BRINGING THE WORLD IN: STAKEHOLDER PANEL DISCUSSION

General Guide.................................................................................................................................................. 1
Stakeholder Example: DCDC Water/Climate .................................................................................................... 5
Stakeholder Panel Example Assignment: DCDC Water/Climate ................................................................. 8

GENERAL GUIDE

Experts, practitioners, stakeholders or other relevant people participate in a panel discussion on a sustainability topic or problem. The panel presents students with multiple perspectives and expertise, causing them to grapple with the reality of pluralism and giving them the opportunity to enter into discussion and debate with real-world experts through formulation of thoughtful, critical questions.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Distinguish the nature and extent of how panelists’ account for the future when sharing their perspectives and opinions on a sustainability problem and how to act on them. [FUTURE THINKING]
- Identify the normative outlook of panelists and recognize how the fields, jobs, or places they come from shape their values and perspectives on sustainability. [VALUES THINKING]
- Discuss how pluralistic forms of knowledge and value sets might be integrated in sustainability solution options despite inconclusive or incomplete evidence. [VALUES THINKING]
• Identify and discuss effectiveness of negotiation and deliberation skills of panelists. [INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES]
• Engage in a constructive dialogue with panelists during question and answer times to gain a deeper understanding of the topic and gather information needed to achieve the learning objectives of this experience. [INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES]

ACTIVITIES
The purpose of this experience is to give students the opportunity to explore real-world sustainability issue and stakeholder perspectives in a classroom setting. Panelists and a moderator (usually the instructor at this level) sit in front of the class while the moderator facilitates discussion amongst panelists using topics or questions predetermined by the instructor or students. Then, the discussion is opened for students to ask questions directly to the panelists. The panelists’ role is to answer questions based on their perspective, knowledge, and experience; listen actively to other panelists; and ask questions of other panelists as appropriate. The moderator’s role is to pose questions, steer panelists back on topic if they digress, prompt panelists to dig deeper if necessary, and keeping the discussion within established time constraints (Kirsner, n.d). The students’ role is to listen actively throughout the experience and participate in question-and-answer discussion in the second part of the experience. In smaller classes, students can interact more with panelists. In larger classes, strategies like note-taking and submitting questions by note card, etc. can help students engage in the experience even if they do not have the opportunity to interact with panelists directly.

Experience lasts 45 minutes to 1 hour. Save at least 15-30 minutes for question-and-answer time with students. Providing more time will send message to students that they have an active role to play in the experience and enable more interaction between students and panelists (Kirsner, n.d.). One common critique of panel discussions is that they often do not engage the audience, leaving them to sit passively for long amounts of time during which the audience’s attention and interest is lost (DeFinis, 2010). Moderating discussion to keep panelists on track, coaching students to be active listeners, and facilitating student panelists interaction are ways to combat this.

Before:
• Pick sustainability topic / problem for discussion.
• Identify 3-5 panelists. Contact them before the semester begins to determine date and time that works with their schedule and the course calendar. Discuss topic and objectives. Secure a bio of each panelist to include in syllabus or assignment material.
• Work with panelists to develop discussion points or questions to structure the panel, or have students submit potential questions as part of an assignment.
• Arrange to meet, speak, or email panelists about a week in advance in order to revisit topic and objectives. Share discussion points and / or Q’s so that they can prepare.
• Post / distribute any preparatory assignments plus bios of panelists the week of the discussion. Knowing who the panelist are can help students keep them and their perspectives straight during the conversation and be prepared to engage in Q & A.
• Secure microphones for the moderator and each panelist if the room size requires them.

_During:_
• Set up chairs and name tags for panelists in front of the classroom. Place the moderator’s chair in the middle or just to the side so that s/he can take an active role in the discussion.
• Have panelists arrive to class a few minutes early and introduce them to each other before the discussion begins so that they are comfortable interacting with each other.
• Introduce each panelist to students at the beginning of the class. Explain the structure of the event (e.g. topic, x minutes for panel discussion, x minutes for Q&A, students roles).
• Moderating Discussion: Establish time constraints at the beginning of the discussion for entire discussion, each discussion point / question, each panelists contribution, and Q&A session. Consider using red/yellow/green cards to indicate to panelists when their time is up. Sit in the middle or beside the panelists, rather than sitting in the audience or standing at a podium, in order to facilitate comfortable, free-flowing discussion (DeFinis, 2010; Kirsner, n.d.).
• Thank panelists for sharing their perspectives at the end of class.

