



The Deliberative Citizenship Initiative (DCI)

Building Democracy, One Conversation at a Time

The [Deliberative Citizenship Initiative \(DCI\)](#) is dedicated to creating opportunities for Davidson students, faculty, staff, and members of the wider community to productively engage with one another on difficult and contentious issues facing our community and society. Through programming across the Davidson College curriculum, campus, and community, the DCI works to accomplish this mission by teaching deliberative skills, reinforcing humane instincts, building meaningful community, catalyzing creative solutions, and analyzing the deliberative process itself.

The DCI's seven main programs (summarized below) are designed to complement and reinforce each other as they serve different functions and audiences.

DCI Fellows Program

The core of the DCI is its [Fellows Program](#). Each year, a cohort of Davidson students are selected and paid to serve as DCI Fellows and play leadership roles in the initiative. These fellows are trained in deliberation facilitation skills, and they immerse themselves in deliberative theory and methods, help choose the issues for the year's focus, facilitate robust deliberations on those issues, and reflect on and document their experiences as sponsors of these discussions. As facilitators of the DCI's small group deliberations, they are essential to the success of the DCI's Deliberative "D" Teams and Deliberative Forums. They also assist with outreach to different audiences, and they develop their own personal deliberation projects that bring people together on campus and in the community.

Deliberation Facilitator Training Workshop

Every year the DCI hosts a two-day, eight-hour [Deliberation Facilitator Training Workshop](#). It is required for the DCI Fellows and DeeP Collaborative faculty members and is open to interested students, staff, faculty members, alums, and community members. Spread across two weekends, the workshop equips participants with the skills and knowledge to foster more honest, respectful, and productive discourse in their communities on difficult political and social issues. It involves numerous interactive activities and mock deliberations that enable participants to practice facilitating these kinds of conversations. Everyone who completes the training is certified to facilitate the DCI's deliberative discussions.

Deliberative Forums

The DCI also sponsors regular [Deliberative Forums](#) led by trained facilitators to enable productive, one-time small group discussions of difficult issues among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members. The Forums usually begin with a panel that includes diverse perspectives on the topic at hand and are designed to be inclusive and engaging. The panel is

followed by an extended opportunity for the audience to deliberate with one another on the topic. These discussions are moderated by DCI-trained facilitators and explore deep-rooted social, economic, and political challenges. Past topics have included Free Speech and Inclusion, Social Media, Economic Mobility, Housing, and Reforming the Supreme Court, among others.

Deliberative “D” Teams

In order to enable participants to get to know each other over time and have the opportunity to engage more deeply with one another on the issues they discuss, the DCI also organizes [Deliberative “D” Teams](#). These groups bring together small groups of 6-10 students, faculty, staff, alums, and community members, and are guided by the DCI’s trained facilitators and Deliberation Guides. These groups meet for two hours three times per semester either online or in-person. D Team topics have included abortion, book censorship, climate change, election reform, immigration, policing, the legacies of slavery, and more.

Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Program

The DCI also hosts a cohort of faculty from Davidson and other institutions of higher education that spends an academic year developing courses that include a significant deliberation component. This [Deliberative Pedagogy \(DeeP\) Collaborative](#) first meet during a day-long orientation workshop on the Davidson campus in August and then continue to meet virtually over the course of the year to discuss selections from the relevant literature and share their progress as they develop and implement their deliberation-involved courses. All Collaborative members submit Deliberative Course Plans, syllabi, and blog posts describing their experience creating and teaching their courses. To complement the work of the Collaborative, the DCI also hosts one-time deliberative pedagogy panels and workshops that are open to all faculty.

Deliberative Citizenship Speaker Series

Every year, the DCI hosts a [Deliberative Citizenship Speaker Series](#) that introduces the Davidson community to different theoretical and practical approaches to deliberation. Speakers with both academic and practitioner backgrounds are invited to give public lectures, meet with interested students, staff, faculty, and community members, and consult with the DCI Co-Conveners and Fellows on the work of the initiative. Past speakers include Christy Vines, Eric Liu, Leila Brammer, Debra Hawhee, Martin Carcasson, and Sara Drury.

Research

The DCI is committed to supporting [research on deliberation](#). It assesses the effects of its own activities by tracking, analyzing and reporting on its inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes. By conducting focus groups, interviews, and surveys before and after its programs and examining recordings of the deliberations it hosts, the DCI seeks to identify what is working well and what can be improved upon in the future. It publishes an [Annual Report](#) that summarizes this information and is developing other research materials that examine the effects of its programming in more detail. The DCI also publishes Deliberation Guides, Pathways Guides, and other resources that are used by its Forum and D Team participants and are available to the wider public on the DCI website.