

# Conversation Partners

**Anoka-Ramsey Community College**

**2016–2017**

Communication Suggestions .....	2
What to Do If.....	3
Suggested Topics and Activities.....	4
Conversation Partners Program and Job Skills .....	7
Student Conduct Code, Part E .....	7
Meeting Log .....	9
Survey .....	11



**ANOKA-RAMSEY**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## Communication Suggestions (for language-paired partners)

As you discuss ideas with your partner, you may have times when you have difficulty understanding each other.

The Following are general suggestions for talking with your partner:

- If you ask your partner a question, allow for quiet “wait time”. Sometimes your partner will need time to think about the vocabulary and grammar that they want to use.
- It’s better to ask for repetition, even if it takes a while, than to give the message that you’ve given up trying to understand an idea.
- Try to be aware of the facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice you are using when there is misunderstanding. It may not always be possible, but attempt to show positive, calm energy, instead of the frustration you may be feeling.
- Your partner maybe uncomfortable telling you that they don’t understand something. If you ask, “do you understand?” they may answer yes, even if they didn’t understand. Instead, you might ask follow-up questions about your idea to check their understanding.

If you don’t understand your partner:

- Be clear which part you understood and which part you would like them to repeat: “I understood this idea (repeat idea), but I didn’t understand the last word.”
- You could also ask for rephrasing: “I’m sorry. I didn’t understand. Can you say your idea in a different way?”
- Ask if they can give an example.
- Ask if they can write the word down or draw a picture of the idea.

If your partner doesn’t understand you:

- Repeat your idea a little more slowly, pausing between parts of a sentence or idea. Try to use a normal tone and volume of voice. (Speaking more loudly won’t help with understanding.)
- Rephrase your idea using different words and sentence structure.
- Give an example and then repeat your initial idea.
- Write down a word or idea; draw a picture of an idea.

## Communication Suggestions (for culturally-paired partners)

- Try to be aware of the facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice you are using when there is misunderstanding. It may not always be possible, but attempt to show positive, calm energy, instead of the frustration you may be feeling.
- If your values/beliefs differ, THAT’S OKAY! Remember to be respectful of your partners’ beliefs and understand that they are not wrong, their beliefs are different.
- Respect personal boundaries – if your partner doesn’t want to discuss a particular topic, choose another you both agree on and are interested in talking about.

- Keep an open mind – remember that everyone’s life journey is different. By looking at a topic a different way, we may gain a new perspective on it!

## **What to Do If.....**

### **My partner asks me questions that make me feel uncomfortable.**

Some topics are uncomfortable for people. For example, some Americans are not comfortable talking about religion, sexuality, money, and age etc. People from other cultures may be uncomfortable with other topics. Be sensitive to topics your partner is uncomfortable with, and let your partner know if you prefer not to talk about a topic.

### **My partner keeps canceling our meetings.**

Sometimes problems come up and people need to cancel meetings. If you have to cancel please give your partner as much advance notice as possible. If it becomes a pattern that your partner is canceling frequently, please let the program head or the partner coordinator know what is going on.

### **My partner seems to want more than friendship.**

The Conversation Partner Program is not a dating service. It is up to you how you allow your relationship to develop, but no one has an obligation to their partner beyond meeting them to exchange language/culture practice. If this becomes an issue, contact the program head or the partner coordinator.

### **My partner dominates the meeting.**

Conversation Partners is intended to benefit both partners. It is your responsibility to be sure you are not dominating the conversation, and it is your responsibility to make sure your partner is not dominating the conversation. Some people may be shy – be encouraging and give them equal time.

### **My partner asks for money, transportation, and/or tells me things that are too personal or uncomfortable.**

Trust your feelings if you are not comfortable in situations like this. The Conversation Partners Program is not a tutoring, counseling, transportation, or banking service. If your partner is sharing too many personal issues with you or they tell you something and you are feeling uncomfortable, refer them to the program head for help and resources on campus.

# Suggested Topics and Activities

## **Food and Meals**

Topic/Activity:

- Family Meals – What meals are usually served with the whole family present? What food is eaten, the seating arrangement, the method of serving dishes and the general conversation
- Teach your conversation partner to cook a dish that is popular in your country and learn how to cook a dish from their country

## **Magazines, Newspapers and Books**

Topics/Activity:

- Discuss famous authors in your home country. What types of books, poetry, etc. are these authors known for? Who is your favorite author?
- What types of reading material do you enjoy – newspapers, magazines, or books?
- Bring in a magazine or book written in another language. Discuss your reading material.

