

**Official Memorandum of Action – MOA-16/05
Statement on Civility**

Name of Council/Committee:
Ad Hoc Civility Committee

Meeting Date:
2016

Implementation Date:
Upon Administrative Approval

RECOMENDATION:

The Ad Hoc Civility Committee recommends adoption of a University-wide statement of civil behavior for all faculty, staff, and students. (see attached)

Robert Wertkin, Chair, Ad Hoc Civility Committee 2016
Date

Approve Disapprove Return to council/committee
Comments:

C. Dennis Simpson, Faculty Senate President Date

Approve Disapprove Other action
Comments:

Timothy J. Greene, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Date

Approve Disapprove Other action
Comments:

John M. Dunn, WMU President Date

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BACKGROUND:

The mission of Western Michigan University is to be “a learner-centered, research university, building intellectual inquiry and discovery into undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs in a way that fosters knowledge and innovation, and transforms wisdom into action. As a public university, WMU provides leadership in teaching, research, learning, and service, and is committed to enhancing the future of our global citizenry.” (Adopted December 8, 2011)

RATIONALE:

A statement on civility expresses a collective belief about respectful and courteous behavior. Many universities (more than 200 were identified) have civility statements in effect. WMU does not have an overarching statement about behavioral expectations although there are specific policies in place (e.g. sexual harassment, Title IX, hostile work environment, professional conduct). A Western Michigan University statement on civility has positive value to all university stakeholders.

RECOMENDATION:

Meeting the University mission requires an environment that honors the inherent dignity and worth of all members of the WMU community. Respectful behavior expressed verbally, in writing, visually, and physically should be the norm in all university communications and venues including classrooms, meetings, forums, events, social media, and residential communities.

As an institution of higher education, we welcome a diverse range of perspectives and opinions and uphold the importance of civil debate. We fully support the free exchange of ideas and beliefs, as well as the expression of provocative or less popular ideas. It is through this process that we generate knowledge and deepen our understanding of humanity.

Freedom of thought and expression may create conflict, strong emotions, and divergent ideological positions. While these effects are expected and welcomed, all members of the community have a responsibility to behave in a manner that does not harm others nor creates a hostile environment. Behavior that attacks, humiliates, belittles, or conveys personal hatred towards others diminishes our thriving and safe university environment.

Each member of our academic community is encouraged to be thoughtful and sensitive in their choice of words and behaviors. We should be aware of how our behavior affects others. Furthermore, we carry a responsibility to challenge those who communicate intolerance, hatred, and bigotry. Words and actions matter. Everyone is asked to do their part in creating a healthy and positive university community and a culture that truly values each member’s uniqueness, experiences, and perspectives.