

JMU Institute for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue

ICAD Year-End Report 2019-2020

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Vision

We seek to create a world that engages in dialogue and deliberation across differences as a cultural norm and as an effective tool for addressing the challenges and opportunities of civic life.

Mission

To inspire dialogue and deliberation that shapes engaged and inclusive communities and informs sound policies.

We do this by:

- creating spaces where exploring values and tensions can transform communities for collaborative public problem solving;
- training students, campus, and community members to build capacity for productive talk; and,
- grounding this work in and seeking to add to theory and best practices.

ICAD is housed in the School of Communication Studies, and while grounded in theories and research of communication, is multidisciplinary in nature and enjoys the robust support of the Department of Political Science and the College of Arts and Letters. Dr. Britt rechartered ICAD at JMU in 2012 and Dr. Alexander joined ICAD in 2013. Dr. Kara Dillard joined ICAD in 2019. Working with an ad-hoc Advisory Board, ICAD subsequently developed a new vision and mission. ICAD reports to Eric Fife, Academic Unit Head for the School of Communication Studies, and has been submitting annual reports to the School of Communication Studies and the College of Arts and Letters Dean’s Office.

ICAD Reach

ICAD AY 2019-2020 Reach by the Numbers

7	Graduate Students enrolled in the facilitation theory and training course SCOM/PUAD 627, Spring 2020
25	SCOM undergrad students in the facilitation theory and training course SCOM 447, Fall 2019
3	ICAD Student Affiliates and Interns earning credit for ICAD engagement
52	ICAD Facilitator Affiliates on call for providing professional services to community clients
13	Campus Facilitated Forums and Processes (<i>see descriptions below</i>)
13	Community Facilitated Forums and Processes (<i>see descriptions below</i>)

ICAD Goals for 2020-2021

Engaged Learning: We will continue to expose students to the theory and practice of facilitation, dialogue, deliberation, and collaboration through the dedicated undergraduate course, SCOM 447, and the cross-listed graduate course, SCOM 627/PUAD 627, as well as exposing honors students to the skills of framing complex issues through the Honors curriculum focusing on deliberation in SCOM 123 Honors. Students in the new JMU XLabs course *Hacking for Democracy* will learn deliberation skills, including basic ideas of how to moderate face-to-face and online dialogues on politically polarizing local issues. We will also continue to provide opportunities for students to use their skills in designing and facilitating productive conversation through campus and community projects.

Engaged Scholarship: We continue to engage in reflexive praxis that allows us to contribute to research and inquiry into the factors underlying successful facilitation and engagement practices, including cutting-edge research into online dialogue and deliberation spaces that may become the new normal in a post-COVID-19 world. We also strive to find ways to study the impacts on those who participate in engagement processes.

Engaged Service: We will continue to provide professional facilitation services for campus and community groups who have a need to shape spaces for productive talk and collaborative action. In addition, we will offer a set of non-credit community-based training workshops to respond to growing interest and inquiries. We also continue to grow and manage a network of ICAD faculty, affiliates, and student and community facilitators to build sustainable capacity to meet growing campus and community needs. For 2020-2021 we will be intentionally engaged in ensuring that our work is designed around principles of authentic inclusion and reflecting on ways our work can both be anti-racist and support structures of racial equality. We will continue to integrate online tools like Common Ground for Action deliberative forums or Zoom-based dialogues to bring new and cutting edge civic engagement practices to the larger Shenandoah Valley.

Leadership in the Field of Dialogue and Deliberation

Dr. Lori Britt was named to the board of the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation in January 2019. (ncdd.org)

Dr. Lori Britt was named as an Associate Editor for the newly launched Journal of Deliberation Democracy (formerly the Journal of Public Deliberation.) The journal's key objective is to serve as the forum for the latest thinking, emerging debates as well as critical views on deliberative democracy.

