



The Common Good News
Regis University Institute on the Common Good

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE



The recent series of town meetings across the United States that have focused on health care reform have shown a surprising lack of civility and, in my opinion, very little productive dialogue. If we as a nation are to confront the complex issues challenging our communities, we must develop ways to engage in thoughtful and civil conversations that help us develop sustainable solutions. I encourage political leaders to design processes that allow for deep listening and true engagement and I encourage the individual citizen to come to these forums with an openness to learn the basic facts, and to hear other perspectives as well as a desire to share one's own personal beliefs and stories. For public forums to be successful the National Coalition on Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD), whose board I chair, has developed a few key recommendations. These include availability of balanced and detailed information, bipartisan convening, a fair facilitator, the establishment and maintenance of ground rules for participation, a structured process that allows for participants to engage one another safely, and accurate recording of all the perspectives in the room. I encourage all of us to move beyond the divisiveness of partisanship and work with one another in the spirit of the common good.

~ Paul Alexander, Ph.D.

ICG HIGHLIGHTS

What is happening at the
Institute on the Common Good?



Colorado's Future

Regis University's Institute on the Common Good has partnered with Colorado's Future, whose mission is to build public trust and improve the processes of public policy decision-making in a way that will build a better Colorado. Colorado's Future especially addresses fiscal issues affecting the state, strengthening representative governmental systems and rebuilding public trust in government. The main interface between the two organizations is the Building a Better Colorado through Civic Engagement pilot program that brought together around 200 "grass tops" leaders in three areas, Grand Junction, Lakewood and Pueblo. This joint project "engages civic leaders in defining the solution" to state-wide fiscal matters, according to Colorado's Future, "and then secures support for that solution via a one-to-one advocacy network. These opinion leaders and the individuals that they influence will play a critical leadership role serving as the primary educators for this effort."

The Institute is supporting the project in a variety of ways, in particular offering expertise on practices of deliberative and participatory democracy and collaborative political processes. Pending expanded funding, the project plans to expand to around 50 public engagement sites around the state over the next several months.

To find out more about this initiative, visit: www.coloradosfuture.org

DIALOGUE TIP OF THE MONTH

Regis University's Institute on the Common Good recognizes that ground rules are essential for the performance of groups, whether at work, with family or in a community setting. Depending on time, ground rules can be stated by the organizer, facilitator or co-created with the group. Ground rules provide a point of reference for challenging situations that might arise between participants (disrespect, stereotyping, name calling, monopolizing the floor, etc.). Ground rules that we use and suggest are:

- Listen respectfully (or deeply) when others are speaking.
- Suspend judgment and do not negatively characterize (or criticize) others' feelings or motives.
- Speak from your own experience rather than using generalizations and stereotypes.
- Ask questions to seek greater understanding.
- Allow time for others to talk.



DIALOGUE RESOURCE OF THE MONTH

The White House has launched two new online public policy discussion forums for Americans and one new website providing access to government databases. These Internet tools are aimed at helping citizens to participate in policymaking and promoting the President's Open Government Initiative.

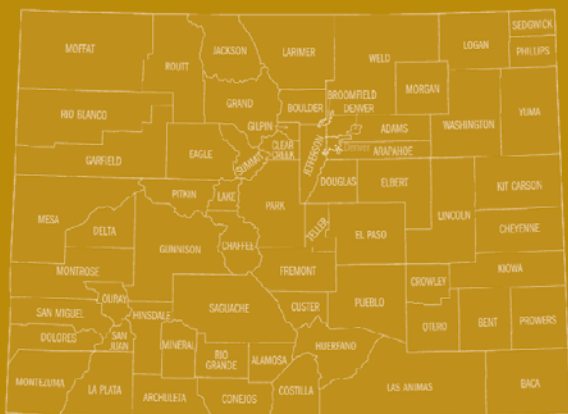
White House Solicits Public Comments Online for Open Government Initiative:

<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/whitehousesolicits.html>

Three Government Websites Promote Transparency, Participation: <http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/threegovernmentwebsites.html>

The recourses listed above are not a political endorsement.

AROUND THE STATE



A community is shaped by the people within it. How they live their lives, the lifestyles and activities they choose all shape the character of that community. What if there was a way to help get everyone on the same page in deciding what they want their community to become? The answer is Dream City: Vision 2020.

