



Old Dominion University

Dine & Dialogue: A CommUNITY Conversation (Summary)

Empowering Monarch Citizens to Address: Bias, Bigotry, and Bullying

January 29, 2019

OVERVIEW:

On Tuesday January 29, 2019, nearly 300 ODU students, staff, and faculty participated in a 90 minute-event to discuss the various manifestations of bias, bigotry, and bullying. We also discussed proactive strategies to address instances where Monarchs feel they have had relevant experiences or could advocate for someone else.

There were 300 individuals who signed up to attend the conversation. Although 43 were unable to attend, there were 40 walk-ins, and an additional 38 facilitators, **totaling 297 participants**.

- Students = 128 (Graduate and Undergraduate)
- Employees = 129 (Faculty and Staff, including Facilitators and Panel Moderators)

To ensure a diversity of perspectives during the conversation, eight to nine individuals were assigned to tables based on their role at ODU, gender, and race/ethnicity. This table diversity was so important because it is our intention that these important conversations are held with those who have diverse perspectives, so that we can maximize the potential for learning about and appreciating differences. Each table also included a trained facilitator to ensure that all attendees had an opportunity to participate in the conversation and to keep the conversation moving toward responding to two key questions:

1. As a nation, and even on our campus, we continue to experience frequent incidents of discord. In what ways have manifestations of bias, bigotry, and bullying impacted you (i.e. as a faculty member, staff member or student on campus, in your organizations, at work, in the larger community)?
2. What support do you need from other Monarchs to empower you to take action against bias, bigotry, and bullying?

Each of the participants had a 3x5 index card that included these two questions on one side and definitions of bias, bigotry, and bullying on the opposite side. The table of participants were given 15 minutes to share their responses to question one, and 15 minutes to share their responses to question two. Scribes were appointed by the facilitators to provide written summaries of the comments gathered from their respective tables. The definitions of bias, bigotry, and bullying were important for the group to have because it provided a starting point for the conversation.

BIAS: A preference based on personal experience either for or against an individual, a group, or a thing that affects fair judgment. (adapted from the Anti-Defamation League)

BIGOTRY: Unfair or prejudiced beliefs or actions that result in intolerance, contempt, discrimination, hatred on the basis of a person's ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender or gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics. (adapted from the Anti-Defamation League)

BULLYING: Disrespectful, intimidating, aggressive, and unwanted behavior toward a person that is intended to force the person to do what one wants, or to denigrate or marginalize the targeted person. (adapted from the Commonwealth of Virginia Policy 2.35)

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES:

There were 155 returned surveys. Below is a chart that summarizes the data received.

Evaluation:							
Sl.No	Material Content	Yes	No	Some what	Not at all	Total	
1	The format and organization of the event was effective	94.20%		4.50%	1.30%	100.00%	
2	Participating in this conversation was useful	92.95%	1.28%	5.13%	0.64%	100.00%	
3	The moderators were effective	97.44%	1.28%	1.28%		100.00%	
4	Dialogue objectives were met	87.74%	0.65%	10.32%	1.29%	100.00%	
5	Use of relevant examples	80.40%	2.61%	15.03%	1.96%	100.00%	
6	Pace of the event was comfortable	87.74%	1.29%	10.32%	0.65%	100.00%	
7	I would attend and/or recommend future dialogues to others	96.77%	0.65%	1.94%	0.65%	100.00%	
	Overall dialogue Rating	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Unsatisfactory	Total
	How would you rate the overall quality of this event?	63.40%	30.72%	3.27%	1.96%	0.65%	100.00%

With nearly 400 comments resulting from the two questions, the following is a brief overview of the common themes that emerged from the conversations, as well suggestions for promoting advocacy and future conversations in each of our individual spheres of influence. In what follows is a summary of the qualitative responses.

Question #1: As a nation, and even on our campus, we continue to experience frequent incidents of discord. In what ways have manifestations of bias, bigotry, and bullying impacted you (i.e. as a faculty member, staff member or student on campus, in your organizations, at work, in the larger community)?

There were three (3) themes that emerged from the comments that included the following:

1. Various manifestations of bias, bigotry and bullying were described.
 - These examples of bias, bigotry, and bullying were across many dimensions of diversity to include race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, ability/disability status, gender expression, membership status. in campus organizations, employment status, employment rank, etc.
 - Bullying can be across students and staff.
 - It is a misnomer that supervisors aren't bullied by direct reports.

2. Awareness and Knowledge:
 - "This experience has affirmed my perception and feelings that there is an underlying cultural harm of bullying at the university."
 - "It is always helpful to know what others on campus are thinking or feeling. It helps us all put things in to perspective."
 - "In this time of political chaos, there are hate groups that feel empowered to be more vocal and escalate their hate towards others."
 - "I use these tools when I am at work and on campus. This session gave me more awareness about bias, bigotry, & bullying. Thank you so very much for giving us this workshop."
 - "Protecting free speech means protecting hate speech."
 - Many were disappointed, but not surprised about manifestations of bias, bigotry, and bullying on campus from both students and staff.
 - Educate and acknowledge our own bias because America has socialized all of us to view black and brown people as negative or problematic.
 - I am a graduate student in Educational Leadership & believe this event will be helpful in both my professional career & in my academic research.

