**ACTIVITY: CHALLENGE YOUR THINKING**

Read each of the following scenarios quickly and respond immediately without stopping to think. There are no right or wrong answers.

**Scenario 1.** You are walking home down a dark sidewalk when ahead you see three people standing around. Something about the way they are hanging out makes you a little frightened to walk past them.

* Be honest with yourself: what did you just imagine these people looked like?

I imagine people doing drugs and drinking. These are common addictions that can lead to bad places.

* Why do think you might have associated this particular mental picture with the emotion of feeling frightened?

This is frightening because people who do drugs and drink can be impaired in the moment and be unpredictable. People who are drunk can cause automobile accidents. Drunk individuals can also lead to domestic violence. It is important to stay sober minded so that you can make appropriate decisions. Being impaired in any way can result in bad situations. It’s best to stay sober.

**Scenario 2.** In a student commons area on campus, you see a student from another country sitting alone—someone you know casually from a class—and you walk over and are just about to ask if you can join him, when two other students also from his country appear and sit down with him. You hesitate.

* Would you have hesitated if this person had the same cultural background as you? What makes this situation different?
* As you hesitate, you overhear them conversing in a language other than English.
* Be honest with yourself: how does that make you feel now?

**Scenario 3.** A couple you know invites you to join them and one of their friends, whom you have not met, on a “double date”—a movie and dinner after. When you meet them outside the theater, you see that their friend, your date, is of a race different from your own.

* Are you surprised or shocked? What is your first reaction?
* Do you anticipate any more difficulty making conversation with your date than with anyone else whom you have just met?
* Should your friends have told you in advance? Why or why not?
* If they had told you, would that have made any difference? Explain.

*Now think for a minute about how you responded in these scenarios*. Did your mental image in the first scenario involve a negative stereotype? What images in the media or society might have contributed to that response?

The second and third scenarios involve simple situations in which you couldn’t help but note some difference between you and another person. What might you feel in such situations in real life? Again, there is no “right” answer, and an awareness of differences is normal and natural even if it may cause some discomfort at first. On the other hand, if you have had significant experiences with diverse others, you might have read these scenarios and simply wondered, “So what? What’s the big deal?” *It’s worthwhile thinking about what that means*.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

* Diversity refers to a great variety of human characteristics, and ways in which people differ.
* Diversity in the college environment has many benefits for all students, faculty, and others. Students learn more in a diverse setting, are better prepared for the future, and contribute more fully in positive ways to society.
* Nontraditional students bring many unique characteristics to the college environment that help enrich all students’ social and educational experiences.
* Multiculturalism involves respecting the ideas, feelings, behaviors, and experiences different from oneself in any way. Colleges promote both diversity in the student body and multiculturalism among all students.
* As an individual, each of us can gain the benefits of diversity as we challenge our own stereotypes, understand and celebrate differences in others, and learn to interact well with others different from ourselves. Take advantage of campus opportunities to increase your cultural awareness and to form social relationships with diverse others.
* Although we would hope that all college campuses would be free of hate and discrimination, it can become necessary to take a stand against prejudice.