

## CEP Department Group Discussion Guidelines

*To help us have difficult conversations and learn from each other in a spirit of mutual respect*

1. Own what you are saying as your feeling, thought, opinion or belief, and invite others to have different views. **Speak for yourself while remaining curious and open to others.** “I feel angry when I see someone else feeling hurt by another student, but also I wonder what is going on between those involved that I don’t understand.”
2. **No bullying** means no disparaging others, pushing your ideas onto others, trying to get them to give you your way, closing off to other ways of looking at things, or raising your voice with difficulty calming yourself down. In response to such behavior, it is acceptable to discontinue the discussion and/or ask that person to take time out and come back to discuss the topic when they can calmly express curiosity about other perspectives.
3. To value diversity means there is room for many cultural and individual differences, including about interrupting each other, so no one way is considered the right way. Cultural differences should be discussed in inclusive ways to **offer multiple options for managing conflicting preferences.** Say something like “in my neighborhood growing up, we interrupted each other all the time, what about in yours?”
4. Listen more carefully to those we might not agree with or who might not be part of our group. Try to understand what they mean before jumping to conclusions, because overreacting can make misunderstandings worse. Recognize that you may be misinterpreting what is happening and **check out your perceptions directly:** “Can I check out my perceptions about what just happened between us? I want to hear your perceptions, too, and understand what I might be missing.”
5. When there is a group dynamic building negativity toward a person or another group, some balance in response is called for. Empathy for others’ feelings and allowing room for venting may be insufficient, and offering other perspectives can help stabilize the situation. **Direct the speaker to speak to those being discussed in person rather than behind their backs.** Remember that every one of us has both strengths and weaknesses:

### Examples of balanced statements:

“You know, so-and-so isn’t very good at \_\_A\_\_, but I’m not very good at \_\_B\_\_.”

“I don’t like the way so-and-so does \_\_C\_\_, but I do like the way so-and-so does \_\_D\_\_.”

### Examples of responding to negativity to introduce more balance:

“Does so-and-so do anything that you appreciate?”

“Is there anything you can own, that you contribute to make this situation difficult?”

6. Healthy systems **make room for everyone to be themselves** and make different choices while also maintaining connections, communication, and ethical and professional behavior.