

# An Imperative Responsibility in Professional Role Socialization: Addressing Incivility

Diana Layne<sup>1</sup> · Tracy Hudgins<sup>2</sup> · Celena E. Kusch<sup>3</sup> · Karen Lounsbury<sup>4</sup>

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#### Abstract

The study used a thematic analysis to examine student and faculty responses to two qualitative questions focused on their perceptions of the consequence of incivility and solutions that would embed civility expectations as a key element to professional role socialization in higher education. Participants included students and faculty across multiple academic programs and respondent subgroups at a regional university in the southern United States. A new adapted conceptual model using Clark's in Nursing Education Perspectives, 28(2), 93-97 (2007, revised 2020) Conceptual Model for Fostering Civility in Nursing Education and Daniel Goleman's in Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ. Bantam Books (1995) Emotional Intelligence domains was used as the framework for this study to give meaning and context to its findings. For this group of respondents, the study found that seventy percent of faculty and students agree that incivility has the largest impact on the emotional intelligence domain of self-management, which includes negative emotional outcomes, loss of respect, negative professional and student outcomes, poor academic outcomes, attrition, and less success. Leadership in higher education will strengthen their institutions by using a relational approach centered on communication skill-building to ensure that faculty have been socialized to the importance of civil professional behavior and that stakeholders collectively explore and agree on the meaning and organizational integration of civility.

**Keywords** Incivility  $\cdot$  Higher education  $\cdot$  Faculty  $\cdot$  Professional roles  $\cdot$  Emotional intelligence

There is a crisis in higher education, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Farnell et al., 2021; Krishnamoorthy & Keating, 2021; Marsicano et al., 2020). A recent survey by the Bipartisan Policy Center and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) found that only 27% of adults believe a college degree is "definitely worth it" (Finley et al., 2021). Higher education enrollment has declined by 13.8% over the past decade (National College Attainment Network, 2022). This decline took a precipitous drop from 2019 to 2022 by 8% even after returning to in-person classes during the Covid 19 Pandemic (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2022). Faculty members are also leaving higher education. Between 2019 and 2020, faculty numbers at

Extended author information available on the last page of the article

U.S. public universities decreased 3–4 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Some causes of this crisis in loyalty and engagement include the cost of tuition, not seeing the value in the degree, and logistical barriers to attending school while working (Marcus, 2022). Increasingly, students do not see their investment in education resulting in sufficient personal and professional returns. The full scope of this multi-part research study seeks to view the crisis in higher education through a personal and professional lens by exploring how well higher education institutions support students' professional development by cultivating and maintaining a professional and civil climate. Ample studies have examined the incidences of incivility in the college classroom and their effects on students who go into the workforce (Clark & Springer, 2007; Hefferman & Bosetti, 2021; Luparell & Frisbee, 2019; Piotrowski & King, 2016). This paper aims to examine student and faculty perceptions of the consequences of incivility in higher education and student and faculty recommendations for faculty to socialize students across a variety of academic programs to a professional role.

#### Faculty's Role in Preparing Students for Professional Roles

This study builds on a vast body of research into the personal and emotional dimensions of the higher education experience (Alt & Itzkovich, 2019; Boice, 1996; Tormey, 2021). Many studies have considered the faculty's role in promoting students' academic success and satisfaction with their learning experiences (Bao et al., 2018; Lamport, 1993; Wyatt, 2011). Faculty who establish supportive relationships with their students and maintain positive interactions contribute to student loyalty, engagement, positive academic outcomes, and degree completion (Baird, 2020; Bowden, 2009; Hoffman, 2014; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2022; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Snijders et al., 2022). Effective teaching practices rooted in the Emotional Intelligence domains of relationship management, such as "considering students' perspectives and personal goals," allow students to feel that their teacher is supportive and promote greater student success (Goleman, 1995; Khassawneh et al., 2022; Pychyl et al., 2022). Far less research has been conducted to explain the faculty's role in fostering students' future professional success and preparing them for professional roles (Bashir & McTaggart, 2021; Cruess & Cruess, 2012; Perez et al., 2022). However, evidence suggests that enhancing students' emotional intelligence improves future outcomes in workplaces and organizations as well as in academic contexts (Gilar-Corbí, 2018; Kastberg et al., 2020; Tang & He, 2023).

