

Viewpoint Diversity Initiatives

University of Tennessee Space Institute

In alignment with the State of Tennessee's Campus Free Speech Protection Act, the UT Board of Trustees Policy Affirming Principles of Free Speech for Students and Faculty, UT System's BE ONE UT core values, and UTSI'S Strategic Plan, our campus works together to ensure a climate welcoming of diverse viewpoints for all faculty, staff, and students.

Our mission guides what we do with integrity and civility. We achieve excellence by actively engaging students, faculty, and staff, embracing diversity and inclusion, inspiring positive change and enriching and sustaining our community.

Below are viewpoint diversity initiatives planned or being planned and/or conducted during the current 2022-2023 academic year at the University of Tennessee Space Institute:

Vol is a Verb Pledge

The Vol is a Verb pledge, which students recite as part of a welcome event for new students, includes a call for viewpoint diversity and respectful dialogue. The pledge reads:

*To create a campus where everyone belongs, I pledge:
to listen first,
to build space for challenging ideas and diverse points of view,
to cultivate relationships that contribute to my growth as an individual,
to respect myself and those around me,
and to act with honesty, compassion, and courage.*

Student Summit on Free Expression (Spring)

Thru UTK, planning will soon be underway to partner with PEN America to again offer the student summit on free expression of ideas. The summit will provide a foundational understanding of free expression as a human rights issue and political conversations for students.

You Might Be Right Podcast

Moderated by former governors Bredesen and Haslam, each episode of the podcast, You Might Be Right, includes a guest on either side of a political issue, and the governors process what they've heard at the end of the episode, helping listeners understand how to bridge the divide. Subscribe and listen [here](#).

Faculty Divisive Concepts Website

A [website](#) was launched to support faculty free speech, including guidance on viewpoint diversity.

Intercultural Awareness and Conflict Mitigation STAFF (FALL)

Hosted a 90-minute virtual workshop conducted by Dr. Bobbie Porter, Organizational Effectiveness & Inclusion Consultant and Higher Education Diversity Practitioner. Better culture starts with better conversations and a better understanding of the ways in which we show up in spaces. By improving the quality of your organization's everyday conversations, you will develop a culture of increased openness, respect for differences, and understanding – which will fuel collaboration, more innovation, and greater effectiveness. Explored the different dimensions of identity creates an opportunity to build community, increase sensitivity, and experience authenticity. In this session, participants will examine the different identities and assumptions about themselves and others. Further, participants engaged in productive conversations while learning how to connect with diverse colleagues at various levels. This session covered conflict that arises due to cultural differences and provide best practices to mitigate these issues in academic settings. Through introductions and awareness exercises participants discovered how knowledge of the dimensions of identity encourages productivity. These sessions provided the participants with information on how they manage conflict in their lives and reflect on ways that they adequately address conflict in the spaces they occupy.

Intercultural Awareness and Conflict Mitigation STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF (SPRING)

Will host another 90-minute virtual workshop with same content as session hosted in the fall for staff with emphasis on civility, free speech, and open dialogue.

Multicultural Advisory Committee FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS

The goal of this diverse committee is to have dialogue around strategies for creating and sustaining a welcoming and inclusive environment at UTSI. Free speech is welcome and encouraged. Open dialogue is expected and encouraged.