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Introduction to the First Year

Reflections Seminar

In August 2010, Undergraduate Advising and Research (UAR) initiated 18 months of collaborative conversations among colleagues from across campus about creating a “Stanford 101” program to enhance the experience of first-year undergraduates. These conversations culminated in December 2011 with the identification of two broad categories of student need: a need for small, safe spaces in which to reflect on big picture questions and a need for a more coherent introduction to the myriad resources and opportunities at Stanford. The former of these categories was given highest priority for development.

Toward the end of these conversations, Thomas Ehrlich, Visiting Professor in the Graduate School of Education, shared a “Reflecting on Your Life” curriculum designed at Harvard by Professors Richard Light and Howard Gardner and Dean of Freshmen Thomas Dingman. This curriculum provided a proven framework for the task force that began its work at the end of 2011 to develop and pilot five First Year Reflections Seminars (“Reflections”) in Winter 2011-12.

In its report of January 2012, the Study of Undergraduate Education at Stanford (SUES) committee cited the need to “encourage students to take ownership of their own educations” and to support students’ capacity building for doing so. The report’s authors noted that they were “particularly excited to hear about” the Reflections pilot in development. The report concluded, “ventures of this sort deserve the […] fullest support of the University.”

Reflections seminars provide an opportunity for students to pause and reflect upon who they are and what they want out of their lives to assist them in making choices more thoughtfully and intentionally in their time as undergraduates at Stanford. The seminar’s goals are to promote in students a sense of ownership over their education and to provide a community of peers and tools in support of self-authorship.

The seminar seeks to develop in students the following behaviors and competencies:

- recognition of how their choices impact their own formation
- ability to articulate a rationale for choices to self and others
- willingness to take risks
- focus on learning more than grades
- ability to put experiences in perspective
- resilience (i.e., the ability to situate setbacks as opportunities for growth and learning)

Seminars are typically co-facilitated by a trio of one faculty member/lecturer, one staff person, and one upperclass student. The seminars meet for three 90-minute sessions during Winter Quarter to engage in exercises and dialogue shaped broadly to achieve the articulated goals. (Some seminars offered an optional fourth session.) Each trio of co-facilitators develops the specific curriculum for their seminar, but most follow a similar thematic architecture (yesterday-today-tomorrow) across the three sessions.
Across Winter 2011-12 and Winter 2012-13, fourteen Reflections seminars were coordinated by UAR. In the 2012-13 academic year and moving forward, Residential Education is leading the effort, with seminars offered for one unit of course credit through the Graduate School of Education (as EDUC 155x).

The following pages contain sample curricula drawn from some of the groups in the first three years. Boxed text represents the specific activities/prompts for the students with some additional instructions for co-facilitators outside of the boxes. Italicized text signals specific instructions the co-facilitators delivered to the students. Please note that most co-facilitators created more detailed outlines to use at the sessions themselves; those below are simply intended to provide a sense of how some groups constructed their sessions. Additionally, although some of these outlines contain up to four activities/discussion prompts, most co-facilitators find that time only allows for two or three at the most.

Typical Reflections Seminar Thematic Structure

**Session 1**
*Yesterday*

*Ground Rules*
First sessions establish ground rules for the sessions, provide exercises to help the students get to know one another, create a safe space for sharing, and find out what questions the students really want to discuss.

*Themes*
Many of these first sessions focus on “yesterday,” the home that the students just left, their identity in high school, and family expectations.

*Logistics*
Facilitators take care to have snacks, pads of paper, note cards, and pens/pencils for use at each session.

**Session 2**
*Today*

*Themes*
Session two focuses on students’ time at Stanford. Values are explored and honed, with the intent to contextualize them alongside how those values are lived (or not) in students’ current Stanford experiences. The hope is for students to take ownership of their time at Stanford and make authentic decisions about their courses and activities.

**Session 3**
*Tomorrow*

*Themes*
Tomorrow is often understood by students as “next quarter” or “next year” rather than post-Stanford. Questions of what constitutes a good, or meaningful, or happy, or values-based life are the focus. Students have a chance to think about the future that is further afield (such as through bucket list, or retirement toast exercises). At the end of session three, facilitators make room for students consider how they can continue reflective activities on their own.
Preparatory Plans and Tips for Co-Facilitator Teams

Before the First Session

Get to Know your Co-Facilitator(s)
- Decide the point at which you want to involve your upperclass student co-facilitator. (From the very beginning? Once you have sketched a curriculum?)
- Discuss with your co-facilitators what brings you to this endeavor.
- Discuss your style in a facilitator role. Do you tend to be directive? Laid back? How will you adjust your style in a co-facilitation role? Discuss successful team teaching or co-facilitating experiences.

Plan your Curriculum (draw from existing materials or design your own)
- Develop a shared set of goals and objectives for your seminar. Developing and articulating your goals for your seminar will help guide your decisions about what exercises to do, how to present them, and how to determine whether they are helping your students move in the direction you intend.
- Read through the Facilitators’ Guide and become familiar with the sample curricula.
- Discuss the role of the upperclass student co-facilitator. In some seminars, the student is fully a co-facilitator; in other seminars, the student may serve as a role model in exercises or participate in exercises to even out pairs/triads.
- Sketch out all three sessions with an overall plan for the exercises you hope to do. Most facilitators will do the detailed planning for the second session during their debrief of the first, and do the detailed planning for the third session during their debrief of the second session. It is helpful for future groups if you save your intended and actual outlines.
- Plan the first session in detail
  - Plan to establish ground rules for participation (e.g., respectfulness, respecting privacy of information that is shared in the seminar, active listening, no cell phones or laptops).
  - Determine how you will introduce yourselves and how students will introduce themselves.
  - Decide who will lead each exercise/offer discussion questions.
  - Determine how to phrase nuanced or tricky questions.
  - Discuss how you and your co-facilitators will communicate with each other mid-seminar.
  - Determine how much time to devote to each exercise/topic.
  - Decide who will keep track of time.
  - Discuss what activities/discussion topics you might be willing to forego if a rich discussion is running long.
  - Decide what materials will you need (e.g., pens, index cards, whiteboard markers, etc.).
  - Decide where will you sit in relation to the students and each other.
- Plan to solicit student feedback (e.g., consider ending each session with an opportunity for students to give anonymous feedback) and adjust the exercises/approach in the next session as needed. (You might ask, for example, what students liked or didn’t like about the session. What would they like to do less/more of next time?)
• Decide how much you will share about yourself with your seminar students. (How will you respond to questions about yourself or respond if students want you to participate in an exercise?)
• Keep in mind that this experience is about developing in students a practice of reflection; it is not faux therapy.

Expect the Unexpected
• How will you handle students who arrive late?
• How will you handle students who are absent from a session? (How will you help them integrate with the group at the next session?)
• How will you modify exercises to work with more or fewer students than you expected?
• What will you do if an activity or exercise isn’t working?
• How will you handle emotionally powerful moments, tears, or conflict?
• What are your contingencies if exercises take less time than you anticipated (hint: always have more planned than you will use) or if an exercise is going well and running long?

General Logistics
• Schedule time with your co-facilitator(s) to plan AND to debrief sessions.
  • Some have found it helpful to debrief the first session and plan the second session at the same time.
  • Some have found it helpful to debrief a session immediately after it ends.
• Decide who will send welcome/introduction email to students and who will send reminders in advance of the sessions. It can be helpful to get students’ cell phone numbers and perhaps to send a reminder via text message.
  • Provide a phone number for students to call or text in case they cannot find the room or are running late.
  • Remind them it is a 3-session commitment.
  • Convey your commitment to the seminar and to their experience.
• Decide who will bring snacks and who will bring materials (index cards, post-it notes, pens, tissues, etc.).
• Decide who will send report-out email to the co-facilitators’ list.

Class Management Logistics
• Reflections is offered for one-unit of credit on a S/NC basis (listed in Axess as EDUC 155X). Students who must miss a session should make every effort to participate in one of the weekly make-up sessions (offered by other co-facilitators and combining students from other seminars). Students must attend the make-up session in the same week as their absence in order to stay current with their own seminar.
• When you describe the importance of attendance, frame this in terms of the experience for the individual and other students (e.g., ‘the experience is richest when everyone attends and participates in all of the sessions) rather than in terms of earning credit for the class.
• The entering of grades will be administered centrally based on attendance information shared with the course administrator.
After the First Session

- Discuss with your facilitation team what went well and what did not work well.
- Review feedback from students.
- Evaluate the accuracy of your timing estimates.
- Gauge your effectiveness in meeting goals and objectives.
- Adjust the next session plan, as needed.
- Share your group’s experience with the cohort of other facilitators via the email list and at the Friday workshop sessions. These workshops offer opportunities to share ideas and get feedback from fellow facilitators.

Tips from Stanford Co-Facilitators

*“Allow silence.”*

*“Don’t be too tight on the clock; let things flow.”*

*“Be prepared to acknowledge awkwardness to make it less awkward.”*

*“Keep in mind that you’re creating a time and space for the students to talk. It’s not a time to lecture or deliver content.”*

*“When someone comes out to the group, acknowledge what a big deal that might be so students don’t walk away with ‘open wounds’ or feeling too raw or exposed.”*

*“Be prepared to switch gears and abandon an exercise if students aren’t clicking with something.”*
Group 1

Session 1

Welcome (5 minutes)
Sessions provide opportunity to get to know one another, to reflect together, and to take a pause from the bustle and movement that is the Stanford experience. Looking forward to building trust with one another, to enjoying one another’s company, to providing a safe space for sharing. Encourage students to keep journals—not for turning in, but to provide a physical place to go along with the temporal place to reflect.

“Today we will be focusing on ‘How I got here: the past that's shaped me, what I preserve, what I leave behind.’”

