



**FLORIDA POLYTECHNIC
UNIVERSITY**

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July 13, 2022

Dr. Christy England
Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs
State University System of Florida
Board of Governors
325 W. Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Dr. England,

Please find Florida Polytechnic University's Plans for Implementing Civil Discourse Recommendations:
Interim Update.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Dr. Randy K. Avent
President
Florida Polytechnic University

Board of Governors' Civil Discourse Initiative Update—July 2022

Recommendation 1:

Operationalize Board of Governors' Statement of Free Expression

Florida Poly has created a Civil Discourse Committee that is charged with developing the University's response to the Board's request. The Committee is composed of members representing the General Counsel's Office, Faculty, Human Resources, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Student Government Association, and the Office of the President.

The Committee has collected information on the University's existing efforts on civil discourse and reviewed those efforts to ensure they are consistent with the Board's Statement of Free Expression and cultivating a culture of civil discourse in all campus interactions, including academic, administrative, extracurricular, and social dealings.

The Committee is developing a recommendation for the University to further operationalize the Board's commitment to open-minded and tolerant civil discourse by promoting, supporting, and regularly evaluating adherence to the principles set forth in the Board's Statement of Free Expression and cultivating a culture of civil discourse in all campus interactions, including academic, administrative, extracurricular, and social dealings.

It is the intent of the University to encourage a free discourse of ideas while maintaining the safe and normal operations of campus life and education. To this end, the University revised regulation FPU-1.007 Campus Free Expression in 2019 to reflect the University's commitment to free expression and to comply with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes. The University does not have, and has never had, a free speech zone. Free expression is permitted, and encouraged, on University grounds and indoor areas. Such use must not disrupt or interfere with the normal operations of the University, any academic or other University activities, or the rights of other members of the University community.

Recommendation 3:

The Board of Governors recommends that the leadership of each university board of trustees, faculty senate, and student government annually review and endorse the Board's Statement of Free Expression and commit to the principles of civil discourse.

Beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year the Board's Statement of Free Expression will be reviewed for endorsement by the Board of Trustees, Faculty Assembly, and Student Government.

The University's Board of Trustees initially reviewed and endorsed the Board's Statement of Free Expression May 22, 2019. Beginning with the September 28, 2022, Board of Trustees meeting, the review and endorsement of the Board's Statement of Free Expression will be added to their Work Plan as well as added to the agenda for each subsequent September meeting.

The Faculty Assembly plans to meet in Fall 2022 to review and endorse the Board's Statement of Free Expression.

The Student Government Association Executive Branch will annually review the principles set forth. In addition, the Legislative Branch's Advocacy and Communication Committee will host monthly Town Halls that are open to all students. The Town Halls are intended to strengthen civil discourse efforts.

Recommendation 4:

The Board of Governors recommends that each board of trustees conducts a thorough review of current student orientation programs, student codes of conduct, and employee policies and procedures to ensure consistency with the Board of Governors Statement of Free Expression, the principles of free speech and civil discourse, and compliance with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes.

Beginning with the September 28, 2022 meeting, the Board of Trustees will add to their Work Plan and agenda a review of current student orientation programs, student codes of conduct, and employee policies and procedures to ensure consistency with the Board of Governors Statement of Free Expression, the principles of free speech and civil discourse, and compliance with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes. The staff responsible for the items, the Provost and CFO (or their designees) respectively, will report to the Board of Trustees annually for continued discussion and review.

An overview of student orientation programming, the student code of conduct, and employee personnel policies and procedures and a report of the reviews detailed in Recommendation 6 below will be provided to the Board of Trustees at its annual May meeting for the Board of Trustees to conduct a thorough review.

Recommendation 6:

The Board of Governors recommends that university academic, student affairs, and administrative leaders review student orientation programming, student codes of conduct, and employee personnel policies and procedures to ensure that they contain clear and unambiguous support for the Board's Statement of Free Expression, and the principles of free speech and civil discourse, and that they comply with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes.

Florida Poly reviews the Student Code of Conduct periodically, typically annually, by a committee that includes student representatives and representatives from academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrative units at the University. This year's review of the Student Code of Conduct includes reviewing the Code to ensure there is clear and unambiguous support for the tenants expressed in the Board's Statement of Free Expression, free speech and civil discourse, and section 1004.097, Florida Statutes.

University staff and administrators have also reviewed student orientation programming to ensure that the programming aligns with the Board's Statement of Free Expression, free speech and civil discourse, and section 1004.097, Florida Statutes.

Beginning Fall 2022, appropriate University units will review employee policies and procedures to ensure alignment with the Board's Statement of Free Expression, free speech and civil discourse, and section 1004.097, Florida Statutes. Specifically, employee policies and procedures will be reviewed to ensure there are procedures to address alleged violations of employee free expression.

Recommendation 7: Implement best practices.

Best Practice 1: The Florida Poly library is developing a series of web guides to promote and connect faculty, staff, and students with information resources and reading suggestions that cultivate a culture of civil discourse. The web guides will be linked through the library webpages and made available in Weekly Phoenix updates. In Fall 2022, Florida Poly will hold a “Free Speech” poster design workshop for student submission. The workshops will be organized around an educational program that facilitates a greater awareness of tolerance for ideas exchanged.

Best Practice 2: Florida Poly includes a civil discourse exercise within new student orientation that provides an opportunity for students to discuss differing opinions based on topics of interest to the student, for example, who is the “best” Marvel character. Beginning Fall 2022, the SGA’s Legislative Branch’s Advocacy and Communication Committee will host monthly Town Halls that are open to all students. The University previously hosted Campus Conversations, an opportunity for employees to meet with leadership to take part in open discussions on various issues and perspectives. The University will re-implement Campus Conversations at least once a semester.

Best Practice 3: The University is committed to providing and maintaining an environment free from unlawful discrimination. University regulation FPU-1.004 Non-Discrimination/Equal Opportunity specifically prohibits discrimination based on race or ethnicity. University regulation FPU-1.005 Discrimination and Harassment Complaint and Investigation outlines the process to address discrimination and harassment complaints. University regulation FPU-3.002 Student Government and Student Organizations and the SGA’s Constitution prohibit the Student Government Association and Registered Student Organizations from discriminating based on race or ethnicity, among other protected class statuses.

Best Practice 4: University regulation FPU-1.003 Use of University Facilities and Property clearly outlines the priority of use for university facilities and property. Top priority is given to credit instruction and other academic uses. Due to the University’s limited space, events on campus mostly consist of credit instruction and other academic uses. When space is available, the University allows outside parties to use campus facilities regardless of the content of the message.

Best Practice 5: The University partnered with EEOC Training Institute to provide mandatory training for supervisors titled “Leading with Respect” that focused on respect and the types of behaviors that contribute to a respectful and inclusive organizational culture. The University also provides annual employee discrimination and harassment training that address civil communications. Appropriate University units are exploring and developing educational and professional development opportunities for employees to reinforce free expression and open-minded debate norms. The University plans to have appropriate opportunities identified by October 2022 with an implementation date in Spring 2023.

Best Practice 6: The faculty will work to include in all syllabi for fall 2022 an abbreviated version of the Faculty Assembly’s endorsement of the Board’s Statement of Free Expression and commitment to the principles of civil discourse. Faculty will be encouraged to post a copy of the Faculty Assembly’s endorsement on their office doors, effective upon endorsement by fall 2022. Similarly, the University Writing Center will launch a campaign educating students about the importance of free expression and the value of civil discourse as part of its regular academic year services. The University regularly assesses student engagement and satisfaction through nationally normed surveys that include questions related to freedom of expression and exposure to different points of view in classroom and campus environments.