

What is an Unconference?

An unconference is created by and for YOU. Rather than having a pre-determined schedule of sessions, we work together on the day of the event to create programming that will be interesting and inspiring for everyone present.

Every unconference is different. At this one, we've scheduled a panel for the morning that we hope will give us all some ideas to reflect on throughout the rest of the day. Our afternoon is divided into three one-hour sessions, and we'll collect your input during the morning to decide what -- and how many -- breakout conversations will be scheduled during those sessions.

We are so excited for this day together. We've put together some shared values for our day so that we can all start from the same place. The back of this handout includes tips for session facilitators. If you've agreed to be a facilitator, we hope these will be helpful reminders. If you're in a session that does not appear to have a facilitator, we hope these tips will inspire you to feel confident guiding the conversation.

Unconference Shared Values

- This conference is what you want to make of it! If you're in a session and realize that it's not the conversation you hoped for, feel free to (quietly) get up and head to a different session.
- Make space for other ideas and opinions
- Relax and have fun!

My Unconference Schedule:

Breakout One:

Location:

Breakout Two:

Location:

Breakout Three:

Location:

Tips for Session Facilitators

These tips are not rules; instead, they're a suggested framework for facilitating a session if you're not sure how to get started.

You don't need to be an expert to facilitate a topic. In fact, sometimes it's easier if you're not. All you need is a willingness to guide conversation.

NOTE: Reflect on what will work well with the size of your group: Do you want to spend the session in full group discussion? Or, would it be easier for participants to take part if the full group breaks into smaller groups when it's time for discussion? Feel free to adjust these tips accordingly

1. **Start with introductions:** invite participants to share their names; you could also ask them to share their professional experience and role, and/or a reason they came to the session. Introductions take a long time in a large group; with more than 20 people, you could instead invite participants to introduce themselves to the person on either side of them.
2. You might choose to take a moment to agree on some session values as a group. Invite participants to share their own suggestions, such as:
 - o Don't interrupt other speakers
 - o Respect other people's' opinions
 - o Assume the best of others
3. **Confirm the session's topic** with attendees. Invite everyone to share questions that they have about the topic; you might want to have paper handy to record these. You could share questions by going around the circle, or by inviting participants to share spontaneously.
4. **Focus in:** reflecting on the questions shared, are there any specific issues or sub-topics that came up repeatedly? Identify and share these with the group; work together to decide if you'd like to start your conversation on one of these, and identify others that you hope to discuss at a different point in the session.
5. After choosing an issue to focus on, **invite free conversation.** If you notice that one participant is doing a lot of the talking, you can make space for others by saying something like, "Thank you so much for sharing your ideas! I'd love to make sure we hear from some others as well; does anyone have any other thoughts or opinions on this?"
You might notice that several people have spoken, but that they all represent one perspective or idea. You could ask, "We've heard several great suggestions about dealing with this in the Higher Education community; does anyone have any thoughts on the K-12 experience?"
6. **Watch the clock.** If your group identified multiple questions or issues that you want to talk about during your session, make sure you respect this. Keep an eye on the clock and offer a time check. For example, you could say: "We've had a great conversation about this issue for the last 20 minutes. We identified two other questions that we wanted to talk about; how would people feel about moving on to one of those? Or, would we all like to continue with the conversation we've started?"
7. **Check the vibes.** Keep your eyes on everyone in the room to see how they're feeling. If you notice that someone hasn't spoken much, or if you can see that they'd like to speak but haven't been able to get an opportunity, feel free to invite them to share. For example, you could ask, "[Name], I wondered if you had any ideas or feedback on this, based on the work you do?" It's completely fine if they pass on speaking after you've created this opportunity for them.
8. **Wrap up with an Exit Ticket.** Make sure you leave 10 minutes at the end of the session to wrap up: invite one or two final thoughts, and share the Exit Ticket for all participants to fill out.