_After:_
• Assign preparatory or concluding assignments.
• Thank panelists again in writing or email.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT**
The assignments below that can maximize learning outcomes of the Stakeholder Panel experience and produce outputs that can be assessed to determine achievement of the learning objectives.
• **Read** material chosen jointly by instructor and panelists.
• **Prepare questions** based on topic or concepts for panelists, which are submitted to the instructor to help develop questions for panel discussion (helpful for large classes, where students interaction with the speakers is difficult). Output: written questions.
• **Take notes** during discussion and submit after class. Output: written notes.
• **Write questions** for panelists during discussion session. Ask them or submit to moderator, who randomly or selectively reads during Q &A session. Output: written questions.
• **Write reflection** or guided essay assignment focusing on the connection between the panelists’ perspectives and course material covered. Output: written reflection.
• **Organize** panel discussion as part of honor’s contract or in collaboration with DCDC’s Water/Climate Briefing (one briefing is always slated to be organized “from students for students”). See assignment guidelines (link). Outputs: Panel
discussion agenda, supporting assignments for class, and panel discussion activity.

Use a Likert-scale to determine if students achieved all, most, some, little, or none of the learning objective. Develop a rubric with examples of answers that demonstrate students have achieved all (5), most (4), some (3), little (2), or none (1) of the objective.

TAKE THIS EXPERIENCE TO THE NEXT LEVEL!

- **Visit the world** - Take a field trip or do a walking audit to see an organization, site, or project described by the panelists.

- **Simulate the world** - Students take on roles of the different panelists while discussing similar sustainability problems presented in class.

- **Engage with the world** - Assign students (in groups) to research or develop a project based on the expertise of the panelists. Ask the speakers to provide feedback or come back to class for presentations. Panelists could serve as mentors to different groups, which could develop research projects based on their respective areas of expertise.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES**


**STAKEHOLDER EXAMPLE: DCDC WATER/CLIMATE**

**SUMMARY**
Students organized and facilitated a public stakeholder panel discussion in line with the current theme of Water / Climate Briefings from the Decision Center for a Desert City. In doing so, they gained experience collaborating with peers and stakeholders to plan, prepare, and facilitate an event. They were exposed to multiple perspectives and values while listening to and interacting with panelists, and came to understand the roles and value of boundary organizations in creating sustainability change.

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<td>Students asked questions to engage in meaningful discussion. Instructor needed to create a couple questions to get the discussion started.</td>
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<td>Professor created the setting for the discussion, as well as sought out stakeholders to be involved, and plan around their schedules.</td>
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**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**
- Distinguish the nature and extent of how panelists’ account for the future when sharing their perspectives and opinions on a sustainability problem and how to act on them. [FUTURE THINKING]
- Identify the normative outlook of panelists and recognize that concepts of concepts of justice, equity, social-ecological integrity, and ethics vary across and within cultures. [VALUES THINKING]
- Articulate the potential roles and value of boundary organizations in change processes for sustainability. [STRATEGIC THINKING]
- Collaborate with peers and stakeholders to plan, prepare, and facilitate an educational event. [INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES]

**ACTIVITIES**
In this experience students planned, organized, and facilitated a panel discussion that explored a current topic of the DCDC’s Water / Climate briefings with guidance from their instructor. The purpose of this activity was to help students to gain experience collaborating with peers and stakeholders to plan, prepare, and facilitate an event, gain exposure to multiple perspectives and values related to water and climate issues in the Phoenix Metro area by listening to and interacting with panelists, and understand the possible roles and value of boundary organizations in sustainability change. The assignment works best for a small group of students, perhaps through a group project, an honors contract, or extra credit.
Timeline

- Introduce Code of Collaboration and Work Plan tools and help students learn to use them.
- Help students make connection between course content and Water / Climate Briefing theme.
- Ask students to identify two academic readings and two professional readings related to the theme to identify and elaborate the state of the art of this theme. What is known? What are open issues? What are interesting questions to explore? Why?
- Ask students to identify the key experts and stakeholders within academia and in the community who could be potential panelists. Students develop a portray describing each expert (expertise, interesting contributions/perspectives, questions to ask him/her).
- Help students start sketching out the purpose, goal, structure, and key questions for panelists.
- Start inviting panelists (help students to draft contact email, attach description of panel).
- Reserve a room and necessary equipment (e.g. extra microphones, projectors, tables, chairs).
- Meet with panelists to discuss further, revise concept for panel according to feedback.
- Start preparing promotional material for the panel (send out save the date four weeks in advance of panel, send out more detailed program two weeks in advance)
- Prompt students to develop agenda / script for moderation (remember the questions asked structure the experience). Make sure it is shared with panelists.
- Discuss and practice moderation skills with students in class.
- Run the panel: Give introduction into topic, moderate, reflect, close panel.
- Write thank you note to panelists.
- Discuss with students the different normative stances of panelists and others who participated in event. Help them consider the value of pluralism and what it means to act despite uncertainty (values-based and science-based).

Assignments and Assessment

The assignments below that can maximize learning outcomes of the Stakeholder Panel experience and produce outputs that can be assessed to determine achievement of the learning objectives.

