

## Perspectives on civil discourse

'As an educational community dedicated to civil discourse and to providing learning opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds, it is incumbent upon all of us at Madison to stand in unity with fellow citizens when these fundamental principles are under attack. And as a public university, we will always respect and protect rights of both free speech and freedom from discrimination that are essential foundations for the learning environment.'

— **JONATHAN ALGER**, *JMU president*

'Where I think free speech ends is when it incites to violence, and there's a great deal of that in our society. Free speech is something we can have conversations about. We don't have to agree, but we can have respectful conversations. And I think that mirrors what happens in classrooms across James Madison University.'

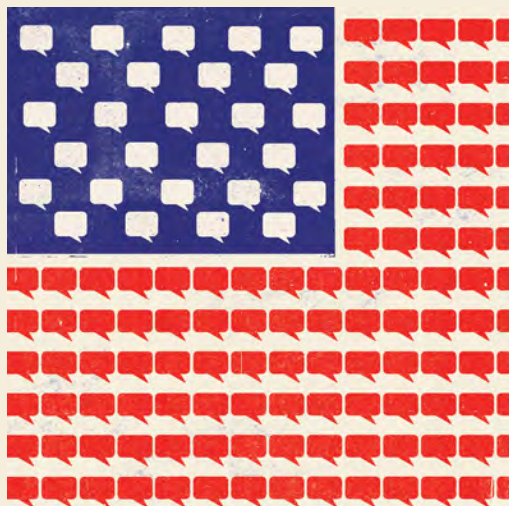
— **BILL WHITE**, *professor of educational foundations and exceptionalities*

'Free speech must be content-neutral. Censorship and prior restraint hurt open dialogue.'

— **ROGER SOENKSEN**, *professor of media arts and design and communication studies*

'Civility is a commitment to others to focus on addressing problems and not attacking each other. It does not artificially constrain talk by avoiding conflict, but focuses on productive conflict that is tough on the problems rather than each other. For me, civility is a redirection of the energy and passion that bring people to the table in the first place.'

— **LORI BRITT**, *professor of communication studies and director of JMU's Institute for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue*



'Engaging in discourse within a forum of democratic decision-making is a fundamental component of our civil nature in the United States. There is plenty of evidence in social and corporate media outlets that our abilities to productively engage with one another are eroding, causing concern for the status of our democracy.'

However, if we pay attention, we can also see a marked awareness of this erosion and the re-emergence of efforts to shore up civil discourse in civic spaces.'

— **ROB ALEXANDER**, *professor of political science and associate director of JMU's Institute for Constructive Advocacy and Dialogue*

'Actions speak louder than words. But words, too, can be loud — beneficially or not. As a learning community, we encourage reflective questioning before making a decision of word or deed. JMU's Ethical Reasoning in Action — Eight Key Questions — enhances civil discourse by modeling thoughtfulness and critical thinking as a strategy to identify and carefully craft the common good.'

— **BILL HAWK**, *chair, The Madison Collaborative: Ethical Reasoning in Action*