

**Campus Wide Listening Session**  
**Cultivating a Community of Care During a Tumultuous Election Season**  
**Sept 25, 2024**

**What we heard**

**CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS**

**How we are feeling going into this election season**

- **Feeling apprehensive/nervous.**
  - We don't often have informal spaces where we can have political conversations because it's such a polarizing topic. Sometimes we just need a space to be able to share those feelings of apprehension, nervousness, or anxiety.
  - I don't discuss politics at all because it seems that people can't disagree and be civil to one another.
  - Even when in a social setting, sometimes people will express their beliefs, but you can tell they're still respectful and holding back.
  - I thought I would join this conversation because it might be a group where I could discuss how nervous I am about the election?
- **Feeling exhausted**
  - Seeing exhaustion around election discussions, among students, staff and faculty.
  - Students want to be politically active but are more driven to do well in academics that they don't have the energy to split their time with political rallies or campaign activities, how do we balance that.
  - Voter registration drives have been apathetic with students – does my vote matter?
  - How do we help them exercise their civic duty?
  - There is a lot of general dissatisfaction / less energized / unsatisfied
- **Feeling energized**
  - Because we have a woman of color on the ballot
  - Sororities are hosting voter registration events and to get out and vote
- **Feeling optimistic**
  - can't wait for November 5th to get here but I am doubtful that we will have an official winner on the 5th
  - Optimistic, but I am also feeling pushed into that.

**How is this election season impacting our work?**

- **The election is negatively impacting my job**
  - I feel targeted by politically motivated anti-DEI bills.

- Those struggling to have effective DEI conversations have our work cut out for us. A feeling of tenuous “safety”
- Working on equity, there are serious concerns and threats to freedom of expression of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which are targeted in this election to obtain votes.
- It has damaged my morale and is causing a lot of stress.
- feeling belittled in public settings like the state hearing last week
- **I'm concerned - "am I wasting my time doing these tenure process?"**
  - Is Kentucky just going to be another state that devalues things like tenure
    - Attacks on academic freedom of speech
- **Anxious about anticipated legislation changes**
  - Should we be proactive? Do we wait for legislators to make decisions for us? Do we change things now?
  - Renaming spaces or committees so that they are not eliminated, what message does that send to those communities that are affected?
  - Our DEI committee renamed itself as DEIJ so that we can explicitly make our work about just outcomes.
    - Our Diversity and Inclusion Committee recently changed our name to Community and Engagement Committee anticipating changing legislation.
- **It was madding to watch our colleagues from UofL defending our use of specific words in Frankfort.**
  - “Why are you using equity instead of equality?” to the committee in Frankfort.
  - We have data to support our work and who we are helping, and it feels like they are just pushing it aside and not listening.
  - It feels like data, science is only used when it supports an argument, not for doing the work that needs to be done. It feels like people in power discount data-based initiatives.
- **I have a responsibility to help folks have conversations like this, if they want it.**
  - also, to check-in on folks who may be overwhelmed and ask how they are doing? To be a support mechanism for the faculty/staff and students.
  - I see it as my job to protect spaces and language that explicitly examine racialized structures and other structural practices of oppression.
- **Some faculty are afraid to bring political conversations into their classroom**
  - They don't want to be attacked or criticized by students.
  - I'm not trying to convince someone to change what they believe, but it's hard to know where I can be safe.
- **LGBTQ community feels that legislation is trying to erase LGBT from public spaces.**

