

Model C

Peer to Peer Conversations

Purpose/Rationale:

The purpose of Peer to Peer (P2P) conversations is to promote growth over a faculty career and to build relational culture and climate on campus. Minimally, it is anticipated that faculty who initiate P2P conversations will acquire resources and ideas for solving professional challenges that matter most to their work at DU. During a P2P conversation, individual faculty identify an area/key question of practice to engage in a confidential 2 hour conversation around this question, conundrum, or problem. A P2P conversation consists of 3-4 committee members (CM) plus the faculty convener (FC). Committee members may hold any rank from any of the DU faculty series or staff/administrators with relevant expertise as a committee member or they may come from outside institutions depending on the topic and needed expertise. The P2P conversation structure is customized to the DU community based on professional development work developed by the *Center for Courage and Renewal*¹

Timing/structure:

Ideally, faculty should initiate a P2P conversation at least every three years for the purpose of sustaining a vibrant intellectual and professional trajectory within the DU community. Faculty are encouraged to convene a P2P conversation at the following benchmarks: within three years of initial appointment, within three years following promotion from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor, and within three years after promotion from Associate Professor to Professor. These recommendations apply to faculty in all benefitted faculty series, including Tenure Line Professorial Series, the Professorial Series in University Libraries, the Teaching Professor Series, the Clinical Professor Series, the Professor of the Practice Series, and the Research Professor Series.

Format:

The following text provides a brief outline for a P2P conversation. A more detailed conceptual explanation and practical considerations are included in *Peer to Peer Conversations Manual/Best Practices* available on the Faculty Senate website.

Step 1: Initial reflection

The FC is encouraged to write a one- or two-page document refining ideas, questions, and considerations. The FC is encouraged to distribute this document to the 3-4 Committee Members (CMs) to help focus their feedback during the P2P conversation.

Step 2: Inviting 3-4 committee members

The Center for Courage and Renewal (<http://www.couragerenewal.org/>) is an internationally recognized organization offering workshops, consulting programs, and retreats for teachers, physicians, social workers, clergy and other members of the helping professions for several decades. Educator, social activist, and scholar Parker J. Palmer is a co-founder.¹

The FC reaches out to 3-4 faculty of any rank or staff/administrators of any position. All CMs need not hold similar views around the question under consideration. In fact, selecting CMs with contrasting expertise or experiences can increase the effectiveness of the P2P conversation by adding diversity and unexpected insights that open up the potential for professional growth. That may mean that the best CMs are close colleagues, but it might also mean that the best CMs reside outside your immediate social/academic networks. Faculty Senate can provide a list of faculty across campus who self-identify as CMs or have participated successfully in the process.

Step 3: Finding the best place

Although almost any space will work, it is suggested that the qualities of a good space will include silence and privacy. Writing or note taking materials can be useful for capturing questions or observations made by either the FC or CMs.

Step 4: Introductions and purpose

Introductions can be as simple as name, unit affiliation, and what understandings/knowledge each CM brings to the conversation. The Faculty Convener offers a brief (10-15 minute) overview of the problem, issue, or conundrum under investigation. The Committee Members ask questions aimed at bringing additional clarity or insights to the question at hand. The goal is to explore and examine the question to its fullest potential instead of moving toward a quick resolution and conclusion. During the last 15-20 minutes of the conversation, the committee members are invited to share any final thoughts regarding the question. Close with a reminder of the importance of confidentiality.

Step five: One-page summary

This short document may include key questions that were asked, possible steps to follow, and any questions that were raised that are still in need of further examination. This document may be sent to the Committee Members for their general interest. Additionally, the FC should consider noting participation in a P2P conversation in Activity Insight.