Preparing for the Election; A Guide for Leaders
(adapted from University of Washington, Office of the Ombuds)

The impact and stressors surrounding this election are exacerbated by the unprecedented context: a global pandemic, the racial justice moment, economic concerns, transition to remote working/learning, physical and mental health concerns. Despite people’s resilience over the past 7 months, many students, faculty, and learners are feeling brittle. While we don’t know what will happen, we (roughly) know when. While there may not be a final result on November 3rd we can prepare. Below are suggestions.

1. Create time and space
   a. Leave the week of Nov 3rd free for what may emerge
   b. Consider whether to cancel classes or shift discussions
   c. Assess whether students will be present
   d. Consider that staff and faculty may need time to process
   e. Consider group meetings to process as people and to plan as leaders
   f. Possible options: town halls, open virtual office hours

2. Don’t make it harder
   a. Avoid humor (which is often used to diffuse challenging situations, but not likely to connect you to people who are struggling)
   b. Don’t be dismissive, using phrases like “calm down” (which can feel patronizing)
   c. Now isn’t the time to be contrarian, playing devil’s advocate

3. Expand our empathy
   a. True empathy is imagining how someone who is maybe very different from you might be thinking; It requires imagination and curiosity and listening; Empathy isn’t agreement
   b. Ask questions and actively listen
   c. Reconsider your experience; Generational differences may impact responses

4. Ground yourself with a stable foundation for yourself as a leader
   a. This election, in context of everything else, is different from other stressors
   b. Engage in physical, mental and social practices that help ground yourself

5. Finding your voice
   a. Send a message to team, colleague, departments
   b. Jot down some of your ideas, experiences, quotes before election day
   c. This is time to live out both your personal and institutional values

6. Spotlight Resources
   a. Connect to ensure that resources are widely known and distributed; Personalize the services rather than just distribute a list of acronyms

7. Office of the Ombuds
   a. We are here for university leaders, faculty, staff, learners
   b. ombuds.ucdavis.edu