Dr. Kara Dillard was named to the Board of Directors for the National Issues Forums Institute in August 2019. The NIFI is one of the leading organizations in developing issue guides and connecting practitioners to communities in deliberation.

Dr. Kara Dillard was named a Research Associate with the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, focusing on online deliberation and citizen outcomes.

Dr. Lori Britt and Dr. Kara Dillard were invited to participate in the Virginia Bar Association at University of Virginia Karsh Center's "Dialogue to Explore Civility and Engagement Initiatives" Roundtable, June 2020.

ICAD continues to be active in the network of campus-based civic engagement, dialogue and deliberation institutes in the Kettering Foundation Centers for Civic Life program.

Dr. Rob Alexander continues to organize the Shenandoah Valley Facilitators Network, the largest group of trained facilitators in the area.

Research about the Practice of Dialogue and Deliberation

Publications

Britt, L. L., & Alexander, R. (2019). Stories Communities Tell: How Deliberative Practitioners Can Work with Community Narratives. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 15(3), 6. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16997/jdd.344>

Britt, L. L., and Ball, T. C. (2019). Deliberative Communication about Complex Social Issues: An Innovative General Education Course for Honors Students. *Journal of General Education: A Curricular Commons of the Humanities and Sciences Reports*

Pastor, D., Goldberg, A., Britt, L.L., Shuyler, K., Thacker, E., Whaley, C., and Williams, J. (2019) Political Learning & Democratic Engagement at JMU, A campus climate study.

Research in Progress

Evaluating the Civic Impacts of Deliberative Pedagogy, writing article about pilot data collection from two courses with different types of deliberative pedagogies (SCOM 123 Honors, SCOM 447 Facilitation) and a control group, SCOM 123. Early findings show that these pedagogies are having the impacts we desire for several markers of civic engagement and efficacy. Additional data will be collected Fall 2020.

Common Ground for Action (CGA): A Macro-Level Case Study in Design-Build Innovations in Online Deliberation. Using three meta-case studies of major projects utilizing Common Ground for Action as the primary deliberation treatment – in online deliberative forums for U.S. Members of Congress, in online deliberations for college students across a diversity of US-based universities, and in an initiative encouraging online deliberation on key 2020 election issues sponsored by a major US newspaper – this essay examines the utility and function of the deliberation theory-based design features of CGA as well as the drawbacks and constraints of game design as they relate to promoting deliberative talk and choicework.

New innovations in online deliberation: A review of the literature. A literature review of online deliberation that provides a framework for evaluating outcomes based on design features, is still a work in progress.

Outrage and incivility in new online deliberative spaces: How design choice impacts political discourse. Analysis of discussion board content from the U.S. newspaper USATODAY and transcripts from National Issues Forums (NIF)-style deliberative forums convened on the Common Ground for Action (CGA) online platform. Both datasets are features of USATODAY's national election year initiative "Hidden Common Ground 2020" with the newspaper pushing readers to participate in online deliberations via their on-site message board and in CGA forums. Preliminary analysis provides two important related insights relevant to efforts at encouraging deliberation: First, that a richer, moderated online deliberative forums harbored far less uncivil talk and outrage language than the leaner, online deliberative message boards and second, that design choices about how to structure online deliberation may make significant difference in outcomes.

CGA comparative moderator research. This research focuses on the difference in moderator experience and outcomes between in-person and CGA forums. A pilot focus group was conducted with 5 CGA moderators who were initially in-person moderators to talk through what they saw were critical differences and similarities between the two. Focus groups and follow up interviews are ongoing and research should be complete by end of 2020.

Attitudes and behaviors of students after cross-campus forums. This project aims to assess how impactful online deliberation via CGA is on civic attitudes and behaviors. Each year, NIFI hosts a weeklong series of cross-campus forums connecting students from disparate campuses - urban with rural campuses, conservative with liberal, large with small, liberal arts with tech focus, etc. – together in deliberation. Often, students participate in campus-based forums only with students like themselves or who, because they are on the same campus, have similar experiences. Connecting different students together using CGA is a unique way to see how much of an impact exposure to different voices and stories has on the forum experience. Survey instrument is being designed for use in Fall 2019; a pilot test was conducted Spring 2020. Data collection in Fall 2020 and project completion by end of spring 2021.

