

This Place, Our Community, Our Purpose: Conversations for Making Our Way Through

All that you touch
You Change.
All that you Change
Changes you.
The only lasting truth
is Change.

~Octavia Butler, *The Parable of the Sower*

We don't have to wait for some grand utopian future.
The future is an infinite succession of presents,
and to live now as we think human beings should live,
in defiance of all that is bad around us,
is itself a marvelous victory.

~Howard Zinn, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*

I can't imagine a more important task than to consciously choose who we want to be
as a leader for this time. We must understand the time we're in,
focus our energy on what's possible,
and willingly step forward to serve the human spirit.

~Margaret Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose to Be?*

In Spring term 2022, President Stephen Percy invited several members of the PSU community to co-imagine how we might collectively engage in shared reflection on our lived experiences of the interrelated crises of the past several years in order to glean insights and learnings as we move forward in uncertain times. To that end, we offer "Conversations for Making Our Way Through," a set of facilitated discussions involving members of the campus community, taking place during Fall term 2022. "Conversations for Making Our Way Through" is intended to provide participants with a space within which to (re)connect with other members of the PSU community, share power in collaborative expressions of learning, and grow in our recognition of and capacity for resilience, adaptability, and joy, in the service of finding a pathway forward for ourselves, each other, our students, and our communities.

Structure of the Project: After an introductory orientation, volunteer facilitators will each convene a 60-minute discussion group of 4-10 persons, to happen either in person or virtually. During the orientation session, facilitators will engage in conversation themselves around a guiding set of reflection questions and collectively consider revisions to the framing questions based on their experiences of that conversation. Next, each facilitator will host their discussion.

Finally, at the end of Fall term, the facilitators will meet again to debrief their experiences as discussion leaders and surface themes from the group conversations.

Time Commitment:

- Facilitators should expect to dedicate 4-5 hours to the project through the orientation (1.5 hours) and debrief meetings (1 hour), facilitation of one discussion (1 hour), and general preparation (.5-1.5 hours).
- Discussants should expect to dedicate 1.5 hours to the project through their participation in discussion (1 hour) and their consideration of discussion prompts prior to the discussion (.5 hour)

Potential Outcomes: The purpose of “Conversations for Making Our Way Through” is intended to create spaces for meaningful interactions among members of the campus community through which personal and professional sense-making and refreshed connections will happen. In addition to the impacts we hope the conversations will have on individuals personally and professionally, insights from the project will be seriously considered at the levels of institutional policy and practice. Following the facilitators’ debrief at the end of Fall term, the project leads¹ will develop a summary report of the demographics of participants and the emergent themes from the discussions (while keeping participants’ particular sharings confidential), for distribution to the president, provost, project participants, and other interested parties. While the project in its own is not intended to deliver us to specific outcomes beyond these, the experiences of participants and the themes that emerge from the discussions may well inform future institutional action.

Interested in participating as a facilitator, discussant, or both? Please complete this 1-minute, no-obligation [survey](#). We’d appreciate your response by Friday, October 14, so that we may begin planning the sessions and the orientation meeting for facilitators.

Questions? Contact Vicki Reitenauer, vicr@pdx.edu.

¹ Abby Chroman, Program Manager, Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, School of Business Administration
Sally Mudiamu, Director of International Partnerships and Initiatives, Office of Global Engagement and Innovation
Vicki Reitenauer, Faculty, Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies