



PROGRESS REPORT: AUGUST 2023–JUNE 2024



CITIZENS & SCHOLARS  
**COLLEGE PRESIDENTS  
FOR CIVIC PREPAREDNESS**

# From Polarization to Progress

## *College Presidents Join Forces*

Amherst College

AUGSBURG UNIVERSITY



BENEDICT COLLEGE

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

BUTLER UNIVERSITY

Carnegie Mellon University



Cornell University

DARTMOUTH



DENISON

DEPAUW UNIVERSITY



DREW UNIVERSITY

Duke UNIVERSITY



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Gettysburg COLLEGE

Grinnell College

Hamilton



INDIANA UNIVERSITY



Kenyon



LONGWOOD UNIVERSITY

LUTHER COLLEGE



MCLA MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

MERCY UNIVERSITY



MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY



PACE UNIVERSITY

Quinnipiac UNIVERSITY



Rollins



Salem STATE UNIVERSITY



SKIDMORE



STETSON UNIVERSITY

Susquehanna UNIVERSITY

SEWANEE THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH



UNIVERSITY OF DENVER



University of Pittsburgh



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE



VASSAR



WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

WHITMAN COLLEGE



MEMBERS AS OF JUNE 30, 2024



## HIGHER EDUCATION AT A CRITICAL CROSSROADS

This year has been pivotal for American democracy and higher education, both grappling with crises of confidence, declining participation and trust, increased polarization, and uncertainties about their futures. These issues intensified following the Israel-Hamas conflict in October 2023, dominating media coverage with reports of campus protests, debates surrounding free speech, and heightened concerns about student safety.

At the start of the 2023–24 academic year, 15 college presidents from a diverse array of institutions came together to launch College Presidents for Civic Preparedness. They committed to advancing critical inquiry, free expression, and civil discourse on campuses across the country. By the end of the spring semester, their numbers had grown to 77 (and counting). Presidents initiated a range of activities, including new courses, dialogue dinners, events, speeches, and free expression campaigns—many of which are detailed in this progress report.

Now, the coalition is ready to scale in both its membership and its impact.

Every institution aims to help all students, not just those who opt in, engage in civil discourse. What sets this approach apart is the combination of skill-building with the motivation and social permission needed for constructive conversations. This ensures that students carry these abilities with them beyond campus, into their jobs, and throughout their communities.

The impact will be visible across campus—in lecture halls and dining halls, labs and event spaces, administrative offices, and student lounges. By the end of the upcoming academic year, 20% of the coalition aims to reach every student on campus, renewing their campuses into vibrant hubs of civil discourse! [Learn more about next steps towards this goal.](#)

As presidents gear up for the new academic year, they remain mindful of ongoing societal unrest, particularly with an approaching election season. However, this moment calls for envisioning democracy and campus life at their best—demanding a more equitable, humane way to engage with one another. It's challenging yet essential work, crucial for both higher education and democracy's future.

While the work has only just begun, I'm pleased to share the consortium's progress so far. The momentum of College Presidents for Civic Preparedness—especially in such a difficult year for higher education—is truly inspiring.

**Raj Vinnakota, President  
Institute for Citizens & Scholars**



### CITIZENS & SCHOLARS COLLEGE PRESIDENTS FOR CIVIC PREPAREDNESS

#### AUGUST 2023

Public launch of College Presidents for Civic Preparedness

Faculty Institute convening at Duke University

#### FALL 2023

College presidents kick off academic year with Campus Call for Free Expression, earning national media coverage

#### OCTOBER 2023

Israel-Hamas war, igniting campus protests, debates and boycotts

#### DECEMBER 2023

First congressional hearing with presidents addressing accusations of antisemitism on college campuses

#### JANUARY 2024

Annual convening at Howard University

#### APRIL 2024

Coalition opens up to all presidents

Measurement Working Group convening at the Johns Hopkins University and Georgetown University

First Confidential Forum for Presidents

#### MAY 2024

Second congressional hearing with presidents addressing accusations of antisemitism on college campuses

#### JUNE 2024

Faculty Institute convening at Rutgers University

Second Confidential Forum for Presidents



## CITIZENS & SCHOLARS COLLEGE PRESIDENTS FOR CIVIC PREPAREDNESS

College Presidents for Civic Preparedness is preparing students to participate in our dynamic, diverse, and often contentious society.

### COMMON GOAL

The coalition’s current priority is advancing civil discourse, ensuring every student learns to seek diverse perspectives, engage constructively, and confidently express views, even amid disagreements.

### COLLECTIVE ACTION

The presidents co-authored the [Civic Commitments](#) as a blueprint to revitalize campuses as vibrant hubs of civil discourse.

### COLLABORATION

Presidents convene regularly to exchange insights and support each other in overcoming challenges while implementing this initiative nationwide.

As a result, the campuses where College Presidents for Civic Preparedness lead are emerging as beacons of free inquiry and civil discourse:

- ▶ Classrooms will come alive with passionate discussions on today’s most pressing topics, where every student will lean in to ask questions, share ideas, and challenge conventional wisdom.
- ▶ Auditoriums and lecture halls will be filled with students participating energetically in thoughtful debates with provocative guest speakers.
- ▶ On campus quads and online platforms, students from diverse political and social backgrounds will advocate for their viewpoints through productive discussions, events, and protests, while actively seeking to build trust and find common ground with others.

