



D.G. and Harriet Wall Martin
Institute for Public Good

An Invitation to Join the Deliberative Citizenship Network (DCN)

UPDATE: The deadline to apply to the DCN has been extended to April 15. See the new FAQ at the end of this document for more info about this extension and other recent questions that have been asked.

Overview

Institutions of higher education across the United States are invited to apply to join the **Deliberative Citizenship Network (DCN)**, a national initiative dedicated to strengthening civil discourse and deliberative learning on college campuses.

The DCN is led by the Deliberative Citizenship Initiative and housed within the [D.G. and Harriet Wall Martin Institute for Public Good](#) at Davidson College. It is a four-year initiative that will support **100 institutions of higher education** as they build or expand campus programs that cultivate the skills, dispositions, and institutional structures necessary for robust and respectful deliberation about important public issues. The network is supported by a grant from the **U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)**.

Through participation in the network, institutions will receive training, resources, and first-year catalytic funding to support a **deliberative citizenship program** on their campuses that integrates:

- Deliberative pedagogy in the classroom
- Student facilitation and leadership
- Public programs that model respectful engagement across different viewpoints
- Participation in a national community of practice

The goal of the DCN is not simply to host isolated events and workshops, but to help institutions develop sustainable, campus-wide cultures of deliberative engagement that strengthen teaching, learning, and civic life. Participating institutions will become part of a national cohort of colleges and universities working collaboratively to strengthen civil discourse in higher education.

Who Should Apply

The DCN welcomes applications from a wide range of accredited higher education institutions, including liberal arts colleges, public and private universities, community colleges, minority-serving institutions, religiously affiliated institutions, tribal colleges, and military academies.

Institutions do **not** need to have existing civil discourse programs in order to apply. The DCN is designed to support both institutions that are launching new initiatives and those seeking to expand existing work.

Why This Network Matters

Colleges and universities play a vital role in helping students learn how to engage thoughtfully with complex ideas and with people who hold different perspectives. Yet many campuses today struggle to sustain environments where students, staff, and faculty feel confident expressing their views, listening carefully to others, and working together to examine difficult questions.

The DCN is designed to address this challenge by supporting institutions that are committed to cultivating **deliberative citizenship**, the practice of collaboratively examining public problems, weighing competing perspectives, and reasoning together about possible solutions.

The network builds on the experience of the **Deliberative Citizenship Initiative at Davidson College**, which has developed an integrated model combining:

- Faculty development in deliberative pedagogy
- Facilitator training for students, staff, faculty, and community members
- Small-group deliberative discussions
- Public forums that model respectful disagreement

Through the DCN, this model will be adapted and implemented across a diverse range of institutions nationwide, customized to their particular campus contexts.

What Participating Institutions Will Do

Institutions selected for the Deliberative Citizenship Network will establish or expand a **campus-based deliberative citizenship program** supported by a local leadership team and a set of core activities.

Each participating institution will form a **DISCOURSE Team** consisting of:

- **Two faculty members** who will participate in the Deliberative Pedagogy Collaborative
- **One staff (or faculty) member** who will coordinate the campus initiative
- **8-10 student fellows** who will help facilitate deliberative programming

These teams will serve as the core leadership group responsible for implementing DCN programming on their campus.

Participating institutions will commit to several core activities.

