is collected and reported to decision makers.	After participating in dialogue to action circles, a school superintendent creates new policies to involve parents in the district’s schools
Changes in community dynamics	Many hundreds of people take part in the circles. Once there is a “critical mass” of people who have a new understanding of the issues and of one another, their capacity for community work increases.	Circles on race happen in a community over years. In all kinds of settings, public meetings begin to operate according to dialogue to action circle principles. People learn to work together across differences, and feel a stronger sense of community.
Changes in community’s public life	Once people see the benefits of larger-scale dialogue to action, they make it an ongoing part of how their community works.	After a round of circles on education, the school district decides to use the circles routinely to involve citizens in creating and implementing its annual school-improvement plan.

Steps in a Dialogue to Action Circle

In Dialogue to Action Circles, each session builds on the one before it. Here is how the sessions fit together.

Session 1

MEET EACH OTHER

- Get to know and understand one another.
- Talk about what a good education means to us.
- Be given information about how our students are doing.

Session 2

EXPLORE THE PROBLEM

- Discuss how our students are doing.
- Talk about why we believe some students do not succeed in school.

Session 3

SET GOALS

- Create a “picture” of UHD where all our students do their best.

Session 4

PLAN FOR ACTION

- Talk about how to make our visions from Session 3 happen. Some of these ideas will be actions that people can do alone, or in groups. Others will be things that UHD or the community can do.

The Action Forum

After the four sessions are over, we will have a large meeting where we will collect action ideas from all of the dialogue to action circles. At this action forum, there will be a chance for people to sign up to do some of these things.

SESSION ONE: MEET EACH OTHER

What Does a Good Education Mean to Each of Us?

Introduction to the Session

By coming to this dialogue to action group, we show that we care about our university and our students. Each of us has much to offer. We all want to help every college student succeed at UHD. The goal of today's session is to get to know each other, and to share some of our hopes and concerns. This will help the rest of our sessions go better. Today, we will also talk about what a college education means to each of us. What do we want college graduates to be able to do? This will help us find action steps in the last session.

Part 1: Welcome and Introductions

(10 minutes)

- The facilitator will introduce him/herself, and explain his/her role.
- The facilitator will explain a little bit about our study circle program.
- Together with the facilitator, we will look through the “Steps in the Dialogue to Action” on page 7.
- Next, we will look over the “Introduction to the Session” on this page.
- Finally, we will go around the circle and say our names.

Facilitator Tips

- This session has five parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
- Help everyone feel welcome. Be sure each person has a chance to speak and to hear the other group members.
- List major themes from this session on large sheets of paper so everyone can see them.
- Save and type up the notes so that you can refer to them in later sessions.
- Label a large sheet of paper “Action ideas.” If group members come up with action ideas for helping every student succeed, list them here. (You will use these notes in Session 4).
- Label another large sheet of paper “Things we are already doing.” If group members bring up things that are already being done to help every student succeed, list them here. (You will use these notes in Part 4 of Session 3.)

Session 1, Part 2: Setting the Ground Rules

(10 minutes)

We need to agree on the rules about how to talk with and listen to each other. They will help our circle work better. Here are some ideas.

- Titles in this group are less important than in other areas of life. Every person here brings an important perspective to the discussion.
- Listen to and treat each other with respect.
- Each person gets a chance to talk.
- One person talks at a time. Don't cut people off.
- Speak for yourself. Don't try to speak for "your group" ("All students feel a certain way," or "all faculty feel a certain way.")
- Remember that people come from different cultural backgrounds and express themselves in different ways.
- If you feel hurt by what someone says, say so, and say why.
- It's OK to disagree.
- Help the facilitator keep things on track.
- It's okay to interrupt the conversation in order to help the recorder get your ideas down correctly and in the right place.

Session 1, Part 3: How Have Our Lives Shaped Our Ideas of a Good College Education?

(60 minutes)

Our own life stories often shape our ideas and beliefs. We will use this session to share parts of our life stories. This will help the rest of our sessions go better. Be as open and honest as possible with each other.

Starting Points:

1. Think Back: What was college like for you? What did you like and dislike? (For students, talk about what college is like for you today. What do you like and dislike?)
2. What do you think are the biggest problems facing our university?
3. What do you think is UHD's greatest strength – both inside and outside of UHD – for dealing with these problems?

4. What kind of tie does UHD have with us? How does UHD work with various members of the Houston community?

Session 1, Part 4: What Do We Want Our College Graduates To Know and Be Able To Do?

