



UNIVERSITY *of* WEST FLORIDA

Civil Discourse Plan

Interim Report

July, 2022

Recommendation 1: Leadership at each university will operationalize the Board's commitment to open-minded and tolerant civil discourse.

Leadership at the University of West Florida has long promoted the principles of civil discourse both in and outside the classroom. The tenants of such are entwined in professional development, programs, services, and activities offered across campus.

During the spring 2022 semester, a central [webpage](#) devoted to Civil Discourse and free expression was created that highlights the University's commitment and outlines standards of practice.

UWF has also recently convened its first Civil Discourse campus-wide stakeholder meeting. The meeting included representatives from: the Provost's office, the office of Equity and Diversity, Student Engagement, the Dean of Students (including the office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, Student Case Management, and Student Government Association), Student Ombuds, Undergraduate Admissions (including Orientation programs), the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, Institutional Communications, Faculty Senate, and Human Resources. This group will coordinate actions and plans.

Beyond discussing activities and initiatives already in practice, members of this committee will also convey to a Civil Discourse Oversight committee. This committee will convene beginning fall 2022 and will provide oversight of respective initiatives, the implementation of activities contained within the UWF Civil Discourse plan, and assess the degree to which civil discourse and free expression are built into the campus culture.

Recommendation 3: 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.

At its June meeting, the UWF Board of Trustees approved the proposed 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan includes the addition of a strategic direction focused on creating a culture of Inclusion and Civility. This strategic direction includes the goal for ensuring a commitment to open-minded and tolerant civil discourse. A stated indicator of success is the endorsement of the Board of Governors' Statement of Free Expression by the University's boards and leadership.

During the fall 2022 semester, the Board's Statement of Free Expression will be brought before UWF's Board of Trustees, Faculty Senate, and Student Government Association for review and endorsement. This presentation will set the foundation for an annual review and endorsement of the Statement. Information regarding the review and endorsement and a link to UWF's Civil Discourse and Free Expression webpage will appear on each respective Board's website. Members of the Civil Discourse Oversight committee will provide regular updates to each governing board regarding respective initiatives and the implementation of new activities.

Recommendation 4: 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.

At its June meeting, the UWF Board of Trustees approved the proposed 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan includes the addition of a strategic direction focused on creating a culture of Inclusion and Civility. This strategic direction includes the goal for ensuring a commitment to open-minded and tolerant civil discourse. Indicators of success include annual reviews of student orientation programs, codes of conduct and employee policies and procedures to ensure consistency with the Board's Statement of Free Expression, consistency with the principles of free speech and civil discourse, and compliance with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes.

Beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, a thorough review of student orientation programs, the Student Code of Conduct and pertinent employee policies and procedures will be presented to the UWF Board of Trustees by members of the Civil Discourse Oversight Committee.

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.

At its June meeting, the UWF Board of Trustees approved the proposed 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan includes the addition of a strategic direction focused on creating a culture of Inclusion and Civility. This strategic direction includes the goal for ensuring a commitment to open-minded and tolerant civil discourse. Indicators of success include annual reviews of student orientation programs, codes of conduct and employee policies and procedures to ensure consistency with the Board's Statement of Free Expression, consistency with the principles of free speech and civil discourse, and compliance with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes.

University academic, student affairs, and administrative leaders regularly review student orientation programming, student codes of conduct, and employee personnel policies and procedures, however such has not been done in a systematic or formalized way. The Civil Discourse oversight committee will conduct a formal review of 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 throughout the 2022-2023 academic year. The committee will commit to an annual review of these and other respective activities and initiatives.

Recommendation 7: Implementing best practices that effectively promote and support civil discourse.

An environmental scan of current practices was conducted summer 2022.

Best Practice 1:

- Student orientation programs include the principles of civil discourse and free expression as campus community standards presented by UWF’s Dean of Students. As summer 2022 student orientation programs are delivered in both in-person and virtual formats, the virtual program now includes direct reference to the Board’s Statement of Free Expression.
- The Office of Human Resources will enhance the Onboarding Portal in UWF’s HR Information System to include UWF’s endorsement of the Board’s Statement of Free Expression and a link to the UWF Civil Discourse web page. Expected implementation is November 2022 .
- Training for student staff in various campus departments includes the principles of civil discourse. For example, Resident Assistant training offered through UWF’s office of Housing and Residence Life includes sessions regarding facilitating Conflict Resolution and “Courageous Conversations.”

Best Practice 2: The environmental scan identified many ongoing programs and activities that promote open discussion, understanding, and learning opportunities. Attendance at these activities include students, staff, faculty, University leadership, and community members. Some examples include:

- Campus Conversations series
- The Seligman First Amendment lecture series
- The Pace Lecture Series
- The Experience Downtown Lecture series

Best Practice 3: Several University policies and regulations include the University’s commitment to diversity, equal opportunity, and free expression. They promote viewpoint diversity, open-minded discussion, and prohibit programming that excludes participation based on race or ethnicity. For example, University policy P-13.09-02/20 Prohibition of Discrimination, Harrassment, and Retaliation clearly states UWF’s commitment to ensuring each member of the University is permitted to work and study in an environment free from discrimination and harrassment based on race or ethnicity.

Best Practice 4: Policies and procedures governing the invitation and accommodation of campus speakers will be reviewed by University academic and student affairs administrators throughout the 2022-2023 academic year.

Best Practice 5: The Civil Discourse Oversight Committee will continue to review educational and training opportunities throughout 2022-2023. Starting fall 2022, those already identified will be promoted through the Civil Discourse webpage.

Best Practice 6: This is currently accomplished through hallmark training opportunities such as “new Chairs” and “All Chairs” training and in utilizing faculty mentors as teaching partners. An Administrative Fellow in the Division of Academic Affairs also provides support for faculty development. Throughout 2022-2023, a faculty advisory group led by the Center for Teaching Learning and Technology will help guide efforts to enhance faculty development and aid in assessing the effectiveness of creating the environments described.