ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Innovative Civic Engagement Pedagogy at CLDE 2018

(Introductory Essay: *eJournal of Public Affairs*, Special Issue)

Bethany Fleck, Guest Editor
Metropolitan State University of Denver

## Author Note

Bethany Fleck, Department of Psychology, Metropolitan State University of Denver.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Bethany Fleck, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Plaza Building, 220AC, Denver, CO 80217-3362. Phone: (303) 615-0415. E-mail: bfleck2@msudenver.edu

Those who attended the 2018 Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting (CLDE18) held in Anaheim, California, from June 6 to 9, are aware of the expertise shared and the synergy created among the participants working toward the advancement of civic learning and democratic engagement on campuses and in communities. This special issue of the *eJournal of Public Affairs* highlights exemplary work that was presented at the meeting and that has since been further developed into peer-reviewed scholarship ready for broader dissemination. Readers who attended CLDE18 will be reinvigorated by this collection of articles, while those who could not participate can now join the conversation. Though the journal editors considered manuscripts describing a number of exemplary programs, this special issue focuses on projects related to innovative civic engagement teaching pedagogy.

Innovative civic engagement pedagogy combines two fields: the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) and the advancement of civic learning and democratic engagement by colleges and universities. Having worked in both areas, I am particularly excited to present this special edition, which links the two. Specific pedagogies that promote civic engagement include (but are not limited to) service-learning courses, community-based research, American Democracy Project (ADP) programs integrated into course work, internships, program and university-wide initiatives, and other experiential learning opportunities. This special edition highlights the ways campuses foster civic engagement, examines considerations related to innovative civic engagement teaching pedagogy, and discusses the assessment of civic outcomes—work that was at the heart of CLDE18.

The annual CLDE Meeting is co-organized by ADP, The Democracy Commitment, and NASPA Student Affairs Administrates in Higher Education, and is "intended to facilitate exchanges of knowledge and develop a sense of community around our shared civic learning and democratic engagement work" (American Association of State Colleges and Universities [AASCU], 2018, p. 4). During the meeting, participants focused on the *emergent theory of change*, which poses four important questions: (1) the purpose question: "What are the key features of the thriving democracy we aspire to enact and support through our work?"; (2) the learning outcomes question: "What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do people need in order to help create and contribute to a thriving democracy?"; (3) the pedagogy question: "How can we best foster the acquisition and development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for a thriving democracy?"; and (4) the strategy question: "How can we build the institutional culture, infrastructure, and relationships needed to support learning that enables a thriving democracy?" The articles in this special edition reflect the discussions that took place around these questions at CLDE18 but center most significantly on pedagogy. In addition, meeting conversations focused on the various contexts and campus

cultures that foster the "civic ethos of campus," "civic literacy and skill building as a goal for every student," "civic inquiry integrated within the majors and general education," "civic action as lifelong practice," and "civic agency" (AASCU, 2018, pp. 4-5). As attendees explored these ideas at CLDE18 so too do the articles comprising this special issue.

The scientific study of pedagogy through SoTL has seen great advances in the past 20 years as its own field of research. Teachers have long reflected on pedagogy, thinking in depth about what works (and does not) in promoting the success and achieving the academic goals of their students. Such reflection, study, and sharing of expertise are essential for undergraduate student success. Teachers, administrators, and student support staff improve their practice through SoTL, which provides a platform for communicating ideas, sharing best practices and new innovations, and assessing techniques for intended impact. Because of specific advances in its methodology, SoTL has become more established as a valuable product of scholarship, worthy of faculty time and effort, as well as faculty retention and promotion.

My psychology colleagues Gurung and Landrum (2014) described SoTL as "the focus on theoretical underpinnings of how we learn, the intentional, systematic, modifications of pedagogy, and assessments of resulting changes in learning" (p. 1). The articles in this special issue represent important contributions to SoTL in that they share techniques and innovations for promoting civic learning and democratic engagement. While more rigorous research methods and assessment are needed to advance such scholarship, I argue that scholars and practitioners need a place to share ideas about classroom activities and projects, and to communicate program goals and institutional initiatives around promoting civic learning and democratic engagement on U.S. campuses. This special issue meets this need. Published collections of SoTL materials have the capacity to bring educators from different areas of study, different institutional roles, and different research interests together in conversation. When reminded of their shared focus on undergraduate education, educators can learn lessons from each other. For example, innovations in a biology course could be applied to a psychology course, and lessons about community-based research as a pedagogy can be applied across an entire campus. I hope this special issue contributes to readers' motivation and understanding around such methods, encouraging the application of the authors' various ideas to ongoing work with students.

