

Frequently Asked Questions about the “No Better Time” conference

Can you briefly describe the conference hosts, the Democracy Imperative (TDI) and the Deliberative Democracy Consortium (DDC)?

TDI and DDC are committed to strengthening deliberative democracy in public life. DDC is an alliance of practitioners and scholars who work together to strengthen the field of deliberative democracy. TDI is both a resource center and a national network of people working to advance deliberative democracy through college and university teaching and learning, community partnerships, and institutional governance. To learn more, go to www.unh.edu/democracy/index.html and www.deliberative-democracy.net.

What are the conference's objectives?

Deliberative democracy has reached a critical point in its development. Over the last fifteen years, shifts in citizen capacities and attitudes have led to a dramatic proliferation of citizen participation and deliberative practices, and in 2008 they helped to produce an historic presidential election. On the heels of these changes, new opportunities for educators and practitioners are emerging in communities, in government, and on campuses. The primary goal of "No Better Time" is to take stock of these developments and to consider future directions for educators and practitioners in teaching, research, and in citizen-centered initiatives.

We know what we *want* to happen: colleges and universities will make democracy central to their academic, governance, and public missions; researchers, practitioners, and other leaders will learn together better in order to improve the practice of deliberative democracy on the ground; educators will ensure that all graduates understand and know their responsibilities in a just, free, equitable society; students will become skilled in the arts of dialogue, deliberation and public reason, conflict management, and collaborative decision and policy making; the gap will close between researchers and practitioners and theory and practice...

We don't know *all that needs to happen to make these aspirations a reality*. And we think that by bringing together a lot of smart, dedicated, and experienced people, we can figure it out. Convening people who care about deliberative democracy, learning from each other about what works, mapping out and prioritizing activities, and providing the space for innovation and collaboration; these are the objectives of this conference.

Who should attend?

The short answer is, *anyone who cares about advancing deliberative democracy through college and university teaching, research, and/or leadership on campus or in the field*.

Check out some of the ideas for learning exchanges and if you think there's something in there for you, join us!

Colleges and universities might get the most out of this conference by sending teams that consist of scholars, institutional leaders, students, and community partners.

Is this conference for me if I am a practitioner, not an academic?

Yes. For both DDC and TDI, the ultimate goal is to strengthen deliberative democracy in the field – and we think both educators and practitioners can play more significant roles to that end. Leaders on campus and in communities need to hear from one another so that they know how they can work together better.

Should students attend?

Yes, students are significant catalysts for change on college campuses and in communities. Please come!

Is the focus strictly US, or is there an international dimension?

Though most of the attendees are likely to be from North America, some participants will be from other parts of the world, and we are keenly aware that the growth of deliberative democracy is a global phenomenon. The conference will help people explore the differences and similarities in how this work is evolving in different countries, as well as the case studies, practices, and techniques that may be applicable in many different places.

I see that many sessions are being described as "learning exchanges." What does that mean?

A lot of people are doing fascinating work, and we want to provide a forum for learning about that. And we don't want to assume that others in the room are not equally involved. So we are creating space for the robust exchange of ideas and activities. We are organizing in advance many learning exchanges, but we are also allowing space at the conference for new learning exchanges that might emerge during the conference.

What are some of the potential topics for learning exchanges?

They're listed with the conference materials on the conference website.

Will there be a call for proposals? If not, may I propose a learning exchange? If so, how?

No, there will be no call. But we encourage people to propose a learning exchange or offer to tweak and moderate an existing learning exchange. You can do so by sending an email to nancy.thomas@unh.edu or mattleighninger@earthlink.net. There is no deadline for proposing a learning exchange, but we only have a certain number of rooms, so if you want to ensure space, get your request in soon.

People can also create a learning exchange at the conference. If you meet someone there and cook up an interesting exchange, propose it, and we'll try to find space for a

session. Again, space is a premium so you might want to think about your concerns, issues, passions, etc. soon.

If I organize a learning exchange, will I be paid?

No. The Democracy Imperative and the Deliberative Democracy Consortium are lean organizations. We don't charge dues, so we need to ask participants to pay their own way. We are doing our best to keep the costs of this conference down.

There's also space carved out on the agenda for meetings. What's the difference between a learning exchange and a meeting?

The goals and the duration. Meetings can be among existing groups or newly formed groups, such as a community of practice for diversity officers or public scholars or people who share an interest or concern. We envision meetings as more action oriented – next steps. Meeting spaces are two hours whereas learning exchanges are two-and-a-half or five hours in duration (depending on the topic). Participants in learning exchanges are welcome to extend their work into meeting space, if so inclined.

Do I need to reserve meeting space for my organization, group, or idea? How would I do that?

Please notify nancy.thomas@unh.edu or mattleighninger@earthlink.net of your interest in reserving meeting space.

Breakfast Roundtables (Friday morning): What topics are covered?