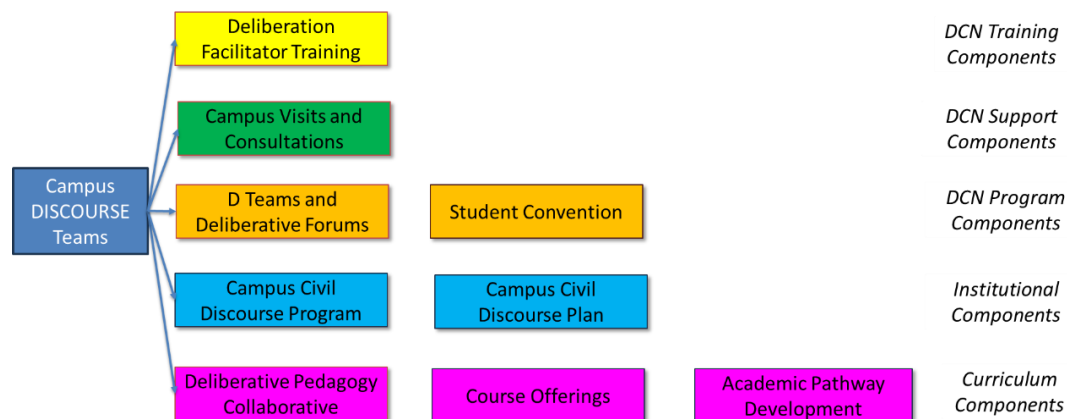
- **Faculty Development:** Faculty participants will join the Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative, a year-long faculty development program focused on integrating deliberative methods into course design and classroom discussions. Faculty will develop or redesign courses that incorporate structured deliberation and engagement with diverse viewpoints.

- **Student Leadership:** Student fellows will participate in facilitator training and help organize deliberative programs on campus. These students will gain experience facilitating discussions, organizing events, and leading civil discourse initiatives.
- **Campus Programming:** Each institution's DISCOURSE Team will design at least one public-facing civil discourse program in its first year. These events might include deliberative forums, small-group deliberation programs, speaker events featuring diverse perspectives, or other campus-based deliberative activities. Participating institutions will host **at least one public-facing deliberative event each year**.
- **Network Participation:** Institutions will participate in a national community of practice that includes faculty workshops and training programs, cross-campus collaboration and learning, shared teaching materials and deliberation guides, and national gatherings of students and faculty.

Together, these activities will include both in-person and virtual programs and are designed to support lasting institutional change rather than one-time programming.

The diagram below maps out the key activities of the DCN, including the training, support, and civil discourse programming components that will be available for all DCN partners and the institutional and curriculum components that partner institutions will be responsible for implementing.

The DCN's Key Components



What Participating Institutions Receive

Institutions selected for the Deliberative Citizenship Network will receive a range of supports designed to help launch and sustain their campus initiative.

These include:

- **Catalytic Funding:** Each participating institution will receive a first-year subaward of \$10,000 to support the initial development of its program, including stipends for faculty, staff, and student fellows.
- **Training Programs:** Participants will have access to a set of structured training programs, including deliberation facilitator training workshops, deliberation host workshops, faculty workshops on deliberative pedagogy, and specialized pedagogy methods sessions.
- **Implementation Support:** Institutions will have access to guidance, resources, and consultation from DCN staff as they develop their programs.
- **National Network:** Participating institutions will join a national network of peer institutions working to strengthen civil discourse in higher education. This network will provide opportunities for collaboration, shared learning, and the dissemination of effective practices.

Eligibility Requirements

Institutions applying to join the DCN must demonstrate the following commitments.

Institutional DISCOURSE Team

Applicants must identify:

- Two faculty members willing to participate in the Deliberative Pedagogy Collaborative
- One staff (or faculty) member who will coordinate the campus initiative
- 8-10 students who will serve as Deliberative Citizenship Fellows

Programmatic Commitment

Institutions must commit to participating in several core DCN programs and hosting at least one deliberative public event of its own.

Evaluation Participation

Institutions must agree to participate in program evaluation activities, including surveys and program reporting.

Goal Alignment

Institutions must affirm their commitment to the values that guide DCN programming, including the importance of civil discourse, free expression, respectful deliberation, and constructive engagement across differences.

Administrative Endorsement

Applications must include a letter of support from a senior administrator, such as a provost or dean.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed using a structured process designed to identify institutions that are well positioned to contribute to and benefit from the network.

Selection will consider several factors:

- **Student engagement capacity:** The institution's ability to recruit and support a diverse group of student fellows.
- **Faculty leadership:** The experience and capacity of the faculty participants to develop deliberative courses and promote civil discourse on campus.
- **Institutional readiness:** The extent to which the institution has the infrastructure and leadership needed to implement DCN programming effectively (not necessarily an existing civil discourse program, but an office, academic department, or program that can take the lead on advancing this work).
- **Commitment to civil discourse:** The plausibility of sustaining civil discourse programming beyond the initial grant-supported year.
- **Learning value for the network:** The extent to which the institution contributes to the diversity of contexts represented in the national network.