**Contents of the Special Issue**

This issue of the *eJournal* includes eight peer-reviewed articles, two book reviews, and three videos featuring the "CivEd Talks" that were delivered during the CLDE18 plenary session.

The lead author of the first article, Nicholas D. Hartlep, is the 2018 recipient of ADP's John Saltmarsh Award for Emerging Leaders in Civic Engagement. Each winner of the annual award winner is invited to submit an essay for publication in the *eJournal*. For his essay, Dr. Hartlep organized the nine most recent Saltmarsh Award winners to collaboratively write the article that appears as the first in this special issue, entitled "Toward an Innovative Civic Engagement Pedagogy." In addition, John Saltmarsh himself contributed by providing concluding remarks about pedagogical practice. With its multiple perspectives on ways to promote civic engagement in various contexts, this essay sets the stage for the other pieces in the issue.

The remaining articles move from discussions of specific classroom techniques or projects to broader considerations of campus-wide initiatives or programing. In "Civic Engagement in the Online Classroom: Increasing Youth Political Engagement in an Online American Government Course," Judithanne Scourfield McLauchlan provides a detailed description of how she integrates civic engagement into her online teaching. She discusses challenges and opportunities of online civic engagement pedagogy and also presents assessment data from her study that will help readers understand related student outcomes.

Colleagues Adrieen Hooker, David Wang, and Carol-lynn Swol, in their article "Infusing Creative Energy to Encourage Civic Values and Action in Project-Based Learning and Community-Based Research," offer two case studies exploring how creative energy is used to apply civic skills and enable collective action in art and design courses. The authors discuss how two specific pedagogies, community-based research and project-based learning, were utilized to solve "wicked problems." Their discussion provides readers with a fitting preview of the topics addressed in the videos of the CivEd Talks from CLDE18 (links to which are included in this issue).

Danielle Lake, Marc Lehman, and Linda Chamberlain also address wicked problems in their "Engaging Through Design Thinking: Catalyzing Integration, Iteration, Innovation, and Implementation." The authors reflect skillfully upon a project-based undergraduate course that engaged students in collaborative participatory action, offering specific "pedagogical strategies for transdisciplinary, collaborative, community-based learning that responds to a 'real-world need' in 'real time.'"

In "Fake it 'Till You Make It': Debunking Fake News in a Post-Truth America," Joseph Zompetti and Molly Kerby present a timely and relevant discussion about the development of fake news and its powerful influence on political discourse. In connection with the theme of this special issue, the authors give attention to pedagogies that can help students evaluate news and social media sources, a skill that could (and should) be embedded into a range of higher education courses.

Moving into more programmatic contexts, Mark Wagner and Katey Cleary, in their article "Blackmaleness at a Public Regional University," provide an analysis of three case studies of Civic Corps projects. They focus specifically on challenges faced by Black male collegians during their academic careers, in hopes of inspiring more research on the ways colleges and universities can ultimately eliminate inequities by building and/or enhancing civic engagement and service-learning programs.

Authors from multiple institutions came together to write about the ways in which the emergent theory of change (the focus of discussions at CLDE18) can be applied to initiatives and programs at higher education institutions across the United States. In "Taking a Deep Dive into the Emergent Theory of Change," Lindsey Woelker, Kristina Gage, April Marshall, Tara Centeno, and Scott Smith consider each of the four questions that the theory seeks to answer, and explore how to apply each to actual practice. Indeed, readers stand to learn much from this article about the way in which educators can come together to reflect, talk, and recognize their various roles on their campuses as community-engaged scholar practitioners.

In this issue's final scholarly article—"Creating Cohesive Paths to Civic Engagement: Five Approaches to Institutionalizing Civic Engagement"—authors Garret S. Batten, Adrienne Falcón, Jan R. Liss, and Arielle del Rosario assume a broad scope, focusing on the need for civic engagement program design throughout the entire undergraduate experience. They promote and recommend specifically the institutionalization of civic engagement curricular mapping. Through such work, their consortium—Project Pericles—has identified five types of programs organization that campuses might consider utilizing in their efforts to strengthen their community engagement.

