

FrankChat

It's the Franciscan Thing to Do! Engaging mind and spirit



FrankChat is an initiative USF has begun during the year of COMPASSION and further developed the following year of RESPECT in response to requests from faculty, staff and students for more opportunities to learn how to have frank, respectful, compassionate conversation with integrity to one's own views about things that really matter. USF believes that respectful, civil discourse is the best way to support our expressed value for diversity into practice.

The intention of the program is to teach all members of the USF community to engage in civil discourse and to value dialogue over debate, WIN-WIN over winners and losers. We believe that learning these skills will then enable us to achieve a community culture that embraces difference as a strength and to communicate openly and honestly about controversial issues.

Sessions:

FrankChat sessions will be offered several times per semester. Each session provides participants with an opportunity to discuss controversial issues in small groups of five or six faculty, staff and student participants. Topics for new sessions can be suggested by student organizations, classes or campus committees.

Three Options:



There are three ways that participants may engage:

1. FrankChat utilizing the DuTalk® Cards

Civil Discourse requires that participants be able to recognize the difference between dialogue and debate and gain familiarity with effective participation and facilitation skills. To learn these skills, new participants are encouraged to play the DuTalk® Card Game from Loras College. Members of the group are asked to draw a card from a deck of brief scenarios that present a values or communication issue. The scenario is read aloud and the group has five minutes to discuss the issue and determine the answer to the questions, "What do you do? What do you say?" Members of the group take turns practicing facilitations skills. The cards are one mean to provide rapid, and frequent practice opportunities.

2. FrankChat Drop-In

Participants at each session join groups of 5 or 6 others at tables and select a topic from a suggested list or generate one of their own. One member is asked to facilitate the conversation and another to record. Once topics have been selected, they are announced to the room and participants have an opportunity to move to the topic of their choice. Conversation then begins. The facilitator's responsibility is to ensure that the conversation doesn't slip into debate, that participants don't back away from conflict, that no single member dominates the conversation, and that all have a chance to participate. The facilitator remains neutral on the topic, but may supply available facts, ask probing questions or summarize comments or points of view.

3. FrankChat Circles

If a group becomes passionate about a topic or a focuses on a problem they would like to solve, they may continue to meet as a group across sessions and pursue the discussion further. If they generate a solution, a follow up action forum is planned and stakeholders on the issue are invited to hear the group's presentation and, if possible, take action to solve the problem or adopt the group's recommendations.