Final cohort selection will also consider the overall composition of the network, including institutional diversity, geographic representation, and the potential for cross-campus learning.

Application Process

Applications will request brief information about:

- Institutional context
- Faculty participants
- Student recruitment plans
- Plans for implementing DCN programming
- Strategies for sustaining the work over time

The application has been designed to be **concise and manageable** in order to allow for a thoughtful and efficient review process.

Timeline

The anticipated timeline for the first cohort is as follows:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Milestone</u>
March 20, 2026	Application opens
April 1, 2026	Informational webinar (1:30 pm EST)
April 13, 2026	Application deadline

April 14, 2026	Application review begins
April 22, 2026	Institutions notified
May 18, 2026	Institutional confirmation deadline
June 15, 2026	Faculty preparation begins
Aug. 12-14, 2026	Faculty DeeP Collaborative Orientation Workshop (in person)
Aug. 30 & Sept. 6 2026	Deliberation Facilitator Training Workshop (in person or virtual)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What civil discourse programs are available for DCN members to participate in?

To provide DCN partner institutions with immediate civil discourse opportunities as they design their own programs and catalyze connections across the network, a range of civil discourse activities developed by the Deliberative Citizenship Initiative (DCI) will be available for DCN members. These include **Deliberative Forums** that are one-time public events that bring together participants with diverse viewpoints to discuss a major public issue. They also include **Deliberative “D” Teams** that are small groups that meet several times during a semester to engage more deeply with complex topics. Each institution’s DISCOURSE Team members are expected to participate in these forums and D Teams and to encourage other members of their campus communities to join as well. These programs are valuable opportunities to discuss contentious and important issues with people both on campus and across the Deliberative Citizenship Network.

What kinds of programs will institutions host on campus?

Participating institutions will organize programs that model respectful engagement across differences. These may include deliberative forums, small group deliberation opportunities, public events, and courses that incorporate deliberative pedagogy. Each institution will host at least one public-facing deliberative event each year.

What is each institution’s DISCOURSE Team?

Each participating institution forms a DISCOURSE Team that leads the development of deliberative citizenship programming on campus. The team includes two faculty members, one staff (or faculty) coordinator, and 8-10 students will complete the deliberation facilitator training program and serve as the local leadership group responsible for launching and sustaining the institution’s deliberative citizenship program.

What funding do participating institutions receive?

Institutions selected for the network will receive first-year catalytic funding of \$10,000 to support faculty stipends, student fellow stipends, and program implementation. Institutions will also receive training, program materials, and ongoing consultation from the DCI team.

What are the responsibilities of student members of the DISCOURSE Team?

Student members of the DISCOURSE Teams will complete the eight-hour Deliberation Facilitator Training Workshop in the early fall. They will also facilitate and/or participate in D Team and Deliberative Forum discussions and help organize at least one public-facing civil discourse program on their campus. They will meet with the rest of their DISCOURSE Team to prepare for these events beforehand, debrief about them afterwards, and continue their training in civil discourse principles and practices.

How many students from our institution can attend the National Deliberative Citizenship Student Convention?

Each participating institution may send two student fellows to attend the National Deliberative Citizenship Student Convention, which will bring together students from across the network for a multi-day event focused on practicing and demonstrating the skills of deliberative citizenship while engaging with a major public issue.

What are the responsibilities of the staff/faculty coordinator of the DISCOURSE Team?

The staff/faculty coordinator of the DISCOURSE Team will coordinate civil discourse programming, support student fellows, assist with event logistics, and coordinate reporting and evaluation work with the DCN project team. Student fellows will moderate discussions, assist with public events and deliberative forums, and help build a campus culture of respectful dialogue and constructive engagement across differences.

What reporting or evaluation requirements will participating institutions have?