(30 minutes)

Before we talk about how we can help more students succeed, let's think about the purpose of a college education. What do we want our college students to know and be able to do when they graduate?

Using the Views

These viewpoints are here just to help us get started. Each view is written in the voice of a person who thinks it is a very important idea. *Some viewpoints that are important to you might not be on this list. Feel free to add other views.*

- First, someone will read each of the viewpoints out loud.
- Then, we will use the following questions to help us talk.
 1. What other viewpoints would you add? What is missing?
 2. Which viewpoints come closest to your own? Why?
 3. How have your life and values shaped your views?
 4. What new ideas or ways of thinking are you learning from others in your dialogue to action circle?

Viewpoints

View #1

According to this view...

College Graduates must learn academic rigor and be held to high standards.

Students must learn academic rigor if they are going to be competitive in today's global workforce. They must master and excel at a variety of skills or they simply will not be able to compete in most jobs, or in life. When we allow students to make excuses for

incomplete work or work that is not up to reasonable academic standards, we are allowing a disservice to that student. Further, when the university as a whole is complicit in a “hand holding” culture, it hurts the reputation and respect of the students’ academic degree, which further hurts the students.

View #2

According to this view...

College Graduates must be able to forge a good career.

Our college graduates must be able to get good jobs and forge careers with the attainment of their degrees. Professors, therefore, should work harder to tie course learning objectives to skills that are relevant to student careers. Students should have the chance to participate in college internships to help give them experience and training. Students will work harder in school when they know that doing well will help them get a good job/career. Further, with increasing college tuition rates, good jobs upon graduation are essential for today’s college students who often have large student loans.

View #3

According to this view...

College graduates must be responsible people.

College graduates must be responsible people, which means being able to show up and get the job done. It takes more than just skills to succeed in real life. College should encourage and instill the importance of basic values, such as honesty, respect, fulfilling our commitments, and service to others. Thus, part of college is about students learning to take responsibility and initiative for their education.

View #4

According to this view...

College Graduates must have skills for everyday life.

College should be a place where people learn the skills and information that is necessary to survive everyday life. College students need to know and learn practical areas such as knowledge about finances. Students need to learn how to relate well to others in the workplace and at home. They need to learn how to settle disputes. We need to teach them about hard issues like parenting, sex related diseases, drugs, and alcohol.

View #5

According to this view...

College Graduates must learn critical thinking skills, be ready to learn for a lifetime, and have a solid liberal arts foundation.

The best thing we can do is to teach students how to keep on learning. They must be able to talk clearly with others, think critically, and find out what they need to know. If they know how to work in teams and solve problems, they will be better prepared for the real world. Today's graduates will probably change jobs many times. In today's economy and global market, students must be able to adapt to change and a strong liberal arts education provides a strong base that can be taken into many areas of life.

Note to Facilitators

Remember to go back to the list of questions in "using the Views" on page 3 after you have read these views.

View #6

According to this view...

Graduates must learn to have the skills to be good citizens.

We are facing real problems in our society. Graduates need to know how to take part in community life and how to develop public judgment. They need the skills to help others in their community. They should learn about democracy, politics, and social issues. They should learn how to work in groups, and how to make decisions with other people. In fact, all areas of the college curriculum should be made relevant to participating as citizens in our social world.

Session 1, Part 5: Conclusion, and Getting Ready for Our Next Session

(10 minutes)

- Where do we agree or disagree?
- Write down any action ideas on the “Action Ideas” sheet so that you can work with them in Session 4.
- In our next session, we will look at some information provided by Achieving the Dream. To get ready for this, our facilitator will give you some information to help us talk about why some of our students are not succeeding.

Closing: Facilitator Tips

1. Thank people for coming and sharing.
2. Remind everyone that it is very important for them to attend every session.
3. Briefly explain what will be discussed next week. (The Session 2 “Introduction to the Session” will give you this information).

SESSION TWO: EXPLORE THE PROBLEM

Why Are Some of Our Students Not Succeeding?

Introduction to the Session

In Session 1, we talked about how our schools affect us. We asked, “What do we want our graduates to know and be able to do after they leave school?”

In this session, we will talk about why some students are not succeeding in our schools. This will help us develop goals and action ideas in the next sessions.