Studies of higher education's responsibility for teaching professionalism and career readiness focus more on staff efforts and institutional policies and point out the gap in attention to faculty roles in this effort (Bennett, 2018; Chigbu & Nekhwevha, 2022; Okolie et al., 2020). As arbiters of curriculum, faculty have not yet consistently defined the place of professionalization within disciplinary learning outcomes. There is wide-spread disagreement between employers, higher education administrators, and faculty about which learning outcomes and skills colleges and universities should cultivate within the classroom to prepare students for future professional life (Lim, 2015; Lisá et al., 2019; Salas Velasco, 2014; Sánchez Carracedo, 2018; Succi & Canovi, 2020). When asked which learning outcomes are addressed in undergraduate education, university faculty and administrators reported relatively little attention to interpersonal "soft skills" such as teamwork (37%), civic skills (34%), and intercultural competence (62%) as compared to the highest rated skills of written communication and critical thinking

(90% and 87% respectively) (Finley & McConnell, 2022). Only 42% of college and university stakeholders identified emotional intelligence as a very important skill for students. Empathy (59%) and self-awareness (58%) ranked only slightly higher (Finley & McConnell, 2022). In contrast, employers ranked the ability to work effectively in teams as the most important job skill (Finley & McConnell, 2022). Generational differences and differences in political affiliations accounted for further divergence in perceptions about the skills needed for workplace success and whether colleges and universities were successfully professionalizing students (Finley et al., 2021). Faculty, higher education administrators, students and employers have not yet developed a shared curriculum for professionalization, nor has consensus been reached about the faculty's responsibility for teaching professionalism.

#### Faculty's Socialization to Professional Academic Roles

Compounding these questions about how colleges and universities can be more responsive to their students' need for professionalization is the issue of undefined academic professional roles. Explorations of the academic career in higher education offer little guidance on collegial relationships or expectations for civil or professional behavior. Boyd and Smith (2016), Feather (2016), Vick et al. (2016), and Rosewell and Ashwin (2019) make no mention of faculty professional codes in their overview of academic careers and academic professional identity. The American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) Statement on Professional Ethics identifies the primary professional responsibility of academic faculty as seeking and stating, "the truth as they see it" (AAUP, 2009). The professional code continues to stress the importance of demonstrating respect for students, serving as guides and counselors to students, and avoiding harassment and discrimination against both students and colleagues (AAUP, 2009). No further guidance on the expectations or a code of conduct for fulfilling these obligations is provided. In contrast, the National League for Nursing's Nurse Educator Competencies cite the critical importance of socializing student nurses to their professional roles as nurses (Core Competency 2: Facilitate Learner Development and Socialization) as well as maintaining a personal commitment to be a positive contributing member of the educational team (Core Competency 8: Pursue Continuous Quality Improvement in the Nurse Educator Role) (Halstead, 2019). These codes and guides leave room for additional research to clarify the skills and behaviors needed to put these values and commitments into action. In one of the few studies linking values and morals to academic identity, Fitzmaurice (2013) calls for more sustained dialogue to aid in professionalization and socialization to academic roles.

Academic professionals in disciplines like librarianship, nursing, and occupational therapy recognize the need for specific attention and professional development related to professionalization within higher education (Andrew et al., 2009; Baldwin et al., 2017; Dickerson, 2004; Levy & Roberts, 2005; Penn, 2008). Galantucci and Krcatovich (2016) describe the powerful effects on students' professionalization when higher education faculty engage in positive role modeling and collaborative mentoring with a clear understanding of academic ethics and their own professional roles. However, Hamilton (2002), Sethy (2018), and Janket et al. (2020) point out that there is no overarching statement of the social contract or ethical code for interacting with students, junior faculty, or colleagues within higher education.

