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Managing for Civility within Institutions of Higher Education

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The Pennsylvania State University, School of Labor and Employment Relations

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This presentation focuses on several key themes

• Examines our issues within a broader societal context
• Adopts a management perspective
• Argues for the need to balance civility and academic freedom to promote mission fulfillment and organizational sustainability
We live in a diverse global community....A Collective....We

- Globally diverse
- Highly interrelated
- Highly interconnected
- Highly interdependent
Conducting business globally in the 21st century increasingly requires an ethical and socially responsible approach

- Age of accountability
- Legitimacy or license to operate is granted by society
Higher Education is a microcosm of society, plays a unique role and has special obligations

• Penn State is a multi-campus public research university that educates students from Pennsylvania, the nation and the world, and improves the well-being and health of individuals and communities through integrated programs of teaching, research, and service.
We in the Higher Education community have an ethical obligation to help create a better society.

- Triple Bottom Line
  - Economic Development
  - Environmental Stewards
  - Social Justice
Institutional leadership challenges are varied and complex

• Mission, vision, culture and values
• Brand and strategy
• Economic viability
• Creating an environment conducive for teaching, learning, research and service
• Stakeholder engagement
• Accountability
Practicing civility is required to live successfully as part of a diverse community

- Respect for one another
- Tolerance of ideas and persons
- Promote human dignity
- Serve the common good, not just self-interest
- Learned capability
- Examples
Five virtues of civility that can be applied to any community (Ward & Yates, 2014)

- Recognize differences in various communities
- Identify accepted social norms/values that generally govern good relations for each community in which one is involved
- Be flexible and adaptable enough to live by norms of a given community in the spirit of getting along
Five virtues of civility that can be applied to any community (Ward & Yates, 2014) continued

- To know when to modify behavior and be guided by other norms, as necessary, to fit into another community
- Be tolerant of defects or imperfections in norms in order to maintain mutual trust in a community
Academic Freedom involves the rights and responsibilities of faculty to teach and students to learn

- Faculty
  - Intellectual free agent
  - Right of free expression and risk-taking inquiry
  - Prepare students to be productive members of society
  - Community member
  - Role model: Lead by example

- Students
  - Intellectually challenged
  - Treated with respect, tolerance and dignity
  - Expectation of developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities required to be productive members of society
Academic Freedom does not mean that there is no review or lack of accountability

- Faculty as intellectual free agent, but not a behavioral free agent
- We should act responsibly and hold ourselves accountable for our decisions, actions, and their consequences
- Academic freedom should not be used as a shield for irresponsibility speech or behavior
- Examples
We need to balance civility and academic freedom to promote organizational sustainability

• To create an environment conducive for teaching, learning, research and service
• To create a welcoming, inclusive and diverse community
• Create a healthy, safe and positive work environment
• To engage stakeholders
• Contribute to making society better
Management Best Practices to promote civility and academic freedom simultaneously

- Establish a culture of respect, diversity and inclusion, tolerance, and the common good
- Collaboratively establishing principles of free speech and academic freedom sub-divided in multiple public forums
- Promotion and Tenure Rules and Regulations should reflect values of the institution
- Student evaluation of teaching effectiveness should address values of the institution
- Create expectation of review and accountability
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