Institutions participating in the Deliberative Citizenship Network will contribute to a shared evaluation effort designed to understand how deliberative citizenship programs can be implemented and sustained across different types of colleges and universities. Participating institutions will be asked to administer surveys to students and faculty involved in DCN activities and to share basic information about their courses, programs, and events. Institutions will also provide brief periodic updates on their campus programming and participation in DCN activities. These evaluation activities are designed to support learning across the network and to assess the broader impact of the initiative while minimizing administrative burden for participating institutions.

What are the responsibilities of faculty members of the DISCOURSE Team?

Faculty participants will engage in the year-long **Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative**, redesign courses to incorporate deliberative pedagogy, and participate in network meetings and workshops. This includes a two-day workshop in August at Davidson College and monthly meetings with the Collaborative cohort. Faculty also participate in D Teams and Deliberative Forums and civil discourse programs organized on their campuses. They also help mentor student fellows and support deliberative programming on campus.

What are the requirements of the Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative?

Faculty who participate in the Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative take part in a year-long faculty development program focused on integrating deliberation into their teaching. The Collaborative begins

with a two-day in-person orientation workshop on the Davidson campus and continues with regular virtual meetings of cohort members. Participants engage with scholarship on deliberative pedagogy, share ideas and strategies with colleagues from different disciplines, and develop or redesign courses so that structured deliberation becomes a central part of the learning process. Faculty work on course design that sequences readings, writing assignments, and discussions in ways that highlight intellectual disagreements and teach students skills such as empathetic listening, critical reasoning, and respectful argumentation. For more on the details and past iterations of the DeeP Collaborative, visit [this page](#).

How many courses will participating faculty be expected to develop?

Faculty participating in the Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative will develop or redesign three courses that incorporate deliberative pedagogy. Each faculty member will redesign a course in their own discipline, and the two faculty participants from each institution will also collaborate to develop a joint course focused on civil discourse and deliberation. These courses will incorporate structured deliberation, engagement with diverse viewpoints, and assignments designed to build students' skills in reasoning, listening, and constructive engagement.

What is the time commitment for the Deliberation Facilitator Training?

The Deliberation Facilitator Training that all DISCOURSE Team members will complete is an eight-hour training program over two weekend afternoons designed to prepare participants to organize and facilitate structured discussions on complex or controversial issues. The training includes interactive exercises, practice deliberations, and guidance on managing discussion dynamics, encouraging balanced participation, and fostering respectful engagement across differences.

Is the Deliberation Facilitator Training offered in person or online?

The Deliberation Facilitator Training will be offered as a hybrid experience, with both in person and online options. The training uses a combination of instruction, interactive exercises, and practice deliberations and is designed to be adaptable across formats so that participants from institutions across the network can participate effectively.

What types of institutions can apply?

The network welcomes applications from a wide range of higher education institutions, including public universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, minority-serving institutions, religiously affiliated institutions, and military academies.

How long does participation in the network last?

Institutions join the Deliberative Citizenship Network as part of a cohort and are expected to actively participate during their first year of program implementation. After this initial year, institutions remain part of the broader network community of practice, with ongoing opportunities for collaboration, resource sharing, and participation in national DCN activities.

Learn More and Apply

In this invitation, we have endeavored to provide all the necessary information institutions will need to decide if they would like to join the DCN. To apply, please complete the Application Form [here](#). We recognize institutions may have additional questions, and we are happy to address them. For additional information, please join an informational webinar and Q&A session about the DCN on April 1 at 1:30 pm EST (register [here](#) to join). Questions about the application process may also be directed to [dcid@davidson.edu](mailto:dcid@ davidson.edu).

[DCN Application Form](#)

[Informational Webinar Registration](#)

[More Info about the Deliberative Pedagogy \(DeeP\) Collaborative](#)

NEW FAQs (Added April 10, 2026)

TIMELINE AND CALENDAR QUESTIONS

We are excited about this opportunity but may not be able to get our application in by April 13. What is the absolute latest we can submit an application for consideration?

We have extended the deadline to April 15, when we will begin review of all applications to join the DCN. The application portal will remain open and submitted applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis after April 15 as spaces remain open in the first year cohort of the DCN. Institutions not selected to join the DCN in its first year will be eligible to join next year.

Is the calendar of events and training opportunities already set and available to view?

