Structured Constructive Controversy

Rules (Johnson & Johnson, 1987)

1. I am critical of ideas, not people. I challenge and refute the ideas of the opposing positions, but I do not indicate that I personally reject them.
2. Remember, we are all in this together, sink or swim. I focus on coming to the best decision possible, not on “winning.”
3. I encourage everyone to participate and to master all the relevant information.
4. I listen to everyone’s ideas, even if I do not agree.
5. I restate what someone has said if it is not clear.
6. I first bring out all the ideas and facts supporting both sides, and then I try to put them together in a way that makes sense.
7. I try to understand all sides of the issue.

Schedule

1. Meet your partner. Meet with your partner (and others) who are sharing your position and plan how to argue effectively for the position. Make sure you have mastered as much of the material for your position as possible. Consider other ideas and suggestions on how to present the issues.

2. Present your position. Each side will have an opportunity to present their position as persuasively as possible. While one side presents, the other side listens and takes notes, but does not talk. Hold all responses, clarifying questions, or suggestions for the time of open discussion.

3. Open discussion. Any person may talk. Everyone argues persuasively for the assigned position, presenting as many facts and as much reasoning as possible to support the assigned point of view. Critically listen to the opposing point of view and ask for facts and clarification. The issue is complex and you need to understand all of the information to make a good decision and prepare a good report. Work together and understand all of the issues.

4. Role reversal. Switch sheets of paper and prepare to argue effectively for your newly assigned position.

5. Present your newly assigned position. Each side will have an opportunity to present the newly assigned position as persuasively as possible. While one side presents, the other side listens and takes notes, but does not talk. Hold all responses, clarifying questions, or suggestions for the time of open discussion.

6. Open discussion maintaining your newly assigned position. Any person may talk. Everyone argues persuasively for the newly assigned position, presenting as many facts and as much reasoning as possible to support the newly assigned point of view. Critically listen to the opposing point of view and ask for facts and clarification. The issue is complex and you need to understand all of the information to make a good decision and prepare a good report. Work together and understand all of the issues.

7. Come together as a group. You no longer have assigned positions. Discuss the issue as a team.

8. Reach a group decision. Summarize the best arguments for the various points of view. Detail what you know about the issues under consideration. When you think you have consensus in your group, come to a group decision, preferably a decision with all group members in agreement. Organize your arguments for your group report. Be prepared to defend your decision in discussion with the entire class.

Campusless College Degrees
Structured Controversy

Assigned point of view:

**NO**, my campus should NOT grant “campusless college degrees” through online courses.

Arguments:

1. For our a society to maintain quality and excellence in the education of its citizens, students must possess a greater pool of skills and information to function productively than can possibly be offered solely through online instruction.

2. Much of information taught through online courses is not relevant to the socialization values of sharing and working with others. Online courses miss an important purpose of education, which is to increase participants' learning of basic social skills of working face-to-face.

3. Online courses may limit creativity and freedom of expression through the constraints of computers to transmit information and expression (e.g., feelings of happiness or puzzlement).

4. Online courses restrict education to only to individuals who can afford computers, related technologies, and Internet services.

5. Prioritizing online instruction might give an impression that one method of instruction is best, which is narrow in focus and prohibits development of other modes of instruction.

6. Profit-hungry technology businesses promote online courses without care of students' well-being.

7. Online universities may demean the jobs of professors.

8. University libraries and classroom experiences are important. Online courses cannot replace the valuable experience of attending class or working in a library on campus.

9. Accreditation of online university courses and degrees might require surveillance that students might not like.

10. Classmates can provide moral support, whereas working online offers no sense of camaraderie when participants are unable to log on or when participants lag behind in their work.

11. More students drop out of online courses than traditional courses.

12. Will employers accept dot.com diplomas? Will our campus maintain its high reputation if some degree programs are online?

Additional Arguments: