

## University of Central Florida – Interim Update

### Interim Update: Plans for Implementing Civil Discourse Recommendations

**Recommendation 1: Leadership at each university will 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.**

The Civil Discourse Final Report was approved and released while UCF was developing its next strategic plan. The recommendations and the Board's Statement of Free Expression were considered throughout the development of our strategic plan. Principles of civil discourse and an endorsement of the Board's Statement of Free Expression were included as part of the university's focus on Community and Culture. The strategic plan states that *UCF is committed to fostering a culture of innovation, inclusion, public service, and collaboration and will be a model for civil discourse, consistent with the Florida Board of Governors' Statement of Free Expression.* A priority initiative in this area is to establish the Ginsburg Center for Inclusion and Community Engagement that will be central to programming on civil discourse and engagement. The university will further align and operationalize its commitment to civil discourse through the implementation of the university's strategic plan.

**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 Commitment to the principles of civil discourse.**

Beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, university leadership is planning a coordinated review and endorsement of the Board's Statement of Free Expression. The Board of Trustees' review is planned for the September 29, 2022, regular meeting in conjunction with several presentations and reviews (outlined in Recommendations 4 and 6) that will be discussed in the respective Committee sessions. Subsequent reviews by the Faculty Senate and Student Government are being planned for the 2022-23 Academic Year and will be reported back to the Board of Trustees.

**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.**

In preparation for the 2021 Board of Governors' Trustee Summit, Chair Martins and President Cartwright asked for the UCF Board of Trustees to receive a presentation on inclusive excellence and civil discourse at UCF during its [September 2021 full Board meeting](#) (see DISC-1).

University leaders, including Provost Michael Johnson, Vice President and General Counsel Youndy Cook, Interim Vice President for Student Development and Enrollment Services Adrienne Frame, and Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Andrea Guzman, gave a

presentation addressing inclusive excellence at UCF, focusing on how the university ensures freedom of expression and encourages civil discourse.

The presentation included an overview of the University's policies on freedom of speech, examples of the relationship between freedom of speech and academic freedom, and concluded with examples of programs at UCF that promote an atmosphere of diversity of thought, dialogue and understanding.

During the February 2022 Board of Trustees meeting, Chair Martins requested that the BOG's final report on Civil Discourse be included in the [Board's materials](#) (see INFO-1). He also shared a summary of the final Civil Discourse recommendations and asked President Cartwright to assign staff to take a deep dive into each recommendation, specifically the reviews outlined above, and present the findings to the Board of Trustees at a subsequent meeting. Additionally, he assigned Trustee Caryl McAlpin, who serves as a member of the Board's Academic Excellence and Student Success Committee, to provide strategic guidance to staff, and to ultimately advise the Board regarding findings of the staff's review.

At the May 2022 Board of Trustees meeting, Chair Martins reported that Trustee McAlpin has met with the staff team, who will report their findings during the Board's September 2022 meeting cycle, along with the review and endorsement of the Board's Statement of Free Expression.

Additionally, the Board's FY23 work plan is being developed to incorporate the appropriate reviews and presentations throughout the annual meeting cycles.

**Recommendation 6: 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.**

#### *Orientation Programming*

UCF's Summer 2022 virtual pre-orientation was revised to include a page in the Community Building section entitled "Civil Discourse at UCF." This page incorporates language that was adapted from the Board's Statement of Free Expression. In this virtual forum, students are required to confirm they have read the section on civil discourse before proceeding to the next module. The virtual pre-orientation is mandatory for all new students (FTIC and Transfer), and every student has access to and is required to progress through this page prior to attending orientation in person.

UCF's in-person orientation has been restructured to include community-building activities throughout the entire FTIC orientation. The activities are moderated through small group facilitated conversations, known as "Knight Talks." As it relates to Civil Discourse, there is a Knight Talk in which Orientation Leaders conduct a simplified version of the traditional "cross-the-line" activity that highlights the types of differences in upbringing, beliefs and values that students may encounter amongst the very diverse incoming new student population.

The Orientation Leader facilitates a brief conversation about ensuring that everyone understands that the core foundational purpose of higher education is to expose individuals to an environment where opposing beliefs can be “rigorously discussed and critically evaluated.”

#### *UCF Web Content Review*

UCF tasked a third party to conduct an external review of UCF’s websites to identify web content not in compliance with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes, and/or inconsistent with the principles outlined in the Board’s Statement of Free Expression.

Presentations with the outcomes and recommendations from the requested reviews are being planned as part of the Board’s September 28-29, 2022 meeting cycle.

**Recommendation 7: Implementing the best practices outlined on pages 6 and 7 of the attached report based on the Board’s review of university programs and initiatives that effectively promote and support civil discourse. For each best practice implemented or to be implemented, include a timeline.**

***Best Practice 1: Instill the importance of civil discourse, academic freedom, and free speech from day one, utilizing student and employee orientation sessions, public assemblies, and official university documents and communications.***

See Recommendation 6. Additional reviews are underway and expected to be completed within Academic Year 2022-23.

***Best Practice 2: Schedule and host ongoing, campus-wide forums, dialogues, and debates on various issues and perspectives to promote open discussion, understanding, and learning opportunities.***

In Academic Year 2021-22, the Faculty Senate formed a Civil Discourse Committee to begin the planning of debates and opportunities for students to engage in dialogue. Additionally, the newly formed Ginsburg Center will serve as a primary driver for additional programming and coordination of ongoing, campus-wide forums, dialogues, and debates on various issues and perspectives to promote open discussion, understanding, and learning opportunities.

***Best Practice 3: Foster intellectual diversity by encouraging university leadership to: (1) promote viewpoint diversity and open-minded discussion and debate, and (2) highlight and enforce policies that prohibit programming that excludes participation based on race or ethnicity.***

On September 23, 2021, University leaders, including Provost Michael Johnson, Vice President and General Counsel Youndy Cook, Interim Vice President for Student Development and Enrollment Services Adrienne Frame, and Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Andrea Guzman, gave a presentation addressing inclusive excellence at UCF, focusing on how the university ensures freedom of expression and encourages civil discourse.

The presentation included an overview of the University’s policies on freedom of speech, examples of the relationship between freedom of speech and academic freedom, and concluded

with examples of programs at UCF that promote an atmosphere of diversity of thought, dialogue, and understanding.

***Best Practice 4: Avoid disinvitations by developing clear, viewpoint-neutral policies and procedures governing the invitation and accommodation of campus speakers.***

The university has hosted speakers with different viewpoints. We are unaware of any disinvitations of a speaker for reasons other than a natural disaster and the COVID-19 pandemic. University Regulations and policies related to the use of campus grounds and facilities will be reviewed to ensure viewpoint-neutral protocols and procedures.

***Best Practice 5: Provide targeted educational and professional development opportunities for university administrative employees to reinforce free expression and openminded debate norms.***

Through the implementation of UCF's Strategic Plan, all educational and professional development opportunities will be assessed to ensure alignment with current mission and values, which include a commitment to fostering a culture of innovation, inclusion, public service, and collaboration, and will be a model for civil discourse, consistent with the Florida Board of Governors' Statement of Free Expression.

***Best Practice 6: Encourage faculty to establish and maintain a learning environment in their classrooms and offices that supports open dialogue and the free expression of all viewpoints and create processes to evaluate the strength of such environments.***

The Karen L. Smith Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning at UCF (FCTL) supports excellence in teaching and learning across the university by providing resources and training in various teaching techniques. They have developed a website for faculty with resources for engaging in civil pedagogy (<https://fctl.ucf.edu/teaching-resources/classroom-management/civil-pedagogy/>).

Each May the FCTL holds a summer conference to provide an opportunity for faculty to engage more deeply with various topics related to instruction. At the May 2022 conference, one of the sessions focused on tools and activities faculty can use to create a climate in which encounters between students with different opinions and experiences can occur in the spirit of dialogue and mutual respect.