

**New College of Florida  
Board of Governors' Civil Discourse Initiative Update – July 2022**

**Recommendation 1:  
Operationalize Board of Governors' Statement of Free Expression**

In February 2022, New College of Florida created a Civil Discourse Initiative (CDI) committee, which was charged with developing the College's response to the Board's request. The committee consisted of Dr. Queen Zabriskie, Interim Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Dr. Frank Alcock, Director of Academic Initiatives and Special Projects; Dr. Sarah Hernandez, Co-Director of the Initiative on Diversity and Equity in Academics; Dr. Sonia Labrador-Rodriguez, Co-Director of the Initiative on Diversity and Equity in Academics; and Jada McNeill, Assistant Director of Civil Engagement, and Kaylie Stokes, Associate Director of Student Success Program. The committee operationalized the Board's commitment to open-minded and tolerant civil discourse through the development of the Initiative on Respectful Discourse (IRD). IRD will allow New College of Florida to create opportunities for the campus community to learn the principles set forth in the Board's Statement of Free Expression and develop a "culture of civil discourse." The IRD will also allow the college to regularly evaluate its progress on adhering to the Board's civil discourse principles in academic, administrative, extracurricular, and social interactions. The committee used the Board's Statement of Free Expression to define respectful discourse and identify outcomes that we expect to achieve through this initiative.

**Defining Respectful Discourse:**

Respectful discourse is speech or expression that recognizes the dignity and humanity of all people involved as well as all members of our campus community. Dignity is the belief in the inherent equal value and worth of all human beings. Even if a conversation, exchange, or expression produces discomfort, individuals involved are not looking to discriminate, threaten, defame, punish, humiliate, or isolate. Instead, participants are looking to increase connection, develop a better understanding across divides, or develop greater reflexivity and awareness. Respectful discourse recognizes and accepts differences in a way that empowers and enables participants to listen and speak. Respectful discourse facilitates a greater awareness and thoughtful exchange of diverse perspectives, even if other members of our community may find ideas exchanged abhorrent or disagreeable. Ideas should be challenged within respectful discourse for that is part of the learning process.

**Outcomes and Assessment:**

New College of Florida will use a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the success and effectiveness of this initiative in developing a culture of civil discourse on campus. The quantitative methods may include surveys given to participants in training opportunities as well as curricular and co-curricular activities to assess the effectiveness of the program. Qualitative methods may include a content analysis of open-ended survey questions, interview responses, and/or any written work submitted for academic activities connected to this initiative for specific themes related to intended outcomes of the initiative. In terms of overall outcomes, the Initiative on Respectful Discourse will develop greater connection, both between different groups and within groups, through sharing of experience and perspectives; increased recognition of the dignity and humanity of different members of our community; greater understanding and awareness of diverse and different perspectives; more reflexivity about and awareness of impact of speech or expression; and a greater ability to communicate -- including teaching speaking, listening, questioning, and validation skills -- across difference and disagreement. The committee will develop specific measures and identify indicators during the 2022-2023 academic year.

**Recommendation 2:**

**The Board of Governors recommends that each university's Accountability Plan and Strategic Plan include a specific endorsement of the Board's Statement of Free Expression, as well as a clear expectation for open-minded and tolerant civil discourse throughout the campus community. The Board of Governors will include similar statements and principles in its Strategic Plan for the State University System.**

In 2019 the New College of Florida administration and the Board of Trustees developed and passed a Statement of Free Expression, which is publicly displayed on the college's "Mission and Values" webpage. New College will include a specific endorsement in the next Accountability Plan and Strategic Plan. Additionally, the Initiative on Respectful Discourse will be able to contribute to the investments that New College is making in Inclusive Excellence as indicated in the current Accountability Plan that was approved by the Board of Governors.

**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 college's Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and General Counsel will bring the Board's Statement of Free Expression to the board of trustees, faculty senate, student government, and staff council each year for review and endorsement. They will also communicate to each of these bodies about the Initiative for Respectful Discourse so that they can commit to the principles of civil discourse.

**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 2022-2023 academic year, the Board of Trustees will conduct 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.

**Recommendation 5:**

**Beginning in the 2022 presidential evaluation and contract renewal cycle, as a part of a president's evaluation, the Chair of the Board of Governors will consult with the board of trustees chair to review the university's campus free speech climate, including adherence to the principles set forth in the Board's Statement of Free Expression, the occurrence and the resolution of any issues related to the university's compliance with substantiated violations of section 1004.097, Florida Statutes, and the implementation of best practices promoting civil discourse.**

Beginning in the 2022-2023 academic year, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Chair of the Board of Governors, will review the campus' free speech climate. The college's Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and General Counsel informed the Chair of the Board of Trustees of this recommendation in June of 2022, and the Board of Trustees agreed to implement this recommendation.