Introductions (5 minutes)
Co-facilitators begin with brief introductions (names and reason for involvement in Reflections seminar, something each brings to the seminar—experience, background, driving interest).

Exercise 1: Item from Home (30 minutes)
Opening discussion: With the notion of pause, we are going to spend 5 minutes or so to think and write in your journals, ultimately to share with the group an answer to this question:

“What's one of the significant items you brought with you to college from home (this can be literal or metaphorical)?”

1. think
2. write
3. students share: name, where from, answer to the question

Exercise 2: Formative Experience (30 minutes)
Writing and reflection exercise:

1. Complete this question with an example of a formative experience from your past:

“I would not be who I am today if…”
-or-
“I learned what matters to me when…”

2. Pair up with a student next to you; take turns (two minutes each) listening deeply, without interruption, as you share the thing from your past that was meaningful to you and why.

Exercise 3: Discussion (remaining time)
Closing discussion: Share with the group your answer to the question above.
Session 2

Check-in (10 minutes)
Welcome the students back. Ask if they have anything to share (a check-in) such as things they have been reflecting on since last week, things weighing on them, questions that have emerged for them since the last meeting.

Exercise 1: Moving Maps (40 minutes)
Everyone stands. We’ll be asking you to place yourselves on the floor in relation to series of targets, to show where you (literally) “stand” in relation to these targets:

a. Stanford as “home”: a box on the floor represents Stanford. How “at home” do you feel in relation to Stanford? Does Stanford feel like home? (if so, stand in the box); or does home feel at some steps removed from Stanford?

After students arrange themselves, invite them to share where they placed themselves and why.

b. The ‘ideal’ Stanford Student: A circle/figure on the floor represents the “ideal” Stanford student. How close do you feel to that ideal? If you feel completely identified, stand in the circle; if you feel like you’re at some step removed from that ideal, stand farther away to reflect how near or far you feel.

After students arrange themselves, invite them to share where they placed themselves and why.

c. Head versus heart: One circle on the floor represents your head; another (some distance away) represents your heart. Where do you feel you line up in terms of your decisions, actions, self-identity: closer to your head or to your heart? Stand in a place that shows where you line up in relation to your head and your heart (in the middle is perfect balance).

After students arrange themselves, invite them to share where they placed themselves and why.

Exercise 2: Good / Useful / Successful Happy Life (40 minutes)
Break into small groups: Count off 1-4 to divide into small groups; each group will discuss:

“What makes a 1) good, 2) useful, 3) successful, and 4) happy life?”

Discussion:
As a large group, discuss how to lead a life that is good, useful, successful, and happy at the same time. Is it possible?

Invite students to share anything they learned from the experience.
Exercise 3: Drawing and Reflection (40 minutes)
1. With a blank sheet of paper and colored markers, students draw Venn diagram representing the multiple communities to which they belong.
2. Group discussion: How do you handle different ‘pulls’ from the various communities? Which has priority and why?

Closing Exercise: Question On Your Mind (remaining time)
Once again we are going to think, write, and share, but this time our sharing will be a bit different in that we’ll collect what you write and read it aloud, so do not write your name. We will be building communal questions rather than individual ones, and we hope they will help us to build an agenda for our future meetings.

On an index card to be turned in, write question(s) you would most like to consider and discuss in coming sessions, reshuffle, then read aloud in group.

1. Please take an index card and pen or pencil. Take a few minutes to write down two or three questions that are on your mind – questions that you would like to discuss with your relating to your thoughts about the life you are now living, your dreams for the life you might like to lead, and how your Stanford experience might influence and contribute to those dreams.
2. You should NOT write your name because the co-facilitators are going to collect the cards when you are done and read the questions aloud.
3. Once you have had enough time to think and write, we will collect all the cards.
4. The co-facilitators will save the cards for the next meeting, as your questions may be a helpful starting point. Or, we may choose a question with which to start the second session.
Session 3

“Where am I headed, what is my ultimate personal dream and how will I get there?”

Exercise 1: Someone You Admire (15 minutes)
In place of a traditional “check-in”, we will go around the circle sharing the following:

a. Name someone you admire
b. What qualities or values do you admire in this person?
c. How are you like or unlike this person?
d. How might you see yourself moving toward those qualities in the future?

Exercise 2: Bucket Lists/Regrets (30 minutes)
In small groups (5-10 minutes to write, followed by large group discussion):

a. What is one regret that you have had since you have come to Stanford?
b. What does this say about your aspirations and values?
c. What might you do to address this in the future?

Exercise 3: Bucket Lists/Regrets: Five in Ten (40 minutes)
Identify hopes, dreams, plans for the future (5 minutes to write on newsprint; 5 minutes to post and visit others’; 25 minutes to discuss in large group)

a. What are five things you want to be sure to do in the next 10 years?
b. What do you learn about yourself and about your peers as a group from looking over these lists? What values are reflected in these lists?
c. Do your dreams mirror or veer away from the plan others have for you?
d. How do your concrete goals align with your values?
e. What will help you to achieve your “five in ten”?
f. Which one are you going to commit to doing first?

Closing
Thank students for willingness to participate in seminar. Invite students to stay in touch.
Group 2

Session 1
The Life I am Living?

Introduction (10 minutes)
1. Introduce the purpose of the sessions and underscore that everything that is shared is kept confidential and must stay in the room. No grades, no “right” or “wrong” answers. This seminar is for students.
2. Students each introduce themselves: names, where they are from, what house they live in, and answer "what excites you?".
3. Co-facilitators introduce and provide a bit about background about themselves.
4. Generate/add additional ground rules, as needed.

Exercise 1: Taking a Trip (30 minutes)
1. Exercise requires pen and paper.
2. Read the exercise aloud to the group

Part I – Packing Our Bags
As a class we are traveling to Australia to attend lectures on the rainforest and aboriginal cultural artifacts in that area. We have been instructed to bring appropriate clothing and everyone must bring one item that symbolizes a special memory and/or reflects his/her identity. What would your one item be?

3. Bring the group back together and have each student describe that special item and what it represents to him/her.

Part II – Stranded
Three hours into the trip, the plane experiences difficulty and is forced to land on a remote island.

Everyone on the plane is encouraged to calm down and is reassured that there is enough food and other necessities for the next week. However, we are informed that we will not be rescued for at least five days because of the treacherous weather and the remote location of the island.

4. Break the students into small groups to work together

Survival Plan
In your group come up with a survival plan focusing on two or more ideas about what will be necessary to help the group be supportive of each other and create a sense of “community” while stranded. Include in your survival plan, how each person’s special item will be used.
Exercise 2: Questions on Your Mind (45 Minutes)

1. Distribute pens and paper. Ask them to write down the questions that are on their minds—that they would like to discuss with their peers—over the course of the next sessions. They should NOT write their names on the paper since these will be collected and read aloud.

   This exercise will help to get you thinking about the questions that are on your mind.

2. Please take a blank sheet of paper and pen or pencil. Take a few minutes to write down two or three questions that are on your mind—questions that you would like to discuss with your peers relating to your thoughts about the life you are now living, your dreams for the life you might like to lead, and how your Stanford experience might influence and contribute to those dreams.

3. DO NOT write your name on the paper because the co-facilitators are going to collect the papers when you are done and read the questions aloud.

4. Once you have had enough time to think and write, we will collect all the papers. Read the questions aloud, one at a time. The group will select a question to discuss.

5. The co-facilitators will save the papers for the next meeting, as your questions may be a helpful starting point. Or, we may choose a question with which you would like to start the second session.

Concluding Activity (5 minutes)

  On an index card, write three words to describe your reactions to the session.

Collect the cards, explaining they will be used to help summarize the discussion at the start of the next session. Encourage but not require students to keep a journal of thoughts that relate to the session over the next week.
Session 2

Opening (10 minutes)
Summarize from last session based on what students wrote on their index cards at the conclusion.

Exercise 1: Core Values (45 minutes)
This exercise will ask each of us to identify the values that are of greatest significance to us. (Note: Core Values Assessment from the Center for Ethical Leadership [www.ethicalleadership.org])

1. Take out the list of core values found in your packet of materials. Review the list and consider whether any additional values should be added. You may add whatever you like to the list, but please do so silently.

   Circle the 12 that are most important to you personally.

   Choose the six values, from the 12 you originally selected, that are most significant to you.

   Choose the two that are your “core” values.

   What values were not chosen and why? What values did you add to the list? How did you choose your two “core” values? Are these values? What is a value? Would your family members have chosen the same values? Would your friends?

2. Once everyone is finished, we’ll ask for volunteers to explain how they chose their values.

Exercise 2: Worthy Purpose (30 minutes)
This exercise encourages you to consider how your happiness might relate to fulfilling a purpose.

Helen Keller said, “Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.”

As you think about your values and your dreams, and the pursuit of happiness, what might constitute a “worthy purpose” for you?

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1 The Core Values Assessment from the Center for Ethical Leadership is Appendix A.
Session 3

Making Meaning of the Life I Want to Lead

Exercise 1: Reflecting on Last Week (15 minutes)
Begin with students’ sharing thoughts on last week’s session.

Exercise 2: Good / Useful / Successful Life (30 minutes)
Break into 3 groups. Each group will be assigned one of the following topics:

- What constitutes a good life?
- What constitutes a useful life?
- What constitutes a successful life?

Keep a record of your group’s conversation and then report your findings to the large group.

What are the similarities and differences among the types of lives? Can you lead a good, useful, and successful life all at once?

Exercise 3: Action Steps (40 minutes)
What are the most important insights you have gained about yourself and your goals from these Reflection sessions?

In light of those insights, what concrete steps might you take during the rest of your time at Stanford that you might not have otherwise taken?