- **Identify** 2 academic readings and 2 professional readings related to the theme to identify and elaborate the state of the art of this theme. What is known? What are open issues? What are interesting questions to explore? Why? Output: 1 page write-up.
- **Engage** professionally with experts, peers, and instructors to create panel event. Output: Emails, meeting agendas, notes, performance, feedback from panelists.

- **Develop** an agenda/script for panel discussion. Output: 2-3 page agenda/script.

- **Discuss** potential roles and values of a boundary organization in sustainability. Analyze normative stances of panelists and others who participated in event. Consider the value of pluralism and what it means to act in climate/water issues in the face of uncertainty (values-based and science-based). Output: Participation.

Use a Likert-scale to determine if students achieved all, most, some, little, or none of the learning objective. Develop a rubric with examples of answers that demonstrate students have achieved all (5), most (4), some (3), little (2), or none (1) of the objective.

**TAKE THIS EXPERIENCE TO THE NEXT LEVEL!**

- **Visit the world** - Take a field trip or do a walking audit to see an organization, site, or project described by the panelists.

- **Simulate the world** - Students take on roles of different panelists in a role-play assignment.

- **Engage with the world** - Assign students (in groups) to research or develop a project based on the expertise of the panelists. Ask the speakers to provide feedback or come back to class for presentations. Panelists could serve as mentors to different groups, which could develop research projects based on their respective areas of expertise.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES**


DeFinis Communications. Moderate with Moderation: 10 Steps to Running a Successful Panel Discussion. Accessed on June 11, 2012:
STAKEHOLDER PANEL EXAMPLE ASSIGNMENT: DCDC WATER/CLIMATE

SUMMARY:
The goal of this activity is to summarize your projects in an interesting and engaging way, help your peers in the main lecture section get to know new places in the Phoenix Metro Area and learn more about course concepts of biophilia and biophilic design, and gain experience organizing, facilitating, and participating in a big event! You will have up to 1 hour to present your 5 team honors projects to the main lecture section of Sustainable Cities through a panel presentation.

INSTRUCTIONS:
- Create a work plan outlining tasks and due dates and code of collaboration to guide teamwork.
- Assign roles and tasks (e.g. introducer, facilitators, panelists, lights/visuals/microphone, reserving and setting up chairs, tables, and extra mics, other) by [date].
- Find and read 2 academic articles and 2 professional articles related to the theme to identify and elaborate the state of the art of this theme. What is known? What are open issues? What are interesting questions to explore? Why? Output: 1 page write-up.
- Work with instructor to identify potential panelists.
- Draft an invitation letter. Get feedback from instructor by [date].
- Decide how to structure panel (how do you introduce your presentation, how many panelists, who facilitates, is there a script or do panelists improvise, how will you keep your audience engaged, when will you invite questions from the audience, etc).
- Decide what you want the audience to get out of your presentation. Create a set of questions that when answered by panelists will convey what you did, why, what you found, and what it means to your audience. Get feedback from instructor by [date].
- Create an agenda/script for the event. Get feedback from instructor by [date].
- Prepare slide show, PowerPoint, or other visual to illustrate research sites and key concepts.
- Practice in class on [date].
- Arrive 15 minutes early on the day of the presentation to set up. Bring multiple formats of any electronic material in case of technical difficulties.
- Discuss potential roles and values of a boundary organization in sustainability. Analyze normative stances of panelists and others who participated in event.
Consider the value of pluralism and what it means to act in climate / water issues in the face of uncertainty (values-based and science-based).

- **Reflect** on what goes well, what you would do differently next time, and what you learned through this activity so that you can participate in reflection after the event.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**
- Collaborate with peers and stakeholders to plan, prepare, and facilitate an educational event using tools like Code of Collaboration and Work Plan.
- Identify the normative outlook of panelists and recognize that concepts of concepts of justice, equity, social-ecological integrity, and ethics vary across and within cultures.
- Recognize the pluralistic value of panelists' diverse perspectives and opinions and how to act on sustainability problems despite plural views and inconclusive or incomplete evidence.
- Articulate the potential roles and value of boundary organizations in change for sustainability.

**ASSESSMENT:**
Your performance and outputs organizing, facilitating, and participating in the panel presentation will be assessed by instructors and students to determine how well you meet assignment requirements and achieve learning objectives listed above.

**OPTIONAL RESOURCES:**
- Google “panel presentations” to get an idea of how they work.
- Find out if any of your peers have ever participated in panel presentations; get their ideas.

**REMEMBER:**
- You are in charge of this event! Use the instructor as a resource but not as a project manager.
- Everyone must participate by taking on at least one role and actively supporting others.
- Take advantage of practices ahead of time. We will know if you don’t!
- The panel presentation will go on whether or not all panelists or participants are present - be prepared.