Session 2, Part 1: Getting Started

(10 minutes)

- Review the “Introduction to the Session.”
- Review the ground rules.
 - Does everyone still agree with the list?
 - Do we need to add anything?
- Since our last meeting, has anything happened that relates to this issue that you would like to share?
- Our facilitator will post the notes from Session 1. He/She will sum up the main ideas from that discussion. This will help us to be ready for our work today.

Facilitator Tips

- This session has four parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
- Post the notes (and pass out typed notes) on the general themes from Session 1 for all to see.
- List major themes from this session on large sheets of paper so everyone can see them.
- Save the notes and type them up so that you can refer to them in later sessions.
- Label a large sheet of paper “Action Ideas.” If group members come up with action ideas for helping every student succeed, list them here. (You will use these notes in Session 4.)
- Label another sheet of paper “Things We Are Already Doing.” If group members bring up things that are already being done to help every student succeed, list them here. (You will use these notes in Part 4 of Session 3. You may use them again when you are working on action ideas in Session 4.)
- In Part 2 of this session, use the fact sheets to help participants see themes, trends, and the “big picture.” Avoid getting bogged down in details.

Session 2, Part 2: How Are Our Students Doing?

(20 minutes)

At the end of our last session, our facilitator gave us some information on how our students are doing.

- When you look at the information, what stands out? Why?
- Does anything surprise you? Why?
- What overall themes and trends do you see? You may notice that some groups of students seem to be more successful than others.

Session 2, Part 3: Exploring the Roots of the “Achievement Gap.”

(80 minutes)

In Part 2, you may have noticed that some groups of students are doing better than others. The “gap” in success between different groups of students is what people call the “achievement gap.” When we help all of our students succeed, that “gap” will be closed.

Before we can close the achievement gap, we need to think about what causes it. We will probably have many different ideas about this. We may agree with each other on some points, and disagree with each other on other points. That is OK.

Using the Views

These viewpoints are here just to help us get started. Each view is written in the voice of a person who thinks it is a very important idea. ***Some viewpoints that are important to you might not be on this list. Feel free to add other views.***

- First, someone will read each of the viewpoints out loud.
- Then, we will use the following questions to help us talk.
 1. What other viewpoints would you add? What is missing?
 2. Which viewpoints come closest to your own? Why?
 3. How have your life and values shaped your views?
 4. Do race and culture play a part in the achievement gap? How? Does income level play a part? How?
 5. What new ideas or ways of thinking are you learning from others in your dialogue to action circle?

Viewpoints

View #1

According to this view...

People of color are treated differently than white people. This leads to a gap in student achievement.

Some examples:

- Students of color do not have many role models in school. They do not see enough adult leaders from their own culture.
- Many colleges and universities that serve students of color do not have enough money.
- Some students don't see their cultures represented in the curriculum. They can't see how college relates to their own lives. As a result, they lose interest in learning.

View #2

According to this view...

Universities have different goals for different groups of students.

Some examples:

- What people expect from students makes a difference in how they perform. College students from poor families get labeled as poor students, and often people expect less from them.
- People often label African-Americans and Latinos as poor students, and often have lower expectations for them.

View #3

According to this view...

The gap in family incomes leads to the achievement gap at the college level.

Some examples:

- Poorer students tend to work more while going to school.
- Poorer students are often less prepared for college since poorer neighborhoods get less money and resources for their K-12 education. Some students enter UHD lacking basic skills in writing, research, mathematical calculation, and analysis.
- Poorer students lack access to health care and other programs that are necessary to do well in college.

View #4

According to this view...

Professors spend so much time and energy dealing with student economic and social realities that they can't hold as rigorous standards with their teaching...

Some examples:

- A large percentage of UHD students work full-time while attending college full time.
- Because students are often overwhelmed with family responsibilities, they often prioritize their family commitments over their school work.
- Students do not attend class regularly.
- Growing percentage of students do not purchase and/or read required textbooks.
- Students unable to demonstrate basic proficiency in writing and computation.

View #5

According to this view ...

Some students do not have the support they need to make it though the school system.

Some examples:

- Advisors often seem not to have enough time to help each student.
- Because some students lack family support for their schooling, they are often attempting to navigate a confusing system alone and without experience.
- Some students do not have anyone to stand up for them or act as an advocate for them. The university's channels that exist for providing students with persons who will advocate for them are sometimes confusing or unclear.
- Similarly, navigating financial aid systems also present barriers for some students.

View #6

According to this view...