This special issue also includes two book reviews. First, Lori McKinney and Lisa Kim provide a much-appreciated faculty and nontraditional student perspective in their review of *Learning Through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Across Academic Disciplines and Cultural Communities (2nd Edition)* by Cress, Collier, and Reitenauer (2013). Martin Shapiro then reviews *Factfulness: Ten Reason We're Wrong About the World—and Why Things Are Better Than You Think* by Rosling, Rosling, and

Rosling Rönnlund (2018), providing an overview of the content as well as favorable reflection on the book's merits.

Completing the issue are three inspiring CivEd Talks that were recorded during the CLDE18 plenary session and that center on wicked problems on campuses and within larger communities. These talks are brief but powerful stories emerging from CLDE18 member experiences, research, and practice that challenge viewers' thinking about important issues. In particular, the 2018 CivEd Talks focused on the wicked problems of hunger and homelessness, climate change, and undocumented students. Clare Cady, director of Community Engagement at Temple University and founder/director of the College and University Food Bank Alliance, spoke on "Hunger, Homelessness and Action to Include Today's Students"; Sian Proctor, professor of geology at South Mountain Community College, spoke on "Climate Change Action Through Student Resiliency Ambassadors"; and Joel Pérez, vice president and dean of students and Title IX coordinator at Whittier College, spoke on "Dream Deferred: Broken Promises for Undocumented Students."

**Looking Forward**

I hope that the collection of work provided in this special issue inspires readers to continue their own efforts to advance civic learning and democratic engagement on their campuses and in their communities. Specifically regarding pedagogy, I encourage readers to reflect on the courses, programs, and institutional-level initiatives described in this issue and to determine how these ideas might fit into their own work. As scholars and practitioners, we must continually reflect on and move forward the scholarship of teaching and learning. I recommend more assessment of these ideas and advocate rigorous methodology in the scientific study of innovative civic engagement teaching pedagogy.

Finally, I urge readers not to miss out on next year's discussion. Please consider attending the 2019 CLDE Meeting, to be held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, June 5 to 8. Find additional details and register online by May 1, 2019, to receive the early-bird rate.

## References

American Association of State Colleges and Universities. (2018). 2018 Civic Learning & Democratic Engagement Meeting organized by ADP, TDC, and NASPA. Retrieved from http://www.aascu.org/meetings/clde18

Cress, C. M., Collier, P. J., & Reitenauer, V. L. (2013). *Learning through serving: A student guidebook for service-learning and civic engagement across academic disciplines and cultural communities* (2nd ed.). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Gurung, R. A. R., & Landrum, R. E. (2014). Assessment and the scholarship of teaching and learning. In D. Dunn (Ed.), *Assessing teaching and learning in psychology: Current and future perspectives* (pp. 159-171). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Rosling, H., Rosling, O., & Rosling Rönnlund, A., (2018). *Factfulness: Ten reason we're wrong about the world—and why things are better than you think*. New York: Flatiron Books.

## Author

Dr. Bethany Fleck received her PhD in Developmental Psychology from the University of New Hampshire. While there she also earned a Masters in the Science of College Teaching. Her research centers on cognitive development in childhood education and university classroom contexts. Both lines of research draw on developmental theory with the overall goal of enhancing the learning environment for students of all levels. Recently she has been working on a project that measures academic self-handicapping and other motivational constructs in urban middle school students. In the university classroom, her research as of late focuses on the effects of service learning, civic engagement, and syllabi manipulations. Bethany is currently an Associate Professor at Metropolitan State University of Denver teaching courses in the human development and psychology majors. In her courses she is committed to an active, learner-centered approach to teaching.