3. Skepticism about How Do We Move Forward?
 - How do we engage in the conversations that move us forward?
 - How are we still here? What can we do to move forward?

- Why aren't we addressing the real elephant in the room. This conversation didn't even scratch the surface.
- "What was the goal of today because all of this will be swept under the rug eventually and we will go back to the same old thing."
- "This was a great start; however, people who typically volunteer to participate in these events want to see change. I am interested in what is being facilitated at the President's leadership level to ensure this conversation and subsequent change takes place."
- "Why isn't there real accountability for workplace bullies? There is a double and unequal standard for bias, bigotry, and bullying across faculty, staff, and executive administrators. What can be done for the employees to bring us together and reform our toxic culture at ODU?"
- "This conversation was not helpful. The questions were filtered such that only surface level questions were asked. When are we going to have the really tough conversations, we need to move ODU and all of us forward?"

Question #2: What support do you need from other Monarchs to empower you to take action against bias, bigotry, and bullying?

The comments from this question revealed primarily five (5) key themes that emerged.

1. Support Needed from Peers (Student to Student and Staff to Staff):

- Show care, respect, and affirmation for others by not allowing offensive jokes and acts to go unchecked (whether an affected person is present or not).
- Be mindful of others in day to day actions.
- Confront hate with love.
- Recognize that to be silent is to be uncivil and complicit.
- Go with an intent to understand.
- Resist defense mechanisms.
- When someone comes to you to confide about an issue of bias, bigotry, or bullying, support them as much as you can and/or refer them to someone else to get support.
- Respect freedom to speak but not violence.

2. Supports Needed from ODU leadership:

- Organize more conversations and opportunities for more training/professional development; engaging training like this and not boring training.
- ODU leadership must engage in these conversations in real ways and not just us.
- Pay attention to details.
- "I need the leadership to resist becoming defensive, listen and walk with us."

- Make substantial investments in diversity and not just during a crisis.
- Provide more training and professional development for all Monarchs.
- Educate students and employees about the first amendment.
- Protect all of us.
- “It feels like there are real safeguards for students already and not genuine mechanisms in place that allow employees to feel protected from workplace bullies, especially if they are at high levels of leadership.”
- “The rise and fall of any organization begin and ends with leadership. ODU leadership needs to take responsibility for making more of an investment into all of us and not just when we are in hot water.”

3. Supports Needed from Faculty:

- I will use what I learned here in my classrooms with my undergraduate and graduate students. This event was very helpful.
- Teaching lessons of equality/Promote general welfare of others in every content area.
- Provide instruction in courses on civil debate and ways to disagree without being disagreeable. We must teach honest and respectful communication.
- Market the various ways, support structures that students can reach out or submit a complaint if they are being bullied. For example, you can get resources on the many levels of diversity at ODU and or report a problem at <https://www.odu.edu/life/diversity>
- Reference different works/papers/books. Continue to attend programs and encourage our students to participate in these kinds of experiences. Provide students the space to participate by giving extra credit for a course.

4. Supports Needed from Students:

- As a student leader, I want to be more vigilant/SGA should offer more forums.
- I will use this experience to try and get the Greek life community together.
- Share with others, empowered to be bolder.
- Take tools back to my chapter. Learn about more events like this.
- Use this in my educational experience in my courses at ODU; how I treat others and myself.
- “It would be helpful for students to communicate their need to have formal instruction on these issues...faculty are not always rewarded (i.e. given time) to do this.”

5. Suggestions to Promote Advocacy/Build Capacity:

- “Saying nothing is not ok. Find an ally, don’t be silent, support transparency.”
- Engage in the hard conversations; keep the conversations going more frequently and smaller.
- “I will continue to listen to others. I interact with people from all over so it's not about "furthering diversity and inclusion" it's about being mindful and understanding we all come from different backgrounds so learning about others and different cultures take practice.”

- Incorporate bullying and diversity/inclusion into mandatory training and professional development for student organizations and for the employees...not just 20 minutes at faculty meetings.
- Check the Human Resources page to learn about bullying policy.
- Arrange for personal conversations to continue in each of our own circles.
- “Start with myself first to ensure I don’t offend anyone because they may have different values/cultures. Think before I speak!”
- I will inquire about opening discussions with a podcast at ODU.

In closing, the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity and the President’s Task Force on Inclusive Excellence were honored to serve the Monarch community with the spring 2019 commUNITY Conversation: *How to Address Bias, Bigotry, and Bullying*. As a result of the overwhelming demand for more conversations, another discussion about race and racism was scheduled on February 14, 2019 for the higher education centers, in which participants were able to have virtual conversations across three sites, the main campus, and through a link. We are planning more conversations, but in the meantime, we hope you will participate in meaningful and continued dialogue during the “Black History Month” programming, such as with the two *Citizen* events on February 21 and 25. Please consult the calendar of events at odu.edu to select those events that interest you. We also have opportunities that will extend into March. For example, on March 19, Bryan Stevenson will join the President’s Lecture series and on March 26, Jane Elliott will be coming to ODU to talk about manifestations of bias, race, and racism. Stay tuned for more transformational experiences. If anyone has questions about commUNITY Conversations or needs assistance, please contact Dr. Janice Underwood at (757) 683-3141.