Some students hold attitudinal barriers to achieving the dream of a college education.

Some examples:

- Some students display poor motivation and study skills.
- Some students lack family support and role models in their college endeavors.
- Some students have poor time management skills.
- Some students have a low academic self-image

View #7

According to this view ...

Some professor teaching methods and styles are obstacles to student success.

Some examples include:

- Some professors are inflexible to students' personal or academic challenges.
- Some professors present materials without elaboration or detailed explanation.
- Some professors expect students to rely heavily on the textbook without explanation.
- Some students perceive that some faculty have unrealistic expectations about what they should be able to accomplish.
- There exist different perceptions between students and faculty on why students don't understand the material or do well.
- Students rely heavily on student guidance and encouragement to succeed academically. Some students speak about failing classes where it appears that professors "don't care."

View #8

According to this view...

UHD has yet to fulfill its vision of giving students a true four-year college experience and culture.

Some examples include:

- UHD is seen as a place that does not have a typical campus life.
- UHD is seen as a place where students are treated more like high school students rather than college students.
- UHD is seen as a place that caters to non-traditional students – not a place that caters to first-year students.
- Some students describe UHD as feeling like more of a community college.
- Some faculty and students perceive that students expect to make A's at UHD regardless of effort.

Note to Facilitators

Remember to go back to the list of questions in "Using the Views" on page 15 after you have read these views.

Session 2, Part 4: Conclusion, and Getting Ready for our Next Session

(10 minutes)

- Where do we agree or disagree?
- What new insights did you get today?
- Write down action ideas on the “Action Ideas” Sheet so that you can talk about them in Session 4.
- In our next session, we will start to build a better future for our college students. We will do this by creating a picture of a UHD community where all students can do their best. Before the next session, you might ask other community members what they think. What goals do they have for our students? For ideas about some goals, look at the examples in Session 3, Part 3. You might also start thinking about these three questions:
 - What is already being done to help our students at UHD?
 - What new ideas are people talking about?
 - What are other universities doing that might work here?

Closing: Facilitator Tips

1. Thank people for coming and sharing.
2. Remind everyone that it is very important to attend every session.
3. Briefly explain what will be discussed in Session 3. (The Session 3 “Introduction to the Session” will give you this information.)

SESSION THREE: SET GOALS

Picture a Community Where All Students Can Do Their Best ...

Introduction to the Session

The last time we met, we talked about why there is an achievement gap. Our job today is to create a picture of a UHD community where all our students can succeed. If we are going to help all our students do their best, what should UHD and our community look like?

Today we will create a vision. The next time we meet, we will talk about specific action ideas for bringing that vision to life.

Session 3, Part 1: Getting Started

(10 minutes)

- Review the “Introduction to the Session.”
- Review the ground rules.
 - Does everyone still agree with the list?
 - Do we need to add anything
- Since our last meeting, has anything happened that relates to this issue that you would like to share?
- Our facilitator will post the notes from Sessions 1 and 2. He or she will remind us of the topic of each session, and sum up the main ideas from those discussions. This will help us shape our vision in our work today.

Facilitator Tips

- This session has five parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
- Post the notes on the themes from Sessions 1 and 2 for all to see. Pass out the typed notes.
- List major themes from this session on large sheets of paper so everyone can see them.
- Save and type up notes so that you can refer to them in Session 4.
- Label a large sheet of paper “Action Ideas.” If group members come up with action ideas for helping every student succeed, list them here. (You will use these notes in Session 4.)
- Label another large sheet of paper “Things We Are Already Doing.” If group members bring up things that are already being done to help every student succeed, list them here. (You will use these notes in Part 4 of this session. You might use them again when you are working on action ideas in Session 4).

Session 3, Part 2: Signs of Hope at UHD

(10 minutes)

These questions will help us get started:

- What signs of hope do you see at UHD?
- What strengths can our community build on?

Session 3, Part 3: Picture a UHD Community Where All Students Do Their Best ...

(60 minutes)

We want all community members, both internal and external to UHD, to help all of our students do their best. Let's picture what that would look like. This will prepare us for Session 4, when we will choose specific action steps that will help us to make these visions happen.

We will build our vision for the future from the ideas we shared in Session 1 about what we want our graduates to know. We will also work from the ideas we shared in Session 2 about why some of our students are not succeeding right now. As we talk today, we can look back at our notes from those sessions. We might want to pay special attention to the places where we agreed, and where we disagreed with each other.

