Small-Group Discussion Instructions

- You will be in a group with everyone at your table.
- Your group will have a facilitator from the Transformative Justice Coalition. They may be an undergraduate student, organizer, a faculty member, a graduate student, staff member, or volunteer. The facilitator will be in charge of taking notes from the small-group discussion.
- Your group will be assigned a theme at random. Find the list of scenarios for your theme and collectively choose one scenario from that short list to discuss.
- You will discuss your scenario for 20 minutes using the prompts within the description and the list of guiding discussion questions below.
- Towards the end of your discussion, collectively gather 1-2 key takeaways to share out.

Guiding Discussion Questions

- How might you begin to address the harm by communicating a message of care to those involved?
- Who needs to be listened to? What perspectives need to be considered?
- What questions need to be asked? Which structural conditions, identities, biases, culture, or power dynamics need to be considered before coming up with a solution? Which of these can be transformed?
- What is an immediate outcome? What does each participating party need to move forward in a healing way?
- What is a longer-term transformative response and what does prevention look like for this scenario?
- Imaginative bonus question: What could this specific conflict resolution look like without current systems that oppress and punish us? What barriers are standing in the way for a transformative approach here at UMass?
- During the last 3-5 minutes of your discussion, please write down 1-2 key takeaways from your discussion.

Scenarios to Choose From

Academic & Labor

1. An instructor suspects that a student has submitted a paper written by AI. Current guidance in the Academic Honesty Policy states “The use of ChatGPT and similar AI text generators to complete assignments is prohibited under the UMass Academic Honesty Policy.” University guidelines state informal or formal processes at the instructor’s discretion. How should the instructor proceed in a way informed by transformative justice?¹

2. A person was hired by UMass to do diversity work for a large department on campus. Many in the department welcome the JEDI workers’ presence but some coworkers say they are being bullied for their political beliefs by this person. How should the worker and the community respond in ways informed by transformative justice?

¹Umass Academic Honesty Statement
Race & Ethnicity

3. A group of students of color want to study in a classroom during night hours, but are confronted by university authorities (UMPD, faculty, etc.), told they cannot be in the space, and asked to leave the building. The students accuse the authority of targeting them for their skin color. What could the university authority have done differently in this scenario? How should access to study spaces and university “property” fundamentally change?

4. On the first day of class, two students are talking as the class is getting set up. The white student says to their Asian classmate “Where are you from?” The second student answers that they are from the Boston area, but the first student asks “where are you REALLY from?” What might be a transformative justice approach to this microaggression?

5. A graduate student who has completed their Teaching Assistantship is surprised to receive a number of negative student evaluations, many of which reference their accented English, accusing them of being “impossible to understand” and being unqualified to teach in the US due to their international degree. The TA is concerned about how these evaluations will affect his future. How might the TA and community respond in ways informed by transformative justice? How might student evaluation guidelines be transformed?

6. A group of BIPOC students complain about the fact that all the pictures on the 1st floor of a campus building are white people. The explanation they are given by the department chair is that those pictures are major donors to the college. What would a transformative justice approach to this situation look like?

Gender & LGBTQIA+

7. A young female student is walking on campus late at night, intoxicated, feeling unsafe, and presses the nearest blue light, and the police respond momentarily. Because she is intoxicated, she is arrested instead of being walked home safely. What needs to change about this scenario? Who other than the police should be responding or assisting to these common occurrences of college substance use?

8. Female students in a male-dominated field write a letter to the department sharing that in small-group work, they are often assigned the role of “secretary” rather than roles that reflect discipline expertise. How should the department respond in a way that advances transformative justice?

9. You are in a class with a friend and realize that the professor and other students are consistently misgendering them. How do you respond?

Dis/Ability Discrimination

10. A neurodiverse student tells their professor that they don’t like it when the class has to choose their own groups because nobody ever chooses them. What would a transformative justice approach to this situation look like?

11. A group of freshmen are discussing their transition to college, and one student says, “I just hope I don’t gain the ‘freshman 15’!” Nearby students react to the statement, accusing the student of fatphobia/sizeism and talk about the misconceptions of public weight conversations and the “freshman 15”. What does the accused student need to learn in order to change their response? What institutional discrimination policies and responses need to be implemented in order to prevent this from happening in the future, and to educate transitioning students?

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2 Workplace Environment CCS Toolkit
3 Black, Indigenous, & People of Color