- It is exhaustive, places that have established to have these conversations are under attack.
- Ally-ships and collegiality feels very performative.
- our chosen names or pronouns are getting rolled back.
- Harmful remarks that, trans people are predators
- Now convincing people that those who are different are human.
- Even walking in public in certain neighborhoods LGBTQ or persons of color don't feel welcome.
- **Feeling isolated in my department**
  - aggressive comments – is this how we're talking to one another in the workplace now
- **One thing that has been on my mind with election season is what is on the minds of young people, including in high school because they are the generation that's coming up.**
  - I remember it was a big thing when I was in high school to be engaged in elections.
  - There are a lot of student led drives and conversations on our campus.
  - Early in the campaign there was a lot of evidence of general dissatisfaction among younger voters. That has changed a bit, but there is a sense that younger voters are less energized/unsatisfied, an apathy about it. Does my vote matter? Feeling that it is a choice between the lesser of two evils?
  - COB Community Engagement committee is trying to recruit students to get their voice and input around the election and DEI
  - Letting them know that we're a resource as well, and we're a support system and how we can be of assistance

### **Strategies on engaging with colleagues and peers related to the election**

- **Attending events that are centered on women voting. Educating them and encouraging women to vote. Then reposting where I can on LinkedIn, and social media.**

### **Ways UofL is preparing for the next 41 days.**

- **Athletics and the office of admissions is working together supporting students**
  - with bus transportation for early voting the week before the election, as well as election day.
  - Out of state students are being alerted when the last day to request an absentee ballot and making sure they are postmarked and returned in time.
- **Here at UofL we have Election Day off**
  - I am looking forward to taking time to be a poll worker this is an opportunity to continue to engage in civic work.
- **My commitment is to continue doing this (DEI) work, because there's so much more that is needed to educating people.**

- We need to focus our energy on those who are willing to learn and stop wasting time on those who don't want to learn or change.
- **Being a new American citizen – voter education? How can we educate a new voter? Where can one go?**
  - Remind folks to check if they're still eligible to vote, given voter suppression tactics we are seeing across the country
    - And what to do if someone does try to turn them away at the polls or while in line
    - People assume that just because I don't look like you means that I can't vote. This concerns me on multiple levels.
- **Educating ones-self on the candidates takes a lot of time.**
  - For me learning about some of the process things like, how do you register to vote and when do you need to turn up is easier than how do you educate yourself about what these leaders are going to do and who they really are?
  - There's been conversation with our student government, on why student turn out is lower, because we do not have a major election in the Commonwealth?
  - Often when there are issues that affect local politics there's a higher voter turnout.
  - So, because there is not a governor or a senatorial race right now? Is that going reduce voter turnout?
  - So, I think it's about the education. Every election matters.

**What conditions would you need to feel safe holding or expressing a variety of personal / political opinions?**

- **More of our leaders need to take the initiative to say that they're available to discuss, support, and hold space.**
  - I think a lot of times this work is left to staff to initiate but I think more of our leaders need to take the initiative to say that they're at least available to discuss and support or hold space to do that.
  - Think about people who are not around those tables who are never being checked in on. It does something when you're at least in the conversation and are able to talk about what's going on and how it's going to impact us day-to-day at the university and not everybody has that.
- **I see a lot of the gun violence right now in schools, especially around the election. do we have any plans for that type of violence that could potentially occur?**
  - Campus safety talked to the Council of Academic Officers (CAO) about what our strategies to ensure campus safety. The upper administrations intent with that meeting and the conversation was exclusively focused on how we protect our students, staff, and faculty in these times.

- Members of ULPD monitor social media channels and networks for things that are happening on campus and in the area.
- **I should have said that student protest is a healthy and vital part of the campus community.**
  - But how do we facilitate this to happen in a healthy way, where everybody is protected and safe.
  - We want to be a place that we're proud of where free speech and discourse are valued and where we are willing to have tough conversations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **What could universities leadership do that would help you feel as though the university was providing a community of care.**

- **One thing we're talking about in our community and engagement committee is providing support post-election.**
  - the counseling center is providing some spaces for the three days after Election Day for folks to come in and process good, bad or indifferent emotions that may come up.
- There is power in faculty, staff, and students, talking to their dean, vice president, vice provost, etc., about their concerns and needs regarding support for members of campus who are struggling. Hearing from many voices rather than a few can be very powerful.
- **President Schatzel has signed the all-in voter challenge.**
  - Which is a commitment made by university presidents to getting voter turnout by their college students.
  - 18 institutes of the ACC have all signed that for the first time since 2002. So that is a step in the right direction.
  - Visible support from the president and upper administration to publicly participate in get-out-the-vote-work.
    - I would love for the upper admins to personally check-in on staff and faculty who may be negatively impacted by the nasty rhetoric or anti-DEI legislation post-election. I would love for them to pay attention to people feeling unsafe and take that seriously. I do not want them to delegate that work to lower admin.