Conference Presentations

Dillard, K. (2020, February). “The power of deliberative democracy on campus” Workshop session at IMPACT conference, Arizona State University.

Britt, L. L., Goldberg, A. Boehm, J., Koether, K., Pickering, B., and Churchill, L. (2020, June). “Shaping Dialogues to Generate Ideas and Support for strengthening Campus Democratic Engagement.” Workshop presentation at the virtual Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Conference, June 2020.

Dedrick, J., Dillard, K., Lindaman, K., Muse, B., (2020, June). “Democratic Deliberation: Free Speech and the Inclusive Campus.” Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Conference.

Dedrick, J., Dillard, K., Lindaman, K., Theis, J., Muse, B. (2020, June). “Democratic Deliberation in Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement.” Campus Compact annual conference, Seattle, WA* (*Conference canceled, no virtual option available)

Speaking Engagements

Britt, L.L., Invited Speaker, Careers and Practices of Facilitation, JMU Outriggers, February 2020

Britt, L.L., Invited Speaker, Shenandoah Valley Governor’s School, Fishersville, VA. Transforming Talk about Public Issues. Part of the *Giving Voice: Lunchtime Speakers in the Humanities* series, February 2020

Britt, L.L., Invited Speaker, Inaugural Saturday Scholars Program, JMU Honors College, Transforming Talk about Public Issues, February 2020.

Workshops

ICAD Designed and Facilitated a two-day Community Facilitation Training, held at Mary Baldwin University, January 2020. 16 participants

Common Ground for Action, Training workshop to orient students, faculty and staff to serving as online facilitators for the Common Ground for Action platform, March 2020.

ICAD and Dr. Kara Dillard convened over 75 demonstrations and moderator training/coaching for the Common Ground for Action online deliberation platform during the course of 2019-2020. This has greatly exposed ICAD to other institutions and campus-based Institutes/Centers looking to expand their tools for dialogue and deliberation. Some examples of ICAD leading online deliberation moderator training:

- Demonstration of Common Ground for Action for editorial page editors across the USATODAY newspaper network, community and engagement reporters at America Amplified/NPR, reporters at Side Effects Media. Demonstrations were a part of the USATODAY, America Amplified and Side Effects Media's different election year coverage.
- Trained over 150 new CGA moderators. Some efforts to note:
 - Trained Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation staff and students – hosting CGA + Zoom forums for working with city officials. Initial test forums with city/county staff were held in April and May.
 - Trained Colorado water management staff on CGA to hold CGA forums using their locally created (with NAAEE) water issue guide. CGA forums were held in April and early May
 - Trained staff of David Mathews Center and Kansas 4H who have then offered CGA moderator training to their own networks. DMC and KS 4H have been convening CGA forums in May.
 - Trained staff members of the Kentucky Environmental Education Council were trained in late October and recently convened five CGA forums using the Climate Choices issue guide for members of the KY state environmental department.
 - Trained staff at the Louisiana Department of Health on their localized opioids crisis issue guide.
 - Trained faculty at Baylor University on moderating church-politics CGA forums.
 - Worked with Net Impact and UpToUs to train faculty and staff connected to Campus Compact
- ICAD worked with NIFI to connect Centers and communities with CGA moderators to continue convening forums. Some examples:
 - Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS) series on immigration.
 - Northern Kentucky health care forums
 - KC Consensus health care forums

Grants/Fellowships

2019-2022, Kara Dillard was awarded a three-year \$195,000 grant by the Kettering Foundation to pursue research into digital deliberative practice and online moderator training.

