American Democracy Project
American Association of State Colleges and Universities

Developing Informed and Engaged Citizens: The Imperative for Higher Education

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Missouri Campus Compact

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The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference and undernourishment.

Robert Hutchins
Dewey reminded us…

The trouble…is that we have taken our democracy for granted; we have thought and acted as if our forefathers had founded it once and for all. We have forgotten that it has to be enacted anew in every generation.

John Dewey
Hurricane Katrina demonstrated what happens when government doesn’t work…when we’re not all in the same boat.
Janadas Devan, Straits Times columnist:

[But] it is not only government that doesn't show up when government is starved of resources and leached of all its meaning. Community doesn't show up either, sacrifice doesn't show up, pulling together doesn't show up, 'we're all in this together' doesn't show up."
Why the Concern About Declining Levels of Citizenship?

• The global problems we confront are more ominous: global pandemics, global warming, terrorism, the viability of the nation-state

• The national problems we confront are more insistent: role of science v. religion, political polarization, capitalism v. democracy, health care, growing divide between rich and poor

In a democracy, we must have an educated and engaged citizenry if we are to address these issues effectively.
Threats to American Democracy

- Decline in social capital
- Increasing inequality
- Atomization of interests, news sources and the pervasive focus on entertainment
- Money and politics
- Lack of civic understanding and civics education in K-12 grades
- Decline in political participation, esp. among the youngest adults
A Decline in Social Capital

Declining Social Capital: Trends over the last 25 years
Attending Club Meetings  ↓ Down by 58%
Family dinners  ↓ Down by 33%
Having friends over  ↓ Down by 45%

Factors Contributing to Declining Social Capital
Commuting (Each 10 minutes = 10% reduced participation)
Television
Two parents working

Less Social Capital (esp. bridging social capital) = Less Democracy
Studies in the United States and Italy

Robert Putnam  Bowling Alone
Increasing Inequality

• Disparities of income, wealth, and access to opportunity are growing more sharply in the U. S. than in many other nations

• People with wealth are “roaring with a clarity and consistency that public officials readily hear and routinely follow.” Citizens “with lower or moderate incomes are speaking with a whisper.”

• Progress toward American ideals of democracy may have stalled, and in some arenas reversed.

American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality, Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, American Political Science Association, 2004, www.apsanet.org
Findings from *The Economist*

**Corporate Compensation**
- 30 years ago: Average compensation of top 100 CEOs in the US was 30 times the pay of average workers
- Today: 1,000 times the pay of average workers

**School Systems**
Increasingly stratified by social class in which poor children attend school with fewer resources

**Universities**
Increasingly reinforcing rather than reducing educational inequalities

United States risks calcifying into a European-style, class-based society.

December 2004
Atomization of Interests, News Sources and the Pervasive Focus on Entertainment

• The number of registered lobbyists in Washington has more than doubled since 2000, from 16,342 to 34,750

• More television channels, more talk radio, internet, blogs, etc.

• 40 million watched American Idol finale; 37 million watched 2nd Bush/Gore debate. Average age of viewer of network news: 60
Money and Politics

Presidential elections
2000: Total 2000 = $327 million
2004: Total 2004 = $545 Million
60 % increase in 4 years

.09 % of population gives at least $1,000 to political campaigns, 55% of funds raised; ¼ of Congress are millionaires; 1% of U.S.

“The sad thing is that in America today if it’s going to take $2 million to win, then normal people can’t run anymore. You either have to be very, very wealthy or very, very bought.”

Janice Bowling, Republican Nominee from Tennessee
Frederick Webber, 30+ years as lobbyist in Washington, President of Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers

“Political fundraising in this town has gotten out of control. What are the priorities here? This thing has gotten away from us”

Washington Post, September 12, 2005

Ernest Hollings, 38 years in the U.S. Senate

“There is a cancer on the body politic: money. The result of this nonsense is that almost one-third of a senator's time is spent fundraising.”

Washington Post, February 19, 2006
So who will we turn to make sure these issues of democracy get addressed?

The 18-25 year olds… the net generation.
Lack of Civic Understanding

- John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Survey 112,003 high school students in 2004: 36% believe that newspapers should get “government approval” of stories before publishing.

- Fewer than half of persons 15-26 years old think that communicating with elected officials, volunteering, or donating money to help others are qualities of a good citizen.

- On NAEP 1998 Civics, 23% of 4th graders, 23% of 8th graders, and 26% of 12th graders scored at or above proficient.
• 75.2% know what city zip code 90210 is. Only 25.5% know that Philadelphia is the city where the Constitution was written.

