

## Reason and Respect

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### Message from the president

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*President, Roger Williams University*

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# reason & RESPECT

A JOURNAL OF CIVIL DISCOURSE AT ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

## From the President

Many universities publish scholarly journals at the graduate level; however, few do so as a means of engaging undergraduate students in intellectual inquiry. *Reason & Respect: A Journal of Civil Discourse at Roger Williams University* is designed with our students in mind—both as readers and as writers. Its purpose is to offset more popular forms of discourse, where too often volume has replaced substance and reason. It provides a venue for all members of our community to respond critically, but respectfully, to diverse ideas and perspectives.

Able edited by Professors Kate Mele, Robert Engvall, and Roxanne O'Connell, the journal reinforces a number of core values important to our university: a love of learning for its own sake; faculty-student scholarly efforts; commitment to service; a global perspective and mutual respect. Those values form the foundation of our university and are represented by *Reason & Respect*.

In this third issue, students and faculty explore the topic of globalization from cultural, economic, political, and ideological perspectives. Such explorations are typically found in journals devoted to business or politics. Yet in deciding on this issue's theme, I thought that globalization is an important topic to be featured in a journal of civil discourse as well. The importance was made even more clear to me at a recent Socrates Café I facilitated entitled "Is Censorship Just a Matter of Good Taste and Judgment?"

Heated, yet civil students, faculty, and community members of various faiths and countries of origin grappled with the question in light of the recent controversy surrounding the portrayal of the prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper. While one student posited that free speech is an absolute, others voiced a contrary opinion: there is no absolute right to speech when it offends that which is considered sacred. And from somewhere in the middle, if such a place exists, a student commented on another, more local controversy—the banning of the performance of *The Vagina Monologues* on a nearby Catholic college campus. She said that what really matters is the "context" in which the message is presented.

Local. Global. The world is divided not merely into nation-states, but into views on the value of free and open discourse. Some argue that the coming Armageddon will not so much be among nations, but among those who share a common belief in freedom, inquiry and civility and those who do not. A journal of civil discourse is the ideal place to discuss globalization for that very reason.

I invite you to read the thoughtful analyses presented here with the hope that they inspire further discussion about the shape our world is taking.

Sincerely,  
Roy J. Nirschel, Ph.D.  
President, Roger Williams University