## **Photos:**

Activity:

- Devote one session to sharing and discussing personal photographs. This is an excellent activity for getting to know each other better!

## **Language Lesson**

Topic/Activity:

- What languages do you speak? What languages do you want to learn?
- Try teaching your partner some words, numbers, or phrases in another language.

## **Geography, Maps and Vacations**

Topics:

- What is the weather like in other places you've lived? How does it compare to Minnesota? What sort of adjustments do people need to make for the weather in Minnesota?
- Compare rural life to urban/suburban life. What are some differences in dwellings, clothing, family structure, etc.?

## **Competitions and Sports**

Topics:

- How important is competition in school, personal life, and in the business world?

- What organized and professional sports are most popular? Does the public watch these sports? Where are they played?

## **Music**

Topic/Activity

- How does popular music differ from traditional music
- Listen to music from each other's country/culture.

## **Dating, Marriage, and Gender**

Topics:

- Discuss your ideas about marriage. How do couples generally meet? How do people decide whom they will marry or commit to?
- What are some gender differences you've noticed in the U.S. vs. other parts of the world?

## **Communication**

Topics:

- How do you greet others? A handshake? Bow? Hands together? How might you greet someone from another culture?
- How is eye contact viewed in your country? How is eye contact different between workers/supervisors, for example? Or, between sexes?

## **Holidays and Celebrations**

Topics:

- What days of the year are officially designated as national holidays or festivals? What are the central themes of these occasions and how are they celebrated?
- What's your favorite holiday/celebration? Why?

## **Government and Politics**

Topics:

- What system of government does your birth country have? What are its basic tenants?
- What do you feel are the most positive aspects of each system of government?

## **Education**

Topics:

- Are you comfortable challenging your professor's ideas in class? Why or why not?
- Is the level of respect for teachers/professors different? How?

## **Friends and Partners**

Topics:

- How did you meet your friends?
- Do you have a partner (spouse)? If so, how long have you been together?

## **Goals**

Topics:

- Have you decided on specific goals to accomplish while you are at Anoka-Ramsey Community College? What are they?
- What will your life be like 5 years from now? Professional life? Marriage? Children?

## **Foods and Culture**

Topic/Activity:

- Discuss what food is served during a typical/traditional breakfast, lunch and dinner from your culture
- Eat at the campus café or meet at an ethnic restaurant.

## **Careers**

Topic:

- What is your dream job? What do you need to do to get there?
- What do you want to do after college?

## **Student Life**

Suggested exercise: Attend one of student Life's events together. A schedule is available at the Student Life desk in the Campus Center. After the event have a brief conversation about it

## **Adventure**

Topics:

- Who is the most adventurous person in your family? Describe what they do.
- What is the most adventurous thing that you have done or that you would like to someday do?

# Conversation Partners Program and Job Skills

The conversation Partners Program gives participants a chance to do more than share conversation and make new friends. Consider the skills you can develop and how these might benefit an employer.

- Listening skills
- Verbal communication skills
- Cultural awareness
- Experience working with diverse groups
- Critical thinking

In today's world of work these are desirable skills that employers want when recruiting the right people into their organizations.

The Career Services office can help develop your job skills and show you how to include your Conversation Partners experience into your resume. For more information, please contact Jill Harrison, Career Services at 763-433-1227

---

## Student Conduct Code, Part E

### Prohibited Student Conduct

Conduct for which students are subject to disciplinary sanctions include, but are not limited to:

1. **Academic Dishonesty**—Cheating, plagiarizing, or aiding and abetting another person in cheating or plagiarism.
  - Cheating includes, but is not limited to, the use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests or examinations, the use of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments, or the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic materials belonging to a member of the college faculty or staff.
  - Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment or the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.
2. **Alcoholic Beverages and Illegal Substances**—Using, selling, or possessing alcoholic beverages or controlled substances or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances on college controlled property. (See also [Drug- and Alcohol-Free Policy](#))
3. **College Policy Infraction**—Violating any other college or department policy or regulation that has been posted or publicized.
4. **Complicity**—Aiding, abetting, attempting, conspiring, hiring, willfully encouraging or being an accessory to any violation of the Student Conduct Code.
5. **Computer Misuse**—Abusing college information technology, including, but not limited to, computer hardware and software, computer labs, classroom technologies and computing or electronic communications devices and services. (See also college [Policy 1A.10 Computer and Network System Use and Security](#) and [MnSCU Board Policy 5.22.](#))