• 81.2% know how many members in the music group “Hanson.” Only 21.2% know how many senators serve in the U.S. Senate.

• 87% know the name of the football player found not guilty of murdering his wife. Only 9% know the landmark case Brown v. Board of Education.

• 63.7% know that “The Club” protects against car theft. Only 25% of respondents know that the Fifth Amendment protects against double jeopardy/self incrimination, etc.

• 59.2% know the names of the three stooges. Only 41.2% know the names of the three branches of government;

• 89% know the father in Home Improvement. Only 32% know the Speaker of the House;

Survey of 600 students age 13-17, National Constitution Center, 1998
Decline in Political Participation

The youngest generation of voters has the greatest distrust of others

Most people look out for themselves
Most people would take advantage of you

The youngest voters have the lowest participation in presidential elections.

But do we really want them involved? Do we really want them to vote?

AIR/Pew Study (January 2006)

More than 50% of students at 4 yr colleges do not score at the “proficient level of literacy.”

That means that they cannot compare credit card offers with different interest rates or summarize the arguments in newspaper editorials.

**Good News**

Literacy level higher among students who say their coursework requires applying theories and concepts to practical problems.
So whose job is it to prepare the next generation of Americans to be active, informed, and engaged citizens?
Someone has to do something, and it’s just incredibly pathetic that it has to be us.

Jerry Garcia
What Are The Strategies We Are Using To Address Declining Civic Engagement?
A Focus on Institutional Intentionality

How Do Campus Leaders Organize and Align the Campus and its Resources to Achieve Specific Institutional Outcomes?

How Do We Create A National Movement to Support Campuses?
ACCOMPLISHMENTS FIRST THREE YEARS
American Democracy Project
211 institutions, 1.6+ million students

Meetings
• 4 National meetings
  1,000+ participants
• 11 Regional meetings
  500 + participants

Conceptual Design Process
• Wingspread Conference
  40 participants, publication

Assessment Project
• National Survey of Student Engagement questionnaire
  32 institutions, 13,000+ students

Programs
• IUPUI meeting on Civic Engagement
  105 participants
• “Inside The Times” 
  270 participants, 2 years
• Civic Engagement in Action Series launched
• Young Voter Strategies and monograph on voting published
Hundreds of Campus Projects

- Campus Audits
- Campus Conversations
- Voter Education/Registration Projects
- Curriculum Revision Projects
- Library Projects
- First Year Projects, Capstone Courses
- Fine Arts Projects, Graduation Pledges
- Speaker Series, Democracy Day
- Recognition and Award Programs

A recent Google search = 76,000 entries for term “American Democracy Project”
Opportunities For Action

- Capstone Courses
- Service Learning
- Teacher Education
- Campus Culture
- First Year Programs
- Co-Curriculum
- General Education
- Voter Registration Education
- Faculty Development
- Assessment
- Libraries
A New Series
Civic Engagement in Action

5 Initiatives Underway

• Stewardship of Public Lands
• Political Engagement Project
• Jury Service
• Electoral Voice
• 7 Revolutions
The Stewardship of Public Lands

**Issue:** How are controversies over public lands resolved in a democracy? What roles can/do citizens play?

**Partner:** Yellowstone Association

**Activities:**

2005  Wolf Reintroduction Seminar

2006  Politics and the Yellowstone Ecosystem
Political Engagement Project: Campus Phase

**Issue:** How can political engagement be fostered and encouraged in colleges and universities?

**Partner:** Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

**Activities:** 8 campuses have been selected to work with Tom Ehrlich and his colleagues at Carnegie

**Monograph:** The New York Times and First Year Center will produce a monograph in 2008
Jury Service as Democratic Participation

**Issue:** How can colleges and universities support federal and state court systems in encouraging jury participation?

**Partner:** National Center for State Courts; Council for Court Excellence

**Activities:**

**2005-2006:** Activities underway on 11 campuses
Issue: What are the best ways to campuses to provide voter registration, voter information, and voter participation?

Partner: Indiana University, Purdue University-Indianapolis

Activities: Monograph published in September 2006; Young Voter Strategies grant project underway to register 50,000 new voters this fall
7 Revolutions Initiative

Issue: How can we prepare undergraduates to be knowledgeable and engaged citizens about global issues?

Partner: Center for Strategies and International Studies (CSIS), Washington, DC

Activities: Initial meeting in late September 2006 in Washington, DC with 8 participating ADP campuses
What does it take to create civically-engaged graduates?