Examples might include taking a class purely out of interest, spending more time with friends, reflecting in a journal daily, speaking to more faculty, exploring the Bay Area and beyond, enjoying yourself more, talking to a friend about these issues.
Group 3

Session 1

Exercise 1: Party / Park / Jail (30 minutes)

We are going to spend the first few minutes of the session today getting to know each other. In the first round, we want you all to pretend that you are standing around at a polite social event, a casual mixer, and the conversation topic is “What do you do?” Be polite and appropriate with a group of friendly strangers. You have 5-7 minutes (depending on the size of the group). Try to talk to everyone.

Keep an eye on the clock, and the group. Encourage students to mix and mingle. Encourage students to keep telling about themselves and finding out about each other, not talking about the weather or current events. Give a one-minute warning.

Okay, time’s up. Well, the party is over. Everyone had a great time, talked for hours and discovered that you really like each other. The party has shut down, but you decided to stay together and walk around town in the moonlight. You stop at a park and have a seat on the ground. The conversation now turns to “How do you think other people see you?”

Again, watch the time. Make sure everyone gets a chance to talk. Eventually, give a one-minute warning.

Uh oh. Bad news. Sitting in the park late at night is illegal in this repressive fictional regime. You are all taken to jail and thrown in a cell. You don’t know how long you’ll be here. It’s as comfortable as the park, but they don’t provide any light (turn the lights off). After talking about your predicament for a while, you realize there is nothing you can do now. The conversation turns to talking about “What are you really like?” Reveal as much or as little as you like.

After seven minutes, turn the lights back on and debrief:

How was that? What did you notice? What did it feel like? What else? Does anyone have a different opinion?
Exercise 2: Hopes & Fears / Group Agreements Team Style (15 minutes)

1. Divide the group into two teams.
2. Once groups are assembled, each group will answer one question, and then assemble its data ("Assembling data" might include student’s own ideas, thoughts and feelings, interviewing others in the room, as well as observations.)

   "What do you hope to get out of the Reflections seminar?"
   -or-
   "What worries or concerns do you have about participating in the Reflections seminar?"

3. Once the groups have collected their data, the groups will present. Using this information, the facilitation team will work to generate group agreements that will guide our time together.

Example: If a concern emerges that participants might be distracted and not fully present, then the group might develop a group agreement that no one will use phones, iPads, laptops or other devices that might distract participants from the conversations.

Exercise 3: Dialogue (30 minutes)

1. What are your goals for yourself?
2. How do those match up with others’ goals or expectations for you?
3. How has Stanford (so far) helped you in working towards those goals?

Present (5 minutes)

2. Share role of facilitation team.
3. Share themes/big questions for the three sessions.
4. Share what to expect next...(how to prepare for next week).

Closing Exercise: Two One Word Whips (15 minutes)

1. What do you value?
2. What are you looking forward to?
Session 2

Exercise 1: Nonverbal Introductions (15 minutes)
1. Participants pair up.
2. Each person in the pair takes 90 seconds to communicate as much about themselves as possible without using words (no drawing, writing, or talking, no ASL, just gestures/motion).
3. Following the three minutes of introductions, partners introduce each other to the larger group (based only on what they interpret/understand from the non-verbal cues of their partner).
4. Following the introduction (and before introducing their partner), the individual can correct misinterpreted ideas and show in gesture how they tried to present the idea.

Exercise 2: Automatic Writing (20 minutes)
1. Imagine your fictitious Graduation Party. Everyone is there to celebrate and reflect on your Stanford career. Your friends, your housemates, classmates, RAs, RFs, faculty, community partners—everyone you came in contact with during your time on the Farm. And they are gathered together to tell you what you meant to them. As dinner starts, one of your professors gets up to make a toast. This may be a professor you have already met, or it might be a real or imaginary professor that you hope to work with later in your Stanford career. It’s okay to make it up. Imagine that the professor stands up, and says:

“I want to say a few words about ______. When they first walked into my classroom ______.” Write the toast that you would love to hear. Make it up. Just write. Don’t worry about wording.

2. Next toast is a classmate.

“This is what ______ meant to me. No matter what, they were always ______. I’ll always remember ______.” Write the ideal toast. In your dream, what would they say?

3. A freshman stands up. This is someone you have had some contact with, and you really like, but you didn’t know they were going to be here. They say:

“I have to say a few words. What I admire most about you is ______. The impact you have had on me is ______. You are the perfect example of ______.”

4. At the last moment, someone else walks in. It’s a family member, someone from outside of Stanford. It might be a parent, or a sibling, or a grandparent. It could be someone who passed away, but whose spirit is here:

“I didn’t think I would be able to come, but I have to be here. I’ve been keeping track of you while you are at Stanford. Let me tell you what I am most proud of ______.”

5. Okay, stop writing. Go back over what you wrote, and circle the words that keep showing up. These are your values.
Exercise 3: What Are Your Values (40 minutes)
In groups of 3, with 3 rounds, answer:

1. Where do you think those values came from?
2. How do your current activities reflect those values?
3. What do you want to do/try while at Stanford to also reflect those values?

Exercise 4: Closing Circle (10 minutes)

- What makes you laugh?
- What makes you cry?
- What makes you angry?
- What makes you happy?
Session 3

Check-In/Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Exercise 1: Values (5-7 minutes)
1. What are the qualities and behaviors you regard most highly?
2. Think back to the graduation toasts you wrote last week. What were the values that emerged in your toasts? Write those in the bottom section of the worksheet.
3. What are the values you want to live by?
4. What is important to you?

Exercise 2: Mission (15 minutes)
What is the mission statement that will guide your time at Stanford?

1. Your mission statement should provide a focus and direction for what you do during the next four years.
2. It's the “big picture” that says what you're about and where you plan to go. A mission statement should be short: 1–2 sentences at most. It says who you want to be and why. Think about how/when you would know you were successful. Think about how you want to be seen/understood.
3. Think about your purpose during these next four years and who you want to be.

Once mission statements have been written, we'll have each person share their mission statement.

Exercise 3: Vision Elements (20 minutes)

When your mission is reached, what will be true?

Your vision elements are compelling themes and images that help you to know that you are fulfilling your purpose. When you are functioning in service of your vision, what will people experience/know/see as a result? What will you feel/see/know about yourself as a result?

Small group discussions (pairs or trios).

Share your vision elements and begin to brainstorm ideas that will help you actualize that vision. These should be actions and opportunities that you can pursue at Stanford.
Exercise 4: Five Bold Steps (15 minutes)

- Initiatives and strategies that move you towards your mission.
- Visions are useless without action.
- Actions signal your commitment.
- Bold steps are IMMEDIATE, not distant. They are the immediate moves that help you move towards your intended goal.
- Bold means that these actions should be BIG! They should be ideas that may push you out of your comfort zone or challenge you in some way. They should be achievable things you can make happen. They should be things you WILL do, not just ideas you have. And things you will do before the academic year ends.

In your previous conversation you brainstormed ideas, actions and opportunities that will help you enact your vision. Narrow those ideas and identify five bold steps that move you towards your vision.

Exercise 5: Supports and Challenges (if time permits)

1. What are the resources, trends, and opportunities available to you?
2. Where can you find the support to implement the steps you’ve identified?
3. What are roadblocks or concerns that might impede your progress?

Exercise 6: Feedback Groups (15 minutes)

In pairs, discuss your five bold steps. Discuss how you think these five steps will help you reach your goal. Get and give feedback.

1. Do these steps help you move toward your intended goal?
2. Do these steps make sense to your partner?
3. How can you support each other in enacting these plans?

Exercise 7: Action Step (5 minutes)

Share an action you can take/do before the end of the quarter that will allow you to make progress towards the first step of your five bold steps.

Closing: Appreciations (5 minutes)

General closure, thanks, thoughts, etc.
Group 4

Session 1

Who are you? Where are you coming from?

Welcome & Introductions (5 minutes)
1. Co-facilitators introduce themselves.
2. Students introduce themselves (just names).
3. Provide background and purpose of Reflections.
4. Establish group norms
   - Confidentiality: Everything said here stays here. This is a safe, trusting space for you to share what’s on your mind without judgment.
   - Participate: Conversations are best when everyone is actively engaged and participating. No cell phones or laptops.
   - Other: Solicit additional rules or norms from the students.

Exercise 1: Item From Home (20 minutes)
1. Give students a minute to think about an important item they brought from home (literal or figurative).

   What was important enough about this item that inspired you bring it to Stanford?

2. Group sharing (upperclass student co-facilitator initiates, if necessary):

   What does this item say about the place you come from? What does this item say about you and what you value?

Exercise 2: Who Were You in High School? (20 minutes)
1. Personal reflection: Give students a few minutes of silence to journal/think quietly about who they were in high school.

   What was your primary role/reputation? Are you hoping to keep or get rid of it as part of your identity here? Do you think college is a place where you can reinvent yourself? Why?

2. Share in pairs. Encourage students to continue thinking about why they do or do not want to keep any aspects of their high school identity.
3. Share in large group.
Exercise 3: Setbacks (25 minutes)

1. Connecting to the notion of “who you are” and “what stories you’ve brought with you,” have students take a few minutes to reflect on a time they experienced a setback, when something did not go the way they planned, or when they faced disappointment. It can be related to academics, activities, friendships, etc.

   I would not be who I am today if... / I learned what matters to me when... / A time I felt strongly about something that deeply affected me was...

2. After a few minutes, ask students to write about:

   How did you react? What did you learn? Would you have done anything differently?

3. After a few minutes, ask students to write about:

   In general, what constitutes a setback for you? How do you handle them?

4. Have students share stories with a partner.

5. Reconvene and ask if anyone wants to share their story.

   What did you learn from your experience that you can apply to your Stanford career? How can you be supportive, responsive, and empathetic to your peers when they face a challenge?

Exercise 4: Questions On Your Mind (10 minutes)

1. Discuss attendance policy.

2. Distribute index cards and have students take a few minutes to write down anonymously any questions or topics they would like to touch on during Reflections: What would you like to discuss with your peers over the course of the next two weeks (about life, values, your aspirations—at Stanford and beyond)?

