



WISCONSIN EXCHANGE: PLURALISM IN PRACTICE

The *Wisconsin Exchange: Pluralism in Practice* is a campuswide initiative to cultivate a community where diverse viewpoints are expected, debated, and respected. Across our signature programming elements and events, we seek to build a campus culture of civil dialogue across many backgrounds, viewpoints, identities, religions, political perspectives, and ideas. We encourage the meaningful, productive – and sometimes uncomfortable – exchange of ideas. We certainly don't expect everyone to agree. We know there will be uncomfortable conversations. But it is vital that we talk – and listen – to each other.

Signature Program Elements

- **Exchange in Action:** A series of discussions between students, faculty, staff, and members of the Initiative's steering committee to seek input on the challenges, opportunities, and expectations for the Wisconsin Exchange. We invite all members of the campus community to participate in these conversations by [signing up here](#).
- **Wisconsin Exchange Grants:** A grant program, using a competitive application process, that provides funding to faculty, staff, and students interested in developing and hosting activities focused on either engaging respectfully across viewpoint differences or developing the skills for thoughtful civil discourse. The [first round of grants](#) was awarded in January 2026.
- **Wisconsin Exchange Speaker Series:** An ongoing slate of events brings together speakers with differing viewpoints to model what healthy debate and civil discourse looks like, and features individuals who can speak to pluralism or civil dialogue in a compelling way. We also partner with campus organizations and schools/colleges to expand the reach of existing events that bring diverse viewpoints to campus. This fall, the Wisconsin Exchange will sponsor several events, including a moderated conversation between Professor Robert P. George and Dr. Cornel West on pluralism, civil dialogue, and the value of constructive disagreement on October 28.
- **Pluralism in Practice Spring Workshop:** An annual gathering for students, staff, and faculty to hear from thought leaders and engage in discourse and education supporting constructive engagement across differences. The inaugural [Pluralism in Practice Workshop](#) featured a panel discussion with Wisconsin Exchange Steering Committee members, breakout sessions, and a keynote conversation with Dr. Colleen Shogan, the 11th Archivist of the United States. Our Spring 2027 Workshop will be held on March 2.
- **Pluralism Postdoctoral Fellowship:** A pluralism postdoctoral fellowship to support scholars whose work engages pluralism across disciplines – ranging from philosophy, communication, political thought, technology, and law. The first cohort arrived in August 2026.

To learn more about upcoming events and campus-wide efforts, please visit the [Wisconsin Exchange website](#) or sign up for our email list [here](#).

The Wisconsin Exchange belongs to everyone in the campus community. Faculty. Students. Staff. Many perspectives, one Wisconsin.

What Do We Mean by Pluralism in Practice?

Real learning happens when different perspectives meet. At the University of Wisconsin–Madison, we will model what it means to learn, live, and lead as a campus community defined by open scholarly inquiry and the free exchange of ideas. To us, pluralism is more than a concept. It describes a willingness to listen with curiosity, engage in vigorous and respectful dialogue, and work together for the public good.

Our campus has long embraced principles of academic freedom, free expression, and a fearless “sifting and winnowing.” These ideals can only happen through robust engagement with diverse viewpoints. We don’t just tolerate different perspectives—we actively seek them out because this is how we sharpen our thinking, test our ideas with rigor, and learn from each other. And we do it with openness, dignity, and respect in the process. As Wisconsin’s flagship public university, UW–Madison has a unique opportunity to lead in this space by demonstrating how pluralism can work on our campus and beyond.

The [Wisconsin Exchange](#) reflects and advances our [shared Community Commitments](#), principles that build a campus culture where all Badgers belong and flourish. At UW–Madison, we believe that belonging and flourishing happen best when we engage a wide range of views and perspectives. We support open scholarly inquiry through faculty and postdoctoral hiring, research, and partnerships that broaden intellectual engagement. We foster meaningful dialogue and skill building through campus programs like student Deliberation Dinners, faculty participation in the Discussion Project, and campus-wide speakers, workshops, and Exchange in Action series. We create learning experiences in classrooms and residence halls and through student organizations and co-curricular activities that prepare students to flourish as citizens of a dynamic world.

Pluralism is not just a value we hold. It is fundamental to who we are and how we fulfill our mission. And it is how we move forward, together.