This progress report for the academic year August 2023–June 2024 shows how this initiative is working towards improving campus life and fostering a civic revival that reverberates throughout society, with a goal of creating a lasting impact beyond our campuses.





# COALITION

## BY THE NUMBERS

77



Presidents

with an average **7 years** presidential experience

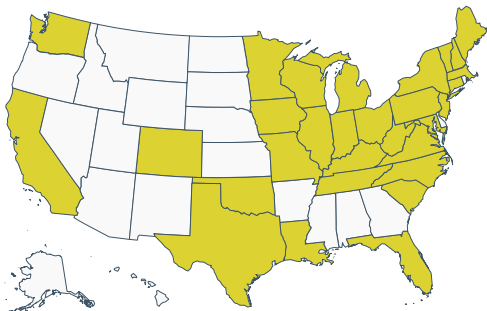
*Broad array of institutions*

**59** PRIVATE

**18** PUBLIC

**7** MINORITY SERVING

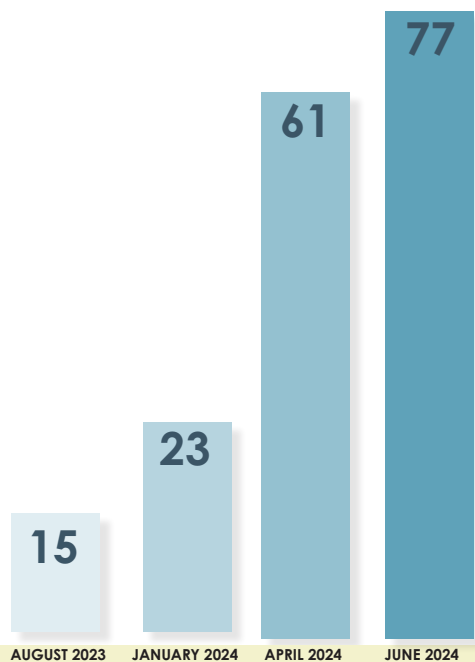
**9** FAITH CENTERED



**30** states & District of Columbia

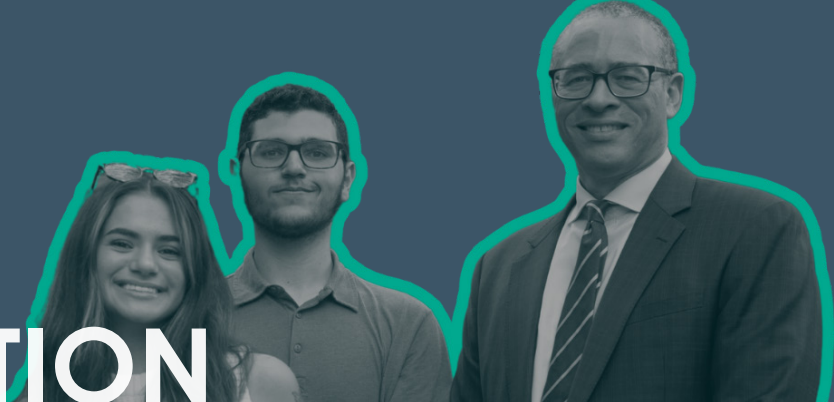
531,304

Students



*First year membership growth*

# COLLABORATION



*This collective approach affords us the opportunity to share best practices and to critically interrogate ideas, policies and programs for potential implementation on our campuses. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, presidential participants are committed to finding constructive solutions and creating deep engagement around notions of civic engagement on college campuses.*

**Roslyn Clark Artis**  
President, Benedict College

## Confidential Forum for Presidents

The Confidential Forum for Presidents was launched to give leaders a private space to discuss challenges, share insights, and collaborate on the urgent issues of managing campus protests, fostering productive student activism, and preparing for the federal election. Each forum was highly participatory and concluded with a briefing and set of recommendations, which presidents used to inform and refine their campus policies and practices.



## Measurement Working Group

In May 2023, Citizens & Scholars and Claremont McKenna College convened a “Bell Labs” working group focused on civic learning in higher education. Over 18 months, participants were given the tools, resources, support, and peer convenings to strengthen assessment approaches at their own institutions. The Working Group helped build a more comprehensive network of campus leaders committed to this work and a stronger knowledge base across higher education.



► [Explore More](#)

► [Explore More](#)



# COLLECTIVE ACTION

## THE CIVIC COMMITMENTS

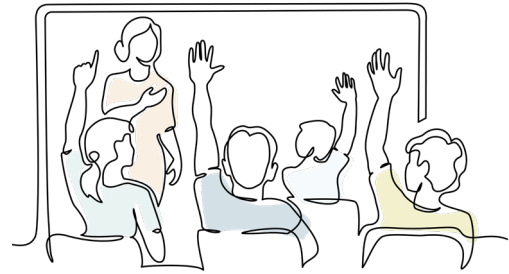
Leaders in College Presidents for Civic Preparedness have created a fresh and pragmatic framework for fostering free expression, civil discourse, and civic readiness within higher education. Co-created by the consortium presidents, the Civic Commitments offer a realistic and reasonable blueprint for advancing American higher education's role to uphold democratic principles in our rapidly changing era. These commitments move beyond oversimplified debates around free speech versus diversity and inclusion. Instead, they prioritize meaningful engagement with diverse voices and viewpoints, underline the importance of supporting free inquiry for democratic understanding, and recognize diversity as a cornerstone of both American democracy and campus life.