## **Incivility and Professional Codes**

If socialization to professional roles is one aim of postsecondary education, but higher education institutions have not defined the social norms undergirding professional roles, violation of norms seems inevitable. Academic incivility is defined as behaviors that violate norms of mutual respect within the learning environment (Clark, 2008). Examples of academic incivility can range from active behaviors such as personal comments or verbal attacks or more passive behaviors such as inadequate communications and avoidance (Alt et al., 2022). Hudgins et al. (2023) found that not only did faculty and students differ somewhat in their perceptions of incivility, but also various subgroups of faculty (instructors, tenure-track, part-time, etc.) differed in their perceptions of civil and uncivil behaviors. In such an environment, students and faculty require substantial emotional intelligence skills in social awareness and relationship management to adapt to shifting norms of acceptable behavior from one classroom to another and avoid academic incivility. However, it is not clear where students or faculty learn to develop such skills, nor is there evidence to suggest that higher education institutions draw connections between navigating these varied norms and socializing students to future professional roles. Professional socialization is defined as the process through which a person becomes a legitimate member of a professional society (Sadeghi Avval Shahr et al., 2019). Experiences of academic incivility may translate to workplace incivility upon transition into practice regardless of industry. A large body of evidence exists describing incivility experienced among healthcare providers, other industries including education (Cahyadi et al., 2021), and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) (Saxena et al., 2019) are also affected, This study aimed to learn more about the perceptions of faculty and students about the consequences of incivility in academic settings on students' professionalization and what solutions they recommend to create a civil environment for both learning and professionalization.

### **Theoretical Framework**

An adapted theoretical framework was developed from The Conceptual Model for Fostering Civility in Nursing Education (Clark & Springer, 2007, revised 2020) and Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence (EI) Model, based on the quantitative and qualitative results of a broader, multi-part survey (Hudgins et al., 2022). This adaptive theoretical framework provided the underpinning for this study by linking behaviors of academic incivility with Goleman's emotional intelligence domains or a lack of emotional intelligence competencies. Clark and Springer's (2007) model of incivility describes a metaphorical "dance" between two people where individuals positively and negatively respond, to another's "steps." Interactions set the stage for emotional, or affective, events. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) developed the Affective Events Theory to explain the relationship between affective events and job satisfaction. These interactions encourage a culture of civility or incivility, depending upon the nature of communication, interactions, and relationships and influenced by faculty attitudes of superiority and student attitudes of entitlement (Clark, 2008; Clark & Springer, 2007). With the author's permission, this study adapted the Conceptual Model for Fostering Civility in Nursing Education and added Goleman's (1995) EI domains to cast faculty and student attitudes in terms of EI behaviors and skills that can be developed and learned.

Goleman (1995) explained EI by organizing the behaviors as reciprocally connected competencies, including emotional self-awareness (knowing what one is feeling at any given time and understanding the impact those moods have on others), self-regulation (controlling or redirecting one's emotions, anticipating consequences before acting on impulse), motivation (utilizing emotional factors to achieve goals, enjoy the learning process and persevere in the face of obstacles), empathy (sensing the emotions of others), and social skills (managing relationships, inspiring others and inducing desired responses from them). These competencies are organized into four domains including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Goleman's domains provide a framework for the thematic analysis of the perceived consequences of and strategies for mitigating incivility in academic settings. By integrating behaviors associated with Goleman's' self (self-awareness and selfmanagement) and social-relational (social awareness and relationship management) domains, we believe students and faculty have the best opportunity to successfully progress through Clark's "encounters with seized opportunities for engagement" phase and achieve civility in ways that socialize them to future professional roles.

