

FLORIDA **A&M** UNIVERSITY
Board of Trustees
ACTION ITEM

Academic and Student Affairs Committee
Thursday, September 22, 2022
2 p.m.

Subject: Plan for Implementing Civil Discourse Recommendations

Proposed Board Action: Seek Board of Trustees' approval of the University's plans for implementing recommendations from the Florida Board of Governors to ensure a climate of free expression and civil discourse on each campus in the State University System.

Attachments: FAMU – Civil Discourse Report

Florida A&M University
Plan for Implementing Civil Discourse Recommendations
Approved by FAMU BOT on _____

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.

Florida A&M University is committed to maintaining a campus environment that supports and promotes open-minded and tolerant civil discourse. University leadership initiated efforts to operationalize the Board of Governor's (BOG) commitment to these principles in spring 2022, as highlighted below.

- President Robinson established a Civil Discourse Workgroup on April 12, 2022, with responsibility for coordinating the University's efforts to address the recommendations contained in the Board of Governor's Civil Discourse Report. The Workgroup has developed an Action Plan that outlines the specific steps to be undertaken to promote, support and regularly evaluate the University's adherence to the principles outlined in the BOG's Statement of Free Expression, as well as specific actions to cultivate a culture of civil discourse in all campus interactions. The Office of University Assessment will have responsibility for coordinating the assessment and evaluation activities, which will include conducting campus-wide surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Workgroup Members

- Maurice Edington, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (Chair)
 - Genyne Boston, Associate Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs
 - Rica Calhoun, Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer
 - Kyle Eidahl, Faculty Senate Representative
 - Andre Green, Assistant Dean of Students
 - William Hudson, Jr., Vice President for Student Affairs
 - Lewis Johnson, Associate Provost for Student Success and Strategic Initiatives
 - Joseph Maleszewski, Vice President for Audit
 - Kelly McMurray, Associate Vice President for Strategic Planning, Analysis and Institutional Effectiveness
 - Keith Miles, Director, Office of Communications
 - Antoneia Roe, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
 - Shira Thomas, Deputy General Counsel
 - Gloria Walker, Vice President for Finance and Administration/CFO
 - Denise Wallace, Vice President and General Counsel
- On July 12, 2022, the FAMU Board of Trustees approved the 2022-2027 University Strategic Plan, which contains a new University Vision Statement (shown below) that highlights the University's commitment to the Statement of Free Expression.
 - ***Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University is committed to the values of accountability, inclusion, innovation, and integrity. The University also values and endorses the Board of Governors' Statement of Free Expression and expects open-minded and tolerant civil discourse to take place throughout the campus community. These values represent the tenets that guide our actions, enable us to sustain our historical mission, and realize our strategic plan.***

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Recommendation 2: 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.

The BOT-approved 2022-2027 University Strategic Plan includes a specific endorsement of the Statement of Free Expression. A similar endorsement is also included in the University's 2022 Accountability Plan.

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. **NOTE:** The first review should be completed during the 2022-2023 academic year.

As noted above, the FAMU Board of Trustees has taken initial steps to address this Recommendation with its recent approval of the new University Vision Statement. During the 2022-2023 academic year, leadership of the Board of Trustees, Faculty Senate, and Student Government Association will engage in the initial round of annual civil discourse training sessions designed to increase their awareness of best practices for fostering a campus environment that supports and promotes open-minded and tolerant civil discourse. These sessions will also enable each group to review and endorse the Statement of Free Expression. Staff from the Office of the General Counsel and the Office of Compliance and Ethics will have shared responsibility for planning and coordinating the training sessions.

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.

The FAMU Board of Trustees will conduct a thorough review of student orientation programs, student codes of conduct, and employee policies and procedures during the 2022-2023 academic year. The Civil Discourse Workgroup will deliver support for this effort by providing the Board with a report summarizing the results of their corresponding review (as described below under Recommendation 6).

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.

The University initiated action to address this Recommendation in spring 2022 via establishment of the Civil Discourse Workgroup. The Workgroup has representation spanning across several administrative units and is currently engaged in a comprehensive review of student orientation programming, student codes of conduct, and employee personnel policies and procedures, which will be completed during the 2022-2023 academic year. Following its completion, the report will be presented to the FAMU Board of Trustees to facilitate their corresponding review, as required under Recommendation 4. Efforts are also underway to enhance student orientation programming

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to include a focus on civil discourse topics. The Office of New Student Orientation enhanced new student orientation programming by consulting with CHW Productions to institute a "Life on Campus" production to be performed at each orientation session. This production addresses a variety of topics, including freedom of speech, hazing, and roommate conflicts. Also, in preparation for orientation sessions for freshman and transfer students, the Office of New Student Orientation selected Advantage Design Group to develop an online orientation section geared toward the Statement of Free Expression. Each incoming student is now be required to complete the online orientation program prior to their arrival on campus.

Recommendation 7: Implementing the following best practices based on the Board's review of university programs and initiatives that effectively promote and support civil discourse.

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.

As noted above under Recommendation 6, student orientation programming has been enhanced to include a focus on civil discourse related topics. The Office of New Student Orientation enhanced new student orientation programming by consulting with CHW Productions to institute a "Life on Campus" production to be performed at each orientation session. This production will address a variety of topics, including freedom of speech, hazing, and roommate conflicts. The Office of New Student Orientation has also selected Advantage Design Group to develop an online orientation section geared toward the Statement of Free Expression. Each incoming student will now be required to complete the online orientation program prior to their arrival on campus. During the 2022-2023 academic year, the Office of Human Resources will complete an overhaul of its new employee orientation program to include education and training on expectations for supporting and promoting civil discourse, academic freedom and free speech. University documents, such as the Strategic Plan, Student Code of Conduct, Employee Code of Conduct, Faculty Handbook, Student Handbook, and University Magazine will also be utilized to communicate expectations to students and employees.

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.

The Civil Discourse Workgroup has identified several campus activities and initiatives that will be utilized in the 2022-2023 academic year to facilitate open discussion, understanding, and learning opportunities. For example, the Office of the Provost has allocated additional funding to the Center for Deliberative Democracy, Civic Engagement, and Census Information to host campus-wide forums featuring invited speakers and facilitators (Dr. Gary Paul will lead this effort). In addition, each college/school will host at least one unit-wide event each year.

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.

The Office of the General Counsel holds a day-long Management Seminar each year with required attendance for administrators and managers. Beginning with the spring 2023 meeting, the agenda will include sessions designed to educate and train administrators on best practices for promoting viewpoint and open-minded discussion and debate, as well as highlighting and enforcing policies that prohibit programming that excludes participation based on race or ethnicity.

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

During the 2022-2023 academic year, the Office of the General Counsel will conduct a comprehensive review of existing policies and procedures to ensure the University adheres to viewpoint-neutral guidelines governing the invitation and accommodation of campus speakers.

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

The Civil Discourse Workgroup will work with the Organizational Development & Training Department during the 2022-2023 academic year to develop and implement targeted educational and professional development opportunities for university administrators. These sessions will be designed to communicate and reinforce free expression and open-minded debate norms.

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.

Beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, the Teaching and Learning Center and the Office on Instructional Technology will conduct several faculty professional development workshops throughout the year to introduce faculty to best practices for maintaining a learning environment in the classrooms and offices that support open dialogue and free expression of all viewpoints (Dr. Genyne Boston will lead this effort). The Office of University Assessment will coordinate efforts to create processes to evaluate the strengths of these environments.

Questions or requests for additional information should be addressed to Provost Maurice Edington at maurice.edington@famu.edu or 850-599-3276.