

End-of-Year Report

2023-2024

Joint Committee for Free Speech Promotion
Joint Committee for Civil Discourse (renamed May 2024)



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Overview

The purpose of the Joint Committee on Free Speech Promotion is to further the mission of the university by promoting greater awareness of the values of free speech, freedom of expression, and academic freedom while honoring the mission, vision and values of UW – La Crosse (UWL).

In doing so, the committee advances the aims of the Board of Regents’ Policy Document 4-21, “Commitment to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression,” and related UW System and UWL policies.

The primary duties and responsibilities of the committee are to plan and carry out educational programs and activities that advance either or both of the following goals:

- A. To provide students, faculty, and staff opportunities to enhance their understanding of the educational, social, cultural, political, and legal aspects of free speech, freedom of expression, academic freedom, and related concepts.
- B. To illustrate the importance of free speech, freedom of expression, and academic freedom by providing opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to engage constructively with controversial or challenging ideas.

The committee strives to plan at least one event that coincides with Free Speech Week (the third week of October annually) and/or other relevant occasions.

The duties and responsibilities of the committee do not include receiving complaints or grievances, or adjudicating disputes related to free speech, freedom of expression, academic freedom, or any other issues.

Membership

The current committee, effective January 2024 through December 2024, is comprised of mostly ad-hoc members. Members of the committee include the following:

- I. Academic Staff
 - a. Caleb Colon-Rivera, Program Coordinator for the Center for Transformative Justice
 - b. Jenni Brundage, Residence Life Director
- II. Faculty
 - a. Taylor Cole Miller, Assistant Professor – Comm Studies
 - b. Anthony Chergosky, Assistant Professor – Pol Sci and Public Administration
- III. Student Senate
 - a. Easton Moberg, student (graduated May 2024)
 - b. Isabel Piarulli, student
- IV. Dean of Students
 - a. Kara Ostlund, Dean of Students
- V. Center for Transformative Justice Staff
 - a. Ashley Nowak, Director for the Center for Transformative Justice
 - b. Caleb Colon-Rivera, Program Coordinator for the Center for Transformative Justice

The interim Chancellor has designated the Director of the Center for Transformative Justice as the convener and chair. The May 2024 notes/minutes indicated the committee unanimously agreed to add a co-chair of a tenured faculty member if present on the committee.

Moving forward, the committee will seek recommendations from the incoming Chancellor to any amendments to the following committee structure:

- I. 2 members appointed by the Academic Staff Council
- II. 2 members appointed by the Faculty Senate
- III. 2 members appointed by the Student Senate
- IV. 2 members appointed by the University Staff Council
- V. 1 member appointed by the Chancellor
- VI. The CTJ (Center for Transformative Justice) Director

There is a memo for the incoming Chancellor with details. See: JCCD Memo to Chancellor.

2023-2024 Initiatives

- I. Free Speech Week

- a. During Free Speech Week, October 16-20, 2023, the Center for Transformative Justice took the lead on preparing content for a daily topic. The University Communications team was instrumental in creating digital signage for each day of the week and social media posts. The topics were as follows:
 - i. Learn the Basics of Free Speech
 1. Staff, faculty, and students were invited to participate in a self-paced online module to learn the basics of free speech. This was in partnership with Hate/Uncycled. There were 70 participants in total.
 - ii. Counter Speech Through Design
 1. Posters and, more recently, social media posts have been a tool for rallies, demonstrations, protests, and other events throughout history. Folks could learn more about how to make their posters impactful.
 - iii. Write a Letter to Your Legislator
 1. Our campus community can make their voice heard. This topic aimed to raise awareness that writing to your representatives can be a powerful tool
 - iv. Display Protest Art
 1. Art, in the forms of visual, music, written, and performance, is a way to provoke audiences and raise awareness. Faculty member Sierra Rooney and staff member Amber Strother compiled a list of great examples.
 - v. Organize a Teach-In
 1. A teach-in can empower students, staff, and faculty to learn more about a topic.
 - b. Learn more by visiting the daily themes website: <https://www.uwlax.edu/event/free-speech-week/#tab-273898>
- II. #SpeechMatters Viewing Party
 - a. Our committee held an event on April 18, 2024. The event consisted of viewing a live webinar titled: Politics, Polarization, and Perils on Campus. The host was the National Center for Free Speech and Civil Engagement at the University of California. Topics ranged from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title IV), Moving from Debate to Dialogue, Targeted Harassment, and Centering Students as we Prepare for the 2024 Presidential Election.
 - b. There were 11 participants in total.
- III. Review of WICCD (Wisconsin Institute for Citizenship & Civil Dialogue) (Wisconsin Institute for Citizenship and Civil Dialogue) and RPD 4-21

- a. Members of the committee dedicated time to reviewing the Regent Policy Document 4-21 to understand the stipulations and expectations.
 - i. Wisconsin Institute for Citizenship & Civil Dialogue (WICCD)
 - ii. The Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents Policy Document 4-21
- b. Members of the committee will help plan, coordinate, and implement content during the 2024 New Student Orientation.

2024-2025 Planning

- The committee will work on the 2024-2025 goals as indicated by the Chancellor.
- This may include:
 - Free Speech Week events
 - Programming (i.e., teach-ins, documentary screenings, modules)
 - Planning professional development opportunities for staff/faculty in the areas of free speech, civil engagement, and civil discourse
 - Planning professional development opportunities for students in the areas of free speech, civil engagement, and civil discourse