# Aim of the Study and Research Questions

The primary aim of this paper is to report student and faculty perceptions of the consequences of faculty incivility and examine their suggestions for addressing incivility as a part of socializing students to a professional role. The proprietary Incivility in Higher Education Revised (IHE-R) survey was adapted with permission and utilized to solicit faculty and student experiences with 24 uncivil behaviors and their experiences of incivility in higher education, potential causes for incivility, and strategies to improve civility, perceptions of the consequences of incivility in higher education and suggestions for faculty to socialize students to a professional role. Faculty and students reported differing perceptions and experiences of incivility and students reported witnessing uncivil behaviors more often than faculty (Hudgins et al., 2023). Additionally, qualitative responses to faculty and student experiences with incivility in higher education, potential causes for incivility, and strategies to improve civility are also reported elsewhere (Hudgins et al., 2022). This paper analyzes the qualitative responses to two open-ended questions: "In your opinion, what is the most significant consequence of incivility in higher education?" and "What do you believe is the relationship between failing to address academic uncivil behaviors and students' future professional incivility? How should faculty address this as part of socializing students to a professional role?" The following research questions guided this analysis:

- What are the faculty and student perceptions of the primary consequences of faculty incivility in higher education?
- What are the student and faculty perceptions of strategies faculty should utilize to address incivility when socializing students to a future professional role?

# Participants

Faculty and students at a public university in the southeastern United States were invited to participate in an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved exempted study in October 2020. Overall, 306 (51 faculty and 255 students) participants provided insight into

the consequences of incivility and/or potential strategies for faculty to address incivility when socializing students. Most of the faculty participants were white females, over 30 years old compared to student participants who were mostly white females less than 30 years old (Hudgins et al., 2023). Many of the faculty participants also held a graduate degree compared to most of the student participants holding an associate degree (Hudgins et al., 2023). Additional participant characteristics are reported elsewhere (Hudgins et al., 2023).

# Methods

A thematic analysis was used to analyze faculty and student responses to two open ended questions related to the consequences of academic incivility and recommended strategies that could be used by faculty when socializing students to a professional role. The work of Braun and Clarke (2012, 2014, 2020) guided the theoretical underpinnings of this thematic analysis. Inductive and deductive coding was completed by three members of the research team who independently analyzed responses. The entire research team developed a codebook following initial coding to ensure coding consistency across team members. To maintain rigor, any discrepancies between initial codes were resolved by consensus of the entire research team. Goldman's EI domains and competencies (Goleman, 1995) were used to organize the initial codes around final themes. Responses were further analyzed by role (student or faculty) and compared by race (non-white or white) to identify differences.

# Results

### **Consequences of Academic Incivility**

### **Faculty Perceptions**

A total of 51 faculty provided their perceptions of the most significant consequence of incivility. Almost 70% of faculty participants identified consequences that aligned with Goleman's self-management domain. Faculty also reported consequences in relationship management and social awareness. Across all domains, faculty identified consequences across the following eight competencies (emotional self-control, adaptability, initiative, developing others, conflict management, teamwork and collaboration, organizational awareness, and achievement orientation). Consequences reported within the self-management domain included negative emotional consequences, negative professional outcomes, attrition, decreased success, negative student outcomes, and loss of respect. Consequences reported within the social awareness domain included normalizing incivility and a loss of diversity. Finally, consequences reported within the relationship management domain included decreased learning, continued incivility, poor relationships, loss of community, and loss of trust. Alignment of final themes, for both faculty and student examples, and EI domains and competencies is presented in Table 1.