6. Discrimination or Harassment—Discriminating or harassing conduct. Note: Allegations of discrimination or harassment based on race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or membership or activity in a local commission shall be adjudicated under separate procedures in accordance with college Discrimination and Harassment Policies ([MnSCU 1B.1](#)), but violators shall be subject to the sanctions as described in the Student Conduct Code. (See also Discrimination and Harassment Policy)
7. Disruptive Activity—Participating in or the promoting of disruptive activity that interferes with teaching, college events and activities, or disciplinary proceedings, interfering with teaching, changing the atmosphere of the classroom or preventing learning from taking place, obstructing or misusing college process, systems or services.
8. Facilities Misuse—Using college facilities, supplies, vehicles, telephones or other materials or service without authorization.
9. False Information—Furnishing false information; forging; unauthorized altering or misusing any document, record or instrument of identification; withholding information from the college; falsely claiming to represent the college or a student organization or club; unauthorized altering or misuse of any data or record (electronic or paper) for academic or personal gain.
10. Gambling—Wagering for money or other things of value, except where permitted by law.
11. Hazing—Endangering the mental or physical health or safety of a person, subjecting a person to public humiliation or ridicule, destroying or removing public or private property for the purpose of initiation, admission into, affiliation with or as a condition of continued membership in a student group or organization.
12. Health, Safety or Security Endangerment—Initiating any false report, warning or threat of fire, explosion or other emergency, failing to abide by any published or posted health, safety or security measures, tampering with fire safety equipment or parking vehicles so as to obstruct access to college buildings.
13. Obstruction of College Operations—Impeding the operations of the college by failing to comply with proper and lawful directions of a clearly identifiable college official or designee when acting in the performance of his or her duties, failing to present identification upon request of a college official or designee.
14. Smoking and Tobacco—Violating the college regulations regarding smoking and the use of tobacco products. (See also Smoking and Tobacco-Free Policies)
15. Solicitation—Selling of goods or services without authorization, recruiting without authorization.
16. Theft of or Damage to Property—Stealing, embezzling or possessing stolen property, destroying, defacing, using graffiti, damaging or littering on college property.
17. Violence and Threatening Behavior—Endangering the health or safety of another person physically or verbally, or causing reasonable apprehension of such harm. (See also Zero Tolerance Policy)
18. Weapons—Possessing or using unauthorized firearms or other weapons on college controlled property. A weapon is broadly defined to include, but is not limited to, all firearms, dangerous knives, explosives, explosive fuels, dangerous chemicals, billy clubs and fireworks. (See also Zero Tolerance and Possession or Carry of Firearms Policies)

For Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) policies and procedures, go to <http://www.mnscu.edu/board/policy/index.html>

---

**Thank you to Conversation Partners at North Hennepin Community College  
for providing much of the text in this handbook!**



# CONVERSATION PARTNERS

## MEETING LOG

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Partner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	Date of Meeting	Brief Description of Topic(s) Discussed	Length of Meeting
1.		<i>Orientation</i>	<i>1 Hour</i>
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Total Semester Hours \_\_\_\_\_

I verify that the above information is accurate and I have read and understand the Anoka-Ramsey Community College Student Conduct Code policy on academic dishonesty.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(blank)

# Conversation Partners Survey

Thank you for participating in CP and for taking the time to answer these questions!

1. Which of the following best describes you?      Student      Staff      Faculty      Administrator
2. Is North American English your first language?      Yes      No
3. Gender:      Identify as male      Identify as female      Identify otherwise
4. Why did you choose to participate in the Conversation Partners Program?  
(Service Learning    Class Credit    General Interest    Other—if other, please explain)
5. Did the Conversation Partners Program meet your expectations?  
(Yes    No    Somewhat)  
Please explain:
6. What did you like about the program?
7. What could have made the program better?
8. Did the Conversation Partners Program affect how comfortable you are when working or speaking with students from different economic, social, or racial backgrounds?  
(Yes    No    Somewhat    Other/Already Quite Comfortable)  
Please explain:
9. Did the Conversation Partners Program affect your ability to speak clearly and effectively?  
(Please circle one:    Yes    No    Somewhat)  
Please explain:
10. Any other thoughts?

Please bring completed survey to our end-of-semester event, or turn in to  
**Brian Okstad, Room S201 (Coon Rapids), [brian.okstad@anokaramsey.edu](mailto:brian.okstad@anokaramsey.edu), 763-433-1536**