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Toward an Innovative Civic Engagement Pedagogy

Nicholas D. Hartlep
Metropolitan State University, Saint Paul, Minnesota

Danielle Lake
Grand Valley State University

Jennifer W. Purcell
Kennesaw State University

Adam Bush
College Unbound

Lane Graves Perry, III
Western Carolina University

Bethany Fleck
Metropolitan State University, Denver, Colorado

Brandon W. Kliewer
Kansas State University

Emily M. Janke
University of North Carolina Greensboro

Paul N. Markham
Sova

Cecilia M. Orphan
University of Denver

John A. Saltmarsh
University of Massachusetts Boston

**Author Note**

Nicholas D. Hartlep, Early Childhood and Elementary Education Department, Metropolitan State University, Saint Paul, Minnesota; Danielle Lake, Liberal Studies Department, Grand Valley State University; Jennifer W. Purcell, Department of Leadership and Integrative Studies, Kennesaw State University;

Adam Bush, College Unbound; Lane Graves Perry, III, Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, Western Carolina University; Bethany Fleck, Psychology Department, Metropolitan State University, Denver, Colorado; Brandon W. Kliewer, Staley School of Leadership Studies, Kansas State University; Emily M. Janke, Peace and Conflict Studies Department, University of North Carolina Greensboro; Paul N. Markham, Founding Partner, Sova; Cecilia M. Orphan, Higher Education Department, University of Denver; John A. Saltmarsh, Department of Leadership in Education, University of Massachusetts Boston.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Nicholas D. Hartlep, Associate Professor, Chair of Early Childhood and Elementary Education Department, Graduate Program Coordinator, School of Urban Education, Metropolitan State University, Midway Center 100B-1, 1450 Energy Park Drive, Saint Paul, MN. Phone: (651) 999-5936. E-mail: nicholas.hartlep@metrostate.edu

**Abstract**

This article shares the thoughts of recipients of the John Saltmarsh Award for Emerging Leaders in Civic Engagement. The contributions appear in the order in which authors received the award (from most recent to earliest): Hartlep (2018 award recipient), "*Critical Storytelling*: Publishing as a Vehicle for Increasing Civic Engagement"; Lake (2017), "Activating a Community-Campus Read"; Purcell (2017), "Beyond Pedagogy: Community and Civic Engagement Leader Identity and Its Broader Educative Role"; Bush (2016), "What You Can Learn From Campus Tours"; Perry (2016), "Ripples Have to Start Somewhere: Social Entrepreneurship and Social Justice for Teaching Civic Engagement"; Fleck (2015), "Civic Engagement Enhanced Online"; Kliewer (2014), "Leveraging Leadership Coaching to Disrupt Authority and Enable Conditions for Civic and Democratic Learning"; Janke (2013), "Listening, Dialogue, and Empathy: Hallmarks of Community, Tools for Listening Across Differences"; Markham (2012), "Finding My 'Community' in Community Engagement"; and Orphan (2011), "I Believe in Expansion." The article concludes with thoughts from John A. Saltmarsh about pedagogical practice.

*Keywords*: civic engagement, pedagogy, higher education, community engagement, scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)

Given annually by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the John A. Saltmarsh Award for Emerging Leadership in Civic Engagement recognizes exemplary early-career leaders in higher education who are advancing the wider civic engagement movement in an effort to build a broader public culture of democracy. I am honored to have been selected as the 2018 recipient.

In my nomination materials for the award, Greg Mellas, director of the Institute for Community Engagement and Scholarship at Metropolitan State University, wrote about my collaborative leadership: "An armchair activist he is not. His passion for this work is fueled through his teaching, research, and collaboration with colleagues both local and national who share his commitment to realizing a just and inclusive society." He also wrote:

> While it is common for teacher educators to encourage future teachers to be compliant and apolitical, Dr. Hartlep develops teacher activists who will transform the field of education. Dr. Hartlep has an established record of collaborating with his students and co-authoring with them. He believes that having his students write and publish as undergraduates is an important form of civic learning. Understanding the politics of publishing and how knowledge is deemed credible is fundamental to his understanding of civic learning. Dr. Hartlep's students have learned many valuable lessons through their co-authored projects. For example, in his *Critical Storytelling in Uncritical Times*, stories of marginalized undergraduate students and educators in U.S. higher education are made visible.

Each year, award winners are invited to submit an article to the *eJournal of Public Affairs*; however, in keeping with my ethos of collaborative leadership, I invited previous award recipients to co-author with me. Because this special journal issue focuses on innovative civic engagement pedagogy, our article highlights curricular and co-curricular activities and/or assignments that award recipients have employed. The individual contributions appear in the order in which authors received the award (from most recent to earliest), and ordering that seemed more equitable than by last name (or any other ordering that I could think of). The activities and assignments shared in this article all speak to ways that award recipients have worked—and continue to work—to increase civic engagement.