► [Explore More](#)

*Having safe opportunities for our students to **practice sharing their perspectives—and to thoughtfully disagree** with one another—is essential to their liberal arts education.*

**Kate Morris**  
President, St. Lawrence University

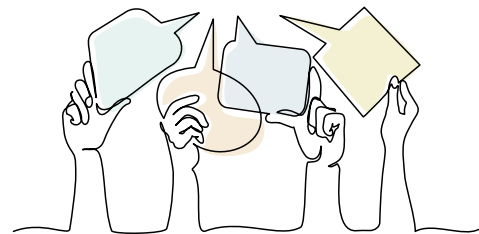
► **Educating for democracy is central to our mission.**



► **We will prepare our students for a vibrant, diverse, and contentious society.**



► **We will protect and defend free inquiry.**



# STRATEGIC VISION & YEARLY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In response to the pressing need to address polarization, College Presidents for Civic Preparedness envisions a future where all campuses are vibrant hubs for civil discourse.

The consortium aims to equip every undergraduate student with the

- ▶ motivation
- ▶ social permission
- ▶ skill set

necessary to engage in civil discourse—a truly distinctive approach. While others may focus solely on skill development, our interventions—partnering with top skills-based programs—address all three key aspects, ensuring a lasting impact.

Furthermore, every institution is working towards reaching students across every area of campus,

- ▶ president- or provost-led initiatives
- ▶ classrooms
- ▶ centers and institutes
- ▶ auditoriums and event spaces
- ▶ campus life

Amidst one of the most challenging years in higher education, consortium members are beginning to realize this vision in unique ways at their institutions. In this inaugural year, each leader created a campus activation plan. Some are just starting their journey, while others have woven civil discourse into campus and academic life.

## A Strong Start

*This year, members offered a wealth of opt-in activities for students*

**88%**

offered courses or seminars that centered on civil discourse

**98%**

hosted speaker series, dialogue dinners, or debates

**98%**

generated new civic research, fellowships, or initiatives

**94%**

held community, civic, or political engagement events

In 2025, **20%** of current consortium members will offer programs to reach **every student**



Here's what that looks like





# Campuses Can Be Vibrant Hubs of Civil Discourse

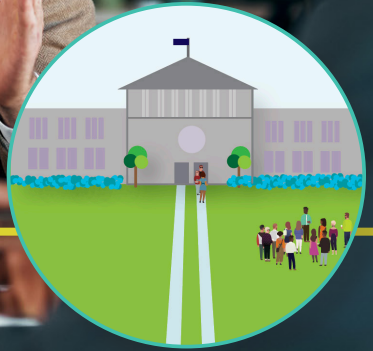
College presidents are driving a civic transformation on college campuses, preparing students for active participation in our dynamic, diverse, and often contentious society.



*Explore the following pages to learn how campuses are beginning to emerge as beacons of free inquiry and civil discourse.*

A photograph of a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a brown blazer over a white shirt, sitting at a table in a meeting. He is gesturing with both hands as if speaking. Other people are partially visible around the table, some looking towards him. The background shows a modern office or meeting space with green pendant lights.

# ADMINISTRATION



Presidents, provosts, and other university administrators have initiated theme years focused on discourse and dialogue, delivering presidential speeches such as the Campus Call for Free Expression to set the tone for civil discourse, and launching campuswide dialogue projects. By spearheading these efforts, presidents are establishing that civil discourse and critical inquiry are key priorities at their institutions.





# ADMINISTRATION

## CAMPUS CALL FOR FREE EXPRESSION

[Campus Call for Free Expression](#) was a coordinated initiative involving 13 College Presidents for Civic Preparedness institutions, featuring presidential and campus activities designed to spotlight the principles of critical inquiry and civil discourse.

**Dillard University** President Rochelle Ford’s [Spring 2024 welcome back message](#) focused on the importance of creating a “brave space” on campus rather than a “safe space.”

The **University of Notre Dame** President Father John Jenkins utilized his [Fall 2023 Opening Mass Homily](#) to emphasize the importance of contributing to the common good and highlighted how universities depend on the diverse contributions of all individuals.

## CAMPUSWIDE INITIATIVES

**Claremont McKenna College**’s [Open Academy](#) provides opportunities for students to build foundations, expand capabilities, and develop mastery of each of the CMC commitments: freedom of expression, viewpoint diversity, and constructive dialogue.

**Xavier University**’s [Take It On](#) initiative prepares students for civic engagement, emphasizing civil discourse across difference.

## THEME YEAR

**University of Pittsburgh** designated 2023–2024 as the [Year of Discourse & Dialogue](#), funding 35 proposals from the Pitt community to support speaker engagements, activities, and workshops that expand critical inquiry and discourse.



News coverage about Campus Call appeared in dozens of national, regional, and industry media.

*In your classrooms and practice halls, in locker rooms and labs, you will come up against viewpoints and opinions that are dramatically different from your own. I urge you to listen to those opposing perspectives and grapple with new evidence; to have your ideas changed by the views and experiences of others; and to allow your experiences and views to inform those of your peers.*

**Ron Daniels**  
President, The Johns Hopkins University



Cornell University's [Freedom of Expression Theme Year](#) included student debates and competitions, symposiums, a speaker series on antisemitism and Islamophobia, journalist panels on political polarization and free press, and art and fashion exhibitions.