3. Read questions aloud and have the group select one or two that they want to discuss in a later session.

Feedback & Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

1. Have students write down feedback or comments on index cards: What did you enjoy about this session? What reactions did you have to what we covered today? What would you like to see done differently?

2. Encourage students to write other thoughts in their journals during the week.
Session 2

How can your personal values complement your Stanford experience?

Welcome (5 minutes)

Review norms and expectations (may suggest snapping as a way to signal recognition), and frame tonight’s session: Last week we learned a little bit about your background and what life events have shaped you. In this session we will think about the present: where you are in your Stanford career, what matters to you, what you value, and what you aspire to do and become. We will be using a lot of the questions you submitted last week to structure the activities and discussions.

Exercise 1: Identifying Values (45 minutes)

1. Clearly the experiences, people, etc. you mentioned have some value to you. Now let’s talk about values in general. It’s important to identify what values and beliefs you strongly identify with and how they guide your actions and decisions.

2. Have students brainstorm a list of values and guiding principles on the whiteboard (e.g. love, happiness, wealth, justice, recognition, integrity, influence). Once the list is complete, ask students to write down seven or eight values on index cards that resonate with them. Then narrow it down to four. Finally, narrow it down to two.

3. Have students share these two core values with a partner. Prompts: Return to your introduction story from earlier in the session. What value(s) does that story exemplify? How did you decide what two values are most meaningful to you? How do your values intersect with the things you hope to do at Stanford? Any surprises or realizations?

4. Bring the group back together, and pose a few of the values-based questions that they generated last week.

Exercise 2: Stanford Bucket List (15 minutes)

1. On a whiteboard, have students brainstorm a “bucket list” of activities, experiences, programs, groups, etc. they want to explore or partake in while at Stanford (e.g., study abroad, be an RA, be president of an organization, be a campus tour guide, complete an honors thesis, engage in research, learn a new skill). Generate as many ideas as possible.

2. Ask students to imagine that they can choose just five things from this list to do. Then ask students to narrow that list to just three things.

3. Connect the students’ bucket lists to the Core Values exercise. Even though you probably will not be limited to only three items from your bucket list, it’s true that you will need to make choices about what you do while you’re here. You can’t do it all, and it’s important to remember that you will be happier with your decisions and your time here if you understand the reasons behind your choices and those choices are aligned with your values.

Exercise 3: Wisdom in the Room (10 minutes)

1. In groups of three, ask students to share their bucket lists.

2. Share as a group (if time).

Feedback & Wrap-Up

1. Distribute index cards to students and give them the opportunity to write down feedback, new questions, and any other comments. What is still on your mind? What would you like to discuss in more depth? Journal any other thoughts or reactions that came up for you tonight, or that strike you in the next week.
Session 3
How to embrace and maximize your experience at Stanford (and beyond)

Warm Up (10 minutes)
1. Have students pair up with someone new. Ask them to revisit the Bucket List exercise from last week: Did you think about it at all? Did you make a plan or take any steps toward achieving one of your list items?
2. Reconvene the group and share. Explain that today's session will focus on ways to take action on their lists and other elements of their Stanford experience.

Exercise 1: Integrating Values With Your Academic Path (~30 minutes)
1. A lot of you have asked questions or expressed concern about where you are headed academically. Take some quiet reflection and writing time to:
   - Discuss in pairs.
   - Reconvene the group and share. Remember: There's a reason you don't need to declare a major until the end of sophomore year. You might be in a different mindset or have discovered a new academic interest by this time next year. Give yourself time and permission to be open and change your mind. Don't feel pressured to box yourself in or make a commitment now—you have plenty of time to explore and decide

   Write down your two core values from last week. Then write down a few broad interests/ambitions (e.g., helping others, starting a company, etc.).

   Then, list out any majors you have been considering and/or classes you have taken thus far. Why have you focused on those subjects or classes? Do they align with your values and interests? Are these actually your values/interests, or do they come from somewhere else (your family, society, peers? Last week many of you cited your parents as the reason you are who you are).

2. Discuss in pairs.
3. Reconvene the group and share. Remember: There's a reason you don't need to declare a major until the end of sophomore year. You might be in a different mindset or have discovered a new academic interest by this time next year. Give yourself time and permission to be open and change your mind. Don't feel pressured to box yourself in or make a commitment now—you have plenty of time to explore and decide

Exercise 2: Questions On Your Mind & Open Discussion (~30 minutes)
1. From the previous exercise, flow into a larger group discussion. What else are you feeling now? What have you experienced so far? Actively facilitate conversation and suggest questions not yet addressed:
   - What to do when you have interests so varied they don’t fit within a single major?
   - How do you cope with the pressures to be really involved on campus and take advantage of every opportunity when you are not sure of your passions?
   - If you’ve ever felt like you didn’t belong, how did you convince yourself otherwise?
   - Have you ever considered leaving Stanford?
   - Is Stanford meeting your expectations?
   - How can we feel less alone and maintain this reflective, supportive environment?
Exercise 3: Pledges (10 minutes)

1. For final group exercise, ask students to think about a pledge or promise they want to make to themselves. Have students write it down on an index card first, along with their two core values. This can be something they have thought about over the course of Reflections. (Perhaps it's accomplishing something on their Bucket List, changing their approach to choosing classes, dropping the mindset that they "must" major in XYZ, or striving to get to know more people—anything goes.)
2. Have students share their pledge or promise.
3. Encourage students to keep this card in their wallet or somewhere safe/visible so that they are frequently reminded of the vow they have made to themselves and the values they cherish.

Closing (5 minutes)

1. Encourage students to keep reflecting and keep the conversations going. It doesn’t need to end with Reflections.
2. Offer optional fourth session (set a date).
Group 5

Session 1
“Yesterday”

1. Brief introductions by three co-facilitators (name, role on campus).
3. Ground Rules – Everything said is confidential and must stay in the room. No grades, no right or wrong answers. This works best when everyone participates and is respectful of others’ contributions. This seminar is for students’ benefit. No electronic devices. Ask if students have others to add.
4. Students introduce themselves with name, where they’re from, a little about their family and background. (Upperclass student co-facilitator begins; other co-facilitators join circle.)

**Exercise 1: Taking a Trip**

*Imagine this scenario: As a class we are traveling to an academic conference. Three hours into the trip, the plane experiences difficulty and is forced to land on a remote island. Everyone on the plane is encouraged to calm down and is reassured that there is enough food and other necessities to last a few weeks while we wait for rescue… You will want to get to know your fellow travelers better than you do based on the introduction you have to them so far. Taking a few minutes think about and jot down on an index card three questions that you would want to ask someone to help you get to know (and trust) them better.

After 3-5 minutes, each student will pass her/his index card to a neighbor. Going in a circle, students will choose one question from the card they received and ask that question aloud of the student who wrote that question. Co-facilitators will participate in the sharing and encourage students to elaborate, as needed. If students are answering too quickly, conduct a second round of questions. Collect index cards at the end.

**Exercise 2: Transition to wrap-up/next week**

*Students count off (1-7 or 1-5) and gather into pairs or trios.

While we are not stranded on an island together, Stanford is environment in which we can all be most effective when we get to know each other, our values, and be honest about our fears. Next week’s theme will be ‘the present,’ meaning your time at Stanford. You have now been at Stanford for about 4 months. Take a few moments in your small group to jot down on index card and then talk with your partner(s) about what these first few months have been like for you and what kinds of issues/questions you’d like to explore together next week.

What has been harder than you thought? What has been easier? What are you anxious about? What is going well? What is not going well?

Ask small groups to share some of the things they discussed. Seek group’s feedback on most important questions to pursue next week.

**Closing feedback**

*Take a few minutes to jot down on an index card a few impressions about this session. It can be a few words, a sentence or two, something you liked, something you’d like to suggest for next week. Do not write your name on these cards that we will be collecting.*
Session 2

Today

1. Brief re-introductions (to refresh on names, introduce new member(s))
2. Re-cap Ground Rules – Everything said is confidential and must stay in the room. No grades, no right or wrong answers. This works best when everyone participates and is respectful of others’ contributions. No electronic devices.

Exercise 1: Values

1. The focus of last week’s seminar was “yesterday,” and we talked about some of the experiences, people, and places that contributed to your formation. Tonight we are going to spend time thinking about “today” by focusing on what is important to you now.
2. Distribute “Core Values Exercise” worksheet from Center for Ethical Leadership.
3. Take time to review the list of 18 values, considering what each means to you. Add values that are important to you that are not listed on the sheet. Put a star beside all of the value words that are very important to you. Narrow to eight, then five, then three, then two. Take a few moments to think about why you chose these two. (You may want to take a few minutes to write your thoughts on the back of the paper.)

Write your two core values (without your name) on an index card.

5. What was your experience with this exercise? What was it like to identify and then narrow your list of values?
6. Write values on the board. Group will share observations: Thoughts on what appears many times? What appears just a few times?
7. Are any values not represented? What does it mean to be aware of your values? How often do you usually think about what your values are and whether your actions are in alignment with them? What occasions prompt you to think about your values?

Exercise 2: Questions for this Week

1. Read list of questions submitted last week. Ask students to snap when they hear a question they would like to discuss. Discuss.

Closing Feedback

Take a few minutes to jot down on an index card a few impressions about this session. It can be a few words, a sentence or two, something you liked, something you’d like to suggestion for next week. Do not write your name on these cards that we will be collecting.
Session 3

Tomorrow

Exercise 1: Good / Successful /Happy Life

1. Ask each student talk about someone they admire: their qualities, values, how they live their lives, and the ways they feel similar to or different from that person. (Note: students were asked by email, in advance, to identify someone they admire.)
2. Divide into three groups with each group discussing one of these:

   What constitutes a good life?
   What constitutes a successful life?
   What constitutes a happy life?