EI Domain	EI Competency	Theme	Faculty example	Student example
Self-management	Emotional self-control	Negative emotional outcomes	"Making capable students feel as though they are incapable. Grading arbitrarily harshly 'because I'm tough."	"Unmotivated students and faculty."
		Loss of respect	"Lack of respect"	"Loss of interest/respect."
		Burnout	None reported	"Burnout"
		Racial inequity	None reported	"Racism"
		Unjust treatment	None reported	"Unfairness to students"
	Adaptability	Negative professional outcomes	"Students avoid this faculty member	"I believe it is losing your employment
			and therefore our major"	or position at the given job due to incivility."
		Negative student outcomes	"Expulsion"	"I think it is expulsion."
		Poor academic outcomes	None reported	"Lower student performance"
	Initiative	Attrition	"I believe that student and faculty retention are both negatively immored by invivility."	"People dropping out."
	Achievement orientation	Less success	"At-risk have a harder time succeed- ing"	None reported
	Communication	Communication	None reported	"Students and teachers are unable to properly communicate and therefore students aren't fully learning."
Relationship management Developing others	Developing others	Decreased learning	"Teachers not improving, and students being confused and getting lower grades."	"Students begin to become disinterested in class and begin to avoid the situa- tions."

EI Domain	EI Competency	Theme	Faculty example	Student example
	Conflict management	Continued incivility	"We aren't modeling behaviors that we would like our students to emulate. We are [not] setting examples in how to be professional, we need to make sure we lead by example."	"Sending graduates out into society without the knowledge or ability to be able to unite or get people to work together. There is always somebody to blame versus we have a problem that we all can be a part of to fix."
	Teamwork and collaboration Loss of community	Loss of community	"Distrust and a lesser degree of colle- giality and community that we might have otherwise."	None reported
		Poor relationships	"Destruction of teacher/student rela- tionships, which is so important for learning."	"Lack of trust between students and faculty. We should all be on the same team."
		Loss of trust	"Erosion of trust, credibility, and reputation of individual institution. Toxicity leads to a downward spiral."	"The fostered distrust between students and an authoritarian school administra- tion"
Social Awareness	Organizational awareness	Normalize incivility	"Normalization of the behavior to the broader society."	None reported
		Loss of diversity	"Other voices (those more reserved individuals) will not be heard."	None reported
Self -awareness	Emotional awareness	Bias	None reported	"Typically, the student gets punished more than anything even if it really had nothing to do on the student's part."

#### **Student Perceptions**

A total of 255 students provided their perceptions of the most significant consequences of incivility in higher education. Interestingly, about 70 percent of students reported consequences also aligned within Goleman's self-management domain. Students reported consequences across two other domains including relationship management and self-awareness. Consequences reported within the self-management domain included negative professional outcomes, negative emotional consequences, negative student outcomes, poor academic outcomes, loss of respect, attrition, unjust treatment, racial inequity, and burnout. Consequences reported within the relationship management domain included decreased learning, continued incivility, poor relationships, and loss of trust. Finally, consequences reported within the self-awareness domain were related to bias, which aligned with the emotional awareness competency. Consequences were reported similarly by both white and non-white faculty and student participants.

#### Strategies to Address Incivility in Socializing Students in a Professional Role Setting

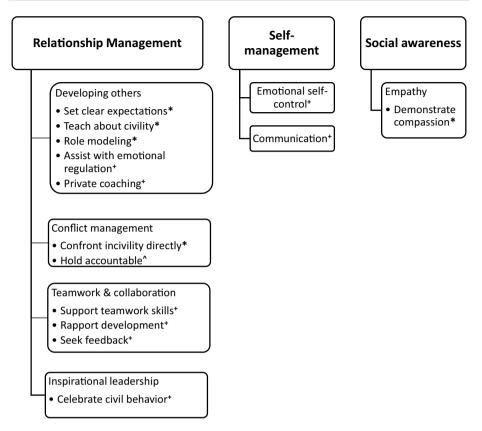
Several professionalization strategies reported by faculty and students were aligned. However, there were several strategies reported by students that were not reported by faculty. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of reported strategies classified by Goleman's EI domains.

