



2024-2025
Student Dialogue Fellows
Dialogue, Inclusion, Democracy Lab
Providence College

Reflection & Impact
Student Fellows Engagement in Conversation for Change

*“You can’t solve a problem if you can’t talk about it.”
– Beverly Tatum*

CONVERSATIONS FOR CHANGE

DID Lab’s Conversations for Change initiative offers opportunities for students to engage in deep and meaningful civil discourse across campus and in the local community. The project embeds constructive dialogue in courses and student life, offers professional development to faculty, staff, and student leaders on facilitating dialogue on disputed questions, and disseminates lessons and tools to foster skills and traits for active citizenship.

DID Lab aspire to educate the next generation of leaders who will make meaningful contributions, address public challenges, and promote the common good.

Student Fellows

Clara Johnson '26 Ariadna Ramos '27 Jazzlyn Goncalves '25
Jane Stephan '27 Alexandra Delano '25 Rachel Medeiros '25
Yessenia Tavarez '27



Clara Johnson '26

English, Social Work



"I want to create a crowded table" — this is the sentiment that I opened the year with and which I bring back now. The crowded table is loud and full and messy. Everyone brings something unique to share. There is intimacy as we engage in the process of mutual nourishment.

This, to me, is dialogue.

I have learned a lot of what it takes to create this crowded table in my time as a student dialogue fellow. It requires vulnerability and openness to new experiences. When we allow ourselves to speak imperfectly, to be genuine and vulnerable, and do not shut down curiosity in the name of perfection, connecting emerges.

Our experiences and stories are vital for forging the connecting and investment necessary for dialogue. I actually think it is better to come to the table "unprepared."

Preparation, memorized facts, and polished language hinder the openness that dialogue requires. Our need to be right or bring the "best" dish to the table, which is dictated by our shame-based culture, will always prevent the exploration and connection that genuine dialogue requires.

There are so many skills I have developed this year which are needed to create the crowded table: acceptance of uncertainty and mess, patience, prioritizing questions over statements, embracing silence and contemplation, understanding non-speech dialogue (body language, art, etc.). In learning these skills, I was able to create unique forms of dialogue and build bridges.

It was messy and creative and vulnerable
— just like the crowded table.

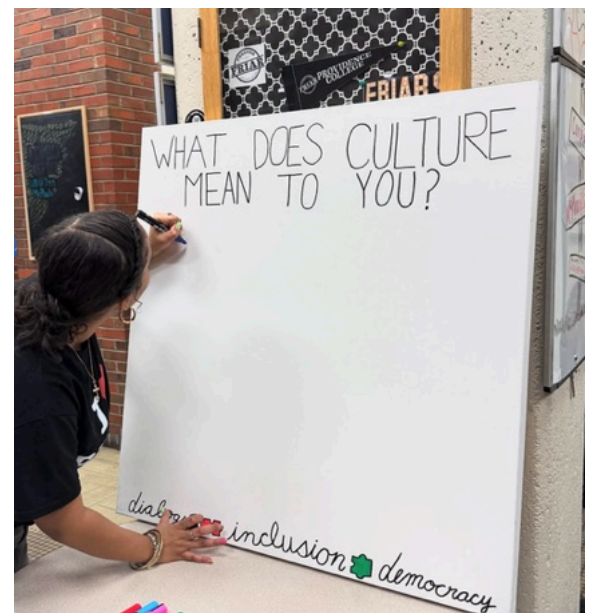


Yessenia Tavarez '27

Social Work

This year as a student dialogue fellow, I can safely say I grew not only as a person but as a human being.

The most important thing I learned is the importance of storytelling in building connections with other people. One of the most impactful parts of this experiences was working with my College Unbound learning partner, whose life experience up to this point has been much different than mine. He taught me the importance of highlighting voices that society often marginalizes and he showed me that despite the mistakes we make in life, we are all human beings worthy of dignity and respect. Through this fellowship, I have been able to practice active listening, deepen my empathy for other people, develop stronger facilitation skills, and work with all kinds of people.



