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Stanford Workshop on Civic Engagement

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At the University of Denver, we've been pursuing a number of curricular and co-curricular strategies/pathways to engage our students – and our broader community of students, staff, and faculty – in free expression, civil discourse, and civic engagement. Below, I've highlighted the most relevant initiatives for purposes of this workshop:

- A. Pilot 8-10 sections of the First-Year Seminar (FSEM) in Fall 2024 specifically focused on matters of free expression and civic engagement in a democracy. This builds on the Spring 2024 Provost Conference on "The Role and Value of Higher Education in a Democracy," where faculty concluded that developing a first-year required course on free expression and civic engagement should be an element of our work to strengthen our democracy and democratic ideals.

We will pilot the course this coming fall under the auspices of the First-Year Seminar and iterate in subsequent quarters as we work toward scaling up for all first-year students. Our Faculty Director of Free Expression Initiatives will work with the provost's office and individual faculty to develop these initial pilots for launch in Fall 2024.

At the same time, our Faculty Director of Free Expression Initiatives will work with the provost's office and all faculty teaching FSEMs this fall (88 faculty) to develop pedagogical strategies furthering our commitments to free expression and civic engagement.

- B. We are also looking to host Advanced Seminars (ASEMs) integrating free expression and civic engagement themes, where ASEMs serve as the other "bookend" to our undergraduate students' completion of the core curriculum at DU. As such, the ASEM is a natural point for reflecting on growth and evolution of thought around free expression and civic engagement matters.
- C. In a related fashion, we are looking to integrate comparative free speech curricula into our required pre-departure course for study abroad students, where 70-75% of DU undergrads study abroad. This will help further students' awarenesses of how free expression principles in the countries and cultures in which they are studying abroad compare with those in the U.S.
- D. I teach an elective seminar on the History of Free Speech for undergraduates (first through fourth-year), where we begin with Enlightenment principles of free expression in a democracy, move to the founding documents and evolving norms of free expression

in U.S. law, chart the impact of free expression principles on social and political movements for women's, civil, labor, and LGBTQ+ rights, and conclude with a debate as to whether the best response to hate speech is more speech.

- E. In addition to the curricular initiatives noted above, we have introduced a "Debate Across the Curriculum" program, where we feature non-competitive debate in our undergraduate courses, modelling free and open inquiry on difficult questions in the full range of disciplines. We are currently working to scale up this program to reach all DU students.
- F. On a co-curricular level, our Denver Dialogues project seeks to model robust and healthy "dialogue across difference" for our community, featuring subject matter experts from four leading think tanks (American Enterprise Institute, Aspen, Hoover, and New America) engaged in dialogue about some of the thorniest current public policy issues, including immigration reform and congressional reform. Each of the Denver Dialogues is coupled with engagement with DU students on both the subject matter and dialogue strategies at hand.
- G. Also on a co-curricular level, we've developed an in-person "Listening to Understand" module, required for all incoming undergraduate students as part of our orientation programming, through which students are invited to engage in pairs, with one student sharing about what is most meaningful to them and the other practicing their listening to understand skills. We introduce this module by making explicit the importance of listening to understand to our commitments to free expression and civic engagement.
- H. Lastly for now on a co-curricular level, we've developed a "Belonging and Expression" module that we've piloted with various shared governance bodies, including our Freedom of Expression Committee, Undergraduate Student Government, and Graduate Student Government, through which participants explore what values are most important to them with regard to both belongingness and free expression, often concluding that the values they've identified are significantly overlapping.

These are some of the things we're doing at DU to promote free expression and civic engagement through our curriculum and co-curriculum, and I look forward to learning of other strategies currently being used and/or developed by our peers.

Thank you for this opportunity. I'm looking forward to our discussions!