

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Joint Committee on Civil Discourse

Approved and Adopted 10/2/24
Approved with Amendments 7/30/25

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Joint Committee on Civil Discourse is to further the mission of the university by promoting greater awareness of the values of free speech, freedom of expression, academic freedom, and constructive dialogue.

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.

2. Duties and Responsibilities

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, aspects of free speech, freedom of expression, academic freedom, civil discourse, and related concepts.
- (b) To illustrate the importance of free speech, freedom of expression, academic freedom, and civil discourse by providing opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to engage constructively with controversial or challenging ideas.

The committee will strive to plan and execute at least one event that coincides with Free Speech Week (the third week of October annually) and/or other relevant occasions. The committee may solicit public input from the campus community with respect to the choice of potential outside speakers or any other aspect of its work. Committee members will also promote civil discourse training. After the events are completed, the committee will complete a summary report on the year's activities for the Chancellor and the incoming committee.

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.

3. Membership

The committee shall consist of the following members:

- 1-2 members appointed by the Academic Staff Council
- 1-2 members appointed by the Faculty Senate
- 1-2 members appointed by the Student Senate

- 1-2 members appointed by the University Staff Council
- 1-2 ad hoc members appointed by the Chancellor
- The Director for the Center for Civil Dialogue and Civic Engagement

All appointments will be for the term of four semesters. Terms are renewable. Terms will begin in the spring and continue through the fall when new appointments are made. Should there be a vacancy, the chair of the committee will contact the appropriate governance group to request the appointment of a replacement.

4. Officers

The committee will annually elect a chair and a recorder by simple majority vote. All members shall be eligible to serve as chair or recorder.

The duties of the chair are to convene and preside over meetings of the committee; to post notices of each meeting in accordance with the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law; to prepare and distribute an agenda in advance of each meeting; and to report on the activities of the committee to the Chancellor.

The duties of the recorder are to record minutes of each meeting; to distribute draft minutes for review by the members of the committee; and to ensure that approved minutes are posted on the university's website.

The chair and the recorder may delegate their duties to another member of the committee as needed.

The Chancellor has indicated that the Director of the Center for Civil Dialogue and Civic Engagement will serve as the convener for the committee. The duties of the convener are to convene and preside over a meeting of the committee for the purpose of electing a chair. The convener will preside over the meeting until a chair has been elected.

5. Procedures

Meetings will be conducted pursuant to the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law and Robert's Rules of Order. A quorum is necessary for the committee to conduct business. A quorum is defined as a simple majority of the members of the committee.

A simple majority of those voting is necessary to pass a motion. Abstentions are not votes. Voting occurs with a voice vote or a hand vote, but a roll-call vote will be conducted if any member requests it. Proxy voting is not allowed. Members attending a meeting in person or by telephone or videoconference, and who have heard the deliberations are eligible to vote. Minutes will reflect the actions taken at a meeting.

6. Funding

Each year, the Chancellor will communicate to the committee the amount of funding the committee will receive funding from the Chancellor's office for that year.

The committee may seek additional funding from other university departments and offices, governance groups, or outside funding sources, to support programming costs.

7. Amendments

Proposed amendments to these bylaws shall be submitted to the chair. The chair will distribute the proposed amendments to the members and the Chancellor. Reasonable time will be allocated at the next meeting for discussion and voting on the proposed amendments.

The proposed amendments become effective upon approval by a two-thirds vote of all committee members, and subsequent approval by the Chancellor.

Edit History

Edited February 10, 2022

Edited September 19, 2024

Edited June 26, 2025