

Guidance for Departmental Conversations

For the departmental conversations, the pre-work for the department is to foster an initial discussion(s) within the program about the AAU PhD Education Initiative objective and goals as elaborated in the [Goals and Definitions](#) document. We would encourage you to include faculty and students (and perhaps staff or postdocs if deemed appropriate) in these conversations.

During the virtual meeting on November 7, each department team lead will be part of one of three small group discussions. There will be time for a brief report from each department. For the report-out, select a few themes or ideas from the departmental discussion(s) that resonated (or surprised). Following the sharing, we will have a conversation about similarities and differences.

We understand in the time period prior to November 7 a full range of discussions might not be possible. It is intended that the department will advance and structure more conversations about these topics during the academic year as it moves toward the development of an action plan. For example, you may elect to start with separate conversations among students and faculty, and then join the two groups. We believe that it is crucial to give room for a full airing and inclusion of student and faculty perspectives. The fruits of these initial discussions are important for your future work. We urge you not to narrow the discussion at this stage. Instead, go broad and deep. Capture the full range of ideas and perspectives.

The [Goals and Definitions](#) document is the starting point for these conversations.

What do each of the words and phrases of the Initiative Objective mean? What are the implications if each of these ideas are taken seriously?

What are our **ASPIRATIONS** as a department/program?

As we consider our department/program (and the university) in relation to the Initiative Objective, what **ASSETS** do we have?

What are the **GAPS** between our aspirations and the current reality?

What are the **MYSTERIES** and **UNKNOWNNS** as we tackle this project? What **QUESTIONS** is this raising, for which you will need to seek answers?

What **IDEAS** do we have about how to move forward? (At this stage, we urge you not to commit to particular ideas or plans. Instead, create a “parking lot” where ideas can be held and not lost. In time, with more discussion and more data, you can revisit these ideas.)

Suggested citation:

Association of American Universities. (2019). *AAU PhD Education Initiative Departmental Discussion Guide*. <https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/PhD/dept-discussion-guide.pdf>