**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 are in compliance with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes.**

Beginning in the Spring 2022 semester, academic, student affairs, and administrative leaders reviewed student orientation programming, the student code of conduct, and employee personnel policies to see if they contain clear and unambiguous support for the Board's Statement of Free Expression, the principles of free speech and civil discourse, and are in compliance with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes. The Student Code of Conduct contains a clear and unambiguous support for the Board's Statement of Free Expression and 1004.097 Florida Statutes. The Student Code of Conduct also articulates support for free speech as well as respectful communication and respectful expression, which supports how the committee has operationalized the principles of civil discourse. In preparation for the 2022 New Student Orientation, a team led by Joseph Moore, Associate Director for Transition & Family Programs, developed a Canvas course that presents the Initiative on Respectful Discourse. This course provides all incoming students with the Board's Statement on Free Expression, discusses freedom of speech, and contains an unambiguous endorsement of the Board's statement. During the in-person orientation, students will participate in a session that will review the principles of free speech and civil discourse as well as introduce them to intergroup dialogue skills and practices. During the Fall 2022 semester, the college's Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, General Counsel, and Chief Human Resources Officer will also make sure that employee personnel policies and procedures are in compliance.

**Recommendation 7:**

**Implement best practices that effectively promote and support civil discourse.**

Best Practices 1: In 2019 New College of Florida adopted a Statement of Free Expression that highlights the importance of civil discourse, academic freedom, and free speech. This statement is on the college's "Values and Mission" page, making it available to the public and campus community. The New College Student Code of Conduct contains a clear and unambiguous endorsement of the Board of Governor's Statement of Free Expression. As part of the New Student Orientation, students are required to participate in a canvas course that talks about the Initiative on Respectful Discourse, and they have to take a short assessment to gauge their level of understanding of the ideas presented after the video. The college's Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, General Counsel, and Chief Human Resources Officer will develop information for the New Employee Orientation during the Fall 2022 Semester.

Best Practices 2: During the Spring 2022 semester, the Civil Discourse Initiative (CDI) committee identified different programs taking place on campus, which consisted of a number of forums, dialogues, debates, and other events that exposed members of the college's community to a wide variety of issues and different viewpoints. For example, the Center for Career Engagement and Opportunity has developed a Certificate in Leadership program and invites corporate and business leaders to campus for guest speaking engagements. David Fugett, the College's General Counsel organizes Moot Court, which is a method of teaching law and legal skills that requires students to analyze and argue both sides of a hypothetical legal issue. The 2022 Moot Court program featured The Honorable Adam S. Tanenbaum, First District Court of Appeal, and New College of Florida Trustee Garin C. Hoover. The committee will continue to identify existing programs so that this information can be presented to the larger community as part of the Initiative on Respectful Discourse. Starting with the 2022-2023 academic year, New College of Florida will develop a

new debate series organized through the Provost Office by Dr. Frank Alcock, Director of Academic Initiatives and Special Projects called New College “Bayfront” Dialogues.

Best Practices 3: In the College's regulations, 3-4022: Equal Education and Opportunity clearly states the college's commitment to creating an educational and work environment free from discrimination, which includes race and ethnicity. The college also has a regulation, 3-4027: Discrimination/Harassment, that prohibits discrimination based on race and ethnicity and outlines the procedure for investigating incidents that arise. Additionally, 6-3005-the New College of Florida Student Code of Conduct has a number of provisions that prohibit exclusion from programming, academic activities, and facilities based on race and ethnicity. Roxana Aguirre, Director of Community Education and Standards, will make any additional updates to the Student Code of Conduct.

Best Practices 4: The college's Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and General Counsel will lead efforts to develop clear, viewpoint-neutral policies and procedures that can govern the invitation and accommodation of campus speakers during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Best Practices 5: The Civil Discourse Initiative (CDI) committee will lead the college's efforts to provide targeted educational and professional development opportunities through the development an intergroup dialogue program as a core part of the Initiative on Respectful Discourse during the 2022-2023 academic year. Intergroup dialogue brings people with different perspectives together in order to promote a mutual understanding of each other's ideas as well as develop the disposition and skills to communicate and build relationships across divides.

Best Practices 6: The Initiative on Diversity and Equity in Academics (IDEA) co-directors will conduct research during the 2022-2023 academic year on the college's Diverse Perspectives requirement in order to evaluate its effectiveness and understand how to best support faculty in providing opportunities for students to learn about diverse perspectives. The Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Provost; General Counsel; and Co-Directors of IDEA will develop training for faculty members on diversity in the classroom during the 2022-2023 academic year.