## ***Critical Storytelling*: Publishing as a Vehicle for Increasing Civic Engagement (Nicholas D. Hartlep, 2018 Award Recipient)**

I teach at Metropolitan State University (MSU), a minority-serving institution (MSI). Before coming to MSU, I taught at Illinois State University (ISU), where, along with a doctoral student of mine, Brandon O. Hensley, I co-edited *Critical Storytelling in Uncritical Times: Stories Disclosed in a Cultural Foundations of Education Course* (2015). The book was written by all but two of the students enrolled in the doctoral-level Cultural Foundations of Education course

that I taught in the summer of 2014 (Dr. Hensley also authored a chapter). The book project turned out to be a wonderful experience for the students. Since the book's publication, Dr. Hensley has gone on to edit two other books with me: *Critical Storytelling in Uncritical Times: Undergraduates Share Their Stories in Higher Education* (2017) and *The Neoliberal Agenda and the Student Debt Crisis in U.S. Higher Education* (2017), which was nominated for a Grawemeyer Award in Education and received an Outstanding Book Award from the Society of Professors of Education.

Although I have left ISU, I have continued this storytelling work. At the time of writing this article, I am teaching a master's-level research methods course at MSU. The students are writing chapters for another *Critical Storytelling* book that I am co-editing with Dr. Hensley, who is now a lecturer at Wayne State University in the Department of Communication Studies. My hope is that one of my MSU students will, like Dr. Hensley, continue to write critically and will ultimately go on to mentor future civically engaged scholars.

Increasing civic engagement is a process that requires instructors to provide opportunities for publication to undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students. While at ISU, I taught undergraduate and doctoral students. Now, at MSU, I teach undergraduate and graduate students. My belief is that encouraging students to write about issues of justice, oppression, and peace is vital for cultivating more civic-minded and grounded citizens. The *Critical Storytelling* project, for lack of a better term, increases civic engagement by encouraging students to be *readers and writers of the world*.

**Activating a Community-Campus Read (Danielle Lake, 2017 Award Recipient)**

The following course project seeks to close the gap in student preparedness for democratic engagement and activism by *partnering*, *scaffolding*, and *activating* a first-year general education course with a campus-community read (CRP). A CRP is designed to draw people from across the campus and the community into conversation about relevant challenging topics. By activating the CRP, this project seeks to generate awareness, create opportunities for listening across differences.

The pilot project required first-year students to first reflect upon the relevance of the issues raised in the CRP (on feminism, the history of women's activism, and the impact of race, class, place, and culture on women's sexual, social, and economic independence) and then brainstorm—and act upon—at least one opportunity for local engagement in the surrounding communities. However, it is the spaces between initial reflection and end-of-semester action that I want to emphasize here. Students explored their own positionality in relation to these issues; got out on campus and invited various communities in, meeting with the on-campus archives specialist, the Title IX coordinator, a peer theatre sexual assault prevention performance group, the local Women's History Council, recent alumni,

and me; created and integrated a vision of the challenges involved; shared publicly accessible Wakelet pages hosting multimedia and interdisciplinary research; submitted blog posts for the campus's Center for Women and Gender Equity; and engaged in a self-selected (instructor-supported) advocacy- and/or engagement-related project. Some students designed and hosted dialogues with friends and family, others participated in on-campus protests around Title IX violations, and still others created a campaign to honor local women activists in the surrounding communities.

Such projects encourage students to develop the skills and values of lifelong learners—reading critically, thinking deeply, dialoguing across communities, and then acting with intentionality in order to build the world they want to live in. They help students see systemic social challenges as critical spaces for stepping in and across, listening for and valuing intersectionality, exploring their own agency, learning from setbacks, and continuing forward. Partnerships across the university and carefully planned scaffolding support such projects, ensuring they meet course learning objectives (i.e., to explore how education can support and transform students' personal, professional, and civic lives and have an impact on society) as well as the CRP's goals (i.e., to bring the campus and community together through dialogues and activities intended to draw people into conversation about current social issues).

