Leading from the Middle
Brave Spaces and Brave Conversations
Ohlone College
(March 2, 2021)

In order to serve our students, in order to support them, Ohlone College needs to engage in the issues that confront our students and the society at large. Changes are needed that require shifts in how we perceive and do things. Moving forward requires that we critically examine what we currently do and have done in the past. The discussions that are needed to lead to productive change require a framework where we can be more open, inclusive, and honest.

We, as the Leading from the Middle team for 2020-2021, look to the idea of having Brave Conversations as the framework within which this can happen. We deconstruct the idea of Brave Conversations into the following parts. Brave Conversations require Brave Spaces. Brave Spaces are not necessarily Safe Spaces. For the members of Ohlone College to engage in a brave conversation, agreement on a common set of Community Agreements for those conversations will help to establish those Brave Spaces. Brave Conversations also rely on gatherings that are predicated on the qualities of any Good Meeting.

First, some definitions.

A. A Brave Space is:
   1. Mutually determined – you agree to the guidelines set by the community
   2. Honest and authentic – you bring your real self to the space, not a construct to simply comply or challenge
   3. Courageous – you say things that may hurt others, yet you own them
   4. Vulnerable – you may hear things that hurt you, yet you stay engaged
   5. Respectful – you acknowledge the humanity of all those in the space and treat them as you would wish to be treated; you actively listen with ears and/or eyes; you allow others to speak and/or sign
   6. Purposeful – you commit to making productive change

B. To have brave conversations within a brave space, it is essential that the principals of any Good Meeting be followed:
   1. There is a clear purpose – there is a clear agenda and timeframe.
   2. A facilitator(s) guides the meeting and makes sure all have a chance to contribute.
   3. The participants commit to being present, prepared, and engaged.
   4. There is clarity at the end of the meeting as to what happens next.
C. It is important to note that a Brave Space is not the same thing as a Safe Space.

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<tr>
<th>Safe Space...</th>
<th>Brave Space...</th>
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<td>has a feeling of being accepted, protected, and affirmed;</td>
<td>requires respect and ownership of what one says, but a participant may be hurt or offended by the words of others;</td>
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<td>promotes inclusion and welcome; and</td>
<td>requires that one be open to other viewpoints, but the focus of the work of a brave space is productive change;</td>
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<td>asks one to engage as far as one is able to and to disengage if needed.</td>
<td>needs one to stay engaged even when uncomfortable or in disagreement.</td>
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We are asking your group to endorse a set of Community Agreements as a part of the broader endorsement by the entire College community. We present the set of Community Agreements below for discussion. This is difficult work. Any set of community agreements should be reviewed annually so that they move us forward. Once endorsed, they are not set in stone.

**Community Agreements for Brave Conversations**

1. I am honest, and I take ownership of my honesty.
2. I am authentic, and I take ownership of my intentions and impact.
3. I am open to the different viewpoints of others.
4. I understand that I may not always like the viewpoints that others express.
5. I am willing to challenge viewpoints with the goal of productive change.
6. I do not challenge viewpoints simply to challenge.
7. I commit to staying in the conversation.
8. In all interactions, I recognize that all of us are a community and that all members should be treated with respect and civility.
9. I understand that a brave conversation may engender feelings of discomfort that persist, even after I leave the space.
10. I leave my title and authority at the door and agree not to use any power I hold against those with whom I disagree.