Anyone can propose a breakfast roundtable. Please do so by sending an email to Xenia at xferencevych@gmail.com.

The closing plenary is partly dedicated to action and next steps. What kinds of actions might come from that session?

Research, new courses or programs, projects, communities of practice, publications, regional groups, workshops, consultants, long and short-term working groups. It's up to the participants.

May I attend part of the conference, or is it critical that I be there, start to finish?

We've designed this conference with outcomes and action in mind, so we hope participants will start with us, participate fully, and help us identify next steps at the end. It's not required, but it is recommended.

May my organization be a sponsor for this conference? If so, what does that mean?

Yes. We invite organizations to serve as co-sponsors by contributing to our fund for student scholarships. Each student will cost us around \$350, so we're asking organizations to sponsor one, two, three... any number of students they can afford. If your organization can't swing \$350, we'll take as little as \$250. The student's name tag will then read "Jane Doe," sponsored by _____. And your organization's logo will

appear on the conference materials and web site as well. If you are interested in co-sponsoring No Better Time, please send an email to xferencevych@gmail.com.

How do I register?

You may register online by [visiting this site](#). Fax and mail options are provided on the web registration form.

Is there a registration deadline?

No, however, there will be an increase in the conference cost for those registering on or after May 1, 2009.

When does early registration end?

We'll accept registrations until we are at capacity. Space is limited.

What are the costs of the conference, exclusive of housing?

\$250 per person until April 30, 2009, \$300 on or after May 1, 2009.

What is the refund policy?

30 days cancellation notification is required, and there would be a \$75 cancellation fee. After June 9, we cannot accept cancellation requests.

What are the amenities for people with special needs?

University meeting spaces and hotel/dormitory accommodations are ADA compliant. Thursday night's buffet dinner includes an entree option for vegetarians. You may indicate special requests in the "notes" section when registering on-line.

Will UNH be providing anyone with transportation during the conference?

No, with the exception of Friday night for dinner (see 3rd to last question). The lodging and meeting spaces are all within one mile of each other and reachable on foot. If you need to, you can rent a car on campus at Enterprise Rent-A-Car on campus: 213 Main Street, Durham, NH 03824, (603) 862-3228. Mention that you are with the No Better Time conference.

If I opt to stay in the dorm, will I have to share a bathroom?

Yes. Mills Hall provides suite-style living with 4, 5 and 8 person suites that share a bathroom. Congreve Hall features a more traditional, corridor style set up of single or double rooms with shared hallway bathrooms.

Are the dorms air-conditioned?

Yes. Other amenities include laundry facilities, vending machines, a shared kitchen, and common meeting spaces.

If I opt to stay in the dorm, what do I need to bring?

The linen service (\$33.00) provided by UNH includes a pillow, blanket, two sheets,

towels, a face cloth, small soaps, and shampoo. You will need to bring any other personal items not mentioned. We recommend, for example, an extra blanket, a flashlight or reading light, a hair dryer, hangers, and an alarm clock. The rooms are not equipped with telephones, radios, etc.

If the dorms are organized in suites, may I put together a group to stay in one suite?

Yes. There is a “notes” field on the web registration form where you may write in your suitemate preferences.

Are there any options for room sharing? Will the organizers help me find a roommate?

Yes. Dormitories offer rooms that accommodate doubles. When registering you may type “assign roommate” in the “notes” field of the web registration form.

If I want to bring my family, may I reserve a suite or multiple rooms?

Yes. Dorm rooms will be available during the conference dates of July 8-11. When registering on-line, you’ll need to write in the “notes” field that you are bringing family members. For security purposes, you’ll need to include the names of all those staying on campus. There are no cribs available for campus housing. Children must be accompanied at all times on campus. Conference attendees are responsible for meals for their families.

May I arrive a day or two early or stay later? What if I want to take a vacation?

Yes. Rooms are available at the New England Center Hotel and Holiday Inn one night before and one night after the conference dates of July 8-11. The New Hampshire Seacoast is a wonderful place to vacation.

If I choose to stay in Portsmouth, how far away is it?

15-20 minutes by car.

If I want to go to Portsmouth for the Friday night dinner, and I haven’t rented a car, how will I get there?

We are providing a shuttle bus service to and from Portsmouth on Friday evening. We’ll provide details at the conference.

Will you be organizing groups for the Friday night dinner?

We’ll identify and reserve tables at restaurants in both Durham and Portsmouth. You can sign up for the restaurant of your choice during the conference.

What if I arrive late on Wednesday? How does registration work?

Participants can register on-site Wednesday evening from 6-8 pm during the Welcome Reception and again Thursday morning prior to the Opening Plenary. Attendees sign in and receive their program packets and ID tags at registration.

Where do I direct questions about housing?

Questions regarding housing can be directed to the University Conferences and Catering Office via e-mail or by phone. Contact information is found on the web registration form.