Using the Sample Descriptions

We will use the following descriptions to help us think about a community where all students can succeed. Talking about these ideas will help us think about what we want. *Some ideas that are important to you might not be on this list. Feel free to add new ideas.*

- First, someone will read each of the descriptions out loud.
- Then, we will use the following questions to help us talk.
 1. What other ideas would you add? What is missing?
 2. Which ideas seem most important to you? Why?
 - a. How would your favorite ideas help students succeed?
 - b. What effect would these ideas have on you or your family?
 - c. What parts would be easy to do?
 - d. What parts would be harder to do?
 3. Think about an idea that is not so important to you. Why would someone else think this is important?

4. What new ideas or ways of thinking are you learning from others in your dialogue to action circle?

Sample Descriptions:

Pictures of a Community Where All UHD Students Can Succeed

1. **In a community where all students can succeed, all students get the resources and services they need.**

The key to student success is to have basic resources and services for all. We must make sure that all students and their families get what they need from the schools. Communities must also provide social services for students and their families. Sometimes we may have to create new resources. Other times, we may need to help people find resources that already exist.

For example,

Students succeed in communities where...

- Social services meet family needs.
- Tutors are available.
- There are enough good advisors and student advocates.
- States give more money and resources to poorer schools.

2. **In a community where all students can succeed, schools welcome and support students of all cultures, income levels, and races.**

Professors and staff should be as diverse as the community. We must make sure that all professors get the training they need to work better with students from all cultures.

For example,

Students succeed in communities where ...

- We have equal expectations and hopes for every student.
- Every student has an equal chance to succeed.
- The curriculum is as diverse as our country.
- Professors teach in ways that work for students from all cultures.

Facilitator Tip

If people bring up specific action ideas, thank them and list those ideas on our “Action Ideas” sheet. Don’t spend time on action ideas now. You will do that in Session 4.

- Professors and staff are as diverse as our community.

3. In a community where all students can succeed, schools and the community work well together.

It is important to all of us that our universities, colleges and our students do well. To close the gap, we will all need to work together. This means using all of our ideas and resources to make sure that schools work for everyone.

For example,

Students succeed in communities where...

- Local businesses offer on-the-job-training
- Universities are learning centers for the whole community.
- Many people in the community come to university events.
- College students from all cultures feel “at home” in the schools.
- Students, Full-time and Part-time Faculty, Staff, Alumni, Community members and others keep talking with each other and working together to help every student succeed.

4. In a community where all students can succeed, UHD takes responsibility for helping all students achieve.

All of us can help, but the most important thing is how UHD helps students. We need to be sure that UHD has high standards for all students. We also need to be sure that UHD meets those standards.

For example,

Students succeed in communities where...

- UHD sets clear standards for all students.
- UHD is expected to meet these standards.
- Part-time and full-time faculty and staff have the training they need to meet the standards.
- Part-time and full-time faculty and staff are evaluated to be sure they are doing a good job.
- Part-time and full-time faculty and staff have the help they need to do well.

5. In a community where all students can succeed, education involves the whole family.

When families get involved, students do better in college. We need to welcome family members into our university. We also need to provide them with tools to help them support their family members in college.

For example,

Students succeed in communities where ...

- Efforts are made to outreach to the whole family.
- Family members feel welcome on campus.
- Opportunities exist for family members to educate themselves about campus and college life.
- Low-cost childcare provided

Session 3, Part 4: What Is Already Being Done?

(30 minutes)

Let's talk about what our university and our community are already doing to help every student succeed. To help us get started:

- We can look at our list called "Things We Are Already Doing"
- Our facilitator might give us some information about what is already being done.

(This conversation will help us prepare for our next session, when we will talk about specific actions that we could take to close the achievement gap.)

Discuss these questions:

- Do we know what other universities or communities are doing to help every other student succeed? If so,
 - What is being done?
 - How is it working?
 - How could it be even better?

Session 3, Part 5: Conclusion, and Getting Ready for Our Next Session

(10 minutes)

Consider these questions:

- Where do we agree and disagree?
- What new insights did you get today?

Also:

- List any action ideas on the “Action Ideas” sheet so that you can work with them in Session 4.
- In our next session, we will talk about specific action ideas to help close the achievement gap. Before then, you might talk with other community members about this. What do they think we should do to help all our students succeed? For some ideas, look at the sample action ideas in Session 4.