The calendar of the main training sessions is indeed set and is available in the DCN invitation. The DeeP Collaborative Orientation Workshop is set for August 12th through 14th and the faculty deliberation facilitator training sessions on both August 30 and September 6 from 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm are also set. The topics and dates of our 2026-27 Deliberative Forums and D Teams are not yet set. We have a systematic and structured process that we go through every spring to identify topics for the following year. It involves an initial survey that collects ideas for topics from our DCI community and the broader public and then a second survey asking respondents to rank the suggested topics. We should have our identified topics and calendar of events sometime by mid-summer.

DISCOURSE TEAM QUESTIONS

Does the application need to identify all three faculty and/or participants on the DISCOURSE Team by name?

Yes, the application does need to identify them by name, as it is important that you have the commitment of those three people that they are going to take this work forward and be active participants in the DCN. It is valuable to have an identified group of people from each institution

that is excited about engaging with this work and will work together to broaden and deepen the level of civil discourse on their campus.

Do all members of the DISCOURSE Teams need to attend the Deliberation Facilitator Training Workshop on August 31 and September 6?

This workshop, which is held over two Sunday afternoons (the sessions build on one another and are both important), provides all DISCOURSE Team members with the basic skills to organize, host, and facilitate challenging conversations about difficult topics. Active participation is therefore required, although participants can join either in-person or online.

Who can participate as the two Faculty participants in the DISCOURSE Team? Can visiting faculty or non-tenure track faculty?

Given the DCN's goal of helping institutions embed civil discourse in college curriculums over the long term, faculty participants in the DeeP Collaborative should not be short-term visiting professors, lecturers, or other term-limited positions that are not likely to be renewed. Full-time non-tenured positions, Professors of the Practice or hybrid faculty/staff roles that are not term-limited are welcome to participate.

Do both faculty members who will serve on an institution's DISCOURSE team need to attend the August Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative Orientation Workshop in-person?

The orientation workshop is a key part of the DeeP Collaborative experience; it allows participants to not only learn interactively about how to embed more deliberation into their courses, but it also enables them to get to know each other and form connections that they will build on as they continue to meet virtually throughout the rest of their year together. For these reasons, it is very important that all faculty members who are members of their institutions' DISCOURSE Teams be able to attend the workshop in-person.

In terms of recruiting two faculty members to participate, are you looking specifically for faculty from across two different disciplines and are using different methods?

We don't really have specific expectations about the disciplinary backgrounds of the faculty who participate in the DCN. This is something for each institution to figure out what would work best for particular context. There are arguments both ways; we've had faculty members from the natural science, social science, and humanities all participate in the DeeP Collaborative, and they bring a great range of perspectives to the conversation. Having faculty with overlapping backgrounds might make collaboration somewhat easier; having faculty with very different backgrounds could extend their impact on the curriculum and result in some very creative connections being made.

Does each faculty member have to develop completely new courses?

Faculty do not necessarily need to develop entirely new courses but can revise existing courses. The idea is to add a series of deliberative components to a course that you teach; which course you do that for is up to you. We just ask that each faculty member add these components to one of their own courses and to one that they will develop and/or teach together. Any of these could be existing courses.

What is the expected time commitment for the two participating faculty members (time in person on Davidson's campus, frequency of cohort meetings?)

The time commitment is designed to be meaningful yet manageable over the academic year. Faculty begin with an in-person DeeP Orientation Workshop at Davidson (August 12–14), with several pre-readings to review in advance. They also complete two Deliberation Facilitator Training sessions (August 30 and September 6, 1:30–5:30 pm EST, offered online or in person). During the fall semester, participants add a set of deliberation components to a new or existing course, supported by one advanced workshop per semester (about one hour each), four virtual cohort meetings (two per semester), and regular virtual check-ins with a faculty partner (also two per semester). At the end of the year, faculty share their work through a short blog or video reflection, a campus presentation, and submission of course assessment materials. Past faculty participants in the DeeP Collaborative have found this work to be highly rewarding – check out their [blog posts](#) to learn more about their experiences.

Who can participate as the Faculty/Staff Coordinator on the DISCOURSE Team? Can short-term staff or faculty serve in this role?

