

# Implementing Civility

A Guide to Character Development and Civility in Academia



## Character Development and Civility in Higher Education

This toolkit is designed for higher education institutions looking to foster character development, ethical leadership, and civility on their campuses. Inspired by insights from Scott Raecker of Drake University's Robert D. and Billie Ray Center and the Ron and Jane Olson Institute for Public Democracy, this guide provides a structured approach to creating a more respectful, engaged, and effective academic environment.

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# The Framework of Character Counts

## Key Components:

- **Six Pillars of Character:** Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Good Citizenship.
- **Character Counts Framework:** A comprehensive, community-based initiative that promotes ethical leadership, resilience, and goal achievement.
- **Practical Implementation:** Not a “plug and play” program, but a framework adaptable to different educational environments.

## How to Apply in Higher Education

- **Incorporate the Six Pillars into Campus Culture:** Encourage students, faculty, and staff to integrate these principles into daily interactions.
- **Professional Development for Faculty:** Offer training on character-building approaches in classrooms.
- **Student Organizations:** Embed ethical leadership training into leadership development programs.

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## Creating a Culture of Civility

**Defining Civility:** Civility includes decency, respect, decorum, kindness, and etiquette. However, true civility extends beyond mere politeness to fostering an environment where people can disagree productively.



## Practical Strategies for Fostering Civility

- **Model Civility from Leadership Down:** University presidents, deans, and faculty should model respectful discourse.
  - **Facilitate Difficult Conversations:** Provide training and workshops on having respectful, productive discussions, especially in polarized times.
  - **Establish Clear Expectations:** Define acceptable behaviors and communication styles across departments and student groups.
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# Implementing the CHAMP Framework for Effective Communication

## CHAMP Components:

- **Clarity of Communication:** Set expectations and goals clearly.
- **Habits:** Encourage positive habits in student and faculty interactions.
- **Accountability:** Establish systems to measure progress in character development.
- **Mindset:** Foster an open, growth-oriented approach to learning and dialogue.
- **Performance:** Evaluate and reward behaviors that align with institutional values.

## Application in Academic Settings

- Faculty meetings can incorporate CHAMP to promote constructive discussions.
- Student leadership programs can use CHAMP to develop responsible global citizens.



## A Tool for Constructive Feedback

Instead of reactive discipline, use the **Praise and Polish** method:

- **Praise:** Highlight what is working well.
- **Polish:** Identify areas for improvement in a constructive manner.

## Implementation in Higher Ed

- Faculty evaluations can integrate this approach to provide balanced, effective feedback.
  - Student assessments can include Praise and Polish to promote a culture of continuous improvement.
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Utilizing  
Praise and  
Polish

# Getting Started at Your Institution

## Practical Steps:

1. **Assess Current Initiatives:** Identify existing character development and civility programs on campus.
2. **Identify Passionate Leaders:** Find faculty or administrators with enthusiasm for driving these initiatives.
3. **Develop a Sustainable Plan:** Ensure long-term commitment by integrating civility and character-building into strategic goals.
4. **Engage the Entire Community:** Include students, faculty, staff, and even local community members in fostering a culture of character.
5. **Evaluate and Adjust:** Use assessments and feedback to measure impact and refine strategies.



Character development and civility are not just educational enhancements; they are essential competencies for responsible global citizenship. By implementing these frameworks and tools, institutions can create a more inclusive, engaged, and ethical academic community.

Higher education institutions have the power to shape not only knowledgeable graduates but also individuals equipped with the character and leadership skills to positively impact society. The time to act is now.

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## Resources to Explore

- [Character Counts!](#): Free resources for implementing character education.
- [The Big Sort by Bill Bishop](#): Understanding societal polarization.

- [Kindness 101 \(CBS News & Steve Hartman\)](#): Lessons on kindness and civility.
  - [Drake University's Ray Center](#) & the [Olson Institute for Public Democracy](#): Case studies on institutional implementation.
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Toolkit based on an expert interview with Scott Raecker on Beyond the Quadcast.

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