Week 1 Report

What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

After resolving some initial technical issues, most groups reported a successful first week of dialogue and high levels of student engagement. Groups began by getting to know more about each other through introductory games, and used icebreaker activities to help students build comfort with the medium and with each other. Despite some initial choppy momentum as students familiarized themselves with the form of dialogue and the ins and outs of the Soliya platform, facilitators shared that students quickly overcame their hesitation and began openly sharing with their peers and asking each other questions.

After reviewing administrative topics such as the structure of the Program, student assignments and the roles of facilitators, most groups began discussions around the nature of dialogue itself, and examined what dialogue is and how it is different from debates, discussions, etc. This lead to great conversations around the goals of dialogue (e.g. active listening with the purpose of understanding the other), what is needed for dialogue to succeed (e.g. the importance of self-reflection), and the roles of individuals in the dialogue process (e.g. asking good, open-ended questions). In most groups, these topics also lead to conversations on students' expectations and concerns as participants in the dialogue.

Attendance & Technology Update

As is typical of the first sessions, students' attendance was low this week with almost 30% of students absent. Fortunately, all groups in which students were absent had the critical mass of students necessary to have effective dialogue, but **if any of your students were absent this week, we'd like to ask you to encourage your students to ensure they are attending all their remaining sessions.**

Though a number of groups had a slower start due to students' technical issues, I'm happy to report that technical issues were relatively low this week – compared to the first weeks of previous semesters. 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.

Next Week

Next week, students will begin with the Identity Activity, which we hope will allow students to examine their respective identities and begin discussions on issues such as identity development, audience-based changes, and identity threat. Students will then go on to collaboratively explore what they see as important global challenges, with a particular focus on key differences that cause conflicts, both globally and within communities. This discussion will use the required readings to help push the conversation to a deeper level. In each group, they will then discuss what they see as the most important issues and use these to determine their agenda of discussion topics for the remainder of the semester.