

Civility can play a critical role in changing a potential conflict into an opportunity to learn and grow.

Though not expressly named, the practice and meaning of civility is reflected in many of our Bentley 's core values, especially caring and respect.

Caring: We practice understanding, compassion and kindness. We recognize the whole person and their well-being, and we think beyond ourselves and our immediate goals to consider the impact our actions have on other people.

Respect: We treat others as they would like to be treated. We recognize the inherent dignity and worth of all members of our community and strive to better understand and appreciate everyone. We are committed to keeping our community free of vandalism, hate speech, violence and harassment.

Especially in a university environment, where we try to keep our minds open and expanding so we can learn, teach and grow, civility means actively listening with consideration to different viewpoints. Civility prevents us from attacking individuals personally whose viewpoints we do not agree with and at the same time encourages us to constructively express our disagreement or our different viewpoint.

Civility shifts the focus from our ego, that is from winning an argument to keeping an open educational mind to gain new knowledge.

Civility is not a superficial set of manners; it is an essential component of a thriving academic community. By embedding civility, defined as respect and caring, we can foster an environment that minimizes and hopefully eliminates negative and destructive conflicts.

Being challenged is a key factor in learning and developing. No matter how uncomfortable it may be, I encourage us to expect and welcome challenging situations respectfully and in a civil manner.

In addition, when disagreements are handled constructively, we are allowing our relationships not to be compromised further but actually to be strengthened.

Disagreements will indeed occur and when they do, I encourage us to be civil, treating others with respect.

Eliane Markoff
University Ombuds
March 2026
emarkoff@bentley.edu