DIALOGUE, INCLUSION, AND DEMOCRACY WALL

THE DIALOGUE, INCLUSION, AND DEMOCRACY (DID) MISSION

Create a safe space that supports the development of well–informed and engaged students through deliberative, community–based discourse to promote equity and democracy

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What is a DID Wall?

We believe our society needs more spaces that facilitate public conversations on complex and divisive topics. Inspired by traditions of "democracy walls" and public art projects across the globe, including on college campuses, Providence College's Dialogue, Inclusion, and Democracy (DID) Lab has created several Community DID Walls. These spaces aim to support the development of well-informed and engaged students through civil discourse.

This tool for critical dialogue is part of a broader effort of students, faculty, staff, and community partners developing a practical philosophy of "what works" to critically engage with disputed questions through real-world experiences using deliberative, equity, and community-based pedagogies.

As a practical matter, the DID Wall poses regular questions in topical matters which are named and framed for community conversations. Once a question is posted on the DID Wall, any member of the PC community in Providence is able to respond with their personal experiences and opinions. The DID Wall is a safe space where individuals can share their voices and be respected, no matter their race, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship status, or gender identity.

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Where are DID Walls Located?

DID Walls can be located anywhere –– online or in-person. Currently, PC DID Walls are located, in the Moore Center and on the third floor of the Feinstein Academic Center. New spaces are also being developed in the Athletic Center and Ryan Business School. DID Lab also facilitates dialogue remotely on our LinkedIn and Instagram (@pcdidwall) accounts.

There is no one way to develop a DID Wall. While it might be helpful to pilot a DID Wall in a place you have access to and oversee, they tend to work best in high traffic areas which are also visible public locations. It helps if people feel comfortable in the space and feel they can stop and take time to answer the questions and review the responses of others.

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Developing a DID Wall

What do you need to create a DID Wall?
- A comfortable space -- online or in-person
- Wall/public space for response
- Writing utensils
- Thought-provoking and well-framed questions
- Community agreements/guidelines
- A team with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and skills committed to facilitating change

How do you develop a question for a DID Wall?
- Keep up with current events
- Consider topics that matter to you and your community
- Ask members of your community they want to discuss
- Listen eloquently for divisive issues where conversation might help bring about more common ground and solutions
- Frame topics so that a diverse range of viewpoints will feel comfortable responding
- Utilize both a physical wall and online spaces to curate future questions
- Consider creating temporary and "pop up" spaces in your community
- Be mindful of triggers, wellness, and mental health in the selection of topics and how they will impact members of the community
- Have fun and engaging conversation topics (like books, movies, role models), along with more heavy and complex challenges

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Frequently Asked Questions

How to differentiate hate speech from free speech?

Hate is speech is speech that leads to discrimination, hostility, or violence. "Addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech. It means keeping hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence, which is prohibited under international law" (un.org) A DID Wall is a place of free speech; however, if there are comments that lead to discrimination, hostility, or violence, they should not be posted.

How much of your personal views should go into the DID Wall process?

You should bring your passion and values to the process of crafting questions and facilitating dialogue. It's also healthy to focus on issues you care deeply about. But try to also create space for opposing views, and make sure all feel comfortable being vulnerable, listening, and sharing their views-- that's the best way to find some common ground and move forward.

# Frequently Asked Questions

Who creates the questions? Who should monitor? How do you decide when to erase a comment?

Questions should probably be edited by a core group to ensure they are framed for lots of people to be engaged, but the ideas should come from as many people as possible. A group should also monitor the responses to make sure they follow community guidelines. Free speech is important, so erasing a comment should be rare, but the DID Wall shouldn't be a space for hate speech or personal attacks, so those kinds of comments are likely to be removed. It's important to develop a transparent process for how and when this should happen.

How to incorporate face-to-face conversations with responses on the Wall?

Face-to-face engagement is essential because it allows for deeper engagement and an opportunity to explore the complexity of issues. This could include public events and speakers on questions, a partnership with student affairs, and connections with courses that enable further dialogue on themes being explored.

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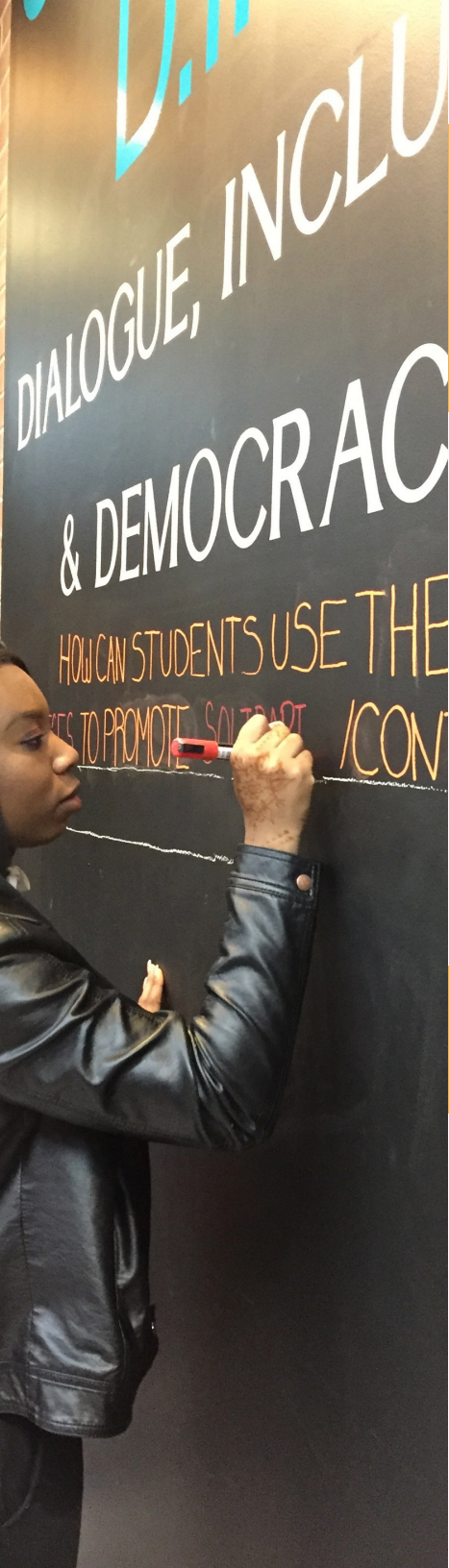
NEED HELP DEVELOPING A DID WALL?

Deliberative Democracy Consortium
www.deliberative–democracy.net
Deliberative Pedagogy Lab
www.deliberativepedagogy.org
Everyday Democracy
www.everyday–democracy.org
Kettering Foundation
www.kettering.org
National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation
www.ncdd.org

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