ICAD is included as part of a grant awarded to the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Association of Realtors from the National Association of Realtors for community work on addressing the needs for low-income housing. Planning for this project is underway and will continue for summer and fall 2020.

For Summer 2020 and Fall 2020, Lori Britt will receive \$1,000 in summer pay and a course buyout for Fall 2020 (\$4,000) from the Interactivity Foundation to work on forming a certification program in dialogue and deliberation for college students.

2019, Lori Britt from the Interactivity Foundation, for work on the Development Team for a Certificate Program for Deliberative Discussions, \$500

Design and Facilitation of Campus-Based Facilitated Conversations and Processes

LEAP Dialogues: Responding to the need for spaces for people to gather and talk virtually about how to learn, wrestle with, and discuss actions steps to create systemic change locally regarding racial justice. We began by offering a Thursday lunchtime online dialogue space that followed the Madison Center for Civic Engagement Town Hall series. The LEAP series will be ongoing throughout the summer, June 2020

Common Ground for Action: Developed and helped moderate, along with ICAD practicum students and other trained student facilitators, three online Common Ground for Action Forums as a resource for faculty in the College of Arts and Letters to engage their students in conversations about public issues. (Climate Choices: How should we meet the challenges of a warming planet?, Making Ends Meet: How should we spread prosperity and improve opportunity?, and The Changing World of Work: What should we ask of higher education?) These were developed to serve the needs on instructors trying to find meaningful ways for students to connect and think together while being socially-distant, April 2020

Guns, Rights and Security: How Should We Protect Ourselves and Community From Gun Violence? – ICAD Affiliates designed and facilitated a community forum to explore views on the intersection gun violence and our constitutional right to safety and freedom, March 2020

Town Hall: Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference: Considering Challenges and Opportunities for Future Conferences – Students helped facilitate small group conversations for the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition discussing future conference details, such as: traditions, conference values, time of year, etc. This was co-sponsored by The School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication at James Madison University, November 2019

Centennial Scholars – Students designed a facilitation experience and workshop for the Centennial Scholars Program's graduate assistants. The goal was to demonstrate the importance of facilitation as well as give examples of techniques that promote participation; these were all skills that the graduate assistants could use in their small groups after the facilitation. Partner: JMU Centennial Scholars, October 2019

Democratic Discussion: Talking Around the "Niceness" at JMU – Students designed and facilitated a dialogue for students to gain a deeper insight of the student perspective of politics and engagement. The goal was to learn students' ideas to further encourage political engagement and prepare students to be educated and enlightened citizens, October 2019

Exploring Historical and Contemporary Blackface. In collaboration with faculty members of the Department of History, ICAD developed an interactive forum that combined the expertise of historians with the engagement of facilitated dialogue to challenge conventional notions of knowledge and meaning regarding racial history in the U.S. The resulting innovation entailed dividing participants into four groups and assigning a history 'expert' to each group. After an initial welcome and framing of the relevance of the event (Northam yearbook controversy), experts sat with their group and provided a 'table talk', giving a presentation while sitting in a circle with their group. Then, one of our facilitators facilitated two rounds of discussion questions to elicit equitable participation. After that, at a set time, the 'experts' got up and rotated to a new group and the cycle began again. With over 45 participants, feedback was positive.

Political Talk: A Deep Dive into Authenticity in a Culture of Niceness – Students designed and facilitated a dialogue for faculty and staff to consider their thoughts on the current political climate on campus and how the university can continue to improve and engage in political talk. The hope was with the 2020 election coming up, faculty and staff could discuss how on campus political talks can continue in the culture of niceness, October 2019

Designed and Facilitated Strategic Planning Session for JMU X-Labs staff and faculty, August 2019

Design and Facilitation of Community Facilitated Conversations and Processes

Harrisonburg/Rockingham Bike-Walk Summit – ICAD continued its longitudinal support of this annual Summit, a collaborative effort by the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition and the Central Shenandoah Valley Planning District Commission to bring together key decision-makers, public administrators, university actors, and bicycling/walking enthusiasts to discuss ways to improve biking and walking in the City and the County. This commitment starts in January and continues through November when the Summit occurs. This year's Summit theme focused upon the advent of micromobility (i.e., dockless bikes and scooters, etc.) within participant communities, what participants have learned, and whether or not participants feel that they are an opportunity or a threat.

