Overview:

This exercise is for Learning Fellows who have completed the activity “Reflective Listening.” Summary statements are a particular type of reflective listening. Like other reflective statements, summary statements help students reflect upon their own learning - what they are understanding, and how they arrive at that understanding. Summaries are particularly helpful to students at times of transition, change or growth. For instance, if a student has expressed concern about a topic to a Learning Fellow and has, with the Fellow’s help, settled on a new approach to a topic, the Learning Fellow could provide a summary statement to remind the student about their decision.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn the general structure of summary statements and times they should be used.
- Practice building and sharing summary statements.

Activity:

- Review the activity “Reflective Listening” and how reflective listening statements can help students reflect upon their own learning. You might want to ask the Learning Fellows to review their role-play or real-play conversations with their partners, if they had time to conduct these.

- Briefly describe summary statements using the description above.

- Using the handout, walk the Fellows through the guidelines of building summary statements. An instructor’s copy of the handout is on page 3.

continued on the next page
Helpful hint:

Summary statements are like bouquets. During conversation, students will provide a wealth of information about their feelings. In constructing a summary statement, a Learning Fellow should pick out the most important pieces of information, arrange them in order, and give them back to the student.

Activity, continued:

- Ask the Fellows to consider the case study on the second handout (or ask them to draft one of their own). An instructor’s copy of the handout is on page 4. Ask the Fellows to write a brief summary statement of four or five sentences. Fellows may also use this time for more roleplaying, where they should first practice reflective listening and then making a summary statement.

- After the Fellows practice writing a summary statement or giving summary statements to one another during roleplay, ask a few follow-up questions about the experience such as:

  What do you think the student’s response might be to this summary statement?  
  How will it clarify their own understanding? How might it lead to the student making a decision or taking the next steps?  
  How did the Learning Fellow move the student from a general statement to more specific feelings and actions?
How to build a summary statement:

Summary statements are only two or three sentences, and they should reflect only the most important information that a student has provided. Generally, a summary statement follows this order:

1. Lead into the summary.
   
   Examples: "Here’s what I’m hearing so far."
   "Let me see if I can summarize this for you."
   "Can I check if I’m understanding you correctly?"

2. Include a statement (from the student’s experience) that reflects change or growth.
   
   Examples: "You want to change this, but you’re not sure how yet."
   "You’re noticing a problem here, and you want to ward it off."
   "You’d like to get back on track in this class."
   "You feel that the author of this paper is mistaken in their opinions."

3. Include a statement (from the student’s experience) that reflects why it is difficult to change or grow.
   
   Examples: "You’re very busy and it’s hard to change your habits."
   "It’s uncomfortable to bring this up with your small group."
   "You’re unclear about your first steps."
   "You don’t want to question authority on this text."
   "You don’t want to criticize your friend."

4. If the student has made a plan or deciding upon a first step of action, include that here. If the student has decided on specifics, include them here.
   
   Examples: "You’re going to visit the tutoring center tomorrow night."
   "You’re going to office hours to discuss this with the professor."
“You’re going to do some more reading, and then get back to me.”

5. End with an invitation for clarification.

Examples:
   “What have I missed?”
   “Anything I should add or correct?”
   “Does that sound right to you?”

Copy of handout 2:

Case study:

Student: “I am loving this class. I didn’t really understand what yoga was all about. I thought it was just a body-mind exercise, and I didn’t understand the spiritual connections at all.”

Fellow: “This course has changed your mind about yoga.”

Student: “Yes, and I think it’s an important change. I think that you get more out of practice when it’s more authentic, and Western yoga doesn’t seem authentic at all. Now I feel kind of guilty when I go to my yoga class at the gym.”

Fellow: “Your class is important to you, and you feel differently towards it now.”

Student: “Yes! Exactly. Like the word “namaste” doesn’t even mean what we think it means. It feels fake. My teacher’s a really good person, but I don’t think he gets the deeper meaning.”

Fellow: “Is this something you want to share with him?”

Student: “Yes, maybe. I’m not sure. He’s really nice. I don’t want to offend him. But I also think that we’ve really, as a culture, misappropriated yoga. I feel like we’re not doing it right, or maybe we should call it something different. I don’t know. I’m working through it. This course really hit me.”

Fellow: “Let me see if I’m understanding you. Feel free to correct me if I’m wrong. You’ve had a powerful experience in this class, and it’s changed your mind about something you really like. You’re interested in bringing this information to other
people, but you’re not sure how to do it in the most polite way possible. Does that sound right?”