## CAMPUSWIDE DIALOGUE PROJECTS

Carnegie Mellon University kicked off the [Deeper Conversations series](#), which offers lectures and cultural events that explore complex societal issues. Spring 2024 programming examined the conflict in the Middle East and combating antisemitism and Islamophobia.

Dartmouth launched the [Dialogue Project](#) in January 2024 to develop collaborative dialogue skills among students, faculty, and staff. The four main components are a special topic series starting with Middle East Dialogues, a partnership with StoryCorps' One Small Step program, workshops, and guest speakers.

Duke University led a year-long [Provost's Initiative on the Middle East](#) featuring events, programs, and engagement opportunities designed to model thoughtful civil engagement, provide a forum for different perspectives, and enhance understanding based on expertise and scholarship.

*Higher education must be on the frontlines of reclaiming civic education.*

Michael Davis  
President, Fairmont State University

## PRESIDENT SPEAKER SERIES

Delta College's [President's Speaker Series](#) hosted an April 2024 event with journalist Mónica Guzmán on bridging divides with curiosity and conversation.

## PRESIDENT-LED CIVIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMING

University of Southern Maine's [President's Civic Leadership Academy](#) immerses students in local democracy and community issues, emphasizing the importance of identifying reliable information and engaging in respectful, deliberative dialogue.

*Facilitating civil discourse and modeling its power to unify, educate and build bridges is precisely the role that higher education can and should play in a society increasingly marked by division.*

Farnam Jahanian,  
President, Carnegie Mellon University





## POLICY UPDATES

**Bennington College's** Free Expression Task Force brings together a diverse group of students, faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees members to thoughtfully craft long-term policies that ensure these fundamental rights are preserved and nurtured within the institution.

**Rhodes College's** Expressive Speech Working Group is developing a campus statement of principles and collaborating with stakeholders to enhance the focus on skill-building for citizenship in the first-year experience.

*Many institutions of higher education purport to challenge their students to think critically and engage with ideas on the cutting edge, but **the Ath is one place where this is done in practice.***

Adrian Flynn, Claremont McKenna College student and Woolley Athenaeum Fellow. The Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum (the "Ath") is a signature program of CMC's Open Academy.

*Washington University in St. Louis Chancellor Andrew D. Martin facilitating a discussion on free speech.*







# CLASSROOMS

Classrooms are coming alive with passionate discussions on today's most pressing topics, where every student can lean in to ask questions, share ideas, and challenge conventional wisdom. Dialogue across difference is gaining traction through courses and seminars on free expression for students, along with workshops and programs like the Faculty Institute, to bolster faculty members' ability to design curricula that encourage civil discourse in the classroom and beyond.



# CLASSROOM

## CURRICULA, FIRST-YEAR LEARNING, AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

**Longwood University's** [senior-level symposium](#) is a culmination of its Civitae classes focused on the common good.

**Pace University** requires courses in [Civic Engagement and Public Values](#) to address fundamental problems and issues in the arts and sciences from diverse perspectives and approaches.

**Rollins College's** [Intercultural Competency](#) course fosters dialogue across difference to find common solutions to advance a shared project.

**Butler University's** [Indianapolis Community Requirement](#) involves students in community partnerships.

**Washington University in St. Louis** hosted a [two-day lecture series](#) led by Chancellor Andrew D. Martin, where participants analyzed real-world cases involving First Amendment issues on college campuses.

**Mercy University** freshmen take a [critical inquiry course](#) to advance their critical thinking, critical reading and information literacy competencies.

**University of Tulsa** offers constructive conversation training in its First-Year Experience (FYE1001) course.

**Indiana University's** Political and Civic Engagement ([PACE](#)) Program offers a 22-credit hour undergraduate certificate along with real-world projects and hands-on learning, from nonpartisan voter registration to encouraging civil dialogue on campus and beyond.

**University of Virginia** students reported a [positive climate in classrooms](#) for diverse perspectives in Fall 2023 course evaluations.

88%

of institutions offered courses or seminars that centered on civil discourse.



*Montclair State University President Jonathan Koppell talking with a student on Montclair's Day of Service.*

*It's pretty cool to know that our **administration is dedicated to teaching students about free speech** and what that means for students who want to be vocal and active about the changes in our country or changes on our campus.*

Ashton Lee, Washington University in St. Louis sophomore and Student Union senator



The [University of Illinois College of Law First Amendment Clinic](#) supports freedom of expression and civic engagement by enhancing law students' understanding of the First Amendment and providing a resource for organizations, students, journalists, and citizens defending and advancing First Amendment protections.

[Rutgers University](#) President Jonathan Holloway's [2023 Byrne Seminar](#) for first-year students heightened their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of citizenship and featured conversations with distinguished leaders on critical questions related to citizenship.

[Middlebury College](#) introduced [five new courses](#) in 2023–2024 focused on building students' conflict transformation skills.