#### Faculty Perceptions

A total of 40 faculty provided strategies for faculty to socialize students in preparation for a professional role setting. Reported strategies aligned with Goleman's relationship management EI domain. Reported strategies within the relationship management domain included role-modeling, confronting incivility directly, setting clear expectations, teaching about civility, and increasing accountability. These strategies aligned with two EI competencies developing others and conflict management. It is important to note this is similar to student reported strategies but lacks the two additional domains which were reported by students (self-management and social awareness). Almost half of the faculty reported the need to set clear expectations as a strategies reported by both faculty and students and their alignment with Goleman's EI domains and competencies along with sample quotes from participants.

#### **Student Perceptions**

A total of 208 students reported strategies for faculty to socialize students in a professional role setting. Interestingly, 97 percent of strategies reported by students were related to Goleman's relationship management EI domain. Suggestions related to developing others included setting clear expectations, role modeling, teaching about civility, assisting with emotion regulation, and private coaching. Strategies specific to conflict management were related to confronting incivility directly. Other strategies suggested related to relationship management included celebrating civil behavior. Students also offered suggestions related to social awareness reported as a need to demonstrate



**Fig. 1** Professional socialization strategies classified by Goleman's Emotional Intelligence (EI) Domains. Strategies marked with an \* were suggested by both faculty and students. Student only suggested strategies are marked with <sup>+</sup> symbol. Faculty only suggestions are marked with <sup>^</sup> symbol

compassion and improve communication. Strategies for faculty to socialize students into a professional role were reported similarly by both white and non-white faculty and student participants.

### Limitations

It is important to note this study was completed amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the social unrest that followed the murder of George Floyd and the palpable tension within the United States leading up to the 2020 Presidential election likely also influenced participant responses. Another important limitation is one of the qualitative questions was phrased as a two-part question which potentially biased participant responses. Participants were asked perceptions related to the relationship between failing to address academic incivil behaviors and students' future professional incivility and strategies for addressing incivil behavior as part of professional role socialization within the same question. This made interpretation of these results challenging. Most participants expressed widespread agreement that academic incivility is a precursor to professional incivility and responded with detailed suggestions for strategies to address incivility. To

EI Domain	EI Competency	Theme	Faculty example	Student example
Relationship management Developing others	Developing others	Set clear expectations	"Students need to know that consequences exist in the real world, and that some are severe. If we fail to address these issues they may likely compound in future situations."	"Failing to address uncivil behavior may cause incivility to persist in the future. Students should be aware of professional roles and learn for respect it."
		Teach about civility	"Have more opportunities for student to participate in professional activities"	"Seminars, classes, role modeling."
		Unable to fix	"T'm not sure dealing with it will help them be better in the future. They are adults and pretty much already set in their ways."	None reported
		Role model	None reported	"Students may learn from bad habits around them, and these may carry on into their careers. Faculty should be extremely aware of their actions and interactions with students, because they are leading by example."
		Assist with emotion regulation None reported	None reported	"Faculty and students should treat each other equal no matter the rank. Let it be known that it's okay to feel a certain way but don't lash out."
		Private coaching	None reported	"They don't want to draw attention to it. Faculty should enclose these things in private"
	Conflict Management	Confront incivility directly	"Address these issues equally with all faculty when they are brought up. Adjuncts are sometimes ignored when they complain about student behavior."	"Failing to address incivility in school will only lead to students believing that uncivil actions do not have consequences which lead to them being uncivil in the future."