Closing Facilitator Tips

1. Thank people for coming and sharing.
2. Remind everyone that it is very important to attend the last session.
3. Briefly explain what will be discussed next week. (The Session 4 “Introduction to the Session” will give you this information).

SESSION FOUR: PLAN FOR ACTION

Making a Difference: What Specific Actions Do We Want to Take?

Introduction to the Session

In Session 3, we created a picture of a UHD community where all our students can succeed. Now let's talk about specific action ideas for bringing that vision to life. We also need to decide which of those ideas are most important. We can divide these actions into four types:

Things that ...

- Our community can do
- UHD can do
- We can do on our own
- We can do together

Later, at the action forum, we will present these ideas, and hear from other dialogue to action circles. (For a little more information about the action forum, see pages 34 - 35).

Session 4, Part 1: Getting Started

(10 minutes)

- Review the "Introduction to the Session."
- Review the ground rules.
- Since our last meeting, has anything happened that relates to this issue that you would like to share?

Facilitator Tips

1. This session has six parts. Use the amount of time suggested for each as a guide.
2. Post notes on the general themes from Sessions 1, 2, and 3 for all to see.
3. Also post your sheets labeled "Action Ideas" and "Things we are Already Doing."
4. Today, your circle will make a short list of action ideas to present at the action forum. Some ideas that individuals feel strongly about may not end up on that list. Tell people that they will have a chance to add their own ideas at the action forum.

- Our facilitator will post the notes from Sessions 1, 2, and 3 and pass out Session Three's typed notes. He or she will remind us of the topic of each session, and sum up the main ideas from those discussions. This will help us make good decisions about action steps to help all students achieve the dream at UHD.

Session 4, Part 2: Thinking about Ways to Make a Difference

(15 minutes)

In Session 3 we talked about our visions for our community. What can we do to bring those visions to life? Let's talk about ideas that could make that happen.

1. Our facilitator will post the "Action Ideas" sheet from the first three sessions.
2. We will break into groups of two or three people. In your group, spend a few minutes talking over the ideas on this list. Also, look at the action ideas on the following pages. These ideas will help each of us to think about what we believe is most important.
3. Think about action ideas that you believe would work for UHD and your community. You might talk about ideas from the lists, or you might invent new ideas.
4. Use these questions to help guide your discussion:
 - Of the many ideas raised in our dialogue to action circle, which one seems best? Why?
 - How would doing these things bring our visions from Session 3 to life?
 - What ideas from other places could we use? How could they help?
 - How could we build on what is already being done to help college students achieve the dream?
 - Who else should be involved?

Action Ideas

Below are some action ideas. Use these ideas to spark your own thinking.

What can community members do to help all college students succeed?

- Motivate college students to succeed in school.
- Get to know how universities and colleges work. Find out what, when, and how things get done at colleges.
- Find out about tutors, counselors, and other kinds of student support at colleges.
- Visit campuses and classes to share your experiences - either professional or life experiences.

- Work with university internship programs to help give students more career guidance and experience.
- Offer to let college students “shadow” you for a day on the job.
- Offer to take a college student to lunch to provide guidance and mentoring.

What can students do to help themselves and other students?

- Become a mentor or tutor for someone who needs help.
- Actively seek out mentors in faculty and community members.
- Make friends with students of other cultures or groups. Ask them what they think about things.
- Encourage your classmates to set high goals and do their best.
- Talk to your professors about what affects you. Tell them what works and what does not.

What can our whole community do to help all students succeed?

- Offer more support services that would help students, such as tutors.
- Urge employers to be as flexible as possible with working students.
- Urge employers to give workers free time to tutor and mentor students.
- Start on-the-job training programs and internship programs.
- Offer high-quality, low-cost child care.
- Ask churches, faith groups, or community centers to offer good tutoring programs for students.
- Offer peer mentoring programs for adults (adults mentoring adults).
- Offer peer mentoring programs for students (students helping students).

What can UHD do to help all students succeed?

- Train staff and faculty in cultural diversity. Show them how important it is to treat all students fairly and equally.
- Develop alternate means to measure faculty success and to provide feedback to see if they are doing a good job. They may need coaching and mentoring.
- Encourage good faculty to teach at-risk students.
- Support faculty in developing their teaching skills.
- Get involved with organizations that support student achievement, like Achieving the Dream.
- Make sure faculty and staff are as diverse as the student body. All students need role models.
- Make it easy for college students to get information about student learning, community resources, school policies, etc.