*I was interested in having experiences with people who believe different things than me, as a reflection of how the world is going to be when we get out of the bubble of college. You have to make a conscious **decision to be in spaces that are outside your comfort zone, and just allow yourself the possibility of a surprise.***

Skye Snider, University of Virginia  
fourth-year student



*Rutgers University President Jonathan Holloway  
with Raj Vinnakota, President of Citizens & Scholars.*

# CLASSROOM



## FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

University of Wisconsin-Madison's [Discussion Project](#) is a professional development series designed to help UW faculty create welcoming, engaging, and academically rigorous classroom environments in which students experience productive classroom discussions. [Recent survey results](#) found that a majority of students largely believe that their instructors encourage diverse viewpoints in the classroom.

Amherst College is offering [faculty grants to develop new, innovative courses](#) supporting democratic practices and engagement, freedom of speech, and civil dialogue. Funding was awarded for proposals from more than 25 faculty in spring 2024, with the first cohort of courses to launch in 2024-25.

*I believe people are more **tolerant and willing to listen than I initially thought.***

*I am hopeful that with competent facilitators, it is possible to get any group of people to have a productive discussion.*

Student, James Madison University

*“I don't think we could do much of anything without a willingness and an ability to engage with people we disagree with. I tell my students often that it is baked into our system of government. There's a back and forth, and then out of that comes some sort of compromise or an ability to find common ground and advance those ideas. We can't have a successful representative democracy if we can't even talk to each other.”*



Elizabeth Matto  
Director, Eagleton Institute of Politics  
Rutgers University  
Faculty Institute Participant





# FACULTY INSTITUTE



## The Faculty Institute is a virtual and in-person community of learning and purpose.

Over 18 months, faculty are provided the resources, support, and opportunities to hear and work with experts and one another and to apply and practice civil discourse. Participants refine their understanding of free expression and civil discourse, expand their intellectual frameworks in this area, and develop courses and initiatives to help students prepare and graduate with the skillsets to engage and thrive in our diverse democracy.

Naturally, faculty emerge as champions for this work at their institutions. They help scale new approaches, provide opportunities for other faculty to get involved, and positively impact their campus environment.

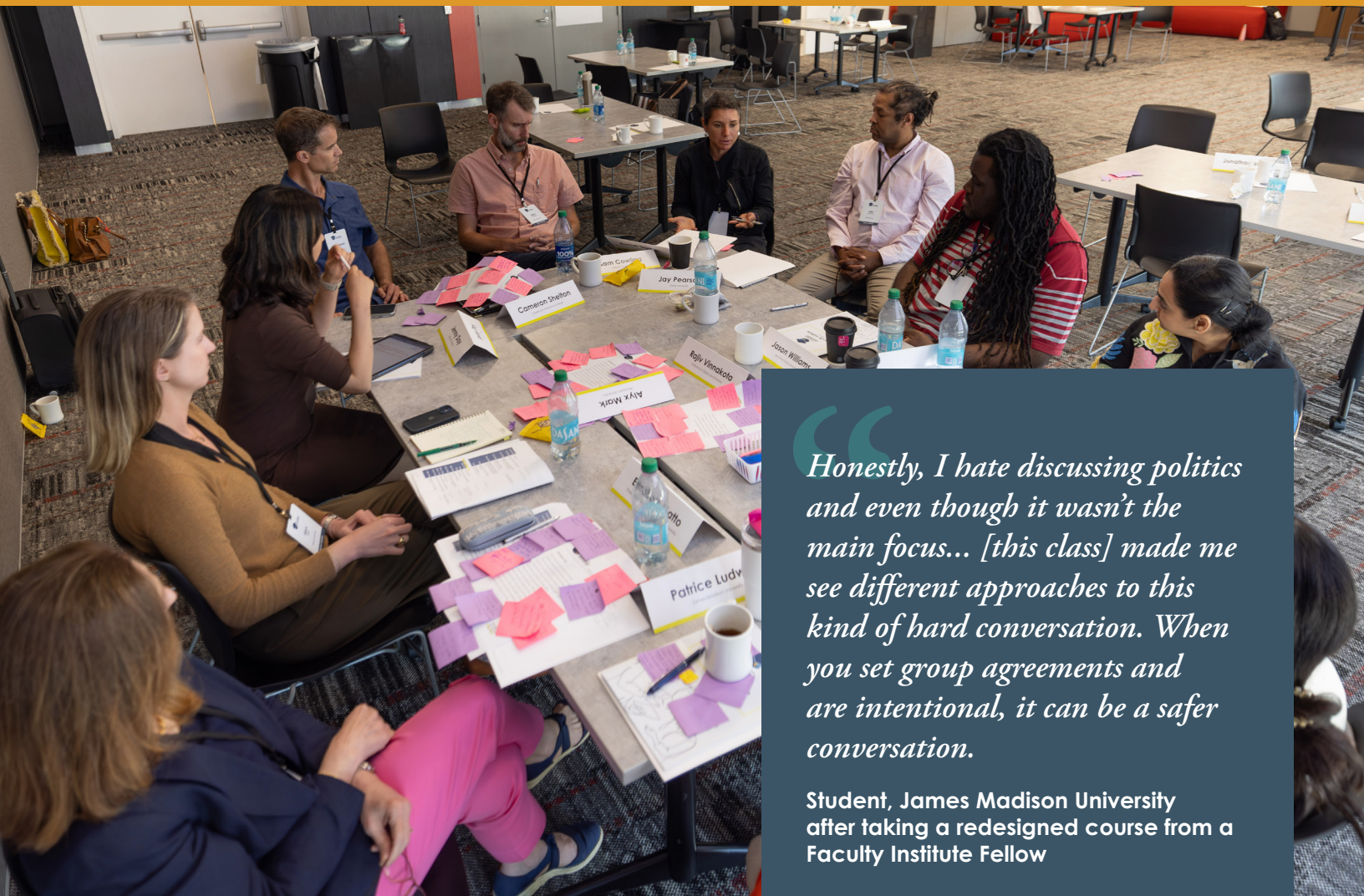
► [Explore More](#)





