



We endorse the following statement of principles and practices:

We believe that all Americans should know and understand the history and current state of American freedom, justice, and equity and *why* these principles are critical to a strong and effective democracy.

We believe that the arts of democracy – inclusive dialogue, thoughtful and informed public reasoning, conflict transformation, and social policymaking and action – are essential characteristics of quality education and a strong and effective democracy.

We believe that diversity in social identity, values, and ideology is a necessary condition for effective democratic processes. We work for equity in and access to social and political systems on behalf of *all* stakeholders, regardless of their position or authority.

We acknowledge that structural inequalities exist both within higher education and society at large and that these inequalities are detrimental to democracy and freedom. Further, when such inequalities grow large enough, they undercut and threaten the fragile foundation of our democracy. Therefore, *we challenge* colleges and universities to question their own policies that may reinforce inequalities of power, access, and opportunity. *We implore* educational institutions to teach all students how to rigorously analyze and effectively address injustices. *We welcome* diverse ideological perspectives on how to define and bring about a more just society.

We believe that dissent and conflict are transformative agents. We encourage the view that conflict presents an opportunity for reflection, study, growth, and change. Commensurately, we reject discrimination, coercion, intimidation, or other behaviors that restrict the free exchange of ideas and civil discourse.

We challenge individuals to engage in public life responsibly – to study ethical, social, and political issues, to seek to understand multiple viewpoints, to balance competing values and perspectives, to communicate responsively, and to engage in an open process of informed public reasoning. *We challenge* the academy to increase institutional commitment to and education for these democratic principles and practices.

We challenge colleges and universities to integrate across the curriculum opportunities for students to “practice” the arts of democracy. Classrooms, co-curricular programs, and residential learning communities provide ideal venues for teaching students to organize and facilitate dialogues and to work collaboratively to solve problems and collectively implement solutions.

We urge institutions that may be risk averse, that shy away from controversial events and topics, to treat provocative social, ethical, and political issues as interdisciplinary teaching and learning opportunities.

We challenge institutional leaders and decision-makers to model the arts of democracy by addressing institutional issues and making change through a transparent process – a process that actively seeks diverse perspectives, encourages the weighing of choices, and conceptualizes reform as an ongoing process rather than a set outcome. The way colleges and universities act must reflect more closely the ideals of engaged and informed citizenry that they seek to instill in students. We challenge colleges and universities to examine, critique, and discuss how decisions are made, who decides, and how power and authority are exercised toward the ideal of shared governance.

We remind colleges and universities of their long-standing contributions to society through public scholarship and social analysis. Faculty members should be recognized and rewarded for research and teaching that has public relevance. We challenge colleges and universities to adopt promotion and tenure standards that value interdisciplinary and problem-based learning and community-based scholarship. We urge scholars to publish in venues that are open sources and to write in ways that are broadly accessible.

We challenge colleges and universities to increase their role as valuable institutional assets in communities. They should garner and extend institutional resources to help communities address social challenges that call for interdisciplinary analysis and solutions. They should serve as equal partners and collaborators and model the arts of democracy as a foundation for any community-university partnerships.

We believe it is imperative that colleges and universities act immediately to play a vital role in promoting these democratic principles and practices.

We accept the responsibility of modeling in our own work and classrooms the democratic principles and practices outlined in this statement.

We dedicate ourselves to serving as a resource, advocate, and convener for colleges and universities seeking support for these efforts.

For more information

<http://www.unh.edu/democracy/>

or contact Nancy Thomas

nancy.thomas@unh.edu