

President's Task Force on Non-violence and Conflict Resolution.

Final Report
September 26, 2011

The **President's Task Force on Non-violence and Conflict Resolution** was appointed in March of 2011, with a charge of establishing a comprehensive and on-going plan to encourage significant teaching, training, programming, and research related to the topics of non-violence and positive conflict resolution.

Specifically, the group was asked to serve as an advisory group to the President, and to make recommendations for both the curriculum and the co-curriculum designed to:

- stimulate effective problem solving and conflict resolution
- teach civility in dispute resolution
- promote a positive campus environment that celebrates diversity

Members included students, faculty, staff and community members representing a variety of constituents, as noted below:

Adonijah Bakari, African American Studies/History
Paul Boyd, Off-campus representative
Peter Cunningham, Graduate Studies
Jeffery Scott Gibson, Speech and Theater
Danny Kelley, Center for Student Involvement and Leadership
Marva Lucas, University College
Jason Morton, University Police
Martha Norkunas, History
Buddy Peaster, University Police
Gina Poff, New Student and Family Programs
Jeremy Poynter, Student Government Association
Deb Sells - Chair
Sarah Sudak, Dean of Students
Diane Turnham, Athletics
Vincent Windrow, Intercultural and Diversity Affairs
John Vile, Honors College
Laurie Witherow, University College
Karen Yates, Student

Early meetings of the Task Force focused on reviewing similar existing programs at other institutions. These included programs at Kansas State, American University, and the national "Enough is Enough" campaign, sponsored in part through NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. Dr. Norkunis also led an effort to catalogue existing efforts already in place at MTSU that centered on issues related to non-violent conflict resolution (see Appendix A). These early reviews led the group to a discussion of goals for a campaign that would be unique to MTSU. These goals included a commitment to three strategic areas of focus:

- Skills training, both in and out of the classroom:
 - Communication
 - Problem-solving

- Resources for intervention
 - Etiquette
 - Fundamentals of civil argumentation
 - Classroom management for faculty
- The creation of a healthy culture/norm for the campus:
 - Personal responsibility
 - Step Up – get involved
 - Civility/respect
 - Impacting students, student leaders, faculty in classroom, staff
 - Communicating “This is who we are; this is what we do; this is how we do it.”
- University responses:
 - Judicial interventions
 - Staff training/faculty training
 - Alternative, healthy programming and activities
 - Campus programming, violence against women events, etc.
 - Alcohol (use, expectations, consequences)

Further review led the Task Force to the existing MTSU Statement of Community Standards and Expectations. After much discussion, task force members concluded that an updated statement should serve as the foundation for the campus wide campaign.

In an interim report to President McPhee, the initial draft of the newly revised MTSU Statement of Community Standards and Expectations and the newly created True Blue Pledge were shared. Discussion ensued, specifically focused on whether or not the two pieces adequately and directly addressed the issue of non-violent conflict resolution as a goal and value of MTSU.

After extensive additional discussion, the Statement was revised and the True Blue Pledge was created, as follows:

MTSU is committed to developing and nurturing a community devoted to learning, growth and service. Each person who joins or affiliates with the community does so freely and accepts and practices the following core values and expectations:

Honesty and Integrity. The notions of personal and academic honesty and integrity are central to the existence of the MTSU community. All members of the community will strive to achieve and maintain the highest standards of academic achievement in the classroom and personal and social responsibility on- and off-campus.

Respect for Diversity. The MTSU community is composed of individuals representing different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, cultures, and ways of thinking. We respect individual differences and unique perspectives and acknowledge our commonalities.

Engagement in the Community. All members of the community are encouraged to participate in educationally purposeful activities that support and enhance the MTSU experience. Active involvement and personal investment in the classroom and throughout the community are hallmarks of an engaged citizen.

Commitment to Non-violence. MTSU is committed to the principles of nonviolence and peaceful conflict resolution. Community members will freely express their ideas and resolve differences using reason and persuasion.

I am True Blue.

As a member of this diverse community,
I am a valuable contributor
to its progress and success.
I am engaged in the life of this community.
I am a recipient and a giver.
I am a listener and a speaker.
I am honest in word and deed.
I am committed to reason, not violence.
I am a learner now and forever.
I am a BLUE RAIDER.
True Blue!

With the final version of the Statement of Community Standards and Expectations as the guide, the four subgroups of the Task Force moved forward with their efforts to pursue significant, ongoing plans for infusing those standards and expectations across both the curriculum and the co-curriculum. The four sub-groups were devoted to the following areas: Faculty and the curriculum, Co-curricular programming, Student Leadership training, and Judicial and other university responses.

Chief among the early initiatives undertaken and/or under way are the following:

- A general introduction to the MTSU Community Standards and Expectations was added to all CUSTOMS orientation programs. Separate presentations targeted students and their family members. This information will become a permanent part of the CUSTOMS program in future years.
- A True Blue website has been established, located at <http://www.mtsu.edu/trueblue/>. The site includes information about the Task Force, as well as other video, visual, and teaching resources.
- The True Blue video was presented at the University Convocation, and all incoming students took the pledge, led by the SGA President. This will become a permanent addition to the annual Convocation program.
- A teaching module focused on civility and non-violent conflict resolution was completed and added to fall, 2011 student leadership training programs for student leaders, RAs, student athletes, SGA, and fraternity/sorority members. As of the opening of the 2011-2012 academic year, more than 200 student leaders have completed the training. The training module has been uploaded to the MTSU True Blue website, and this sort of training will be offered each fall term.
- The faculty who teach COMM 2200—the only general education course required of all students at MTSU—committed to incorporating principles non-violent conflict resolution into their regular curriculum. The text used and the learning outcomes for this course make it a perfect vehicle for introducing these principles into the classroom. We expect this to be an on-going part of the curriculum in this course.