- Offer training about college systems and how they work. Explain what colleges expect and how state standards work.
- Encourage strong orientation, mentoring, and advising programs.

What can our schools and the community do together to help all students succeed?

- Continue the dialogue to action circles. Find ways for everyone – full-time and part-time faculty, students, staff, and the community -- to keep talking about how to help college students do well in school.
- When college students do well, give them rewards and praise them. For students who are at risk, this is very important.
- Offer rewards to good students, like awards and college scholarships.
- Inform the community about the resources that UHD offers students and families.
- Support programs that links businesses with UHD.
- When college students have family emergencies, give them ways to keep up with their schoolwork.
- Reward and honor faculty who improve student achievement.
- Start support teams for each subject area. Faculty, tutors, community members, and students could “team up” and offer extra help in subjects like English, math, science, or history.
- Invite speakers to talk to professors and the community about ways of teaching that have worked and inspired others.

Session 4, Part 3: Brainstorming Action Ideas

(25 minutes)

In this part you will “brainstorm” action ideas. Your facilitator will help you sort your ideas into four categories:

1. Community actions
2. UHD actions
3. Actions people can do on their own
4. Actions that the community and UHD can take together

Brainstorming...

is a way for our group to come up with lots of ideas.

Purpose:

- To help us be creative.
- To come up with many different ideas in a short time.

Guidelines:

- All ideas are OK.
- Don't stop to talk about ideas.
- Don't judge ideas.
- Build on others' ideas.

How to do it:

- Anyone can offer an idea. You don't need to wait for your “turn.”
- Every idea is recorded.

Instructions for Brainstorming:

1. If you are still sitting in your small group from Part 2, come back and join the circle.
2. Next, take a few quiet moments to think. In your small group, you talked about some action ideas. Which ideas were most important to you?
3. While you are doing this, your facilitator will put a sheet of paper for each category on the wall. (See example below.)
4. Now, we will do a “brainstorm.” Share your action ideas with the group. Your facilitator will write down your ideas on the appropriate sheet.

Sort your action ideas into four categories:

Community Actions

Aslkfaskjfaskl slkjfsjf
As;lkfsu aosisfsfj
Slkjf ijfiouaalkj jiol
Soiuer ueiou oluloiuou ui
Lsk uielsi jios keoius kuos

UHD Actions

Lskjflsjf lksjflskfsl askjflksjf
Askfjsuufskfslksfksfjk
Lskjflsj fsu lksfiusfaskfj lk
Lkjflsuflskfsls lskfjsif sifj aif
Lskfjl sifsoluf aoufifusodu otufiudf.
Lsfisfuoufll ols olsuo souifos kusf

**Actions:
On Your Own**

Aslkjflkj lksjflksjf lksdjfksf lksjflksjf
Lskjdf lksjflksjf lskjflsjf lksjflj lsfjl lsfll lj
Lkjfs lksjfljsf lksjflksjf askjflskfj lksjfljsf
Lksfkljsf lskjflskjf lksjflksjfjf jsfkjf lskd
Lksjflkj lsfj lksjflksjf lksjflj lk lksjflksjfl.

**Community and
UHD Together**

:lksjflksfklsl lksdjflksfkl
klsfjkskflskfaskjfl.
Lksdfkj lksjflksfll lsfjlk lksj lsfll
Lksjfl lksjflj lsfll odkdi jsfjls.
Lskjflsi otufotusfslufosuf .sdll.
Lskfjl lksjfl lksjfljsfll s

Session 4, Part 4: Setting Priorities for the Action Forum

(50 minutes)

From the lists we made in our brainstorm, we will now choose three or four ideas that we think could make the most difference in our community. We will take these ideas to the action forum. *Look at the “Action Idea Sheet” on page 32. This is how your results will look when you are finished.*

Instructions for setting priorities:

1. Start by looking at the action ideas on the “Community Actions” sheet. If some of the ideas are nearly alike, combine them. Now do the same thing for each of the other sheets.
2. The next step is to narrow down our lists. We will select a total of no more than eight of our favorite action ideas. (We will pick the ideas that we think are most important. It does not matter if all our ideas come from the same list, from two or three lists, or from all of the lists.)

