Section 10: PICOLA Information
PICOLA provides a multimedia environment for enabling online structured dialogue. It contains a registration process, interactive displays of multimedia information, audio or text asynchronous forums, audio-based synchronous discussions (with video-based moderator windows), windows for Netcasting (of Expert Panels), and polling/survey capabilities. PICOLA models Jim Fishkin’s protocols for deliberative polling and is designed to augment events such as “Campus Conversations.”

We are running a very informal ‘beta test’ of this software in conjunction with this event. Starting tonight and running through 4pm on Thursday, April 13th, participants in this deliberative poll can continue the discussion in both asynchronous and synchronous forms. The beta test of the software will in no way affect the social science results of the actual face-to-face Campus Conversation. Participation is completely voluntary.

While you can register and post at any time, there will be two scheduled real-time discussions: 1pm and 4pm on Wednesday, April 12th. Information on how to login to PICOLA and test the software is included in this separate document.
Preface

It is ironic that as the idea of democracy spreads across the globe, the practice of democracy in America seems far from ideal. Low voter turnout, negative and deceptive political ads, and 'crossfire' media pundits have affected the quality of our political institutions. Is it possible to counter these trends? In his book, *Voice of the People*, James Fishkin argues that we can and introduces the concept of a Deliberative Poll® as a means to achieve this and to improve our democratic institution as well.

Deliberative Polling is a process whereby background information on an issue of local or national importance is developed and presented to a scientific random sample of the population. The sample then gathers in small groups, with a moderator, to discuss and deliberate upon the topic. Questions are invariably generated by the discussions and these questions are given to a panel of experts for response. The groups gather again and then answer a list of survey questions. As Fishkin wrote in *Democracy and Deliberation*, "A deliberative opinion poll models what the electorate would think if, hypothetically, it could be immersed in an intensive deliberative process." In addition to ancillary benefits such as educating and engaging citizens on the issues, the results of these polls can form the basis from which sound policy-making can result.

Carnegie Mellon University is applying the concept and practice of deliberative polling at the campus level. The result of this effort is to (1) create social capital within the student body, (2) raise the level of campus-wide discussions of important issues to new levels, and (3) highlight the virtues of campus diversity, as this is embedded in the nature of deliberative polls.

PICOLA stands for "Public Informed Citizen Online Assembly." It provides a way to model and augment the protocols of a Deliberative Poll. By using PICOLA in a campus conversation allows us to 'continue the conversation' beyond the actual face-to-face event. New information can be added to the 'library', additional comments and reflections can be posted by both participants and expert panelists, real-time meetings can occur and follow-up polls can be held. All of this adds to the power and possibility of introducing deliberative polling to the campus community.
Overview

CAMPUS CONVERSATION
PICOLA SOFTWARE
April 11th – 13th

Your ID and Passwords have already been loaded into the system. Try to log-on to the site, register for the deliberation, and post at least one “asynchronous” message on the Forum Audio/Text Bulletin Board. This will not only allow you to become oriented to the program, but will also allow us to trouble-shoot any problems before the synchronous discussions begin on the afternoon of April 12th. And feel free to post to the Forum and explore the Library background materials at any time, both before and after the synchronous Discussion. And, of course, you can participate in the Asynchronous posts even if you do not participate in the online Synchronous discussion.

Synchronous, ‘real-time’ discussions will begin at the following times: 1pm and 4pm on Wednesday, April 12th. Be sure to arrive at your discussion group just before the designated time. (Once you enter the Discussion, you will ‘appear’ as an icon in a virtual roundtable setting.)

Setup for PICOLA ideally involves a headset with microphone and a webcam. The webcam is used by participants in the registration process (to take a still picture). If you don’t have a webcam, simply select "Take Picture" and continue into PICOLA (you simply won’t have a picture near your name). The headset and microphone is used for the synchronous discussion and as an option for audio-based posts in the asynchronous Forum.

There are three PC workstations preconfigured for PICOLA use. One is in Hunt Library and two are located in room near the Digital Media Lab in BH 148. If you wish to use the ones near the lab area, go to BH 148 15 minutes before the discussion and you will be taken to the PICOLA stations.

If you have any questions or problems, feel free to call our Help Desk (412.268.7641) during regular office hours or send an email to Stuart Easterling <stuarte@cmu.edu>
User Guide

Getting Started

PICOLA is a Flash-based application.

To download PICOLA for Windows:

[NOTE: the site is now closed]

(The user needs to unzip all files and folders to use PICOLA)

For Macintosh users:

[NOTE: the site is now closed]

(Mac's need to run PICOLA on the web)

Once downloaded and launched, you are brought to the Welcome Screen.

Registration and Login

Register using this registration code: abc

Each participant will be given a specific user name (ID) and PSW. Please be sure to write them down here as well: ID___________ Password___________
MY PICOLA Page

The MY PICOLA Page is an information and orientation space. You can view announcements for the discussion group, review readings that you rated as important, and check for new postings in the asynchronous forum.

Participants can jump to a particular document or forum topic within the "MY PICOLA" page, or they can navigate to those pages using the tabbed browsing available at the top of the page. In this way, participants are able to freely browse the PICOLA environment, restricted only by scheduled events (such as a synchronous discussion), which would naturally be available at their scheduled times.

It is here that you will also see the 'menu items' (Tabs) used for navigating PICOLA. Each Tab takes you to the main feature areas of the program: Readings (Library), Forum (Asynchronous), Discussion (Synchronous), Expert Panel, and Survey. Note: In this study, experts will join the general Forum and there will be no additional survey. These tabs will be inactive. Also, to close out the session, click the close button, the My Profile, Help, and Logout features are not enabled at this time.
Readings (Library)

This is a resource area where background materials and links to relevant websites can be found. You will have the opportunity not only to browse these materials (which can be dynamically amended or added to), but also to comment upon them (including a rating system).

Newly added materials will be noted in the My PICOLA section and you can create your own top-level reading list in the MY PICOLA section as well.
Forum (Asynchronous Bboard)

PICOLA's asynchronous forum allows users to participate in discussions and start up discussions at any time. To Post to the Topics Forums, select Forum and select a conversation (or start a new one). You will be asked if you want to make a text or audio post. If you select "text" you will be taken to a screen where you can enter a subject and then the content. You can also Review the message before posting it.
Discussion (Synchronous Roundtable)

This is the place for real-time discussions of the issue. When you enter the Discussion space, you will appear at a 'seat' containing your picture (if you took one during registration), your name and whether you are: 'undergraduate,' 'graduate,' or 'faculty.' You will have access to a set of emoticons through a pull down menu and you can use these to respond to general comments ("Give me a Thumbs-Up if you can hear me") or smiles, etc. in response to someone's comments. You can speak by clicking the Ask to Speak button (you will be limited to 2 – 3 minutes) and you can also "Jump Ahead" if there is a line and you want to say something immediately (though you will have a limited number of these). A Moderator will appear in streaming video to help guide the discussion and perform trouble shooting (audio checks, etc.). A chat box can be used to communicate short comments and a White Board can be used by the Moderator to jot down points of agreement or key questions, etc.

Thank you for participating in this first-ever public use of PICOLA.