### **What resources could the university provide, during and after this election season, to promote a Community of Care?**

#### LEGISLATIVE / EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES:

<https://www.ballotready.org/>

#### **American Political Science Association**

**Teaching Civic Engagement Across the Disciplines:**

[https://web.apsanet.org/teachingcivicengagement/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2016/10/Teaching-Civic-Engagement-Across-the-Disciplines\\_opt.pdf](https://web.apsanet.org/teachingcivicengagement/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2016/10/Teaching-Civic-Engagement-Across-the-Disciplines_opt.pdf)

**– Raise The Vote (Resources to Amplify and Increase Student Engagement)**

<https://connect.apsanet.org/raisethevote/>

- **Reasons Why You Should Register to Vote:**
  - **Your Voice Matters:** Every vote counts, and your unique perspective and opinions deserve to be heard. By casting your vote, you play a significant role in shaping policies and electing leaders who align with your values.
  - **Be Part of a Community:** Voting connects you with your fellow citizens in a shared commitment to a better future. It's a way to bond with your peers and show solidarity in making a difference.
  - **Honoring Past Struggles:** Remember the countless individuals who fought for the right to vote. By registering and voting, you're paying homage to those who dedicated their lives to securing this fundamental democratic right.
- **Best Practices in Voting**
  - **Be Informed:** Take the time to research the candidates and the issues that matter to you. Knowledge is power, and an informed vote is a meaningful one.
  - **Encourage Others:** Talk to your friends, family, and classmates about the importance of voting. Encourage them to register and commit to vote as well.
  - **Plan to Vote:** Mark November 5, 2024, on your calendar and make a plan to vote. Remember the university is closed, so no school, so whether it's by mail, early voting, or on Election Day, ensure that nothing stands between you and your ballot.
- On campus, our efforts are supported by Vote Everywhere, a non-partisan, student-led voter education group committed to helping you stay informed. Whether you're new to the process or have voted before, the team will provide all the resources you need to make sure your voice is heard. For more information regarding registering to vote, requesting absentee ballots, and other voter information check out this website:  
<https://andrewgoodman.org/myvoteeverywhere/university-of-louisville>.
- Through partnerships with the Student Government Association, University Athletics, the Office of Student Involvement, and the Division of Student Affairs, there are a number of great programs and events coming up to make sure that Cardinal Nation is ready to vote. Follow Vote Everywhere on Instagram at [UofLVE](#) to stay up to date on events and important deadlines

**What future topics would you like to see UofL address in CODRE Campus-wide Listening Sessions?**

- **Can we have a follow-up after the election?**
  - Post Election. What that means?
- **Engagement in our community – wider Louisville community, as students transition out of school**
  - how can we find other places of belonging

- have a panel on how we create CIVITAS LGBTQ+ community
- We have a growing Hispanic community and great resources out there too.
- support those opportunities for dialogue and more community and collaboration.
- **how can department chairs support CODRE**
  - how can we make sure that these listening sessions are being taken seriously?
- **How do I understand what's going on with all this attack on DEI?**
  - What does that phrase mean? Attack on DEI and what is happening .
    - What is Kentucky doing specifically, how is that being impacted by nationwide movements?
- **Are exit interviews being conducted.**
  - Stay interviews.
- **This is probably the most diverse student population we've ever had.**
  - whatever legislations happens we still must help these students.
  - how do we support these students and help them?
  - Work on retention and graduate. the work won't stop just because of law passes or a bill goes through