3. Ask each group to summarize and discuss all together how they overlap and differ.
4. Ask each student to write down greatest fear about future on a card --- already have some from questions posed -- then read all out and talk about these.

Wrap-up

1. Write on index cards. Discuss as a group, if time permits.

   What was most useful for you from the Reflections seminar?

2. If time permits ask: Are you glad you participated?
3. What have been the most valuable things we have discussed or lessons you have learned through this time we have spent together?
4. How might you apply these to the rest of your time here at Stanford?
Group 6
Session 1

YESTERDAY: Who are you? Where are you coming from? What matters to you?

Welcome, Reflections Overview & Norm-Setting (5 minutes)
   a. Co-facilitator introductions
   b. What is Reflections? Provide brief background.
      i. Addressing a need articulated by Stanford students for a structured, safe, uninterrupted space to think about their Stanford experience and how to make the most of it.
      ii. Also a chance to get to know one another, to reflect and share together, and to take pause amidst your busy schedules and remind yourself of what’s most important to you.
      iii. Framework: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow
   c. Reflections Objectives:
      i. Encourage a sense of ownership and self-authorship over your Stanford education and experience.
      ii. Help you articulate your identity, values, and rationale for making decisions, and enable you to understand how your beliefs and choices shape your development.
      iii. Uncover your sense of purpose and initiate a dialogue about who you are, who you aspire to be, and what matters most to you.
      iv. Provide a safe and comfortable space for exploring, reflecting, and sharing.
      v. Empower you to continue regular peer reflection after these sessions conclude, and to stay mindful of the personal learnings and outcomes you discover along the way.
   d. Establish group norms
      i. Confidentiality: Respect for privacy. Let’s create a safe, trusting environment for you to share what’s on your mind.
      ii. Discussion norms: Conversations are best when everyone is actively engaged and participating. No cell phones or laptops. Active listening. Snapping can signal understanding, empathy, or agreement.
iii. Attendance policy: Because of the content and the intimate nature of these meetings, the whole group will rely on you to be present and fully engaged each week. If you have a conflict, please let us know.

iv. Seating: Sit closely together and try sitting next to someone new each week.

v. Feedback: Let us know how it’s going. We want to customize this experience for you based on the topics or issues on your mind.

vi. What other rules or norms would the group like to add?

Exercise 1: Item From Home & Introductions (20 minutes)

a. Again, the theme for tonight is “yesterday.” Think about an important item you brought from home (literal or figurative) to Stanford. What was important enough about this item that inspired you to bring it? Write down a few notes on an index card.

b. Group sharing/introductions: Tell us your name and where you are from (hometown and your dorm). Next, talk about the item you brought. What does this item say about the place you come from? What does this item say about you and what you value?

Exercise 2: Who Were You in High School? (20 minutes)

a. Personal reflection: Using an index card, take a few minutes to think about who you were in high school. What was your primary role/reputation? Are you hoping to keep or get rid of it as part of your identity here?

b. Have students share stories with a partner. Reconvene and ask if anyone wants to share their story. Encourage students to continue thinking about why they do or do not want to keep any aspects of their high school identity. Has anything changed in the first quarter? Do you think college is a place where you can reinvent yourself? Why?

Exercise 3: Success Stories (25 minutes)

a. Connecting to the notion of “yesterday” (who you are and what stories you’ve brought with you), reflect on a time when you accomplished something significant or meaningful. It might be related to academics, activities, family, friends, etc. Or, perhaps the accomplishment is related to not doing something (e.g. turning down an opportunity).

i. Prompts: I would not be who I am today if not for… / I learned what matters to me when… / I measure success based on…

b. Have students share stories with a partner. Reconvene and ask if anyone wants to share their story. What did you learn from your experience that you can apply to your Stanford career? How can you use these stories to help you address future challenges?
or setbacks? Many students say that they aren’t comfortable talking about problems with their friends or roommates; how can your experiences influence the way you support, respond, and empathize with your peers?

Exercise 4: Questions On Your Mind (10 minutes)

a. Distribute index cards and have students take a few minutes to anonymously write down any questions or topics they would like to touch on during Reflections. Knowing that the theme of the next two weeks will be “today” and “tomorrow,” what would you like to discuss with the group (campus life, classes, values, relationships, aspirations)?

b. Read questions aloud and have the group select a few that they want to discuss in a later session. Snapping can signal interest. If time permits, start talking about one or two of them.

Feedback & Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

a. Have students write down feedback or comments on cards: What did you enjoy about this session? What reactions did you have to what we covered today? What would you like to see done differently? Should we be doing more/less of something?

b. Encourage students to write other thoughts in their journals during the week. Specifically, try to pay attention to what small successes you experience over the next week, and make note of them (e.g. meeting a new person, finding a pretty spot on campus, scoring well on a p-set).

Back-Up Plan (if we have extra time): Discuss one or two of the questions students have suggested.
Session 2

TODAY: How can your personal values complement and guide your Stanford experience?

Welcome
   a. Acknowledge new members (if any) and how to integrate them.
   
   b. Review norms and expectations and frame tonight’s session: Last week we learned a little bit about your background and what life events have shaped you. Tonight we will think about the present: where you are in your Stanford career, what you value, and what you want to do while you’re here. We will be using a lot of the questions you submitted last week to structure tonight’s activities and discussions.
   
   c. Acknowledge feedback from last week: Tonight we will try to allow for more small group discussion time. We (facilitators) will try to speak up more, too.

Exercise 1: Introductions & Icebreakers (15 minutes)
   a. Let’s quickly go around the room to refresh everyone on our names: Tell us your name and something interesting about it (e.g. why you have it, if you are named after someone, what your nickname is, if there’s a story or meaning connected to it, etc.).
   
   b. Going back to our journaling homework from last Tuesday: Does anyone want to share a small success story that happened over the course of the last week?
   
   c. Pick one thing from your wallet or backpack and tell us what it says about you.

Exercise 2: Identifying Values (25 minutes)
   a. Clearly the experiences, places, people, etc. you mentioned in your stories have value to you. It’s important to identify what values and beliefs you strongly identify with and how they guide your actions and decisions.
   
   b. Have students brainstorm a list of values and guiding principles on the board (e.g. love, happiness, wealth, justice, recognition, integrity, influence). Once the master list is complete, ask students to write down 8-10 values on index cards or post-its that resonate with them. Narrow it down to 4. Finally, narrow it down to just 2.
   
   c. Have students share these two core values in small groups. How did you decide what values are most meaningful to you? Any surprises or realizations?
   
   d. Bring the group back together. Invite volunteers to share or report back. Pose a few of the values/relationship based questions, below.

Exercise 3: Stanford Bucket List (30 minutes)
   a. Have students take a few minutes to jot down a “bucket list” of goals, activities, experiences, programs, groups, etc. they want to accomplish at Stanford (e.g. be an RA, volunteer, take golf lessons, study abroad, work in a lab, go to a Bing concert, eat healthier). List as many ideas as you can, broad or specific.
   
   b. Have students write these things on post-its, and stick them on the wall (gallery style). Allow the group to walk around the room to read everyone’s bucket list items.
c. Re-group, and have students quietly select their top three bucket list items. Encourage them to do this by thinking back to the core values they identified in the previous exercise.

d. Takeaway: Even though you probably will not be limited to only three items from your bucket list, it's true that you will need to make choices about what you do while you're here. You can't do it all, and it's important to remember that you will be happier with your decisions and your time here if you understand the reasons behind your choices.

Exercise 3: “Connecting the Dots” (15 minutes)

a. Have students share their three bucket list items in a small group. Why/how did you pick these three things? How can you take initiative? Do your values intersect with the things you hope to do at Stanford?

b. Group sharing: Invite one person from each small group to report back on what they discussed and what issues came up in their conversation.

   i. One theme/goal that probably came up for many of you is getting to know faculty members: Faculty facilitator to share tips/suggestions for meeting professors or finding lab work.

c. Close by asking students to continue thinking about their values over the next week, and how their actions and decisions match up with those values. Are there tweaks or adjustments they should make for better alignment with your values? New activities or classes to try or add to your routine? Things you can eliminate or dial back?

d. Homework: Try to take the first step on one of your bucket list items. Even if it’s just emailing someone to set up a meeting, putting a key date on the calendar, printing out the instructions, etc. “If you've just begun then you are halfway done.”

Feedback & Wrap-Up

a. Distribute notecards to students and give them the opportunity to write down feedback, new questions, and any other comments. What is still on your mind? What would you like to discuss in more depth?
Session 3

*TOMORROW: How to embrace and maximize your experience at Stanford and beyond.*

Welcome & Warm Up (15 minutes)

a. Your questions from the last two weeks touch on several broad themes (e.g. career/academic decisions, relationships, fitting in, etc.) that we feel complement the idea of “tomorrow” and approaching the rest of your time at Stanford. Tonight we purposely want to give you a substantial amount of time to have a deeper dialogue about those topics in small groups.

b. For a quick warm up, who wants to share any reflections about the Bucket List activity from last week? Did you think about it at all? Did you take any steps toward achieving something?

Exercise 1: Integrating Values With Your Academic Path (20 minutes)

a. A lot of you have asked questions or expressed concern about where you are headed academically or professionally and we know many of you have feelings of indecision and uncertainty. Take some quiet reflection time to do the following:
   i. Write down your two core values from last week at the top of your paper or note card.
   ii. Then create two columns. On the left, write down a few broad likes/interests/passions (e.g. helping others, starting a company, working with your hands, etc.).
   iii. On the right, list out any majors you have been considering and/or classes you have taken thus far.
   iv. Take a few minutes to look at the items in both columns. Why have you focused on those subjects or classes? Do they align with your values and interests? Are these actually your values/interests, or do they come from somewhere else (family, society, peers)?

b. Discuss your thoughts and reactions in small groups.

c. Takeaway: There’s a reason you don’t need to declare a major until the end of sophomore year. You might be in a different mindset or have discovered a new academic interest by this time next year. Give yourself time and permission to be open and change your mind. Don’t feel pressured to box yourself in or make a commitment now—you’ve got plenty of time to explore and decide. “Identify what you love, then figure out what Stanford calls it.”

