FY101: Common Ground

Adapted from New York University’s Common Ground RALI Activity

Facilitator Instructions:

• Review Ground Rules (page 3)

• Instruct each participant to mark a yes or no next to the different questions according to their most honest response while not putting their name on the sheet.

• Shuffle the sheets and redistribute to the group. This activity is meant to be anonymous. Candidates can receive their own sheet after redistribution.

• Go through the questions one by one and have the group stand, look around and sit back down for each question.

After you have reviewed all questions...

Processing:

• Was anyone surprised by the number of people that stood or did not stand for a question?

• If you had an answer that was different than your own, how did it feel to stand or remain seated?

• How do you feel about the composition of this group? Did anyone learn something about the people in this group?

• Do you think this group is a representative sample of the BU freshmen population?
I was born in Massachusetts.

I was born outside of the United States.

I grew up in a two-parent home.

My family had less than enough (in terms of money, resources, etc) when I was growing up.

I identify as a member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer community.

I believe religion/spirituality is one of the driving forces in my life.

I identify as Christian

I have traveled outside of the U.S.

I identify with conservative viewpoints.

I know someone who is or has been in jail.

I know someone who is or has struggled with substance abuse.

I have felt that people judge me because of a physical characteristic.

I identify as less than able (physically/mentally).

I have received privileges or special treatment because of my skin color, gender, or socioeconomic class.

I am a first generation college student (the first person in my family to go to college)
**Ground rules:**

1. **TRY ON:** What we mean here is that even if we don’t initially like an idea, activity, suggestion, etc. that we give it a try anyway. We may decide in the end that it is really not for us, but we know because we have tried it, not because we were predisposed against it.

2. **OKAY TO DISAGREE:** In the dominant culture, we are led to believe that one side of any polarity must be right and thus the other is wrong – so we keep at each other until everyone agrees. But disagreement isn’t usually about right and wrong – it is usually about difference. And differences, simply, are.

3. **NOT OKAY TO BLAME, SHAME OR ATTACK (OTHERS OR SELF):** We think there’s enough of this already. Why add more? It does not help us to stay open to the challenge of changing ourselves.

4. **USE A SELF-FOCUS:** Especially when we are working across difference, there can be a tendency to speak for others. Each of us needs to speak for ourselves.

5. **HONOR CONFIDENTIALITY:** When having sensitive conversations, it’s critical to respect every person’s privacy by not taking what was said and sharing it out of context.