Dream City: Vision 2020 is an organized effort to help the community of Colorado Springs come together and channel the visions of its residents. Dream City is a community-owned project that is organized by more than 100 local organizations and more than 1,000 citizens. Its main goal is to engage the Pikes Peak region in dialogues about a brighter future, to promote civic engagement and to help these members find their common views and values so they can move forward together as a community. Although there are successful organizations involved in Dream City, the project is owned by the individual citizens. Everyone's ideas are important and can inspire and educate a community to create a better future for us all.

Dream City: Vision 2020 is divided into three categories: Inspiration, Education, and Engagement. The Inspiration portion of the project will include art, poetry, films, and photography for children and adults. For the Education part, the local newspaper has also launched a piece about other cities that are using practices the community could learn from. And for the Engagement part of the project, Everyday Democracy will help Dream City to bring the region together for a series of organized discussion groups to talk about visions and plans.

Dream City seeks to help individuals plan a unique and creative community designed for real people and their ways of life.

2010 YEARLONG WORKSHOP

Leadership Currency: Harnessing Connective Power

What's your level of Collaborative Leadership? In January 2010, the Institute will start a yearlong program for leaders and high level managers who want to boost their organizational performance.

This distinctive program increases leader agility, which boosts collaborative performance. This is especially useful for complex and unresolved issues. We enable individuals to align their work with their life's purpose, creating passion, focus, and significantly improved results. Leaders discover how to see and act from the emerging futures, rather than from outdated ideas and structures.

The group will meet four times over the course of the year plus monthly interaction by phone and online with the Institute coaches and with their peers.

For more information contact Fredricka Brown at fbrown@regis.edu or 303-458-4967.

Become an ICG Sponsored Community!

Each year Regis University's Institute on the Common Good selects communities for full and partial sponsorship. If your community has a concern, opportunity, or problem which could be resolved through dialogue, community collaboration, or community conflict transformation, please contact us. With full sponsorship there is no charge to you or your community.

Other Highlights:

Boulder Homeless Initiative

The Institute has been working with Boulder County, the cities of Boulder and Longmont, the OMNI Institute, and many Boulder County nonprofit organizations to help develop a 10-year plan for the provision of housing and homeless services in the county. The Institute provides support for the process to help ensure its integrity and sustainable outcomes.

Boulder Friends Discuss Diversity

In May, the Institute spent an afternoon with the Boulder Friends faith group to discuss issues of race and diversity. Participants engaged in a variety of activities and dialogue, sharing personal stories and viewing clips from popular culture. The purpose of the dialogue was to take time to address the issue of diversity in the Boulder community and specifically within their fellowship. The dialogue ended with a communal discernment on how the issue influences their actions as Friends.

RJ Grant Wraps-Up

The ODR Mini Grant, the Regis-Community-School Partnership Program (RCSPP), wrapped up on July 20. The program expanded partnerships with two schools (North High School and Lake Middle School) to include Lincoln High School and Kunsmiller Middle School. The concept of the program was for Regis faculty and students in the conflict resolution programs and community members to serve the restorative justice programs in Denver Public Schools, depending on the needs of the program coordinators. Supported DPS initiatives included a North High School conflict resolution class, community dialogues on RJ at North High School and Lake Middle School, student service volunteers at North High School and Lake Middle School, peer mediation trainings and teacher training at Lincoln High School, a community speaker series on conflict resolution, and restorative justice circles at Lake and North. Fifty-five students were trained in peer mediation, while more than 25 parents were involved in dialogues around RJ and conflict resolution, and over 75 students were trained and/or mentored in conflict resolution skills. Approximately 30 student and community volunteers were trained to train or mentor DPS students on conflict resolution skills.

Institute's Staff Member Gives Workshop on Collaborative Governance

The Institute's Project Coordinator, TJ Bowen, is spinning off a consulting business called Co-Learning Environments that specializes on co-creating sustainable learning environments with groups and organizations. This August, Bowen gave a workshop during the leadership retreat of the University of Colorado at Denver's Student Government Association. The workshop explored collaborative governance and dialogue skills, especially listening, facilitation, group negotiation, conflict resolution, collaborative technology and open government. To find out more about Co-Learning Environments, visit the website at www.colearningenvironments.com

Dialogue with Obama Strengthening Democracy

Paul Alexander attended a small gathering of dialogue and democratic deliberation leaders in Washington, DC. in early August. The purpose of this gathering, titled Strengthening Our Nation's Democracy, was to develop proposals to advance democratic reforms within the country and present these two key civic engagement leaders within the Obama administration.

