

A Dialogue on Dialogue

UNH undergraduates invited to Biden School to talk civil discourse

Wednesday, April 27, 2022



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: KYLA MACLOUGHLIN, ALEXA BOBINSKI, PROFESSOR RENEE HEATH, VALERIE BIDEN OWENS, MCKENNA MORGAN, ROSS BLAUVELT (COURTESY PHOTO)

Four [communication](#) students and a faculty member, all from UNH's [Civil Discourse Lab](#) (CDL), were invited to participate, with full funding, in an inaugural conference on civil discourse and civic engagement at the Biden School of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Delaware, April 22-24, 2022.

Ross Blauvelt '23, McKenna Morgan '23, Kyla MacLaughlin '23

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and Alexa Bobinski '23, along with Renee Heath, principal lecturer in communication and co-director and faculty advisor for the CDL, joined students and faculty from 18 other institutions of U.S. higher education for the first SNF Ithaca National Student Dialogue.

During the conference, student ambassadors from political science, policy and communication disciplines learned from each other about the challenges they face on their home campuses around addressing conflict. They also brainstormed ways they could strengthen civil discourse upon their return.

Bobinski, who will be assistant program director for the CDL next year, says she learned that civil discourse can mean different things to different people. “It was important to be in a room together and have the chance to speak face to face in order to truly understand how we perceive ideas differently,” she says.

The CDL, established in 2017, seeks to strengthen the ability of students and community members to conduct meaningful conversations, collaborate and make decisions around sometimes difficult but important topics to a civil society. Students from all majors are invited to attend lectures and trainings on facilitating respectful conversations and fostering shared decision making.

“I consider it quite an honor that this newly formed initiative on civil discourse recognizes UNH as a leader in this area,” says Heath.

Named for the 46th president of the United States, the Biden School seeks to foster innovative and equitable solutions that promote civic virtues and democratic values. The SNF Ithaca initiative realizes that commitment, according to the Institute’s Valerie Biden Owens, chair, and Catherine McLaughlin, executive director.

“Through this program, we will inspire the next generation of leaders to find ways to collaboratively meet the policy challenges

of today and transform society in the future,” they say.

WRITTEN Susan Dumais '88 '02G | College of Liberal Arts

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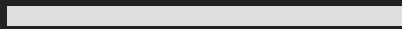
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