What is the Intergroup Dialogue Project (IDP)? IDP prepares students to live and work in a diverse world, and educates them in making choices that advance equity and justice. Its main objectives are to increase understanding of social identities; to explore the effects of social inequality at personal, interpersonal, and structural levels; to develop students’ skills to work effectively across difference; and to strengthen individual and collective capacities to address social justice issues on campus and beyond.

Why do we need IDP? Cornell’s commitment to diversity is a prominent part of its vision and practice – administrators make financial aid a priority for supporting low-income students, departments promote diversity and inclusion, and the student body continues to become more diverse. And yet, a recent study (Hurtado, 2013) reveals that while the majority of Cornell students are satisfied with their Cornell experience, students from underrepresented groups have less positive perceptions of campus climate. This finding is not unique. As studies show, change in compositional diversity has little effect on creating an inclusive environment. Students across the university find it difficult to explore issues of difference, injustice, and equity in ways that feel authentic and meaningful. For many of them IDP is one of the few spaces where they can work with individuals from different backgrounds towards inclusive social change.

How does IDP work? Intergroup Dialogue is a distinctive form of communication specifically designed to allow people to communicate across social, cultural, and power differences, in a critical and meaningful way. EDUC 2610 is a three-credit semester-long course that blends theory with experiential learning. Students explore core social justice issues related to social identities, conflict, privilege, oppression, community, and solidarity. Each class offered focuses on one social identity such as race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability/disability, or nationality for the semester. Each section is composed of 15 or fewer students from different backgrounds and identities, and two facilitators. For example, a class that focuses on race will have one facilitator of color and one white facilitator, and contain half white students and half students of color. Another unique aspect of IDP is that all offerings are led by trained peer-facilitators. Participants are not ‘taught’, but rather everyone has an equal part in the learning and teaching process.

“IDP was a great opportunity for me as a student of low socio-economic status to help others understand more than their homogenized backgrounds would allow…IDP was a comfort zone because everyone felt respected and was allowed to share their opinions to create a mutual understanding between all participants.”

- IDP facilitator & Cornell alumna ’16

What are the achievements of IDP? IDP has had an indelible impact on the Cornell community. Since our inception, our main offering, EDUC 2610, has grown tremendously by word of mouth. From a tiny 30-student cohort in Fall 2012, we reached 200 students in 13 dialogues in Spring 2016. Our student facilitators are not only leaders in various groups across Cornell, but also contribute to academic research, newspapers, and social movements in the wider community. Our dialogue workshops have been well-received by myriad Cornell student groups and departments. Striving to develop a community of like-minded colleagues, we are expanding our offerings to include peer-led programs for graduate students, as well as staff, faculty, and alumni.

“My time learning the topics covered in the Intergroup Dialogue Project and our facilitator classes was invaluable to me and really signified a turning point in my understanding of the systems of power, privilege, and oppression that underpin societies all throughout the world…my work with the Intergroup Dialogue Project…marked a watershed in my understanding of the world as it appears.”

- One of IDP’s first facilitators & Cornell alumna ’14

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Demographics of EDUC 2610 Over Time

Gender Composition
- Non-binary or Trans
- Woman
- Man

Race Composition
- Person of Color
- White

Socioeconomic Status Composition
- Low Income
- Middle or High Income

Sexual Orientation Composition
- LGBTQIA+
- Straight

Composition of People with Disabilities
- Person with Disability
- Person with No Disabilities

Composition of Students by Class
- Freshmen
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

Composition of Students by College
- CALS
- A&S
- CHE
- ENG
- ILR
- Hotel
- AAP

Number of Sections Offered by Topic
- Gender
- Race
- Socioeconomic Status
- Sexual Orientation
- Disability/Ability
- Nationality

In Fall 2017 we introduced Nationality as a topic for the first time!