Exercise 2: Questions & Open Discussion (30 minutes)

Find a new group of students to talk with. Consider a few of the following questions together:

Values & Direction

- How do I find purpose and figure out what I want to do with the rest of my life?
- How can I accept failure and/or the fear that I’m making the wrong choices?
- How do I find balance?
- How do I keep or change my personal/academic identity?
- Has anyone considered leaving Stanford?
- How will spirituality/reflection (in or outside of a faith-based context) be a part of my daily routine?
Relationships

- How do I find a solid group of friends and meet new people outside of my dorm?
- How can I maintain strong relationships with friends/family back home?
- How can I build relationships or initiate work opportunities with faculty?
- What is love and how do I know if I love someone?

Exercise 3: Pledges (15 minutes)

a. Ask everyone to think about a pledge or promise they want to make to themselves. This can be something they have thought about over the course of Reflections. Perhaps it's accomplishing something on their Bucket List, dropping the mindset that they "must" major in something, practicing reflection each day, or striving to get to know more people—anything goes.

b. Have students write this down on an index card, along with their two core values.

c. Have everyone share their pledge or promise with the group.

d. Encourage students to keep this card somewhere safe or visible so that they are frequently reminded of the vow they've made to themselves and the values they cherish.

Closing (5 minutes)

a. Keep reflecting and keep the conversations going; it doesn’t need to end here.

b. Share emails/roster?

c. Group photo?
Appendix A

Core Values Assessment from the Center for Ethical Leadership

Peace
Integrity
Wealth
Joy
Happiness
Love
Success
Recognition
Friendship
Family
Fame
Truth
Authenticity
Wisdom
Power
Status
Influence
Justice

_____________
_____________
_____________

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Appendix B

Co-Facilitators for Seminars in 2011-12 and 2012-13

- Scotty McLennan, Adina Glickman, Alex Wittenberg (2012)
- Jennifer Summit, Patricia Karlin-Neumann, Maya Amoils (2012)
- Thomas Ehrlich, Sally Dickson, Lauren Felice (2012)
- Dave Evans, Koren Bakkegard, Stewart MacGregor-Dennis (2012)
- Dan Klein, Tania Mitchell, Janani Ramachandran (2012)
- Alice Petty, Chris Golde, April Yang (2013)
- Sonoo Thadaney, Joanne Sanders, Jacob Dalder (2013)
- Lance Choy, Marian Adams, Chris Herries (2013)
- Adina Glickman, Anna Stone, Austin Block (2013)
- Daniel Fisher, Koren Bakkegard, Chad Kamisugi (2013)
- Scotty McLennan, Julia Hartung, Chris Herries (2013)
- Patricia Karlin-Neuman, Ross Shachter, Kimberly Bacon (2013)
- Agnes Tin, Ali Miano, Sharon Barazani (2013)
- Stewart Levin, Ken Doran, Jacob Dalder (2013)

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The Stanford 101 Committee, which formed the starting point for what has become Reflections: Maya Amoils, anthony antonio, Koren Bakkegard, Russell Berman, Tom Black, Chris Bourg, Kathy Campbell, Angelina Cardona, Ralph Castro, Lance Choy, Kirsti Copeland, Michael Cruz, Martha Cyert, Ben Davidson, Todd Davies, Mariatte Denman, Sally Dickson, Andy Dimock, Anna Doty, Tom Ehrlich, Dave Evans, Ira Friedman, Theo Gibbs-Plessl, Adina Glickman, Deborah Golder, Chris Griffith, Rich Holeten, Nanci Howe, Larry Lagerstrom, Karen Hiramoto Lee, Julie Lythcott-Haims, Snehal Naik, Shari Palmer, Carole Pertofsky, John Peterson, Estelle Piper, Jazmin Quill, Laleh Rongere, Debanti Sengupta, Ross Shachter, Eric Stein, Jennifer Summit, Robin Thomas, Miranda Tuttle, Kelsey Wharton, Randy Williams, and Alex Wittenberg.
Appendix C

Harvard “Reflecting on Your Life” Materials
To: Our Colleagues at other Colleges and Universities.

From: Thomas Dingman, Howard Gardner, Richard Light, and Katie Steele. Harvard University

We are happy to share the enclosed collection of materials with you. Together they describe, in some detail, our early versions of "Reflecting on Your Life," a series of small group discussions for our freshmen here at Harvard. We would like to provide additional information for any other campus or group that is considering using these materials. We hope you find these suggestions both concrete and helpful.

1. We have found that making this a voluntary enterprise for our freshmen is important. The students who come have clearly self-selected. So have the Group Discussion Leaders, who include both Faculty members and Administrators. Several groups have had "co-leaders," often where a Faculty Member or Administrator invites a student or a junior colleague to join him or her in co-leading a discussion group. There is no additional compensation for anyone though each group is given a budget for snacks.

2. Planning three 90 minute sessions, scheduled roughly a week apart, has proved an effective model. We ask students to make a serious commitment when they sign up. We tell them we are thrilled to welcome them. Yet they are making a commitment to come to all three sessions, just as we are as Discussion Group Leaders. Sometimes, for various reasons a fourth optional meeting has been arranged.

3. Going over the "Ground Rules" for the small group discussions, at the outset of the first session, turns out to be an important "tone setter" for the entire set of three sessions. The goal is to have all of the students feel they can be reasonably "open" in what they say, yet that they will never be quoted by name outside of the
discussion group. To quote one student, "What is said here
stays here... Especially all names and who said what..."

4. A particularly important suggestion that we can make to any
other campus is the importance of serious, rigorous,
planning in advance for these sessions. Here at Harvard,
we spent nearly a year organizing these sessions. The
Freshman Dean's Office invited three undergraduates to
become a "Student Advisory Group" and the students took
this job very seriously. The four leaders for this project,
Dingman, Gardner, Light, and Steele, met about ten times to
plan, before we ran our very first discussion groups. We
discussed what we might do if students don't show up; if a
student unexpectedly breaks down and starts crying, perhaps
leading to an awkward moment for everyone in a group; the
 advisability of having far more discussion questions,
exercises, and activities ready for our group than we
really can implement, so that each of us has a "bag of
great activities" from which to draw.

5. Finally, in the spirit of careful and rigorous planning, we
routinely have meetings where ALL of the Discussion Group
Leaders attend. We share experiences and share ideas. Each
spring for the past two years we have had several new
Discussion Leaders, so our planning session for Discussion
Leaders gives the new leaders an opportunity to ask
questions they may have. Plus they can learn from the more
experienced participants. Our Leadership Team believes that
the success of this project, certainly on our campus and
probably on other campuses also, depends heavily on having
all Discussion Leaders being well prepared. An unexpected
dividend is that most discussion leaders send a brief
report on each session to the other leaders, thus
constituting a powerful "learning community."

We hope you have a highly successful experience if you choose to
try this project on your campus. We are eager to learn about
your impressions and are happy to answer questions if we can.
Attachment B

Outline for Discussion Leaders
Spring 2011

Reflecting on Your Life:
Grappling with Important Questions

A Note to Discussion Leaders:
The outline provided below is meant to provide you with a possible format for your discussion group. Each of the three sessions begins with several primary questions that are meant to be the focus of that day’s discussion. To help frame and inspire conversation, multiple optional exercises and general discussion questions have been provided for each session. If you choose to use one of the exercises, know that there will likely only be time to do one or two exercises per meeting (given the total length of time allotted for each session). The sessions are designed sequentially and many of the suggested discussion questions build on issues discussed in previous meetings.

Goal of the Project:
The goal of the project is to create an opportunity for freshmen – outside of the classroom – to reflect on their lives. Over the course of three sessions, students will be asked to grapple with multiple important questions. Where am I headed and what is my ultimate personal dream? How might my college experience influence my dream? What do I value and will my time in college impact my values? What are my responsibilities, if any, to my community and to make the world a better place?

Session 1: THE LIFE I WANT TO LEAD
Where am I headed? What is my ultimate personal dream? How might my college experience influence and contribute to my ultimate personal dream?

Outline of Session One
1. Welcome and Introductions:
   - Open session with welcome to the group. Explain the purpose of Reflecting on Your Life and remind students of history of program (started in spring 2008 after graduating seniors had commented that Harvard should have a class on how to live life). For some, beginning to answer the question “what does it mean to live a good life?” means taking time to think about a personal dream, personal values, and personal responsibilities to a local and global community. Remind students that this is a project of the Freshman Dean’s Office in collaboration with Professor Richard Light and Professor Howard Gardner. It might interest students to know that over 200 freshmen were interested in participating in Reflecting on Your Life this spring.
   - Invite everyone (including yourself) to introduce themselves. Rather than sticking to the usual information (name, hometown, etc), consider asking students a more pointed question. – e.g. What is your biggest surprise in coming to Harvard? What’s one of the significant items that you brought with you to college, from home (this can be literal or metaphoric)? Name one thing that you’ve always wanted to do, but have never done?
Outline for Discussion Leaders  
Spring 2011

- Discussion leader should review his or her role in facilitating the conversation. It may be helpful to note early on that the program is meant to be a dialogue between students and that the exchange will be more fruitful if all participate.