Given the DCN's goal of helping institutions embed civil discourse into campus life over the long term, it is preferable that the staff/faculty coordinator role be filled by a full-time employee (either staff or faculty) that does not hold a term-limited position. Short-term visiting professors, lecturers, or other term-limited positions that are not likely to be renewed should ideally not serve in this role. Full-time non-tenured positions, Professors of the Practice or hybrid faculty/staff roles that are not term-limited are welcome to do so.

Is the Staff/Faculty Coordinator primarily an administrative role (e.g., logistics and budget)? Can the Coordinator also serve as one of the two Faculty Discourse Team members?

The Staff/Faculty Coordinator of the DISCOURSE Team will coordinate campus civil discourse programming, support student fellows, assist with event logistics, and coordinate reporting and evaluation work with the DCN project team. The position is responsible for both logistical and budgetary tasks as well as programmatic and strategic work related to campus programming. Ideally, the Coordinator role is filled by a third person who is not one of the two faculty members on the DISCOURSE Team.

If we do not yet have the names of the staff person in a particular position that we would like to participate on our DISCOURSE Team, can we just indicate the title or job position?

Ideally you would have the the name of the person, but perhaps you're filling that position and you just don't have a person in it yet. In that case, just make a note in your application about why you don't have that person's name and why you think that position is important to include on the team.

If we only recruit eight or fewer students to the DISCOURSE Team, will we able to reallocate funding to other needs, such as expenses related to deliberative events?

We will assess these situations on a case by case basis, but in general it is important that the DISCOURSE Teams have at least 8 students. Any changes in funding allocations we have to justify and document the Department of Education. If we can identify a good reason for such changes, then we could perhaps make it work. But this would be a conversation that we would need to have with the individual institution.

Do the 8 to 10 students have to be identified at the time of applying or will it be sufficient to identify them over the course of the summer?

Student participants on the DISCOURSE Teams do not have to be identified at the time of applying. We just ask that you have a plan for how you are going to identify students and when ou're planning to do it. We do recommend that you identify them over the summer so they're ready to go and they're signed up and ramped up for that deliberation facilitator training at the end of August.

What happens after year one for the first cohort of students? Do they continue with the fellowships for three more years?

They can certainly continue with their work on civil discourse, although the DCN will not provide funding beyond the first year. Your institution could choose to do so; Davidson, for example, as a Senior Fellows Program for students who have completed the initial year of training. This would be up to your institution to identify funding for, and that is something we can provide ideas and advice on.

Is the \$10,000 provided to each institution designed to cover both the stipends to the faculty, staff, and students as well as the faculty and student's travel to Davidson for the DeeP Collaborative Orientation Workshop and the Student Convention?

The \$10,000 is designed to cover the stipends for the faculty, staff, and students; the travel to Davidson for the two faculty and two students from each institution to Davidson will be covered separately by the DCN.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Is there data that all institutions will collect or common measures all institutions will be examining?

Yes, there will be some common metrics and measures we will use across the network. We will ask each institution to share surveys to participate in. More details about these metrics will be available later in the process.

What were some of the hurdles, if any, to getting faculty buy-in for this work?

We've actually had great participation of faculty in many of our events and the work of the Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative. You can read about how their participation in the Collaborative has helped them with their teaching on the DCI Blog [here](#). In their blog posts, they discuss the challenges they faced as well as how they were able to introduce more deliberation into their courses. Some of them have even used the word "transformative" to describe how it has improved their approach to teaching.

What will students receive after completing this programming?

Serving as a member of your institution's DISCOURSE Team is something they could certainly add to their resumes. At Davidson, our students participate in our Deliberative Citizenship Fellows Program, and if they complete the full year of programming, they can put DCI Fellow on their resume. We've found employers have expressed a lot of interest in this work in interviews, and fellows have reported that the deliberation and facilitation skills they have learned have been incredibly useful in their internships and jobs after graduating. We will explore developing a more general certification that students across the DCN could earn as part of their participation in it.

Will a recording of the informational webinar about the DCN be available?

Yes, a recording is available [here](#).