Additionally, the collaboration between faculty and staff and the extended network of campus, community, and alumni partners can offer vital opportunities for first-year students to bridge curricular and co-curricular knowledge and experience, creating the conditions for the academic and social integration that research on student retention suggests leads to student persistence (Davidson & Wilson, 2013). Creating opportunities for academic and social integration through campus and civic engagement is critical to building an inclusive and liberatory campus climate. In this vein, it is important for faculty and staff to consider how they might encourage first-year students to:

- explicate issues but also intentionally expand beyond initial frameworks;
- self-reflexively uncover their positionality, examine historical and current frameworks;
- explore the real-life impact of a particular course across locations;
- invite others in and get out;
- brainstorm opportunities to engage and transform; and,
- decide, act, and reflect.

**Beyond Pedagogy: Community and Civic Engagement Leader Identity and Its Broader Educative Role (Jennifer W. Purcell, 2017 Award Recipient)**

As stated in the introduction, the Saltmarsh Award recognizes emerging leaders whose work contributes to the "wider civic engagement movement" in order

to "build a broader public culture of democracy." The commitment of scholars and educators to civic learning is readily evidenced in curricula and research. As recognized leaders in community and civic engagement, however, their most impactful contributions may occur within the learning and development spaces beyond traditional classrooms where teaching excellence is nonetheless valuable. As Palmer (2007) noted, "Good leadership sometimes takes the form of teaching" (p. 166). In my own experience, positive change leadership within the academy has consistently emerged from educators whose first commitment is to sound pedagogy, as evidenced among leader-educators and leader-scholars who continue to expand the civic engagement movement by reaffirming their respective institutions' civic missions. Informed by this observation, I have challenged myself to reimagine my community and civic leader identity, and the ways in which I can fill a broader educative role. University-wide faculty development and strategic planning are two ways in which I have recently expanded the impact of my work.

I first experienced the rewards of creating professional learning and development initiatives for faculty and staff to advance civic learning through my dissertation research. As an action researcher in training, I collaborated with members of an institution to establish professional learning priorities related to community engagement. More recently, I applied those same skills—further refined by lessons gleaned from my teaching practice and scholarship—to co-create a faculty learning community focused on community-engaged pedagogy and civic learning outcomes. The quality and significance of the collaborative scholarly products and community impacts produced by the first cohort is remarkable. For example, two participants from different colleges collaborated on a grant-funded project that produced a book co-authored with community partners to give voice to immigrant youth. Similar to students' final portfolios submitted in a service-learning course, these colleagues' scholarly products and reflections demonstrate the value of pedagogy for civic learning, whether for students or for colleagues.

In a separate opportunity, I applied my expertise in civic learning pedagogy as a contributing author for my university's next 10-year comprehensive plan for student learning outcomes. Multiple proposals were vetted through a university-wide competitive review process, including campus presentations, in order to finalize the selection. This process provided an opportunity to advocate for civic learning and community engagement as featured components of the students' university experience. With enrollment exceeding 36,000, the potential impact of the plan's implementation on students' civic learning and democratic engagement, as well as community impact, will far exceed the relatively limited scope of my individual service-learning courses. I now engage the broader campus community with the same intentionality toward learning and development that I apply within my courses.

As members of learning organizations designed for transformation, leader-educators and leader-scholars have an opportunity and responsibility to enhance the capacity for civic leadership, individually and organizationally. They must consider informal and formal leadership roles that leverage commitment and expertise for broader impact. When emerging leaders—such as my colleagues whose work is featured in this article—embody principles of teaching and learning and are willing to become "one who opens, rather than occupies, space" (Palmer, 2007, p. 166), they set in motion an intention that supports efforts to reclaim higher education as a public good. Will you join us?

**What You Can Learn From Campus Tours (Adam Bush, 2016 Award Recipient)**

I just finished touring prospective colleges with my step-daughter Josie, who will be a freshman in the fall of 2019. While it was wonderful as a parent to view colleges with her, it was my wife and I, not Josie, who were swept up by the romance of each liberal arts college we stepped foot on—dreaming of redoing our own experiences as 18-year-olds, sitting in on every lecture and participating in every extracurricular activity. The whirlwind of touring five colleges in four days allowed for a spot comparison of how colleges market themselves: "without walls," "beyond time zones," "full college experiences," "learning communities," and "9 reserved parking spaces for 9 Nobel laureates." I asked questions about DACA sanctuary campuses and mental health services—questions about the needs of the whole student. The vision the campus representatives sold revolved around a sense of place, both as an aspirational site to travel to in order to become to the well-rounded person you could be, and as a site from which to go out into the world via internships, field trips, study abroad, etc.

