

Facilitating Conversation With Students

Engaging the Students

- Treat the students as equals. Yes you are an Orientation Leader, but also make sure they know you are also a *college student* just like them.
- When asking questions, try to avoid just throwing out a general question to the whole group.
 - Maybe answer the question for yourself while you are asking the students. For example: “When I came to Western I was so excited to learn how to ski, what are you all excited about?”
 - Or ask a specific student to first answer your question instead of throwing it out to everyone.
- Be excited about what you are doing. If you think you are too cool for it, then they will too.
- Have a variety of ice breakers planned so you can change activities if your group is not into it.
- When students ask you if they really have to participate in the whole day, tell them that everything we planned is for their benefit. So whether they learn something new or meet someone new, they should benefit in some way from every session.
- If you are playing an ice breaker and one or two students don’t want to play, see if they want to help you facilitate in some way. Example: when playing frog on a log, have a student help you think of which move to do next. Or you could have a student help you judge which pair was the last to get together.

Debriefing

- Sit or stand in a circle. Try to make sure everyone is doing the same thing.
- If you are not in a circle and all the students are facing you, make sure you are facing the sun. That way they can still look at you. Keep eye contact.
- You do not always need to debrief an ice breaker. Debriefing is more for leadership challenges or activities that are meant to teach the group something.
- Make sure to speak out a little more and utilize teachable moments.
- Relate the activity to something in their lives.
- Be conscious of your body language. Stay relaxed and have fun. Be yourself and be confident.
- Putting people on the spot is ok, but also be careful about who you call out. Maybe call on the person who appeared to have the most fun.
- Don’t worry if nobody speaks right away – count to 5 or 10...
- Ask people specific questions. Try not to be vague.
- Reframe questions to make them more relatable.
- Know your activity – be confident in leading it.
- Know your group.
- Point out your observations.

Filling the Void

- Main goal is to be prepared. If you have an arsenal of icebreakers, conversation starters and small activities it will be easier to get through the day.
- Keep a relaxed, but authoritative attitude. If you show you care about being there they'll want to be there too.
- Your group will feed off you. Try to keep personal issues (like boyfriend/ girlfriend troubles) at home because they'll only slow you up during the day.
- If you have a good amount of free time don't be afraid of just sitting around with your group. They'll want to ask you questions, pick your brain and find out more about Western so just be yourself and get to know them.
- Groups will differ from orientation to orientation so don't expect icebreakers that worked during last orientation to work this time.
- Mostly just have fun. These kids are excited and in a new environment, all you have to do is help make them comfortable.

Inappropriate/Uncomfortable situations

- It is best not to call someone out in front of the group, this way you can avoid the problem escalating in front of the other students
- If they ask questions about sex, boyfriends/girlfriends staying over etc., explain that communication between roommates is essential and that they are adults and they have to make the decision that is best for them
- Rude/crude behavior directed towards Orientation Leaders will not be tolerated
- Rude/crude behavior directed towards other students will not be tolerated-if behavior persists, find Brandon, John, Michelle, or Sara so that we can deal with it properly
- Certain phrases or words can be hurtful even when they were not intended to do so, it is best to explain that the Orientation is meant to make everyone feel comfortable and that those certain words can hurt the atmosphere surrounding the group
- If they ask about drugs or alcohol, it is best not to play ignorant to those topic as they know that you know what really goes on here
- If you overhear students talking about a party during orientation, it is best to explain that there could be severe consequences if they were caught drinking or doing drugs during Orientation, emphasize the night time activities.