**Kansas Sunflower Mensa**

Statement on Civility and Freedom of Speech

DRAFT: January 11, 2020

Conversation and the free exchange of information in Kansas Sunflower Mensa (KSM) meetings is highly valued. We should all feel free to express ourselves in KSM meetings, knowing that our ideas will be welcomed and carefully considered. For many of us, this is the most important part of being in Mensa. We must be willing to entertain (or at least tolerate) the ideas of others if we also wish to have our own ideas entertained (or tolerated). If we wish others to consider what we have to say, we must, in turn, respect those to whom we are speaking, explain ourselves carefully, not expecting anyone to agree with us simply because we say it, but be able to express ourselves in a convincing way, with reasons given, and be open to entertain the questions that we receive from those listening to us. With these concepts in mind, the following guidelines are offered to enhance the free exchange of ideas in our meetings.

**General Principles**

KSM chooses to promote an atmosphere for discourse which is characterized by openness, mutual respect, and trust along with a willingness to have one’s ideas, arguments, and beliefs vigorously challenged so as to continually refine and improve them. We encourage a critical examination of competing points of view where no such view is immune to examination and challenge. It is paramount for the success of such discourse that there is a norm of not personalizing arguments with gratuitous slurs or name-calling. No participant should be excluded, humiliated, or intimidated during such discussions. No probing into clearly personal and private information that is uncomfortable for the individual involved should be permitted. It is our desire to eliminate any atmosphere of intimidation, but rather to encourage an open exchange of ideas and points of view which leads to intellectual and spiritual growth and refinement for all participants.

**Inappropriate Content**

Content deemed inappropriate include the following:

● Content is inappropriate that is pornographic, or images containing nudity or graphic or gratuitous violence, where the inclusion of such contributes little, if anything, to the intellectual content of the discussion.

● Content is inappropriate that is unnecessarily long, and where most would judge that any central point has been lost. The purpose of the exchange is discussion on an agreed upon topic. We must be aware of how what we are saying is being received, with the purpose of communication.

● All personal attacks are inappropriate, as are inflammatory or antagonistic comments, as are comments making fun of or belittling others and/or their beliefs, age, intelligence, career choices, or credentials, etc. The focus should be on the agreed upon topic: other comments are diversionary, and do not contribute to a fair and honest discussion.

● All hostile behavior, such as bullying, is inappropriate. All such actions reveal weakness in the position of the one exercising such behavior, not the one who is being bullied.

● Ignoring requests to return to the agreed upon topic is also inappropriate. Staying on topic is a sign of intelligent discourse, and we encourage it.