*The break-out sessions gave me the opportunity to drill down to the core of what civil discourse means. I now walk away from this with a better understanding.*

Faculty Institute participant



*Honestly, I hate discussing politics and even though it wasn't the main focus... [this class] made me see different approaches to this kind of hard conversation. When you set group agreements and are intentional, it can be a safer conversation.*

Student, James Madison University after taking a redesigned course from a Faculty Institute Fellow





# CENTERS & INSTITUTES



Centers and institutes are ramping up efforts to conduct cutting-edge research and innovative scholarship on democracy, political participation, civil discourse, and other complex societal challenges. They are offering more hands-on civic learning experiences, internships, and fellowships, equipping students with the tools and skills to make meaningful contributions to our democracy.



# CENTERS & INSTITUTES

## RESEARCH

**Georgetown University's** [Free Speech Project](#) is a student-staff initiative that examines free speech on a national scale and holds public forums with expert opinion and analysis.

The **University of Maine's** [Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center](#) is a nonpartisan, independent research and public service addressing issues concerning the state and nation.

## LEADERSHIP & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

**Harvey Mudd College's** [Office of Civic and Community Engagement](#) provides campus-level infrastructure for civic learning and engagement.

**Gettysburg College's** [Eisenhower Institute](#) empowers students to tackle challenging public policy issues in real-time through experiential learning.

**Wellesley College** launched the [Hillary Rodham Clinton Center for Citizenship, Leadership, and Democracy](#) in April 2024 to prepare the next generation of civic leaders through three components—the Clinton Fellows sophomore experience, the Faculty Research Initiative, and an annual global convening.

**Davidson College** is establishing a center for democracy and the common good to coordinate activities that help students and employees become effective leaders and citizens.

**Kenyon College's** [Center for American Democracy](#) organizes conferences, lectures and seminars to stimulate nonpartisan civic and political discourse.

**Drew University's** Civic Engagement Center offers a robust [Drew Action Scholars](#) program that works with a large cohort of students passionate about leading social change.

**98%** of institutions generated new civic research, fellowships, or initiatives.

## SPACES DEDICATED TO DEVELOPING CIVIL DISCOURSE SKILLS

**Colorado College's** [Speaking Center](#) provides in-person oral communication tutoring and strategic communication workshops to support students with in-class debates, group work and class participation.

The **University of Dayton's** [Dialogue Zone](#) offers small group conversations and mini-courses to help students, faculty, and staff engage in and facilitate discussions on critical topics impacting the campus community and beyond.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CENTERS

**Grinnell College** marked a key milestone in the Renfrow Hall construction with a “topping off” ceremony in January 2024. The new building will house the [Katherine Howell Weingart '61 Civic Innovation Pavilion](#), dedicated to fostering dialogue and collaborative problem-solving with the community.



A photograph of a man with a beard and short dark hair, wearing a red t-shirt with a graphic design, speaking into a microphone. He is standing on a stage or in a lecture hall, with other people visible in the background. The image is framed by a yellow border.

# AUDITORIUM



**Auditoriums and lecture halls will be filled with students participating energetically in thoughtful debates with provocative guest speakers. Activities such as speaker and debate series, first-year orientation programs on free expression, civil discourse fellows-in-residence, and events promoting democratic engagement and critical inquiry are beginning to encourage open dialogue and the robust exchange of ideas.**

# AUDITORIUM



## SPEAKERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Hamilton College's [Common Ground](#) is an acclaimed multi-format program that brings respected thought leaders to the Hamilton campus to participate in small classroom dialogues and large event discussions.

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts' [Michael S. and Kitty Dukakis Public Policy Lecture](#) featured Supreme Court expert and UC Berkeley Law Professor Amanda Tyler, who engaged in classroom discussions and a Q&A with students and faculty before the public event.

## PUBLIC EVENTS AND LECTURES

The University of Richmond's [Sharp Viewpoints Speakers Series](#) featured Suzanne Nossel, CEO of PEN America, and legal scholar Robert P. George, discussing dialogue, difference, and civil discourse.

Whitman College's [Dignity & Dialogue Series](#), launched in Spring 2024, featured public lectures, workshops, and small group discussions on the Israel-Gaza War, antisemitism, and Islamophobia, aimed at enhancing students' discourse skills.

Centre College hosted an event, "Free Speech & the Inclusive Campus: A Deliberative Dialogue" for students, faculty, and staff in Centre's downtown collaboration space, CentreWorks, using an issue guide from the National Issues Forums Institute.

La Salle University's [John Henry Newman Lecture Series](#) brings thought-provoking speakers to campus to foster critical thinking and civil dialogue, including April 2024 lecturer Greg Lukianoff, CEO of FIRE, who discussed campus censorship and free speech.

Wesleyan University held a [Democracy in Action](#) convening that featured discussions on the power of media, civic education, and arts activism, including a media literacy workshop and civic action fair.

