



Restorative Practices Protocol for Faculty & Staff Departments

Introduction and Purpose

The Division of Institutional Equity (DOIE) advances UMBC's mission to cultivate inclusive excellence by ensuring that equity, integrity, and belonging are woven into the fabric of our community. Guided by DOIE's vision of a campus where all members thrive, restorative practices provide faculty and staff with intentional ways to build connection, repair harm, and strengthen trust. This protocol reflects DOIE's values of equity and accountability by offering departments structured pathways to address challenges while affirming the dignity and humanity of every community member.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of restorative practices is to operationalize DOIE's mission and values by equipping faculty and staff departments with tools to foster equity, accountability, and community care. Consistent with our vision of a campus culture where every individual feels respected and supported, restorative practices enable departments to:

- Repair relationships and restore trust when harm has occurred, reflecting DOIE's commitment to accountability and fairness.
- Create inclusive dialogue spaces that honor diverse perspectives, advancing the value of inclusive excellence.
- Cultivate resilience and shared responsibility during times of conflict or change, aligning with DOIE's vision for a thriving community.
- Integrate proactive community-building practices that foster grace and increase resilience, which reinforces a culture of equity and belonging.

At-a-Glance Flow

1. Referral/Request
2. Intake Consultation
3. Pre-Circle Meetings
4. Circle Type Selection
5. Circle Facilitation (structured rounds)
6. Agreement Development
7. Documentation & Follow-Up

****Departments should plan to engage over one semester****

Intake & Preparation

- Referral/Request: The process is initiated by a department leader, Human Resources & Strategic Talent Management (HRSTM), the Office of Equity and Civil Rights (ECR), or directly by involved individuals.
- Initial Consultation: A member of the community & culture team meets with the requester to clarify:
 - Nature of the harm/concern (conflict, miscommunication, policy issue, climate concern).
 - Scope of the harm
 - Desired outcomes (repair, improved communication, preventative culture work).
- Individual Pre-Circle Meetings: A member of the community & culture team meets confidentially with each party to:
 - Explain restorative principles (voluntary, respectful, focused on repair not punishment).
 - Gather perspectives on what happened, what harm was experienced, and what needs exist.
 - Assess readiness, ensure no party feels coerced, unsafe, or unheard before proceeding.
- Circle Design: In collaboration with the requester and relevant campus partners, a member of the community and culture team determines the type of circle needed (see circle types) and customizes questions or recommends other options.

Circle Types & When to Use Them

Different circles can be used depending on the context:

a. Community-Building Circles

- Purpose: Proactive, used to strengthen departmental culture and communication.
- Use Case: Start of academic year, onboarding new staff, after a departmental retreat, or following stressful events.
- Activities: Sharing stories, discussing values, creating norms, exploring strengths.

b. Learning Circles

- Purpose: Reflect on challenging issues, explore bias, inclusive excellence, or workplace culture concerns.
- Use Case: After climate surveys, faculty/staff development, and Inclusive Excellence-related incidents.
- Activities: Use prompts around readings, scenarios, or lived experiences.

c. Restorative Dialogue Circles

- Purpose: Address specific conflicts, misunderstandings, or harms.
- Use Case: Tension between colleagues, perceived inequities, breakdown of trust.
- Activities: Circle questions focus on:
 1. What happened?
 2. Who was affected and how?
 3. What do we need to move forward?
 4. What agreements can we commit to?

d. Healing Circles

- Purpose: Acknowledge collective harm or trauma experienced by a department.
- Use Case: Layoffs, discrimination, bias incidents, departmental crises.
- Activities: Emphasis on storytelling, validation, care, and resilience practices.

e. Resetting Circles

- Purpose: Reset community expectations and trust in response to experienced collective harm or trauma experienced by a department.
- Use Case: Community tensions, community impact connected to interpersonal incidents, departmental crises, and breakdown of trust.

- Activities: Emphasis on envisioning a new future together, validation, care, and resilience practices.

f. Re-Entry Circles

- Purpose: Support reintegration of a faculty/staff member after conflict resolution, disciplinary process, or extended leave.
- Use Case: Returning from suspension, sabbatical, or after a conflict.
- Activities: Circle ensures community readiness, sets expectations, and rebuilds trust.

e. Town Hall/Community Conversation

- Purpose: Reflect on lived experiences of the community, gather qualitative data to inform decision-making, and create processes for fair decision-making.
- Use Case: After climate surveys, faculty/staff development, and Inclusive Excellence-related incidents.
- Activities: Use developed questions, scenarios, or lived experiences.

Circle Outline Handout for Participants

The detail in this outline is provided to offer a high-level overview. The circle is not a rigid process; facilitators will be responsive in the moment to the needs of the circle participants, which may not align with the outline presented here.

Welcome and opening: Openings mark the time and space of the circle as a space apart from the pace and tone of everyday life. The opening ceremony is designed to help participants center themselves, be reminded of core values, clear negative energies, encourage optimism, and honor the presence of everyone there.

Introduction/Check-in Round: Participants are invited to introduce themselves. The facilitator may pose a question in this round that invites participants to share about themselves, allowing them to get to know one another better.

Values/Guidelines: Discussion of circle guidelines/safety

Storytelling: The facilitator will use prompts to ask those involved to share their stories sequentially, allowing them to exchange their experiences with one another.

Exploring Issues: The facilitator will pose questions about the issue or concern that is the purpose of the circle.

Generating plans for a better future: The facilitator will ask participants what they think can be done to repair any harm or broken obligations, and to create a better future.

Agreement: The facilitator will lead the group in co-creating an agreement about any plans or commitments that are important to those in the circle. These will be written down.

Closing: The facilitator will close the circle.

Follow-Up

- Share Resources
 - Departments and teams will receive a *restorative practices cheat sheet* for infusing practices into daily life and organizational culture.
 - Additional resources will be provided that directly align with individual needs, experience, or planned direction.
 - A member of the community and culture team captures and shares observations and recommendations that support the planned direction.
- Document Agreements:
 - A member of the community and culture team writes a summary of commitments or outcomes.
- Check-Ins:
 - A member of the community and culture team will support follow-up circles or additional one-on-one meetings after 1 month and 3 months, as needed/requested.
- Ongoing Culture Work:
 - Departments are encouraged to integrate regular community-building circles into meetings, retreats, or professional development opportunities, and will be supported by the Community and Culture team with training and coaching as needed.
 - Departmental leaders should explore and offer training and follow-up discussions based on topics or issues brought up.