Northern Shenandoah Valley Rails to Trails Project – ICAD continues to serve as the facilitation consultants for the Northern Shenandoah Valley Rails to Trails Project, a regional collaboration involving two counties, two Planning District Commissions, fifteen towns, and a range of non-profit stakeholders. Activities in the 2019/2020 reporting period included facilitating the development of draft bylaws for the Partnership, designing and implementing a region-wide feedback survey on these bylaws, facilitating the incorporation of this feedback, and moderating the first official meeting of the Partnership where the bylaws were reviewed by all key stakeholders in-person and subsequently approved, hereby kicking off the official Partnership.

Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative – The Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, a conservation organization based in New Market, VA convened a set of governmental and non-profit collaborators to earn a \$1 million grant to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation aimed at ramping up the capacity of these collaborators to address nutrient issues for the Chesapeake Bay TMDL regulations generated from farming in the Shenandoah Valley. ICAD facilitators volunteer their time to provide facilitation services for this effort, helping the Collaborative navigate the early stages of figuring out effective relationship building and decision-making processes.

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ) Green Government Initiative – Staff members at VADEQ contacted ICAD for facilitation support regarding a workshop for state agency stakeholders across eight agencies to develop strategies for implementing the Governor’s Green Government directive regarding the environmental sustainability of state procurement and waste management behaviors. ICAD developed, implemented, and wrote a final report for a half-day workshop held at DEQ offices in Richmond.

Fields of Gold/Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC) – ICAD continued its relationship with the CSPDC and its Fields of Gold agritourism economic development program by designing, implementing, and crafting the final report for a half-day meeting of its Advisory Board where the Board and staff deliberated on whether or not to continue Fields of Gold programming as the program neared mission fulfillment.

Association for Environmental Science and Studies (AESS) Presidential Task Force for Crisis Management – Dr. Alexander, as a member of this international professional association for faculty members and individuals working in the field of Environmental Studies and Science, put on his ICAD hat and started serving as the facilitator of the AESS President’s Task Force for Crisis Management. Dr. Alexander works with the AESS President to design meetings of this Task Force and then implements these designs as the Task Force works to generate strategies for leading the Association through the crises incurred by the pandemic situation and its impacts on conferences and budgets.

2019 Harrisonburg Farmers Market – Students designed a pop up dialogue facilitation at the downtown Harrisonburg’s Farmers Market. The facilitation aimed to engage community members and current farmers market vendors in visioning how to improve the local market and ensure its sustainability. Partner: Harrisonburg Farmers’ Market Board and Staff, October 2019

Designed and Facilitated Visioning and Strategic Planning Process for the Harrisonburg Farmers’ Market Board of Directors, October 2019

Religion in America Class at Mary Baldwin University – Students designed and facilitated a forum for a Religion in America class regarding Columbus Day and Indigenous People’s Day. The students discussed religious influences perpetuated by the name “Columbus Day” and the benefits and drawbacks of changing the name to “Indigenous People’s Day”. Partner: Mary Baldwin Spencer Center for Civic and Global Engagement, October 2019

Fauquier County Schools Department of Instruction – Designed and Facilitated Collaboration and Strategy Session for the Fauquier County Schools Department of Instruction Staff, September 2019

Virginia Social Studies Leadership Consortium – Designed and Facilitated with MPA Graduate Student Eric Schmucker, the third of a three-meeting process focused on developing a mission and vision, and key advocacy objectives for the Virginia Social Studies Leadership Consortium, June 2019