98%

hosted speaker series, dialogue dinners, or debates.

University of Tennessee-Knoxville launched a [Civic Leadership Lecture Series](#) in February 2024 to bring experts to campus for thoughtful and respectful debate and discussion.

## SCHOLARS IN RESIDENCE

Skidmore College hosted [Frederick M. Lawrence](#), a leading expert on free expression, for a three-day residency in March 2024 featuring multiple workshops and talks on advancing difficult conversations.



Hamilton College

*It was very hands-on. We actually took three different claims [that were] put on Twitter and analyzed them, which I thought was an **interesting way to put ideals into practice.***

Nicole Allina, Wesleyan University senior, on the Democracy in Action media literacy workshop



## ACROSS-THE-AISLE CONVERSATIONS

Macalester College hosts the [Congress to Campus](#) program, allowing students to engage in bipartisan conversations with members of Congress modeling respectful dialogue.

## STUDENT ORIENTATION

Denison University's [freshmen orientation](#) allowed students to participate in a live debate on the ethics of ChatGPT facilitated by Braver Angels, encouraging them to engage with ideas thoughtfully.

James Madison University partnered with the [Bipartisan Policy Center](#) to host a training for incoming students to explore and celebrate free expression, its importance, and the opportunities it presents in academic settings.

## NATIONAL CONFERENCES

Howard University students participated in the [Stavros Niarchos Foundation \(SNF\) Ithaca National Student Dialogue](#) in March at the University of Delaware, where they explored the theme of "Free Expression and the Inclusive Community."

In a survey sent to Denison students after a freshmen orientation debate, 80% of respondents said it "caused them to re-evaluate their position [on free speech] even if they did not change their mind."

*Don't be afraid of engaging in the process of civil discourse, of having those difficult conversations that are sometimes divisive. You **can't reach any goal, any widespread or effectual goal, without some divisiveness and some conflict.***

Daniel Singh, Howard University student

*James Madison University*







# CAMPUS LIFE

On campus quads and online platforms, students from diverse political and social backgrounds will advocate for their viewpoints through productive discussions, events, and protests, while actively seeking to build trust and find common ground with others. Programming is underway that fosters civil discourse, civic engagement, and the promotion of free expression and critical inquiry as community values.

# CAMPUS LIFE



## DIALOGUE SERIES

DePauw University's [Center for Spiritual Life](#) provides opportunities for interfaith engagement, including a dinner co-hosted by DePauw's Hillel and Muslim Student Association.

St. Olaf College students across the political spectrum participated in [dinner conversations](#) encouraging challenging conversations among peers with opposing viewpoints.

Sewanee: The University of the South's [Dinner & Dialogue](#) project included a forum on free expression and campus inclusion.

Wake Forest University's [Deacon Dialogue: Let's Talk](#) series held a political polarization event for the campus community.

Cleveland State University's [Courageous Conversations](#) tackles topics on inclusiveness and diversity through honest discussions in a safe space.

Elon University's [Active Citizen Series](#) helps students understand how government works and develop skills for civil discourse across political divides.

**94%** held community, civic, or political engagement events.

**Explain your views and try to understand the other person.**

*You're not trying to convince the other person to change their mind.*

Sarah Dustin, St. Olaf junior, on setting ground rules for a dinner focused on discussion across difference

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Colby College's [Program for Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships](#) is a living and learning community housing 200 students, faculty, and staff who are deeply engaged in the city of Waterville, while also serving and supporting business, civic, and community organizations.

*I joined College Presidents for Civic Preparedness to help Ohio Wesleyan promote civic education, academic freedom, and civil discourse, which sometimes appear to conflict. I believe they are symbiotic and form the bedrock of a vibrant and inclusive academy.*





Salem State University's [First Year Day of Service](#) allows students to complete neighborhood projects with community partners.

Quinnipiac University participated in [The Big Event](#), a day of service that mobilized hundreds of campus volunteers to give back to the local community.

*Luther College already has a reputation for leadership in environmental sustainability, and we know that economic sustainability is a key concern for both the College and our town and region. But just as key is the notion of civic sustainability—that in order for all to thrive as a society, it is crucial that **we are adept at communicating, advocating, and acting across our differences** for the common good.*

Jenifer K. Ward  
President, Luther College

## VOTING INITIATIVES

Vassar College recently secured the right to [host a polling place](#) on its campus after a lengthy legal battle.

Susquehanna University's [Achieve. Lead. Vote!](#) initiative, driven by students, has achieved notable success in voter registration.

Augsburg University designates Election Day as a [campus holiday](#).

El Paso Community College annually hosts a Constitution & Voter Registration Day.

Claffin University is holding a 2024 voter registration drive and march to the polls.

Virginia Wesleyan University's [Marlins Vote](#) engagement initiative promotes a three-point program featuring voter registration, issues education, and volunteer opportunities.

## CAMPUSWIDE EVENTS

The University of Denver's [Spark 2024: Day of Free Expression & Pluralism](#) featured an expert panel on free speech vs. hate speech and an interdisciplinary panel on the relationship between social justice and civil discourse.

Stetson University's [Values Day](#) tradition includes canceling classes and closing offices. This year's theme, "Things We Don't Talk About at Dinner," featured a faculty panel titled "Great Minds Who Don't Think Alike," 29 workshops, and a global citizenship fair.

