**CEHD Civility Initiative**

**Proposed by CEHD Grant Coordinators**

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Civility— roughly defined as commonplace respect, manners and kindness toward each other—has taken a beating lately, even at CEHD.

CEHD faculty and staff work hard to empower others and make life better for students, the community and others we serve. The vast majority truly believe in the value of each individual. Unfortunately, sometimes there’s a gap between what we believe and how we live day-to-day. Sometimes the cobbler’s children have no shoes.

From the grant coordinators’ unique perspective, we see faculty and staff treat each other in ways that are different than what they espouse and than what would be acceptable in any other sector of their lives.

We see passive aggressiveness, unnecessary competition, bad manners and ego wars. We watch as people fall into the trap of automatic cynicism. We see faculty and staff who are afraid to cooperate with others, who withhold information and insights, and who hold on for dear life to their “turf.” We see snarky-ness run rampant and careless inconsideration for others deemed acceptable because people are stressed out. It’s the University way. While CEHD is probably the most civil unit at the University, there’s still room for improvement.

While talking amongst ourselves, we grant coordinators realized that many of the behaviors most important to working well with others are pretty darn basic: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you (rather than “do unto them before they do unto you”); say “please” and “thank you”; respect others; try to see things from the other person’s point of view; share.

If we were all just a little nicer to each other perhaps we could make everyone’s work lives a little less stressful and a little more productive and collaborative.

We therefore propose development of a CEHD civility initiative focused on faculty and staff. The goal would be to create a more civil CEHD, but what specific shape this would take we don’t know. It might include workshops, presentations or intentional behavior modeling by select faculty and staff. Perhaps students would be involved. One of the challenges would be to come up with an action plan that doesn’t automatically trigger the kind of behaviors we hope to combat. It’s easy to imagine the nay-saying, gossip and cynicism that announcement of such an initiative might spark.

There are many resources we could turn to while developing and implementing the initiative.

Turns out this civility thing is a national movement, and a quick web search revealed that we’re not the only ones concerned about civility in academia. Please see the following page for a very brief sample of available resources.

Thank you for considering our Big Idea to make small changes in our everyday lives.

*Project Civility* at Rutgers

Following is an excerpt from the project’s web site (<http://projectcivility.rutgers.edu/>) .

Project Civility is a two-year, university-wide dialogue at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, sponsored by the Offices of Student Affairs and Undergraduate Education at Rutgers- New Brunswick.Launched in September 2010, the university community is focusing its attention on civility in the context of one of the most culturally and racially diverse research universities in the U.S.  We ask ourselves: Who are we, the members of the Rutgers community? How are we getting along with one another? How might we improve the quality of our day-to-day interactions? Featuring a wide array of discussions, lectures, and student-driven activities, Project Civility engages faculty, students, and all Rutgers personnel in an ongoing inquiry about the nature of true respect for others- an inquiry that demands our openness to hear, to learn, to teach, and to change.

From gestures as simple as saying thank you to scholarly debate about the role of new technologies in society; through public exchange of ideas as well as intimate conversations; we aim to shed light on what civility is and what we can each do to make our society (both within and without Rutgers) reflect our "better selves."

We will test the hypothesis that a community-wide effort to cultivate small acts of courtesy and compassion in our daily lives will result, over time, in a more charitable campus culture- one marked by an increase in thoughtful communication and a decrease in hostile encounters. We expect that, through this project, Rutgers will acquire a deeper understanding of itself as a place of higher education, where ideas matter, and where we all seek to learn the best ways of living well together. It is hoped that Project Civility will contribute to a stronger, more closely-knit university: healthier, happier, and celebrating diversity in all its forms.

# *Faculty Incivility: The Rise of the Academic Bully Culture and What to Do About It*

# Darla J. Twale, University of Dayton

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| *The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude*[P. M. Forni](http://us.macmillan.com/author/pmforni), Johns Hopkins University |