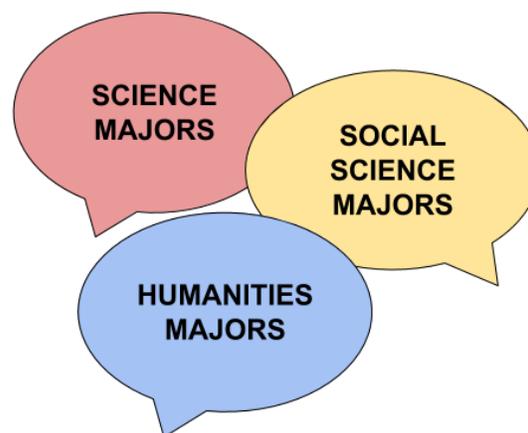


Inspire cross-disciplinary student dialogue: Host a forum to address stereotypes around different academic majors.

How might we facilitate constructive student conversation across majors? Several WE1S key findings point to a systemic lack of opportunities for meaningful communication between students from different disciplines [for more on this issue, see Action Roadmap 8-X]. To create space for such an opportunity and to encourage constructive dialogue, WE1S suggests holding a forum in which undergraduates from the humanities, social sciences, and sciences are invited to speak and discuss in a roundtable format, sharing perceptions and stereotypes that adhere to different majors on campus, with the ultimate goal of furthering mutual understanding.

Try this. Plan a one hour event. In advance, choose three student speakers (one each from a humanities, social science, and “hard” science field). A fourth student, preferably an undergraduate, can act as moderator. Advertise the event widely to encourage an audience made up of multiple majors (invite faculty and staff as well, but make sure the focus is on student voices!) As an opening prompt, the moderator can show [KF 8-2](#) (“Students are twice as likely to think others stereotype them based on their majors than that they stereotype others”). For the first twenty minutes, the three selected speakers can discuss this finding in relation to their own experiences. Importantly, the moderator should make it clear that this is a *discussion*, not a *debate* (i.e., there is no “winner”). For the next twenty minutes, invite audience members into the discussion. The moderator can ask questions such as: “What are your own experiences with stereotypes surrounding

majors?”, “Do you frequently have conversations about your studies with people outside of your field?”, “Would it be beneficial to increase dialogue between majors? Why or why not?”, “Are these discussions best accomplished in or outside of class?”, and “What are key challenges that we must overcome if we want to encourage greater communication and break down stereotypes, and what are possible solutions?”



Finally, for the last twenty minutes, invite the audience to cluster into small groups for discussion, and possibly do a hands-on activity oriented around interdisciplinary dialogue, such as crafting an “Elevator Pitch.” [C-8-1]. The event could be hosted by a department, an extracurricular student group, or as part of a class discussion. Shorten or lengthen timing as appropriate, and invite your school newspaper to cover it. A similar event could also be held with graduate students/faculty.

Resources

Related Cards: [KF 8-2](#)

Blog Post: [to come]

Event Planning Materials: [to come]