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Jaquavous Doucette



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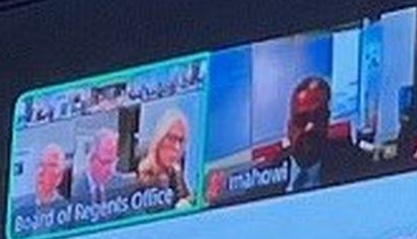
Update on Inaugural TAMU Civil Discourse Symposium

Briefing to Board of Regents' Committee on Academic and Student Activities (CASA)

John B. Sherman '92

Dean, The Bush School of Government and Public Service

14 January 2026



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Charge and Vision

System and TAMU leadership directed the Bush School to organize and lead a symposium on civil discourse in the Spring 2026 semester at main campus.

- The other System schools are similarly directed to hold these events.
- The primary focus will be on students, and they will have key roles throughout the event.

At the conclusion of this symposium, students will:

1. Appreciate how their own character and core values are critical to engaging in respectful and meaningful civil discourse.
2. Understand how Aggie Core Values are an optimal foundation for civic responsibility and discourse.
3. Identify and refine their own "North Star" values and develop tools for civil discourse in a practical setting—and understand the differences between debate and dialogue.
4. Be able to describe how character, core values, and civil discourse have enabled key leaders to be successful.



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Overall Plan



We're aiming to hold this event on **Tuesday, 21 April**.

- Rudder Auditorium and MSC rooms are available this day (with 20 April needed for set up).
- This is a special day for us Aggies. It has powerful symbolism, and VIP speakers and students alike will be able attend Campus Muster that evening motivated by what they experience at the symposium.
- This is a team effort involving multiple TAMU and System organizations and individuals.

The agenda will include a mix of keynote speakers, fireside chats, and student break-outs.

Given the importance of this inaugural event, we are planning to "go big" in terms of speakers and other aspects.



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Working Agenda



Morning Block:

9:00-9:05am Welcome (in Rudder Auditorium): John B. Sherman '92

9:05-9:15am Opening Comments/Setting One's Core Values: LtGen (Ret.) James W. Bierman Jr.

9:15am-10:30am Student-selected speakers (TBD—speaker identification underway)

Midday/Lunch Block:

10:30-10:45 Break and transfer to Bethancourt Ballroom

10:45-11:45am Student Roundtable: Getting Past the Social Media Echo Chamber

11:45am-1:45pm Lunch and Breakout Lyceum-type Discussions

1:45-2:00pm Break/Return to Rudder Auditorium

Afternoon Block:

2:00-2:05pm Welcome to Afternoon Session: Interim President Tommy Williams '78

2:05-3:00pm Practicing Civil Discourse Based on Core Values: Former Vice President Mike Pence

3:00-4:00pm Fireside Chat Between Officials Who Hold Different Views (TBD—working with Government Relations to identify candidate speakers)

4:00-4:10pm Closing and Charge Going Forward: Interim President Tommy Williams '78

Note: Campus Muster begins at 7:00pm at Reed Arena.



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Potential Costs

Based on the schedule and of proposed speakers, we estimate that the costs for this event could be between \$400K-\$800K.

The main drivers are:

- Speakers' fees (i.e., \$130-200K for former VP Pence; similar for other prestigious speakers)
 - Catering for student lunch in midday breakout (\$16-25K)
 - Marketing (\$7-20K)
 - Private jet travel, lodging, and meals for VIPs (\$100-\$250K)
 - Takeaway items (t-shirts, etc.) for students (\$15-40K)
- ...and other expenses.

We will economize where possible—while also ensuring this is a worthy event.



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Concerns and Where We Might Need Help

1. Locking in the speakers.
2. Securing funding from System/TAMU.
3. Generating strong student interest and attendance.
4. Ensuring that we're meeting System and TAMU leadership intent.

