Journal Guidelines

As part of your BRIDGE experience, we ask that you keep a journal of your time together with your partner. While we do want to know what group activities you chose to attend with your partner and what you two decided to do on your own, we also want to know what these experiences meant to you. It is important to note that these journals are confidential. Only staff members will be reviewing them so feel free to be open and honest. You will not be judged on what you say. Journals are due at the end of the semester.

These journals will be a record of your intercultural growth, where you can express your feelings and thoughts. During your time with your partner, you may experience a “critical incident,” or a time of challenge or victory when your notion of what is or should be is turned upside down, or when puzzle pieces fall into place. Interacting with someone from a different culture can often lead to these kinds of awakenings and changes in perspective. Journal about those “critical incidents” and reflect upon how it has helped you expand your knowledge of different cultures. Questions for a variety of topics are provided to trigger your thought and writing process.

We also hope that keeping a BRIDGE journal will teach you a little bit more about yourself. Oftentimes, you learn more about yourself and your culture by having to teach others about it. Write about the times you became aware that your own personal values and beliefs were different and/or similar to those of your partner.

A great journal SHOULD BE:
- Reflective and insightful
- Typed with neatly organized pages
- Descriptive of your semester activities
- Creative (Ex: Pictures, souvenirs, etc)

A journal IS NOT:
- A simple list of events you attended
- Thrown together at the last minute
- Hand-written on paper torn out of a notebook.

Creative Ideas for your Journal

① Please have fun with your journals and be creative!!! You should have fun making these journals, and we should enjoy reading them!
② Include the handouts we’ve given you at training. Comment on how what you’ve learned at the training has applied to your experiences with your partner.
③ Collect pamphlets or souvenirs from places you visit. If you go to a movie, save the ticket stubs. If you go to the theater, you can save the playbill. If you go out to eat, you can save a copy of the menu, etc.

---

1 From Charting a Hero’s Journey by Linda A. Chisholm
Add photos taken from field trips and experiences shared with your partner.
Play tic tac toe, hang man, etc. and keep the paper for your portfolio. What was it like to share this game?
Include an "Info Sheet" about yourself and your partner.
Make a "Things We Have in Common" chart. If you both have a puppy, write that on the chart. If you both like pizza, write it on the chart. If you both love to dance, write it down.
Find info about your partner's culture. Include this information in your journal.
And, of course, tell us what you did together, the types of conversations you had, and anything you just want to write about your experiences together.

Possible Journal Topics & Questions:

- Critical incidents

- What has been a new taste, smell, sound, etc for you?
  - Was it pleasant, scary, exciting, fun?
  - Who were you with and where were you when this experience occurred?

- What have you learned thus far about yourself and your partner that you may or may not have realized? How do personality traits affect activities you do with one another?
  - Ie. You realize you/they are more laid back, anxious, a planner, leader, follower, outgoing, shy, happy, studious, adventurous, talkative, sensitive, etc.
  - Ie. Are you more prone to do partner activities versus group activities, more prone to grab coffee and talk for a few hours or rent a video, etc?

- What are the biggest differences you and your partner face thus far?
  - Ie. Differences in culture, language barriers, difference in values, differences in day-to-day routines, food differences or meal times, study habits, sleeping schedule, weekend routines, etc.

- Describe the home and family life of you and your partner. What are the differences, similarities, and biggest surprises?

- Please discuss your favorite BRIDGE group event that you have participated in thus far and why?

- Please discuss your favorite BRIDGE partner event that you have enjoyed thus far.
  - What you did, where you went, how long you were together, how often you normally do this activity, what this activity means to you, who was there, how did your partner find this activity (exciting, engaging, boring, fun, etc.)
Please discuss and reflect on cultural faux pas you are now aware of after hearing about typical faux pas through the workshop, from common knowledge and from your partner.

How do these similarities or differences make you feel, do they make you question yourself or others, how do you act differently after becoming aware?

- Ie. Proper behavior, how money is used, food, touch, value, religion, privacy, transportation, health and sickness, friends, comfort areas, roles of men and women, social class, education, authority, ethics, entertainment, nonverbal communications, work and job force, etc.

Please discuss and reflect on differences or similarities regarding religion between you and your partner.

- If different, how?
- If similar, in what ways?

Please discuss stereotypes you have had, encountered, or comments that have been made that have really made you upset, frustrated, embarrassed, etc. What was your response or reaction if this stereotype was made towards you?

- Ex. Americans are lazy, Americans are always in a hurry, Americans are so materialistic, etc.
- All Asians are smart and bookworms. Where Africans live tigers, lions and zebras are running around, Foreigners are always standing too close and often kiss others too much upon meeting and greeting, etc.

How long do you think it takes to begin to understand and feel like you are a full participant of the host culture?

- Describe feelings, emotions, events, or experiences that help you to decide the answer to this question.

An essential to understanding culture is first exploring and engaging in its art, music, cultural philosophies, language, food, and achievements. What have you learned in the workshops, field trip, events, partner time, or on your own that has helped you to understand the people around you or other cultures?

What has fascinated you most about your partner and their culture and way of doing things?

Please describe interesting facts you have learned from or about your partner.

- Why is this so interesting to you? Is it because it was surprising, unusual, not expected, very different from you, shocking, etc?

IMPORTANT ADVICE: Keep up to date! If you do this as you go along, it's REALLY easy. If you wait till the last minute, it will be a big hassle.