2. Ground Rules: Initiate a conversation with the students about how to have a productive dialogue. Given the subject matter, and the potential that students and discussion leaders may share personal, sensitive information, conversations should be privileged. While students and discussion leaders may talk with others (outside of the group) about the content of the discussions, names and identifying information should never be used. Discussion leaders could also invite the students to brainstorm other principles or ground rules for the conversations.

3. Getting Started Exercises (choose one):

Exercise #1: This exercise will help students to get thinking about the questions that are on their minds and will help you to know what they want to talk about. It’s also an easy way to ensure that everyone participates.

1. Distribute blank sheets of paper and pens to all students. Ask them to take a few minutes to write down the questions that are on their minds -- the questions that they would like to discuss with their peers -- over the course of the next three weeks. They should NOT write their names on the paper. Explain that you are going to collect the papers when they are done and that the questions written on the papers will be read aloud.

2. Once it appears that the students have had enough time to think and write, collect all the papers. Shuffle them, and redistribute to the students, making sure that students do not get their own original paper.

3. Ask the students to read the questions aloud, one at a time.

4. Next, you might decide to start a conversation using one of the questions from the students or you could ask them to choose a question that interests them and start a dialogue from there.

5. Save the papers for the next meeting, as the students’ questions might be a helpful starting point. Or, take them out at the end of the first session and ask students to choose the question that they would like to start with at the second session.

Exercise #2: This exercise will give you a sense of the students’ motivations for signing up for Reflecting on Your Life.

1. Ask each student to explain why he or she signed-up for Reflecting on Your Life and to list one question or issue that is on his or her mind.

Exercise #3: This activity will help to break the ice and will help the students start thinking about what’s important to them.

1. Distribute small pieces of paper and a pen to all students. Ask them to write a question on the paper that you hope one or more members of the group will be willing to answer. The question should be the kind of question that will encourage the responder to need to reflect a bit before answering e.g. what fictitious character do you most relate to and why? What do you hope to learn from being in College? What is one of your hopes for 2010?
Attachment B

Outline for Discussion Leaders
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2. Once each student has written a question, ask them to fold up the papers and put them in a small bowl.
3. Send the bowl around the circle, instructing each student to take one piece of folded paper from the bowl. Ask them to read the question and make sure that that did not get their original question.
4. Invite students to randomly read aloud and answer the question they got from the bowl. Ask them to introduce themselves again before they begin talking.

4. Discussion Prompts: If you don’t start the conversation using one of the questions generated by the students in Exercise #1 (described above), start the conversation with one of the optional exercises described below. Explain to the students that you are hoping to use this first session to talk about the students’ dreams for themselves.

Exercise #1: This exercise will help students begin to articulate their “ultimate personal dream.”
1. Ask the students to write a scenario of their life, 25 years from now. The scenario should capture their major commitments and pleasures. Encourage the students to be colorful and detailed. For instance, instead of “having meaningful work and enjoying family” a student might write: “living in a cabin in the rural northwest, starting an environmental organization with my legal training, and home-schooling our four children” (as a starter only).
2. Ask one or two students to present their “ultimate personal dreams” and ask them to consider some of the follow-up questions listed in #3 below.
3. Based on the dream you have identified, what are those things that will be easy for you to achieve and what will be more challenging? What sacrifices will you have to make to accomplish your dream?

Exercise #2: This exercise will give students a chance to reflect on where they have come from and where they are now, in order to think more about where they are headed.
1. Encourage students to think of a time from their past when they did something that was really meaningful to them, or something that made a significant difference in how they thought/felt/or acted. Next, ask them to think of something that they are hoping to do in college that will be meaningful for them.
2. Ask students to pair up with a student next to them. For two minutes, one of the students should tell the other student about something from their past that was meaningful to them and why. The other student in the pair, should just listen without saying anything. After two minutes, the students should switch roles.
3. Once each member of the pair has had a chance to speak, the students should find a new partner. This time, ask the partners to discuss something meaningful that they are hoping will happen while in college.

5. Possible Questions for General Discussion:
   • What are the opportunities here and now – in college – that might move you toward accomplishing your dreams?
   • Are you developing the traits you will need in the future?
Attachment B

Outline for Discussion Leaders
Spring 2011

- What excites you most about your dreams and the future you imagine for yourself?
- What are your fears about your future? What will be the greatest challenge for you at Harvard? After Harvard?
- Can you identify institutions or people who provided inspiration for your dreams?
- What was your greatest “stretch” or “accomplishment” before coming to Harvard?
- What if you are unable to accomplish all of these dreams? What will failure in any activity mean to you, and to your life? Can you imagine a SPECIFIC failure, and how you might cope or deal with it? Do you feel you are comfortable sharing any failure so far in your life, even if it seems modest, and then describing how you thought about it?
- Novelist William Faulkner talked about the importance of ‘magnificent failure’—what might he have meant about that?
- Can you share a DREAM you had, that just didn’t work out? Did you learn anything from this experience, beyond the predictable disappointment that your dream didn’t work out?
- How will your friends describe you in 25 years?

6. Concluding Activity:
   1. Using no more than three words, ask students to describe their reaction to the day’s discussion.
   2. Jot down the words they use in case you want to use them to summarize the discussion at the start of the next session.

Session 2: REFLECTING ON VALUES
What do I value? Will my time in college impact my values?

Outline of Session Two
1. Welcome and Introductions
   - Ask for another round of introductions, as a way to remind everyone of names.
   - Encourage students to share a “take-away” from the last session. This will help to launch the conversation and will serve as a bridge between session one and session two.
   - Consider offering a “summary” of what you heard the students saying at the last meeting. Maybe share some of the questions that they generated or some of the words they used to describe the session. These “reminders” will help to build a bridge between what was discussed at the first session and what will be discussed at the second.

2. Discussion Prompts

Exercise #1: Core Values Assessment from Center for Ethical Leadership (www.ethicalleadership.org). This exercise will ask all students to identify the values that are of greatest significance.
   1. Pass out a list of core values (found in your packet of materials). Ask the students to review the list and to consider for themselves whether any additional values should be added. They can add whatever they like to the list but should do so silently.
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Outline for Discussion Leaders
Spring 2011

2. Of the values listed on the sheet, ask the students to circle the 12 that seem to them to have the most import personally.
3. Next ask the students to choose the six values, from the 12 they originally selected, that seem most significant.
4. Lastly, ask the students to choose the two that are their “core” values.
5. Once the students are finished, ask for volunteers to explain how they chose their values. What values were not chosen and why? What values were added to the list? How did they choose their two “core” values? Are these values? What is a value? Would your family members have chosen the same values? Your friends?

Exercise #2: This exercise will require all students to participate in the conversation while also serving as a quick “poll” of the thoughts and ideas percolating in students’ minds.

1. Pass out index cards to the entire group. Ask the group to answer the question “What are your values?” in as few words as possible, on the index card. They may use individual words or a few short phrases (this is not meant to be a college essay). Warn the group that you are going to collect and re-distribute the cards so that they can be read aloud to the whole group.
2. Give students a couple minutes to jot down their ideas, then collect and re-distribute the cards.
3. Each person will then read aloud someone else’s card while notes are written on a board.
4. Ask for a volunteer to explain his or her card. Why are those values particularly important to you? Encourage other students to share and respond. Or, ask students to respond to the list on the board by considering the follow-up questions listed immediately below.
5. What similarities do you notice? Do any of the ideas surprise you? Are there any ideas missing that you expected to see?

Exercise #3: By focusing on a person they admire, students will be subtly encouraged to delve into what is most important to them. Also, if all students are asked to participate, this exercise can help students to get to know each other through the stories they tell about their role models.

1. Invite students to get into pairs.
2. Ask students to talk with their partner about a person they admire. Each pair should consider the following questions: What do you admire about this person? In what way are you similar to the person you admire and in what way are you not? Are there any aspects of the person that are less admirable?
3. Next, ask the students to find a new partner. With this new partner, the students should discuss a person they do not admire (if this is a person in the Harvard community, that person’s name should not be used). What has led them to formulate such an opinion? Are there aspects of this person that impress you?
4. Follow-up question for the whole group: Has your list of admired and non-admired persons changed in recent years and, if so, why?

3. Possible Questions for General Discussion:
Attachment B

Outline for Discussion Leaders
Spring 2011

- As you identify the qualities, traits, and values that are important to you, where do you think these ideas come from?
- Have these qualities, traits, and values always been important to you? Have they changed over time?
- In the last session, we discussed your dreams for your own life. How do your own hopes and dreams relate to the life of the person you admire? What can you learn from his or her experience?
- Do you believe that there exist, in your life, certain moral, ethical, absolute values? Or do you think of living your life as being hesitant to “judge” other people, and other entire cultures? Might your TIME AT HARVARD help you to think about resolving this question for yourself?
- Does it matter if the things that are important to you are not important to the other people around you? What if you strongly disagree with something that is important to someone else? What if oppressing another person or group of people was important to someone?
- In what ways might your values or convictions be challenged or strengthened while in college?

4. Concluding Activity
Exercise #1

1. Most of us would like to lead happy lives. But, what is happiness?
2. Mark Twain wrote “Happiness ain’t a thing in itself – it’s only a contrast with something that ain’t pleasant….And so, as soon as the novelty is over and the force of the contrast dulled, it ain’t happiness any longer, and you have to get something fresh.”
3. Do you agree or disagree? What contrasts with happiness?
4. How will you define whether you have led a happy life?

Session 3: MAKING MEANING OF THE LIFE I WANT TO LEAD
What are my responsibilities, if any, to my community? What are my responsibilities to make the world a better place?

Outline of Session Three
1. Welcome
   - For the sake of friendly and inviting conversation, consider whether it is once again important to remind each other of names. Ask students to share something that they have been thinking about since the last session.
   - Introduce the session by explaining that today’s conversation is meant to begin to answer the question about how to live a good life. Students will be asked to consider the meaning of their dreams and their values, as a step toward discerning their purpose and responsibilities.