EI Domain	EI Competency	Theme	Faculty example	Student example
		Hold accountable	"Failing to adequately address this teaches the student such behavior is normal. This does not bode well for future employment."	None reported
	Teamwork and Collaboration Support teamwork skills	Support teamwork skills	None reported	"Allow students to work together collectively on really hard assignments to build trust and confidence within their own skills"
		Rapport development	None reported	"Actually, listen to the students."
		Seek feedback	None reported	"Evaluations to be sure classes are going properly."
	Inspirational leadership		None reported	"We see uncivility as a right for being in power or a professor. Reward civility and ask students to report or complete anonymous survey when incident occurs"
Self-management	Emotional self-control	Role model	"Students often mirror what they see. Therefore, if faculty are modeling uncivil behaviors students will conduct themselves in a similar manner. Faculty should consider that students are always watching and strive to consistently operate in a civil manner. Faculty should also model appropriate conflict resolution strategies."	None reported
	Communication	Communication	None reported	"By talking to the students and listening"
Social Awareness	Empathy	Demonstrate compassion	None reported	"Understand that students have jobs/ other responsibilities sometimes"

address this limitation the research team determined the best course of action was to analyze responses to the second part of the question.

#### Discussion

This study aspired to better understand study participants' perception of the consequences of academic incivility and their insights into the best course of action to address acts of incivility as an element of professional role socialization. Data for this study was collected during 2020. While the respondents were asked to consider the previous 12 months when answering the study questions, it would be challenging to separate the impact that the Covid-19 global pandemic, contentious presidential elections, and social unrest of 2020 could have on the participants' perspectives. While this is an inarguable fact, literature shows a longstanding historical pattern of academic incivility that despite decades of research continues to plague higher education (Boice, 1996; Cahyadi et al., 2021; Knepp, 2012; Levine, 2010). Under the cloud of difficult social and economic issues during the last few years, higher education has received a higher degree of scrutiny on its value and worth.

The results of this study demonstrate that faculty and students value emotional intelligence as a protective barrier from incivility. The faculty and students share common perception of the consequences of uncivil behavior. Seventy percent of faculty and students agree that incivility has the largest impact on behaviors and actions that fall within the emotional intelligence domain of self-management. When the ability to maintain selfmanagement is compromised through the stress of uncivil academic climates, faculty and students agree that there are negative emotional outcomes, loss of respect, negative professional and student outcomes, poor academic outcomes, attrition, and less success. Faculty and students also agree that relationship management is the best way to socialize students to their professional roles. However, students also value behaviors and strategies in the areas of self-management and social awareness which were not identified by faculty participants. Specifically, students within this sample were seeking faculty to demonstrate compassion and empathy within the academic environment. Without shared expectations and norms creating a culture of civility within academia will be difficult to achieve.

Faculty and students agree when faculty role model professional behavior, set clear expectations for civility, and teach about civil behaviors, students will have a blueprint of professional norms that prioritize emotional intelligence and support role transition from student to future professional. Research shows that there is a link between uncivil student behavior and uncivil professional performance (Luparell & Frisbee, 2019). Additionally, there is a causal relationship between negative interpersonal skills in professional roles and poor career outcomes (Itzkovich et al., 2020; Porath & Pearson, 2019). In 2013, Porath & Pearson reported that ninety-eight percent of employees have experienced an episode of incivility that resulted in decreased work effort, time spent at work, quality of work, performance efforts, and/or organization commitment. Twelve percent reported leaving their job because of the incivility (Porath & Pearson, 2019). Nine short years later, the US found itself in the mist of the Great Resignation where 57% of employees leaving their position cite feeling disrespected at work as the primary contributing factor (Parker & Horowitz, 2022). The term "incivility" has been translated to a more malignant toxic work environment, and this new nomenclature is sprawling through headlines explaining the mass exodus of employees from their professional roles.

Higher education is experiencing compression from its consumers and the professional career field to provide a meaningful education that will result in a profitable career. The historic belief that a good college education would result in a well-rounded adult has transitioned to a greater focus in the technical knowledge, skills, and abilities to compete in the work force. However, for both employers and higher education stakeholders, the technical and critical thinking skills needed to earn a career have a priority over the emotional intelligence skills needed to keep the career once it has started. Data suggest there is support for technical and critical thinking skills, but little attention to emotional skills (Finley & McConnell, 2022). Traditionally, higher education was primarily focused on ensuring technical skill competency and minimized the necessary emotional skills required to create and maintain professional environments. Changing demographics within higher education also contribute to the need to create a shared culture of civility. Rising higher education costs with less return on investment for students in the form of profitable careers paired with employers' preference of a technically skilled versus emotionally intelligent workforce creates the perfect storm for incivil behavior. As higher education grapples with creating a technically proficient work force, there is a risk of widening the gap of essential interpersonal skills needed for professional success and higher education's ability to expend curriculum hours devoted to their development.