Democracy Lab Now Offers High School Program

Building off of Democracy Lab's (DL) successful university course, this year DL has moved into high schools across the country. This spring, two schools provided feedback on a short four-week pilot course to prepare for this fall's full six-week course program. The fall course runs from Sept. 14 through Oct. 23. Students will engage with their peers from a variety of high schools about the issue of "Difference: What it means in our society to be 'different'." The high school curriculum focuses on meeting state and national standards for critical thinking and communication. For more information, visit www.teachingdemocracyonline.org or contact Malia Crouse at mcrouse@regis.edu.

Beta Dialogue Skill Trainings Presented

The Institute staff is refining our dialogical skill training activities while also benefitting participants. The theme and purpose of the monthly series is to provide participants with skills and activities that they can use when making decisions or building consensus within their own departments at Regis, with community groups, and within their own lives and personal relationships. To gain experience and constructive feedback while serving others, skill training sessions are scheduled from August through December, where we practice training, but also gather critical feedback from the audience to refine our practices.

Examples of training topics include:

- Sociometry: using physical space and body movement to demonstrate people's position on an issue as a starting point for dialogue.
- Ladder of Inference: recognizing and identifying the assumptions we make and how they influence our actions.
- Inquiry Circle: using open-ended questions to gather information about a group's feelings and values regarding a topic or situation.

The first training on Icebergs: What's under the Surface was held on August 11 with 12 participants from the Regis community; both participants and presenters noted that they gained valuable information from this experience. Trainings are scheduled for the second Tuesday of every month. For additional information or to receive updates on training topics, contact TJ Bowen at tbowen@regis.edu.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS Upcoming Events

Many People. Many Faiths: An Interfaith Dialogue **Regis Lowell Campus, Boettcher Commons, 4-5:30 p.m.** **Wednesday Sept. 16 (Free)**

The Institute is partnering with the Office for Diversity to host an interfaith dialogue that will explore key tensions and common ground between people and perspectives of different faiths, religious traditions and/or agnostic beliefs. Participants will be encouraged to share personal stories and experiences to add to the conversation. This event is open to all students, faculty, staff and members of the Regis community.

Conflict: The Edge of Leadership

This October, the Institute will continue its Bridging the Gaps partnership with The Conflict Center to present a workshop for leaders and managers in business, government and nonprofit organizations. The workshop will focus on conflict as an opportunity and will teach skills to manage conflict and show how conflict can be used to create a productive organization. The workshop is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 13 from 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. in Regis University's Mountain View room in the Adult Learning Center. Registration for the workshop is \$49 before September 30. Registrations completed after this date will be \$59. To register visit https://www.regonline.com/conflict_the_effective_edge_of_leadership

Speak Your Mind: A Conversation on Same-Sex Topics **Regis Lowell Campus, 4-5:30 p.m. Tuesday Oct. 20 (Free)**

The Institute and the Office for Diversity are hosting two forums on same-sex topics on Tuesday, Oct. 20 from 4 to 5:30 p.m. One forum is for the heterosexual members of the Regis community and the other for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and intersex (LGBTQI) members of the Regis community. Location of the heterosexual forum will be announced in early September.

The purpose of the conversation is to provide an opportunity for participants to share experiences on their perspective on same-sex orientation. Participants will be encouraged to share personal stories and experiences to add to the conversation. The event is open to students, faculty, staff and all members of the Regis community.

If you are interested in attending the LGBTQI conversation, please contact Sandra Mitchell, assistant provost for Diversity, at smitchel@regis.edu or 303-964-5304.

The rationale for having two separate forums on Oct. 20 is to allow for individuals within each group a safe space to express views that might be uncomfortable to express in the company of individuals from the other group. A single group (both LGBTQI and heterosexual) event will be hosted in early spring 2010, when heterosexuals and LGBTQI individuals on campus will meet for a joint dialogue. For more information contact Fredricka Brown at fbrown@regis.edu or 303-458-4967.

For more information regarding any of the upcoming events or for a list of other future events, visit our website at www.icgregis.org or contact Fredricka Brown at (303) 458-4967.

Need Help?

If you believe you may be in need of the collaborative dialogue resources of the Institute please do not hesitate to give Fredricka Brown a call at (303) 458-4967, e-mail us at icg@regis.edu, or visit our website at www.icgregis.org.

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE INSTITUTE ON THE COMMON GOOD

The Institute on the Common Good at Regis University serves the community at-large by promoting the common good and providing a safe and effective space for community dialogue, communal discernment, and public deliberation.



Institute on the Common Good

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