To narrow down the lists:

- a. By each idea, a facilitator will put a scale (from -2 to +2). You will be assigned a number
 - b. Walk to each scale and assign a number to the idea. You will assign the range by the number you were assigned.
 - c. The recorder and facilitator will add up the points that each idea received. There will probably be about eight that get the most amount of points.
3. Next, we will narrow down our lists again. Look at the eight ideas that you picked in Step 2. Which three or four of these seem more practical, useful, timely, and important?

To help us talk about this, we will use the following questions:

- o What are the pros and cons of each idea?
 - o What would it take to make these ideas become real? What help or support would we need?
 - o What resources are already in place to help them out? What are we already good at doing?
4. If you now have only three or four ideas left, you are finished! You are ready to go to the action forum (Skip step 5 and go on to step 6.)
 5. If you still have more than four ideas, vote again. (Use the same procedure as in Steps 2a and 2b.) After the vote, select the three or four ideas that get the most points. These are the ideas you will take to the action forum. You are finished!
 6. Make sure that you write your final three or four ideas down on a sheet of paper. You can use the “Action Idea Sheet” on page 32 for this.

Action Idea Sheet to Take to Action Forum

Action Ideas from

(Dialogue to Action Circle Team Name or Number)

Idea #1 _____

Category *(select one)*

- Community actions
- UHD actions
- Actions on your own
- Actions that the community and UHD can take together

Idea #2 _____

Category *(select one)*

- Community actions
- UHD actions
- Actions on your own
- Actions that the community and UHD can take together

Idea #3 _____

Category *(select one)*

- Community actions
- UHD actions
- Actions on your own
- Actions that the community and UHD can take together

Idea #4 _____

Category *(select one)*

- Community actions
- UHD actions
- Actions on your own
- Actions that the community and UHD can take together

Session 4, Part 5: Preparing the Action Forum

(10 minutes)

1. Your facilitator will tell you the date, time, and place of the action forum.
2. Choose a person from your group to present your action ideas at the forum.

Session 4, Part 6: Conclusion: Reflect on Our Dialogue to Action Circle Experience

(10 minutes)

Questions to think about

1. What have you learned so far? What has made the biggest impact on how you think and act?
2. What do you most value about your dialogue to action circle?

Closing: Facilitator Tips

1. Thank people for coming to the dialogue to action circles, and for working to make a difference in their community.
2. Ask if anyone has questions about the action forum.

MOVING FROM DIALOGUE TO ACTION

The Action Forum

Dialogue to Action circles lead to action and change in many ways. One of the ways in which you will work toward action and change is through a UHD action forum.

The UHD action forum will be a large group meeting at the end of a round of dialogue to action circles, where ATD committee members, decision makers, and members of the UHD community will be invited to attend. At this meeting, ideas from all the dialogue to action circles will be presented and submitted to a “range vote.” In most cases, there will be several action ideas that many people support.

Action groups or task forces will then form to move these ideas forward. Participants have the chance to work in these action groups, or to stay involved in other ways. In programs that continue over time, more and more people get involved in further rounds of dialogue to action circles, and many kinds of action occur.

The action forum is not the only way action and change happen through dialogue to action programs. The table on page 6 shows many of the ways that action and change take place. The tentative agenda for the UHD action forum follows.

Tentative Agenda for UHD Action Forum

1 hour and 25 minutes

1. **Refreshments, social time, gallery walk (time to read the summaries from each circle posted around the room.)** (10 minutes)
2. **Welcome and introductions** (5 minutes)
 - Welcome everyone and introduce sponsoring organization, Achieving the Dream.
 - Review agenda
 - Talk about the dialogue to action circles effort at UHD
 - Recognize and thank students, other key people and volunteers.
3. **Reports from the Representatives of Each Dialogue to Action Circle** (25 minutes)
 - A representative from each circle speaks for a few minutes, summarizing key issues or concerns, plus major ideas for action.
4. **Moving to action** (40 minutes)
 - Master of ceremonies ask action forum participants to conduct a “range vote” on the ideas that they are most excited about implementing.
 - M.C. then invites people to sign up for each action group and to pick an action group leader.
 - Leader for each action group collects names, and sets the first meeting.
 - Interested students sign up for COMM 3318, Facilitating Public Deliberation.
 - Interested people sign up to be included in the next round of dialogue to action circles.
5. **Closing Remarks** (5 minutes)
 - Closing remarks (including how the action efforts will be tracked and tied to further organizing.)
 - Next steps (including plans for next round of circles, other ATD initiatives, or check-in meetings.)
 - Thanks to all