

MEMORANDUM

To: Viterbi Staff

From: Yannis C. Yortsos, Dean

Date: August 18, 2025

Subject: Civility and Climate in our Workplace

The University and the USC Viterbi School of Engineering promote civil interactions and an inclusive climate among staff and between faculty, staff, and students. Promoting and maintaining an inclusive climate, which is welcoming and supportive, is essential for all to thrive. I write to remind you of the appropriate policy, and to request your adherence in letter and in spirit. A similar memo is being sent to Viterbi faculty.

As stated in the [“bullying and incivility” section](#) of USC’s Manager Gateway, *“polite and courteous interaction should be the norm. Acts of interpersonal rudeness should be handled swiftly and justly, and those who instigate uncivil behavior must be held accountable, regardless of their hierarchical prestige or special talents.”* Staff that violate professional norms and standards may be referred to coaching and/or subjected to disciplinary action.

Staff are encouraged to report any concerns directly to their leadership, to Viterbi’s Executive Director of Human Resources (HR), and/or via the [USC Report & Response Website](#). In all cases, the [USC Office of the Ombuds](#) is available for confidential, impartial, informal, and independent consultation for anyone (faculty, staff, or student) with concerns about civility and climate.

In cases of allegations of policy violations involving interpersonal misconduct, the following steps will be pursued:

- When an alleged incident is reported in a unit, the Department Chair, Program Director (or their designee) of the staff member will report the event to Viterbi’s Executive Director of Human Resources (HR) and to the Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs, in case of faculty involvement. If applicable, the University Human Resources, the Office of Professionalism and Ethics ([OPE](#)), and/or the Office of Civil Rights Compliance ([OCRC](#)), for allegations involving protected characteristics) will also be contacted. (Any reports made to the [USC Report & Response](#) website will be automatically referred to the appropriate university office.)
- Viterbi’s Executive Director of HR (or designee) will work with the Chair/Director, University Human Resources, and the cognizant university office(s) to investigate the allegations, and determine if disciplinary action is needed and at what level warranted. Academic units may not conduct investigations or impose disciplinary action, verbal or written, without prior consultation with our HR leadership.
- For significant and/or repeated violations of policy, Viterbi’s Executive Director of HR will consult with the Vice Dean for Administration and Finance, University HR, and cognizant university office(s), as needed. Further discipline may be taken, up to and including termination, if deemed appropriate.
- Once all investigations have been concluded, Viterbi’s Executive Director of Human Resources or cognizant university office will notify the parties of the conclusions reached, following appropriate communication guidelines if the conclusions include confidential and/or sensitive outcomes.

As part of the USC Viterbi and USC communities, we share values that bind us together as University employees and as human beings. *I ask all of us to be cognizant of “power differentials” and to refrain from exercising them, in our interactions with colleagues and students.* Let us continue to uphold our values.