- UNIV1010 sections now include a teaching module focused on civility and non-violent conflict resolution each semester, beginning fall, 2011.
- Posters have been created for the Statement of Community Standards and Expectations, and for the True Blue Pledge. Both have been distributed across campus. The Task Force recommends regular, annual refreshing of these visual reminders.
- The video of the True Blue Pledge has been shown at MTSU football games, and should be included in other events, where appropriate, throughout the year. The Task Force recommends that the video be refreshed annually. The Task Force also recommends considering a special focus version of the video, highlighting campus diversity and perhaps including use of some languages other than English.
- A series of opinion pieces, highlighting individual lines of the True Blue Pledge and written by prominent faculty and students, is being introduced through Sidelines. The Task Force recommends this as an ongoing fall term activity.
- A t-shirt featuring the True Blue pledge has been developed. A “Caught you being True Blue” campaign will be rolled out, in which various faculty, staff and student leaders will be able to hand a voucher to students “caught” doing something which embodies the spirit of True Blue. Those vouchers will be redeemable for a True Blue t-shirt. Those shirts will ONLY be available to students who get “caught,” with the hope that they will become coveted collector’s items for the campus.

At this time, it is the feeling of the Task Force that our work has come to a logical stopping point. This past April, Dr. Warner Cribb, Faculty Senate President, sent forward correspondence indicating that the Faculty Senate was requesting reinstatement of the Campus Non-Violence Committee. Dr. Cribb noted that the Campus Non-violence Committee should not duplicate efforts of the new campus 'task force' on violence. Thus, we agreed to hold off on reinstating the Campus Non-violence Committee until the initial work of the Task Force was complete.

We would recommend that at this point in the fall term, members of the Campus Non-violence Committee should be appointed, and that group should take over the work of this Task Force, with this Task Force then being dissolved. The Campus Non-violence Committee—a standing committee for the university—would be well positioned to assume responsibility for monitoring on-going efforts and initiate new activities as needed.

The membership of the Campus Non-violence Committee had previously been defined as follows:

The Campus Non-Violence Committee should be composed of the following: A representative of Human Resources, the Director of Public Safety, a representative of Counseling Services, a representative of Student Affairs, a representative of Academic Affairs, the Campus Safety Officer, a representative of Student Government Association, the Director of the June Anderson Women's Center, and one faculty member from each college (to serve a two-year term). The Legal Assistant to the President should serve as an ex-officio member. The President may appoint additional members as appropriate. The committee may be asked to meet at nonscheduled times during an emergency.

The Task Force recommends that the membership of the Campus Non-violence Committee be expanded to also include a representative from Intercultural and Diversity Affairs, from Athletics, and from the office of Student Organizations and Involvement. In particular, Mr. Paul Boyd, the off campus representative from the Task Force, would be interested in continuing his participation in the standing committee, if deemed appropriate. Professor Jill Anderson, from English, would be interested in serving as a faculty representative.

The charge of the Campus Non-violence Committee had previously been defined as follows:

The Campus Non-Violence Committee should function as a monitoring body to oversee the implementation of the Violence on Campus policy. In carrying out this function, the committee should strive to insure the education of the campus community about violent behavior, its relationship to the University and the community at-large. Furthermore, the committee should be proactive in identifying and determining solutions to potential problems surrounding these behavioral issues. The committee should review the effectiveness of the policies and procedures that were implemented to address violent situations. After the review has been completed, the committee should make the recommendations necessary to insure a safer campus.

The Task Force recommends that the charge be revised as follows:

The Campus Non-Violence Committee should function as a monitoring body to oversee the implementation of ~~the Violence on Campus policy~~ **campus policies related to non-violence and civility.** In carrying out this function, the committee should strive to insure the education of the campus community about ~~violent behavior, its relationship to the University and the community at-large~~ **the MTSU Statement of Community Standards and Expectations and the implications of that statement for students, faculty and the entire campus community.** Furthermore, the committee should be proactive in identifying and determining solutions to potential problems surrounding ~~these~~ **related** behavioral issues. The committee should review the effectiveness of the policies, ~~and~~ **procedures, and program initiatives** that ~~were~~ **have been or should be implemented to address violent situations** violations of the Community Standards and Expectations. The committee should make recommendations and/or implement new initiatives to enhance campus awareness and improve the campus climate with respect to the areas contained in the Community Standards—**honesty and integrity, respect for diversity, engagement in the community, and non-violence and peaceful conflict resolution.** ~~After the review has been completed, the committee should make the recommendations necessary to insure a safer campus.~~

Over the course of these past five months, the Task Force has operated with a high degree of enthusiasm, commitment, and good humor. They have achieved a great deal in a short period of time. I have appreciated the opportunity to serve as the chair of this group. I will be happy to work with the chair of the re-established Campus Non-violence Committee to insure a smooth transition.

Respectfully submitted,
Debra Sells

Vice President for Student Affairs and
Vice Provost for Enrollment and Academic Services