



WICHITA.EDU/FREEEXPRESSION

Facilitating Constructive Conversations

This guidance is a resource for faculty, staff, and students at Wichita State University to encourage and promote civil, thoughtful, and constructive discussions within our community, applicable both in and out of the classroom, and within or outside departments.

RESPECT FOR ALL INDIVIDUALS

- **Active listening:** Pay full attention to the speaker, avoid interrupting, and acknowledge different viewpoints.
- **Considerate language:** Use respectful and considerate language. Avoid derogatory remarks, personal attacks, and inflammatory statements.
- **Valuing diversity:** Recognize and appreciate the diverse perspectives and experiences of all community members.

COMMITMENT TO UNDERSTANDING

- **Seek clarity:** Ask questions to understand different viewpoints fully. Avoid making assumptions about others' beliefs or intentions.
- **Paraphrasing:** Restate what you've heard to confirm understanding and show that you are engaged in the conversation.

- **Empathy:** Try to understand and share the feelings of others, showing compassion and consideration.

CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT

- **Focused dialogue:** Stay on topic and contribute meaningfully to the discussion. Avoid diverting the conversation away from the subject at hand.
- **Orientation:** Approach discussions with a mindset aimed at seeking understanding and finding solutions or reaching a consensus.
- **Positive Framing:** Present your points in a constructive and positive manner, focusing on ideas rather than individuals.

INCLUSIVITY

- **Encouraging participation:** Create space for everyone to speak and ensure all voices are heard, especially those who might have less access or power.
- **Equal opportunity:** Ensure that all participants have an equal chance to contribute to the discussion.
- **Supportive environment:** Foster a welcoming atmosphere where everyone feels safe to express their views.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Personal responsibility:** Take responsibility for your words and actions. Be willing to apologize and make amends if you cause offense.

- **Hold each other accountable:**

Gently remind peers of these standards if the discourse becomes disrespectful or unproductive.

- **Reflect and improve:** Continuously reflect on your own communication and seek to improve your contribution to civil discourse.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRUST

- **Confidentiality:** Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information shared during discussions.
- **Trust:** Build trust by being honest, reliable, and maintaining integrity in your interactions.

OPENNESS TO GROWTH

- **Willingness to learn:** Approach discussions with a willingness to learn and grow from the experiences and perspectives of others.
- **Accepting feedback:** Be open to constructive feedback and use it as an opportunity for personal and community growth.
- **Adaptability:** Be open to changing your views when presented with new information or perspectives.

Wichita State University is committed to formal and informal expressive activity that is conducted in a manner that fosters respect, understanding, and constructive engagement.