

DCI Deliberative Forum on Free Expression at Davidson

April 23, 2025

Comments, Suggestions, and Questions from Participants

Participants were invited to complete a short survey after the event; 39 completed the survey and 13 responded to the following question:

“Building on your conversation and tonight's event, would you like to share any other comments, suggestions, or questions about free expression at Davidson that you would like the College to take into consideration in its approach to managing the tensions around protecting freedom of expression and promoting belong and mutual respect?”

All of the responses to this question are included below:

- “It would be nice to get a status of the "consensus" on campus.”
- “It would be interesting to know more about what "due process" means in terms of how Davidson handles complaints and discipline. That has been a topic of some concern on many other campuses.”
- “My small group agreed that handling Code of Responsibility infractions with respect to free-expression disputes needs more emphasis on restorative solutions rather than punitive ones.”
- “I was disturbed by Jim Martin's desire for the college to hire more conservative professors. I want Davidson to hire the best. Hiring conservative professors is creating a special category in diversity that has nothing to do with diversity.”
- “I'd like to see required training for all students on how to have constructive conversations that encourage students to first seek to understand, to practice intentional listening, to encourage others to engage in conversation and be represented, to authentically acknowledge the views of others and the rights they have to have those views, and to get to the "why" of why people hold certain views.”
- “Stacey Riemer mentioned, I thought, that enforcement of the Code of Responsibility is intended to be restorative. However, as I read the procedures, it seems that they are unfettered and could be punitive. I'm concerned, in particular, about overly zealous enforcement of what could be perceived by victims as hate or harmful speech. I would like to see the restorative nature of the remedies emphasized and spelled out--e.g., structured discussions with the affected parties.”
- “I think what is most critical about how the college manages these tensions is to use best practices and evidence-based decision-making, and to continue to use the college's

statement of purpose as a foundation. That is to say, the process by which decisions and policies are made is at least as important as the outcome.”

- “I hope that those who were not here tonight get involved in similar forums in the future so that all of our discourse is respectful and thoughtful and not just shouting or offensive to suppress or threaten others.”
- “I am curious about any expectations for outside speakers. Does the College share with them our statement on freedom of expression? I also wonder if Davidson’s roots in The Reformed Tradition come into the conversation about responsible freedom of expression.”
- “I recently read Jonathan Haidt's *The Coddling of the American Mind* and found two insights particularly important: 1) Helping students be strong like fires that are energized by winds of challenge, rather than candle flames that are easily extinguished by the wind. I think this is an outstanding goal for all of us raising children or engaged in education.
2) Teaching people to assume the best of others, rather than developing a "call-out culture" on campus where people are primed to take offense.”
- “Knowing students are conscientious with a heavy academic load, increase ways to engage them in the conversation about Code of Conduct and examples of free expression challenges. Shorten the Code (written in 1968?); re-write with student input in modern language...”
- “Very fine event.”
- “I think Davidson does too much to protect its students and faculty (perhaps) from the reality of extreme conversation they will face in their careers.”