

# Crossing the Chocolate River

## (Community-Building Activity)

**Purpose:** Foster teamwork, cooperation, problem-solving, and communication. Engage in thoughtful reflection about the decision-making process and group collaboration.

### ADVISOR NOTES:

#### 1. Set Aside Time for Reflection

The amount of time this activity takes depends, in part, on the size of your advisory group and whether or not your advisees have played this game before. You might set a time limit, such as 15 minutes, at the outset of the activity or let the group work on the task for a longer period of time as needed. It is important that you set aside plenty of time for the group to reflect on their process and participation. This reflection is as important as the activity itself.

#### 2. Know Your Advisees

If you have advisees with limited mobility who might struggle with the task, you can modify the game by using bigger “marshmallows” or distributing extra marshmallows to the group. Or you might allow part of the foot, such as the heel, to touch the river.

#### 3. Prepare the Chocolate River

Before the advisory meeting, clear a space for the “chocolate river” and lay down two long pieces of masking tape about 20 feet apart to designate the river banks.

### PROCEDURE:

#### 1. Explain the Rules for “Crossing the Chocolate River”

- Tell your advisory group that they have spent a wonderful day at a chocolate factory. Unfortunately, prior to their departure, one of the chocolate vats sprung a leak and created a deep river of chocolate between the factory and their bus that they must cross together in order to get home. Luckily, the factory also produces big, fluffy, floating marshmallows and happens to have some extras on hand that the group can use to help cross the river.
- Have the group stand behind one of the “river banks” and give them their “marshmallows.” You should distribute enough marshmallows for about half of the group (so if your advisory has 15 students, distribute 8 marshmallows).

#### APPROXIMATE TIME:

40 minutes

#### MATERIALS:

Two long pieces of masking tape

Paper plates, legal-size pieces of paper, or carpet squares (enough for half the number of advisees in the group) to represent the marshmallows

Large empty space clear of tables, desks, and chairs

- Explain the rules of the game:
  - The goal is to get everyone in the group across the chocolate river. They must cross using the marshmallows. They cannot swim or place a hand, foot, or body part in the river because the current is too strong and the chocolate has the same properties as quicksand.
  - Because the current is swift, each marshmallow touching the river must be anchored by at least one advisee's hand, foot, or body part at all times. Any marshmallows that are not anchored by a hand, foot, or body part will be swept away (taken by you) immediately. Multiple advisees can step on or place their hands on the same marshmallow at the same time.
  - If anyone touches or falls into the chocolate river, the whole group needs to start again. They will not get back any marshmallows that have been swept away by the current.
  - The group succeeds when it gets everyone to the bus on the other side of the river, which means that every advisee crosses the chocolate river successfully.
  - You might place a time cap on the activity, such as 15 minutes. It is important that you leave enough time for the group to reflect on their process in a circle discussion.

## 2. Debrief the Activity

Sit in a circle to discuss a selection of the following questions about the activity. The final two questions are important because they provide the opportunity for advisees to reflect on their advisory contract and the theme of community.

- How did you decide on a strategy get the group across the river? Was everyone involved in the decision-making process, or were decisions about strategy made by a few people? How did you feel during this time?
- How did the group communicate during the challenge? In what ways was communication effective? What could you have done as a group and as individuals to make it more effective?
- What observations did you make about how the group worked together? What are you proud of in terms of group collaboration and cooperation? What might you have done as individuals and as a group to improve collaboration and cooperation?
- Did you achieve the goal of getting the whole group across the chocolate river? If so, what factors contributed to you attaining this goal? If not, what factors prevented you from attaining this goal?
- Did the group honor our advisory contract? If so, what are examples of moments during the game when one or more norms was honored? If not, which norms were not honored, and what was the outcome? What could you have done differently to honor these norms?
- What qualities of a strong community did you observe in the group during the activity? What factors that can weaken a community did you observe during the activity?