



University of Idaho

Office of the President

TO: University of Idaho Students, Faculty and Staff
FROM: Chuck Staben, President, and John Wiencek, Provost and Executive Vice President
DATE: Jan. 29, 2019
SUBJECT: Keep Our Values in Mind as We Do Important Work

This spring we are facing big decisions and important work that will impact the future of the university. A presidential transition, significant budget considerations and new strategies to best address student retention and graduation rates will take a lot of attention amid the already-busy nature of spring semester. When there is much work to do, with the added pressure that intensity brings, it becomes even more important to remember our basic values, namely respect and integrity.

We recently have seen concerning behavior within our university community – perhaps it mirrors the tone of communication in our national discourse. This is not behavior we condone at the University of Idaho. Now is the time to reflect upon who we are as a community and remember the expectation for all of us is to treat one another with respect, dignity and civility. Each person at this university, no matter their role, is important in helping us achieve our lofty and important goals. It is imperative that each of us behaves with the best interest of the university, and the good of our co-workers, in mind.

As we move through this work together, we encourage you to keep three guiding principles in mind:

1. Everyone is entitled to the free expression of ideas within the bounds provided for in the Constitution.
2. Everyone engaged in our scholarly activities of research, teaching and outreach is entitled to the academic freedom to engage in those activities, subject to the responsibilities due to the university.
3. Everyone employed at the U of I (faculty and staff) is entitled to a safe and respectful working environment to allow them to do their best work.

These principles provide the basis upon which we work, learn and explore the world together. While the first two embody freedoms essential to the search for and sharing of

knowledge, the third principle provides for basic human decency. Improper conduct, no matter the context, is not protected and is not acceptable here.

Speech that endangers others (i.e. shouting “fire” in a crowded theater), incites unlawful activity, libels or slanders is not protected. Behavior that endangers safety or that interferes with the working environment (i.e. belittling, insulting, yelling and other forms of aggression), no matter the context, is not protected speech.

Each of us has a right to feel safe and respected at work. We must all try to understand the differences between us, even when it is difficult to include or accept other perspectives. Disrespecting the views of another stifling viewpoints is not protected.

We are all employees of this great university and therefore are expected to perform our jobs to the best of our abilities and comply with the reasonable directives of supervisors and superiors. The principles of academic freedom do not exempt employees from these expectations.

If at any point you encounter a negative work experience, witness inappropriate behavior, or are struggling with the expectations of your job, the university has many resources available to you:

- Report any negative work experience to your supervisor, dean or other leader in your unit
- Contact the university ombuds at 208-885-8947
- Call the 24-hour crisis line at 208-885-6716
- File a [CARE report](#) on behalf of a colleague you may be concerned about

If you are experiencing unmanageable stress or other personal impacts, your [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\) benefit](#) provides counseling assistance at no cost to you.

We have many things to accomplish in the coming months and we look forward to leading the university through them. Your help, input and most of all, collegiality, are appreciated. For us to succeed, we need to all be on the same team, working toward the same goals, guided by an absolute commitment to the success of our students.