Higher education is ground zero for socializing current students to the civility norms of their future career fields. Faculty are ideally situated to create professional relationships that open opportunities to role model professional behaviors and address behaviors that are problematic. The early intervention of professional role adoption provides time to practice and fine tune the skills associated with emotional intelligence in a neutral environment with low stakes. Students who are mentored toward civil professional behavior have a greater likelihood of persisting as civil employees. This is an essential stabilizing factor for a work force that is in significant flux after the global pandemic. Goleman's' EI domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management provide a framework to self and social regulation to successfully navigate incivility by positively seeking engagement opportunities that result in productive professional relationships.

### Conclusion

The faculty and students in this sample of higher education community members agree that emotional intelligence skills of relationship management can be protective when faculty role model, address incivility, and teach about civil behavior as it relates to professional role transitions. Existing studies of the use of EI training to reduce bullying, increase empathy, and promote student success verify the efficacy of such programs for other purposes (Bennett & Sawatzky, 2013; Boyatzis, 2009; Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Fletcher et al., 2009; Itzkovich et al., 2020; Kozlowski et al., 2018). Challenges exist in operationalizing these agreed upon interventions. Academic faculty are often unprepared by their formal education and training to role model, teach, or address professional civility in their interactions and classroom management. If faculty have not personally been educated, trained, or mentored in civility behaviors, they may be ill-equipped to offer it to students. Additionally, perceptions of civil behavior differ between faculty and students (Hudgins et al., 2022). For example, students perceived the use of technology during class, meetings or activities for unrelated purposes quite differently than faculty (Hudgins et al., 2022). This makes operationalizing suggested solutions to ensure a climate of civility complex.

To develop shared cultural norms and develop interventions, the authors believe that the next step in this query is to better understand the effective strategies that can be used to implement a collaborative civility training with a particular emphasis on socialization to professional roles. The use of mixed focus groups (faculty, students, staff, academic leadership) to explore shared ideas and solutions for a course of action that implements methods of learning and accountable civil professional practice is the starting place. The adapted model used for this study is an ideal framework for the exploration of a shared taxonomy centered on creating a civil learning environment in higher education. The destination is the effective transition of a civil professional who will thrive in a new career because they are technically and interpersonally skilled for success.

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Code Availability Not applicable.

# Declarations

**Ethics Approval** The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of South Carolina (Columbia) affirmed this as an Exempt Study Not applicable.

Consent to Participate Not applicable; Exempt Study.

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#### **Authors and Affiliations**

# Diana Layne<sup>1</sup> · Tracy Hudgins<sup>2</sup> · Celena E. Kusch<sup>3</sup> · Karen Lounsbury<sup>4</sup>

Diana Layne layne@musc.edu

Tracy Hudgins Tracy.hudgins@gvltec.edu

Celena E. Kusch kuschc@uscupstate.edu

Karen Lounsbury lounsbua@uscupstate.edu

- <sup>1</sup> Medical University of South Carolina, 99 Jonathan Lucas St. MSC 160, Charleston, SC 29425-1600, USA
- <sup>2</sup> Greenville Technical College, Building 117, Office 132 506 S. Pleasantburg Drive, Greenville, SC 29607, USA
- <sup>3</sup> University of South Carolina USC Upstate, 800 University Way, Spartanburg, SC 29303, USA
- <sup>4</sup> University of South Carolina USC Upstate School of Education, HEC 3009 800 University Way, Spartanburg, SC 29307, USA