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Collective Engagement Agreement

Grand Valley State University

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Collective Engagement Agreement

In line with university policies [BOT 9.1 - 9.10](#) and [SLT 9.1](#), the organizers of this event strive to provide a harassment free experience for everyone, regardless of race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, age, religion, or any other identity not expressly listed. We acknowledge that no space can be truly safe and that academia requires historically excluded members of our community to consistently be brave. In entering this space, we agree to a collective engagement agreement, whereby we will work toward reducing harm and centering the voices of the individuals most affected in this space. As such, following the Dean of Students Office's [Statement on Context for Expressive Activity](#) at GVSU, we agree that all viewpoints will be valued insofar that they do not conflict with a person's right to exist in any of their identities.

Following the campus policy on harassment, [SLT 9.1](#), as well as the student code policy on bullying, [STU 5.2.4](#), harassment includes but is not limited to:

- making offensive comments related to any personal characteristic or identity of an individual;
- deliberate intimidation, stalking, following;
- photographing/recording someone without first acquiring their consent;
- continued disruption of presenters, talks, or performances;
- disrespecting the physical, mental, and emotional space of others such as touching a person or their belongings without consent and/or not listening when boundaries are stated;
- physical, emotional, and psychological threats or violence to any person or group; this is antithetical to the aims of social justice work and will not be tolerated.

If a participant engages in harassing behavior, the event organizer(s) may take actions they deem appropriate, including warning the offender or expulsion from the event. If you are being harassed, notice that someone else is being harassed, or have any other concerns, please contact the organizer(s) immediately. The organizer(s) for this event will be happy to assist those experiencing harassment to feel safe for the duration of the event.

Ground Rules

This section can be adjusted to include only the ground rules that best speak to your intended audience(s). These are suggestions provided by the GVSU Libraries. This list is not exhaustive. Please feel free to include ground rules not listed here that may better complement the Collective Engagement Agreement for your event.

Make No Assumptions When working with people, avoid assuming you know their sexual orientation, gender identity, or anything else related to their identity or experiences. Remember that every person is a complex individual with multiple overlapping identities, that may not fit your personal ideas, understandings or social constructs.

Use All-Gender Inclusive Language Make sure the language you use is inclusive of all people. When referring to people in general, avoid gendered pronouns, using “they” instead of “he/she” unless they have explicitly stated their gender pronoun.

Honor Everyone’s Boundaries Take care of yourself; listen to your physical, mental, and emotional needs and limits; express and honor your boundaries and honor the personal spaces of all. We also mindfully acknowledge that expressions that demonstrate respect may differ across individual and cultural experiences.

Engage Without Attacking and Reduce Harm We do not personally attack individuals. At the beginning of our conversations we address the differences between an attack on an individual versus a challenge to an individual’s idea or belief. Remember that unacceptable behavior includes but is not limited to:

- making offensive comments related to any personal characteristic or identity;
- deliberate intimidation, stalking, following;
- photographing/recording someone without first acquiring their consent;
- continued disruption of presenters, talks, or performances;
- disrespecting the physical, mental, and emotional space of others; touching a person or their belongings without consent; not listening when boundaries are stated;
- physical, emotional, and psychological threats or violence to any person or group; this is antithetical to the aims of social justice work and will not be tolerated.

Participants instructed to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately. This applies to everyone, including event staff and sponsors.

Embrace Your Mistakes, Then, Move Forward. We are all learning and unlearning. We will make mistakes. When we do, it’s our responsibility to admit, correct, and repair the harm. Do not center yourself or your mistake(s) and listen to the needs of those who were harmed. This space embraces mistakes and does not use them as a tool against an individual but rather as a learning opportunity to move forward.

Conflict with Authenticity. Conflict is a natural outcome in a diverse group. We value seeking understanding over preservation of our own comfort by not opting-out of the conflict by “agreeing to disagree.” Rather, we enter conversation expecting different views to be present and commit to addressing gaps in understanding and working cooperatively toward solutions. To this end, we commit to a “both/and” mindset, substituting “and” for “but” in order to acknowledge multiple lived realities.

Right To Pass. Individuals will decide for themselves if and to what extent they will participate in a given activity and this choice will be honored by all. If we choose to be silent we agree to reflect on the decision to be silent and consider sharing how we are processing information rather than an opinion.

Step Up, Step Back. Acknowledge that your lived experiences may require you to step up and speak your truth, while also making space for others to speak to their experiences as well. No one voice should dominate the conversation, nor should no one experience be seen as representative of all. Recognize that structures of authority (for example: What you have learned as a manager) should be secondary to the knowledge learned from the lived experiences of individuals.

Use “I” Statements. Speak from your personal experience, do not speak on the experiences of others, unless you have expressed permission to do so.

Confidentiality. All are encouraged to learn and integrate new information into their daily lives without naming individuals other than oneself. Please ask permission from an individual to attribute their name(s) to a specific idea expressed or statement that was said beyond the confines of this space. If someone expresses that they do not wish for their name to be used, please respect their boundaries.