Sarah Lawrence College has hosted an institution-wide annual series of programs and events on themes broadly under the inaugural "[Democracy and Education](#)" series.

*Students are arriving on campus not knowing how to talk to each other, especially those with different viewpoints, and we cannot afford to allow them to leave campus without having learned that critical set of skills.*

Garry Jenkins  
President, Bates College



# LOOK AHEAD



## From Campus to Country: Higher Ed Can Fuel America's Civic Revival

This year has been pivotal for both American democracy and higher education, with leaders of College Presidents for Civic Preparedness rising to the challenge. By the end of the spring semester, the coalition welcomed 77 leaders from a diverse range of institutions, with new members continuing to join each month.

As the new academic year begins, it brings with it a period of heightened unrest. With one of the most contentious federal elections in recent history on the horizon, college campuses are at the forefront of this crucial moment.

Among the many priorities coalition presidents will address this year, 77% have identified advancing civil discourse as a top priority. Coalition leaders are working together to foster a productive atmosphere on campuses nationwide, with the goal of making a lasting impact that extends beyond the November election.

By the end of the academic year, 20% of the institutions in the coalition will have reached every student on their campuses, equipping them with the motivation, social support, and skills needed for engaging in civil discourse. The remaining institutions will continue to make substantial progress toward this goal.

This crucial work will not only enhance campus life but also ignite a civic revival across America. Most institutions are working with Citizens & Scholars to adopt progress metrics and share case studies. Every institution will continue to make substantial progress towards this, and future annual reports will highlight ongoing progress and lessons learned.

### PRESIDENT OUTLOOK

**77%**

rank advancing civil discourse as a high priority

**20%**

commit to campuswide integration in classrooms, centers and institutes, auditoriums and event spaces, president- or provost-led initiatives, and campus life

**94%**

are optimistic that higher education can contribute to a civic revival across America



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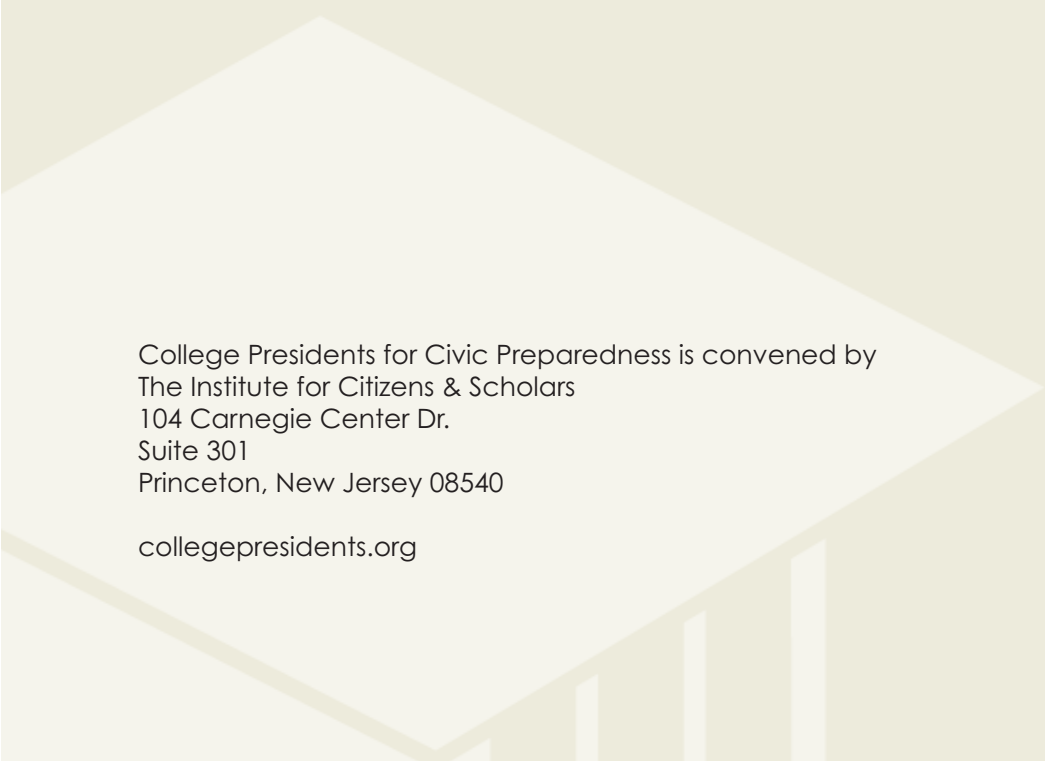
**Campus Life:**

Ohio Wesleyan University  
Bates College



*ECMC Foundation is proud to help support the work being carried out through College Presidents for Civic Preparedness. This consortium leverages the collective power of leaders from a wide range of different institutions. By working together, they are ensuring that our country's undergraduates gain the skills they need to become empowered citizens.*

**Jacob Fraire**  
President, ECMC Foundation



College Presidents for Civic Preparedness is convened by  
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### **About the Institute for Citizens & Scholars**

The Institute for Citizens & Scholars ([citizensandscholars.org](http://citizensandscholars.org)) is a more-than-75-year-old organization that has played a significant role in shaping American higher education. Now, with an expanded mission, Citizens & Scholars prepares leaders and engages networks of people and organizations to meet urgent education challenges. The overarching goal is to shape an informed, productively engaged, and committed citizenry.