

Guidelines for Incorporating & Strengthening Perspective-Taking & Self-Authorship into Division of Student Life Programs



Your program or service has been identified as potentially high impact in helping students develop one or more of the following:

Perspective Taking: The ability to engage and learn from perspectives and experiences different from one's own. Perspective-taking may occur in everyday conversations or structured experiences. While engaging in perspective-taking students enhance their knowledge by attending seriously to differing perspectives and develop respect and empathy for other's views even in the face of disagreement. They learn that they can reconsider their own viewpoints, and that there is value in exploring other cultures. (From [Engaging Diverse Viewpoints](#))

Self-Authorship: The process of validating what one truly believes and questioning beliefs/values that one has taken for granted, such as those from parents or other authority figures. It is learning to trust one's internal voice versus relying on external influences.

Guidelines for Effective Practice

In order to heighten the potential effectiveness of such programs, the Vice President's Office is asking staff members to enhance already existing programs by adding critical elements or practices to them. The following include suggested practices to increase effectiveness of perspective-taking and self-authorship within existing programs:

Name it: Our research has shown that "cueing" students to pay attention to potential learning opportunities is extremely important. Students are no different than the rest of us – we all go on "auto pilot" sometimes and move through experiences without full awareness. Introduce the terms and everyday definitions of perspective taking and/or self-authorship early in your program. You might say something like this, either in the written program materials or in person (or both):

"We expect that this program will give you the opportunity to really learn about other people and view the world through their eyes. This, in turn, really helps you think about who you are and what you believe. We are all the sum of our experiences and backgrounds, and it is easy to see just our own viewpoints. We want this experience to provide you with perspective taking – the chance to really understand others' viewpoints, experiences, and identities. Pay attention to where you think your view of the world might differ from others you are with. Think about what you are learning about yourself and others as you participate."

Focus on integrative learning: Integrative learning is about making connections across contexts. Undergraduate students are able to do this with support, such as portfolios, capstone experiences, or cues to reflect on learning. The ability to connect knowledge and skills from multiple experiences and across different settings is crucial in our increasingly global culture. Essentially, this is about becoming a “good thinker” – someone who can look at new situations and problem solve through them using prior knowledge and experiences. In our situation, we want students to integrate what they are learning in class, on the job, and through our programs and services.

Effective reflection is critical: Reflection is the process of thinking about oneself as a learner, considering what one has learned and how particular experiences (such as your program) contribute to learning. Reflection is a metacognitive skill and needs to be developed with practice. It is more likely to happen when we give students some structure, such as a prompt or question to think or write about. Providing a meaningful program or experience is important, but giving students support in meaning-making about that experience is what takes it to a higher impact level. Consider how you can add reflection to an experience at the time (a brief discussion, debrief, or a one-minute paper) or after the fact (an open-ended question on a program evaluation for instance) in order to increase the likelihood that students will, in fact, reflect on the experience.

Data helps discovery: Collecting data on how perspective-taking and self-authorship is key to understanding if students are learning what we intended them to as a part of the program. There are many ways to gather evidence. You can have participants write a brief reflection, answer an open-ended question on a program evaluation, write a 1 minute paper, participate in a focus group, etc. A list of potential reflection questions to heighten perspective taking and self-authorship can be found on the following page. If you need assistance forming questions, deciding on an assessment method, and/or analyzing data please contact us (sarah-hansen@uiowa.edu or teri-schnelle@uiowa.edu).

Please forward data or reports to us so that we may compile them to look for trends across the Division. A template for sending data to us is available on page 4 and a report template is available on page 5.

Take Home Points:

- **Perspective Taking** (quick and easy definition): the ability to view the world from someone else’s perspective
- **Self-Authorship** (quick and easy definition): the process of answering the “big questions”: Who am I? Who do I want to be?
- **Use the terms:** Introduce the terms explicitly in program descriptions and introductions
- **Remind students to pay attention:** Cue students to watch for learning opportunities and reflect
- **Structure reflection:** Incorporate reflection into experiences, or at the least, into post-event evaluations. Sample questions are included on the following page.
- **Share your findings:** Send open ended comments, reflections, or 1-minute papers to our office (VPSL, 249 IMU) to be analyzed
- **Help is available** – just call or email us (sarah-hansen@uiowa.edu; teri-schnelle@uiowa.edu or 335-3557). We are happy to consult with you during any part of the process.

Reflection questions to heighten perspective taking (PT) and self-authorship (SA):

- Write about a perspective or viewpoint you have come to understand better as a result of this experience. (PT)
- As a result of this experience, what is one thing you have reflected upon? (BOTH)
- Tell us about something you learned about yourself as a result of this experience? What about something you learned about others? (SA)
- Please give an example of how this experience can assist you in communicating effectively with diverse individuals. (SA)
- Think of a time you have had your own perspective or viewpoint challenged. What did you learn about yourself in that process? (PT)
- Consider a strongly held opinion or perspective you have. Where did your perspective come from? How did it develop? What influenced it? (PT)
- Please provide an example of a time at work when you have had to understand the perspective of another person. (PT)
- What have you learned about yourself as a result of this [job, experience, etc.]? (SA)
- What are your strengths and how have you used them [here at work, within this course, within this experience]? (SA)
- College is often a time of exposure to multiple perspectives—encountering people who grew up differently than you, people who hold different beliefs than you, encountering new ideas in classes, etc. Have you encountered new perspectives? Tell me about them. Follow-up: How did that experience affect the way you see things? (BOTH)

Perspective-Taking and Self-Authorship Data Collection

Send open-ended responses, reflections, or any other assessment data you collect on perspective-taking and self-authorship to us (sarah-hansen@uiowa.edu or teri-schnelle@uiowa.edu) so that we may compile them to look for trends across the Division. Attach this document to your data.

Your Name:

Program Name:

Program Description: (brief description of the program)

of students who attended:

What data was collected: (i.e. student reflections, open-ended responses to a survey question, etc.)

Perspective-Taking and Self-Authorship Assessment Report

Introductory Paragraph: What did we do? In this section provide information on **what** the program/experience was, **when** it occurred, **who** participated, **how** the data was collected, and how many individuals **completed** the assessment, in 2-3 sentences.

Summarize the Data: What did we learn? In this section summarize what data was collected on perspective-taking and self-authorship. Try not to use raw data, but analyze the qualitative and/or quantitative data. Below is an example of how to organize qualitative data. If students responded to an open-ended question, determine the overall themes of their responses, count the number of responses that fit each theme, and determine the relative significance of each theme using percentages.

Theme	Number of responses	Percentage
Better understands own viewpoint	15	50%

Sample Quotes:

- “Include sample quotes that highlight the top two or three themes.”

Another way to report both qualitative and quantitative data is with the percentages of individuals who met an outcome. For example, 90% of students were able to describe a perspective or viewpoint they have come to understand better as a result of the experience.

Implications: What are the implications of this data? In this section outline what the data tells you about how students are developing and engaging in perspective-taking and self-authorship as a result of participating in the program/experience.

Use of Results: How will the results be used? In this section outline how the data will be used to make decisions including improvements to the program/experience.