3 Critical Features:

**Institutional Intention**
(leadership, culture, policies)

**Programs and Activities**
(curriculum, co-curriculum)

**Measuring Results**
(institutional and course/program results, using NSSE, Carnegie, HERI tools)
Institutional Intentionality

- Leadership: at lots of levels
- Culture: reflecting widely-shared beliefs
- Statements: Mission statements, Accreditation documents, promotional Materials, etc.
- Policies
- Administrative structures
- Budget
- Rewards and recognition
Programs and Activities

**Knowledge:** Teaching democratic values, traditions, history of democracies, U.S. history

**Skills:** Teaching communications, critical thinking, collective decision-making, organizational skills, etc.

**Experiences:** Designing campus and community experiences for knowledge and application

**Reflection:** Creating explicit connections between experiences and civic obligations
Knowledge

History of the United States
What is the history of the U.S. that all undergraduates need to know? What are the themes and issues? What would you use as a measure of completion?

Principles of Democracy
What are the core principles of democracy that all undergraduates must understand? What is the irreducible list of books that must be read? What would you use as a test of democratic principles?
Skills

Communications: writing, speaking, etc.

Critical thinking: analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing, etc.

Collective decision-making: deliberating, listening, working as a team, making collective decisions, compromising, identifying and solving public problems

Organization: organizing, planning projects, influencing policy decisions, implementing policy decisions, taking collective actions
Hypothesized Skill Acquisition Sequence
Collective decision making sequence

- Write and speak*
- Understand, explain and take positions+
  Organize tasks and acquire resources**
- Express own preferences/Opinions*
  Identify constructive ways to improve complex
  Situations+
- Understand other’s preferences++
- Compromise (if necessary) for collective good++

*Communication  **Organization  +Critical Thinking  ++Collective
  Decision Making

Adapted from Kirlin, Mary 2003. Acquiring Civic Skills: Towards a Developmental Model of Civic
Skill Acquisition in Adolescents. International Conference on Civic Education Research,
Experiences

What are the experiences on and off campus that could be designed to foster citizenship understanding?

What might be involved?

Group work, experiences with diversity, community, leadership, compromise, struggle, imperfect conclusions, other?
Reflection

How could reflection be built into the curriculum to foster deeper understanding, self-awareness, and greater conviction?

Who would be involved? Faculty, other students, community members, others?
Where are knowledge, skills, experiences, and reflection found in the curriculum?

- In first year programs
- In capstone courses
- In the general education curriculum
- In majors and minors

Where are knowledge, skills, experiences, and reflection found in the co-curriculum?

- In student government
- In student organizations
- In residence halls
- In joint academic affairs/student affairs programs
How would you measure citizenship outcomes in undergraduates?

What are the metrics you would use to assess your institution’s success?
1. What do you care about and how much (education, healthcare, environment, national security, etc)?

2. What activities did you do and why (fund-raise, sign a petition, participate in a boycott, run for office, vote)?

3. Where do you get information about news, volunteering, etc?
What was found in that survey?

- Not much difference among many types of institutions.
- Differences in gender and ethnicity.
- 50% of students get their news from television.

What else is needed?

- More info on sources of information
- More info on number/duration of activities
- Information on sense of political efficacy
- Qualitative as well as quantitative info
1. Participation in democratically run student organizations…a more powerful predictor of future political participation than taking courses in American politics or political science.

2. The more courses a student takes in science or engineering, the less they participate politically.

3. The more courses a student takes in business, the less they engage in community service, vote, or try to influence the political process.

4. Students who spend time volunteering during college become more convinced that individuals can change society, feel more committed to effecting social change, and develop stronger leadership skills.
One Simple Model

1. Articulate Outcomes

2. Design Programs and Experiences to Produce The Outcomes

   First Year
   General Education
   Capstone Experiences
   Curriculum
   Student Affairs Experiences

3. Measure Outcomes

4. Revise Programs based on Assessment Outcomes
In Our Work, We Talk About Three Elements:

Curriculum

Co-Curriculum

Culture of Campus

But above all, we talk about institutional intentionality
SUMMARY

• Focusing on preparing citizens is good pedagogy
  Active
  Engaged
  Meaningful

• Focusing on preparing citizens helps prepare students for the world of work

• Focusing on preparing citizens is good practice
  It gives focus to the curriculum
  It holds the institution collectively accountable
  It offers a clear public purpose for institutions

• Focusing on preparing citizens strengthens democracy
400 Public Colleges and Universities
Delivering America's Promise
American Association of State Colleges And Universities