2. Discussion Prompts

Exercise #1: This exercise will give students a chance to see if their “commitments” match their “convictions” (an activity cited in the Harvard Business Review. Sull, Donald N. and Dominic
Attachment B

Outline for Discussion Leaders
Spring 2011


This exercise might be helpful to do after having tried Exercise #1 or Exercise #2.

1. Ask students to draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper
2. In one column, ask students to make a list of five of their current commitments (i.e. work-study job at Office of Career Services, IM rep for entryway, public service groups, etc)
3. Once they are finished, ask them to make a list of five of their convictions in the other column (i.e. peace, justice).
4. Ask students to consider whether there is a match between the two lists. Do you see any surprises? Any omissions? How does your ultimate personal dream, developed in the last session, relate to your current commitments, or your core values? How are your current commitments providing you an outlet for exploring new fields of study, new skills, and/or new experiences?

Exercise #2: This exercise utilizes a “case study” to prompt discussion about living, responsibility, and happiness.

1. Copy and distribute to students a copy of the Parable of Success, included in your discussion leader packet.
2. Ask the students to consider the life that the fisherman is living. Is it a successful life? A happy life? What is he doing for his community?
3. What responsibilities do we have to our communities? Who are we responsible to?

Exercise #3: This exercise encourages students to consider how their happiness might relate to fulfilling a purpose.

1. Helen Keller said, “many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.”
2. As you think about your values and your dreams, and the pursuit of happiness, what might constitute a “worthy purpose for you?”

Exercise #4: This exercise explores the notion of doing good.

1. Henry David Thoreau said, “Be not simply good – be good for something.”
2. Ask the students to consider the last good deed they did. Why did you do it? Who was really served?

Exercise #5: This exercise asks students to consider their responsibilities as well-educated people.

1. Most everyone has heard the expression, “to whom much is given, much is expected....”
2. What do those words mean to you? Do Harvard students have more responsibility than students attending other universities or not going to college at all?
3. Do you consider this expression a serious bit of philosophy or just a platitude? How might this thought affect the way you live your life?
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Outline for Discussion Leaders
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Exercise #6: This exercise will help students make the connection between those they admired and their sense of responsibility.
   1. Think back to the person(s) whom you said you admired and did not admire. How do they score on the ‘responsibility’ dimension? Where are you situated? Where would you like to be situated tomorrow and in 25 years?

Exercise #7: This exercise will ask students to consider how their individual lives, and their individual hopes and dreams may be intertwined with others’ dreams and the reality of others’ lives.
   1. Martin Luther King said, “I can never be what I ought to be, until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.”
   2. Encourage the students to discuss what King meant with this statement.
   3. How does this statement relate to the dreams that you and your peers discussed at the last session?
   4. An optional follow-up question that could move the students beyond thinking only about their own dreams: Given the interconnectivity of human beings that is suggested by King, should we be focusing our work, our responsibilities and our service on meeting the needs of fellow humans, rather than trying to tackle issues like the environment, technology, and space exploration?

Exercise #8: Examine the concepts of 1) good, 2) useful, 3) successful, and 4) happy life
   1. Break the students into four groups. Assign each group a topic: What constitutes a good life? What constitutes a useful life? What constitutes a successful life? What constitutes a happy life?
   2. Ask the students to keep a record of their conversation and then to report findings to the group.
   3. What are the similarities and differences among the types of lives? Can you lead a good, useful, successful, happy life all at once?

3. Possible Questions for General Discussion:
   • How many communities do you belong to today? In the future? How do you handle different ‘pulls’ from the various communities? Which has priority and why?
   • How do you currently think about your responsibilities to your family? To your community? To the broader world? If you recall the dream you created for yourself in session one, and then think ahead those 25 years, do you think about your future responsibilities in a different way?
   • The English word “community” is derived from the Latin “communitas” and “communis” which meant “fellowship” and “common,” respectively. What does the word “community” mean to you?
   • Based on the dreams you have identified, what types of communities do you hope to belong to in the future? What do you imagine your responsibilities will be to these communities? What will be your role?
   • Assuming the dreams you have for your life involve other people (i.e. a partner, children, colleagues), how will those people impact the choices you will make about the life you
Outline for Discussion Leaders  
Spring 2011

want to lead? Do other people who are currently in your life, such as your family, have dreams for you? How will you balance their hopes and dreams with your own?

- As you think about your dream for your life, and your personal values, what aspects of your future do you imagine will bring you the greatest happiness?

5. If it feels appropriate, take a moment at the end of this session to talk with the group about the idea of a fourth, OPTIONAL session. What would the students want to do during a fourth session? Is a fourth session feasible considering everyone’s schedules?

**OPTIONAL Additional Session 4: IMPLEMENTATION/and further REFLECTION**

*Important Questions:* “How, then, shall we live?” In other words...Now what?

Outline of Session Four

Exercise #1: Ask students to develop an exercise or questions for discussion.

1. What important questions are still lingering for you?


1. Ask students to make a list of how they spend their time during an average week (i.e. read for class, study, write papers, go to class, eat, hang out with friends, party, exercise, communicate with friends/family, Facebook).

2. Next, ask them to make a list of the things that they WISH they spent more time doing (i.e. reading for pleasure, meditating, exercise, sleeping, going to special campus lectures/events, volunteering, practicing the violin, exploring Boston). They should write this list in a different ink color.

3. Then, ask the students to determine the significance of the items on each list and assign them to a spot on the chart below. The items from the first list should be written in a different ink color from those items on the second list so that the student can clearly distinguish what matters to them and how they are spending their time.

4. Using the chart as a reflection tool, students should be able to reprioritize how they spend at least some of their time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most significant</th>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Less significant</th>
<th>Insignificant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Exercise #3: This writing-based exercise will act as a time capsule of sorts for students.

1. Encourage the students to take time to do a “free-write” or to write a letter to themselves. These writings can be submitted to the FDO and will be returned to the students at the start of their sophomore fall (this will remind the students of what was on their mind during their first-year and will give them time to act upon ideas they may have lost over the summer).
Attachment B

Outline for Discussion Leaders
Spring 2011

2. Ask students to consider: What aspirations and dreams do you have for the next three years? How, then, shall I live? At Harvard? After Harvard? Or you might give them a prompt like: Annie Dillard noted “How we spend our days is of course how we spend our lives.”

Exercise #4:
1. Pull out the Course Catalogue. Highlight those classes that relate to your “ultimate personal dream.”
2. Make an appointment to talk with your adviser about how you will work toward your dreams over the next three years.
Reflecting on Your Life:  
Grappling with Important Questions

Pointers for Discussion Leaders

Depending on the students’ interests and questions, each discussion group will likely take on its own focus and will likely follow its own path. In other words, not every group will be the same and we think that is a good thing. In the end, the point is not to strictly follow the outline but rather to offer students the chance to talk about what matters to them.

Because some of you have asked, the following general pointers may be helpful to you as you think about facilitating these conversations.

- Spend time planning your sessions in advance. While you may not end up using all that you have prepared, it is helpful to have it ready in case conversation stalls.

- Start the first session with an explanation of how you are approaching your role as discussion leader. You might also want to add a few words about why you wanted to lead a group.

- The discussions should be privileged. Students and discussion leaders need to agree that they will not use names or identifying information when talking about the experience with others who are not part of the immediate group. This should be stated up front.

- Discussion leaders might consider starting their first session by acknowledging 2009 as a momentous year. “Your months at Harvard have occurred during an historic period, both politically and economically. You should feel free to share how these events have affected you, bearing in mind that we hope you’ll think about your life past, present, and future, in all its fullness.”

- You likely will not know the “constitution” of your group in advance. Be aware that some individuals in your group may be more sensitive than others. Initiating a pre-meeting round of introductions over email may help you to learn about the personalities, backgrounds, and experiences of your group.

- The conversation will likely be personal. As the facilitator, you may feel the need to intervene if something uncomfortable is said. During the first session, it is worth telling the group that you may interrupt if you think it is warranted in the moment. Meanwhile, encourage the students to speak up if, and when, they are feeling uncomfortable about something said in conversation.

- Similarly, give some thought, in advance, to how much of your own life you would like to share with the students. Also, you might want to decide in advance if you want to do all or some of the exercises with the students.
• It is important to encourage everyone to participate in the conversation. Watch out for students who want to dominate and find ways to pull others into dialogue. During the first session, make a point that this experience will be more valuable for everyone if the conversation is as inclusive as possible.

• It may be helpful to ask about their experience with conversational patterns at Harvard. Best settings and worst settings? What makes someone “that kid” in section?

• Students may be tempted to turn to you, as faculty and administrators at the college, for the answer or the “final word” on an issue or question. Encourage them to question and push each other, rather than always relying on you to advance the conversation.

• If you plan to have a co-facilitator of your group, meet with that person in advance to discuss your thoughts and plans for each session. What will be your different roles?

• Consider the set-up of the space you are using for your group. Would you prefer to sit around a table or to arrange chairs in a more casual circle?

• Each discussion is meant to last approximately 90 minutes. Offer the students a break at some point during each session. Keep an eye on the clock and try to end on time.

• It may be helpful to keep notes on a dry erase board, black board, or flip chart.

• Having name tags or name plates in front of each participant will be especially helpful in the first session so that everyone can always refer to each other by their preferred name.

• Encourage the students to bring their own paper and pen to each session or be prepared to provide it for them. Make photocopies of any materials that you might want to distribute to the students.

• Offering snacks and drinks may help to make the session feel casual. (Hint: the students love berries, fruit, baked goods, and anything else that is not readily available in a dining hall.)

• You might want to keep notes for yourself about significant topics of conversation that came up during discussion. At the start of the subsequent discussion, it’s nice to be able to offer the students a “re-cap” of what was discussed the week prior.