

## Week 1 Report

### What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

As students are discovering the platform for the first time, facilitators were happy to take them for a tour around to explore the different features and techniques of our new platform. After resolving some initial technical issues, most of the groups reported a successful first week of dialogue and high levels of student engagement. Groups began by getting familiar with our new platform and its upgraded features and aspects, then moved to knowing more about each other through introductory games, and used icebreaker activities to help students build comfort with the medium and with each other.

To initiate the process of building students' comfort and familiarity with each other, most groups started with an icebreaker, such as Two Truths and a Lie in which students had to share 3 statements about themselves and allow the group to figure out which one is a lie. This process was deepened during the Identity Activity, which allowed students to explore their individual identities, and engage with issues of identity development in the context of intercultural dialogue. In many groups, this provoked interesting discussions and sharing of personal stories, around themes such as religion, nationality and immigration. Overall, students demonstrated active listening and real interest in the cross cultural dialogue.

After reviewing the structure of the Program, student assignments and the roles of facilitators, most groups began discussions around Social and Global challenges, where they discussed each other's perspectives about this matter and explored the issues they found most critical. These conversations lead to periods of free-flowing dialogue amongst the students as they dug into substantive discussions on the issues they identified as causes for tension or as important to them to discuss, such as identity threats, social challenges, terrorist attacks, environmental issues such as climate change, racism and intolerance, gender roles and inequality and corruption and prejudice. In most groups, these topics also lead to conversations on students' expectations and concerns as participants in the dialogue.

### Attendance & Technology Update

As this is the first week where students resumed their classes in the majority of universities, students' attendance was somewhat low with approximately 35% of students absent. All groups in which students were absent had the critical mass of students necessary to have effective dialogue, while some others managed to attend their sessions from off campus. Therefore, **if any of your students were absent last week, we'd like you to encourage them to ensure they are attending all their remaining sessions.**

Overall, we're happy to report that technical issues were relatively low and quickly resolved last week. The majority of issues were resolved in-session and students who experienced difficulties due to mic and connection problems at the beginning of their respective sessions were able to participate smoothly for the duration of their sessions. Our tech team will be in touch with those whose technical issues were not resolved in-session and will also be in touch with your technical coordinators to address any technical problems with the computers at the respective university labs.

### This Week

This week, groups are likely to take different directions based on students' interest. Every group will spend some time identifying students' areas of interest, and will likely focus discussions on one or two topics in session, to end up selecting their Final Project topics. As students become more comfortable with one another, facilitators are also focusing on encouraging students to take greater ownership of the dialogue process, and pushing them towards thinking more critically about the topics they discuss.