Alexandra Delano '25

Biology



While I have been able to see the areas of campus that are lacking conversation like the political realm and controversial Catholic teachings, I still find myself seeing DID for so much more than a dialogue forum.

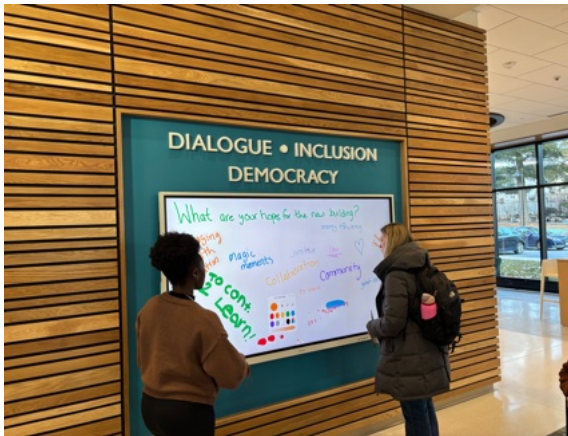
We have become change agents that have found ways to amplify the voices of so many and will continue to do so for years to come.

My favorite way that this was utilized this semester was through the collaboration with the Board of Multicultural Student Affairs (BMSA). Allowing students who may have never came to PC beforehand who were able to see DID as one of the groups on campus that matters was inspiring. We were finally visible. That has not happened in terms of showcasing on campus student groups to date.

I have found myself crafting the skills of conscious framing and active storytelling to ensure that all members of a group feel comfortable and ready to discuss across differences.

DID Lab also made me see that at the end of the day, there are a lot less differences than people paint it out for there to be. For example, placing people in similar position based off of ideals and values can add a level of humanity that is sometimes lost across tense conversations.

I am so grateful that the DID Lab has aided me in strengthening these skills before going out and applying these practices in my future career path.



Jane Stephan '27

Political Science, Psychology

As a dialogue fellow, I learned what it meant to engage in, lead, and analyze dialogue and public discourse. I took away valuable lessons, one being the importance of maintaining an open mind. This helped me develop skills in listening and patience.

Engaging with individuals who hold opposing views taught me how to find common ground and foster meaningful conversations, even in tough and polarizing situations.

Embracing uncertainty was another key lesson, requiring intentionality and active listening. I learned to navigate tension and the unknown by focusing on shared values and avoiding reactive responses, which proved essential in mediating escalated situations and addressing hurt feelings.

I always stayed curious and open to new experiences, and that drove my willingness to learn and constantly observe my surroundings, enabling me to create inclusive environments where everyone's contributions were valued.

I aimed to keep my experience much like a community potluck, as we learned from Eboo Patel. It is important to me that people share and exchange their stories with others while maintaining their own unique experiences—having individuality within a cohesive effort to connect with one another.

I also learned that engaging in unique forms of dialogue, such as through art, music, and crafts, allowed me to interact with the community and bridge divides, fostering a diverse and welcoming space through more unconventional mediums.



Rachel Medeiros '25

Marketing, Sociology



Coming into DID Lab, I wanted to be more involved on campus and be a part of a group working towards meaningful change. I saw that there was a need on campus and in our society to promote communication, especially between those who are different than us. Growing polarization has been a major topic for the past decade and this past November it seemed to explode to unprecedented levels. A healthy society and democracy require communication, collaboration, and community. These things can only be achieved through dialogue.

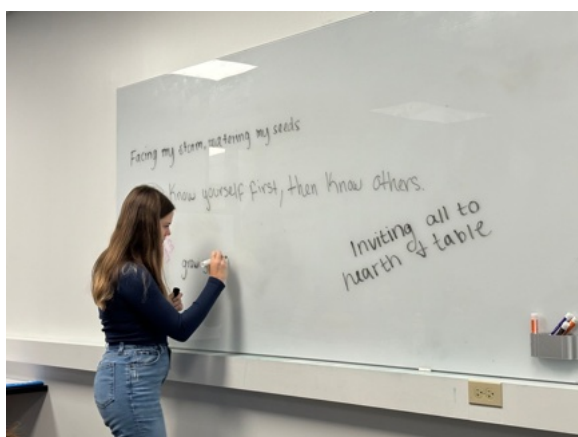


Being a dialogue fellow taught me that differences are inevitable. We all have different beliefs, backgrounds, and lived experiences that impact how we see and interact with the world. Communication should not be avoided because of these differences. This is how community crumbles.

Rather, differences can spark conversation, learning, understanding, and the realization of commonalities.

DID Lab introduced me to a variety of skills that I practiced both in and out of the Lab. I learned about different facilitation styles and how to approach different conversations using these methods. I saw the significance of setting guidelines for engaging in challenging conversations. This includes creating community agreements and setting the tone to promote honesty and avoid harm. I also learned more about the importance of active listening and the key role it plays in dialogue.

One final lesson that I have taken from DID Lab is that people have more in common than they think. Starting with these commonalities can produce a more fruitful dialogue, encouraging people to be honest and open because they establish a level of trust with the other person.



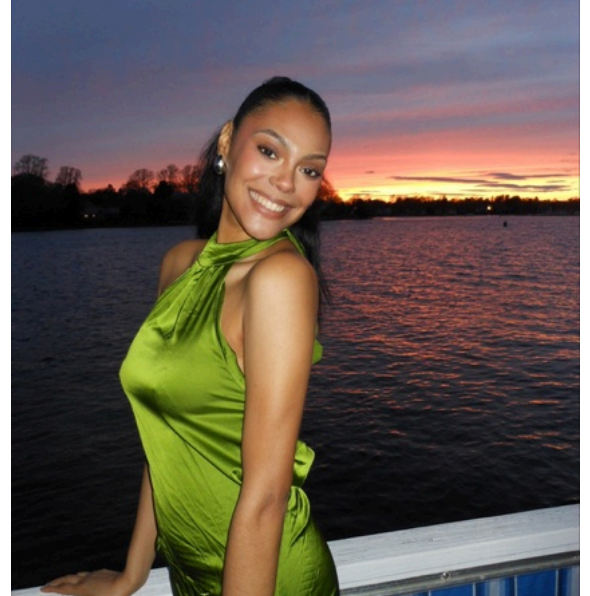
Jazzlyn Goncalves '25

Political Science, Global Studies

Being a student dialogue fellow has been an incredible experience that has transformed my college journey. The skills I have acquired during the DID Lab are ones that I will take with me when I graduate and apply them to my everyday life. Such skills include: adaptability, active listening, and critical thinking.

There are many instances in the DID Lab where we have to actively listen to one another, and this has helped me outside of the lab, especially in instances of conflict. Instead of listening as a way to respond, I now try to listen to simply listen, and the end result is always better. I came into the lab with critical thinking skills, but the conversations we have had in class are some I have never been able to have in other courses. These conversations have increased my critical thinking skills.

I hope the impact I have made is through the conversations I have had with people in the lab as well as during the events we have hosted.



Ariadna Ramos '27

Political Science, Global Studies



This year as a dialogue fellow has been one I would describe of growth, patience, and relationship building.

It was a slow start at first, there were many learning curves thrown my way. I was having difficulty finding the right planning when it came to what I wanted to accomplish with the amount of time we were given. There are so many ideas I wanted to see through, many social projects to take on.

Throughout the process I learned how to effectively network, how to look for the right people to aid in any project idea I had in my mind. I improved in my communication and leadership skills.

The biggest accomplishment for me in DID Lab was the outreach to youth. The planning, catering, reaching out to the youth groups, getting professionals to come facilitate—all seemed very overwhelming, and I did not know where to begin. However, with the help of DID Lab, it no longer seemed impossible.

I am grateful for are the relationships I build within DID, as well as opening myself more to my peers.

The biggest take away I would say has been learning that everything good takes time, progress cannot be rushed, and as long as you are consistent and committed to anything, things will follow through.



Fellows in Action



Fellows in Action



D.I.D Walls