Yet, a sense of place without the sense of the whole student—one that does not include the worlds from which they come, the neighborhoods the campus surrounds, or the adult learners who may be seeking a degree—is a shallow place. These complications are critical ones for meaningful engagement work in which students can participate fully in their learning and in their degree process.

Before College Unbound was recognized as the newest post-secondary institution in Rhode Island, I organized a Gateway Return-to-College initiative for the state of Rhode Island. We ran three iterations of a semester-long class that was free to students, who could transfer credits into any institution they decided to enroll in following completion of the course. The course was built around the deep knowledge making that can be fostered with adults navigating the return to higher education—around identity and autobiography, theories of organizing and collective action, systems thinking and institutional histories, and an understanding of trauma that could keep people from returning to college.

One of the course assignments asked students to schedule and attend at least two different college campus tours during the semester. Just as Josie had to before

her campus visits, the students in the course needed to schedule a tour by registering online and making an appointment. The online form asked for general information—name, address, and birthdate. In this case, however, the dropdown menu for selecting one's year of birth did not extend earlier than 1980. As a result, my students—many of whom were looking to enroll in college for the third or fourth time—could not even feel like they belonged on a campus *tour*, let alone be allowed to dream about being back on those campuses.

There are many reasons someone might leave school: curricular, institutional, financial among them, as well as other life priorities around work, family, and community. Often, it becomes an either/or choice about one's degree. For those wishing to return to school, College Unbound tries to reframe the "either/or" as "both/and."

This reframing is central to College Unbound's pedagogy. We ask students to collaboratively build their curriculum and recruit their faculty. We hold cohort meetings at sites to which students are already connected—for instance, workplaces, community centers, public high schools, and housing authorities. We recognize as credit-bearing pieces of their degree process the deep critical thinking and problem solving needed to navigate debt, reentry from incarceration, and social change for a more just world. Our student body grows by word of mouth as our graduations become town hall meetings and recruitment fairs for adults who see themselves in that year's graduates. In other words, students aspire to be who they already are.

Such engagement is at the core of College Unbound, one built not out of a manufactured sense of place, but out of a sense of home and belonging that one can insist the university respect, honor, and build from.

**Ripples Have to Start Somewhere: Social Entrepreneurship and Social Justice for Teaching Civic Engagement (Lane Graves Perry, III, 2016 Award Recipient)**

At the 1966 commencement ceremonies at the University of Cape Town, Robert F. Kennedy delivered the following message:

> It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man [sic] stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

The Ripple Effect Learning Community (RELC) at Western Carolina University was designed to serve as a preparation, retention, and development tool for preparing leaders to make a difference in their community. The program is designed to ask students—and prepare them to answer—the following question: "What do you care enough about to do something about in your world?"

RELC offers educational experiences that prepare students to identify what they truly love about the world and to ultimately be[come] the change they want to see in it (notions suggestive of the works of Hermann Hesse and Mahatma Gandhi, respectively). Through the disciplinary lenses of social entrepreneurship and social justice, RELC facilitates examinations of historical and current cases in conjunction with theories of social change. For the purposes of this learning community, social entrepreneurship is defined as those social ventures that explicitly address social problems and needs (read: perceived and very real, deeply rooted injustices) that are unmet by creating social value. In fact, some have explicitly supported the express connection between social entrepreneurs and their quest for social justice and change (Beugre, 2017; Christopoulos & Vogi, 2015).

Additionally, this concept is informed by and infused with the development of citizen skills and the concept of social justice, which has been defined as "promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity" (Caravelis & Robinson, 2016, p. 8). This is observed when "all people share a common humanity and therefore have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights, and a fair allocation of community resources" (p. 8). Under socially just conditions, people are "not to be discriminated against, nor their welfare and well-being constrained or prejudiced on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliations, age, race, belief, disability, location, social class, socioeconomic circumstance, or other characteristic of background or group members" (p. 8).

The RELC's overarching goals for students include the following:

- Working collaboratively with community partners, students construct a plan to pursue an intended solution to an identified and researched community-based issue.
- Through critical reflection, students clarify their sense of direction and personal values.
- Students develop a sense of self and sense of purpose as it relates to their social and personal responsibilities.

The RELC experience includes the following initiatives that comprise an interdisciplinary model designed to contextualize curriculum and content:

- Learning communities: Three courses over each RELC student's first year serve as the bonding agent for the faculty and content associated with the RELC curriculum and experience.
- Community engagement project: Community-based projects are incubators for experiences salient to the RELC curricula/content. The project, which focuses on a community issue of value to the community and of interest to the student team, demands the application of theory, content, and tools provided in the fall and spring RELC courses.
- Critical reflection: This component of the RELC model provides the context whereby students integrate learning across courses and consider

overarching questions. This is facilitated using the D.E.A.L. model[1] (Ash, Clayton, & Moses, 2007), presentational forms of knowing, and dialogue.

- Pre-semester engagement retreat: This retreat occurs the week before the fall semester begins and includes mentorship, team development programs, service projects, reflection, and common readings.

Now in its sixth year, with over 110 students having completed the program, the RELC has served as a resource for WCU's campus and community (Perry, Lahm, Schauer, & Rumble, 2016). The program has been offered every fall since 2013, which was initially made possible by an AAC&U "Bringing Theory to Practice" grant. Many RELC students continue to attribute their success at WCU to those foundational experiences that started with the Ripple Effect Pre-Semester Retreat and then were reinforced through their civic and community engagement during their first-year experience.

The following RELC resources are offered to readers interested in learning more about the program:

- Community Engagement Project Assignment Description (ENT195: Seminar)
- Program Materials and Welcome Packet
- Assessment Protocol and Instrumentation

**Civic Engagement Enhanced Online (Bethany Fleck, 2015 Award Recipient)**

In my teaching, I utilize service-learning and community-based research pedagogies in an effort to enhance students' learning of psychology content. In a pre- and post-test research study, my service-learning course demonstrated greater student learning compared to a control course taught without the paradigm (Fleck, Hussey, & Rutledge-Ellison, 2017). Other researchers have empirically supported the notion that service-learning courses also increase civic engagement in students (see DePrince, Priebe, & Newton, 2011; Simons & Cleary, 2006). In response to these findings, I have embedded service-learning within most of my courses. However, starting in 2019, my department will offer a fully online, Quality Matters-certified, Human Development and Family Studies major. Online education offers an exciting way to reach more students, but online teaching itself presents new issues, specifically in relation to the goal of enhancing civic-related outcomes. How does one teach an online service-learning course? Students taking such courses are often located in remote places, having varying levels of access to different community partners, and have other commitments (i.e., family and work) that prevent them from participating in traditional face-to-face classes, never mind ones that require service-learning. While some have fully taken on this challenge with great success (see McGorry, 2015; Mosley, 2015; Nordyke, 2015; Purcell, 2017;

[1] D.E.A.L. stands for "describe, examine, and articulate learning."

Strait, 2015), I have instead started small, creating one online assignment that I hope achieves similar goals but bypasses some of the issues related to distance education.

The assignment—called the "Community Agency Civic Engagement Paper"—is given to my online Psychology of Human Development course. This applied research paper requires students to research a nonprofit community agency that works to better the lives of individuals. Students are allowed to choose any community agency that interests them; however, the agency must be local to the region. Students first research the agency via the Internet and by physically going to the location or calling the agency to seek information.

In the paper, the student reports on the work the agency does and relates that work specifically to developmental psychology course content (e.g., the Boys & Girls Club of America contributes to the positive development of youths' sense of self and identity). In the paper, students are required to define civic engagement, using reputable sources, and to reflect on their own levels of civic engagement by completing three civic engagement measures: the Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale (Reeb, Katsuyama, Sammon, & Yoder, 1998), the Civic Responsibility subscale (Furco, 1999) from the Higher Education Service-Learning Survey, and the Valuing of Community Engagement and Service Scale (Moely & Illustre, 2011). Thinking about their scores and the opportunities available within the community agency, students outline a civic engagement plan. To aid this effort, they answer the following questions:

> How can you become involved in the community agency? What can you specifically do to help them? How is this part of civic engagement? Are you going to start volunteering? Why or why not? What scores did you get on the surveys and what do those scores mean in regard to your involvement with the agency?

Anecdotally, students have commented that the paper motivated them to learn about and subsequently participate with their community agency. It also helped them to realize the practical applications of the material they were studying and to recognize the real-world connections that exist between course content and the community. As an educational psychologist, I want to know the exact learning and civic engagement outcomes the paper has; to that end, a study is underway investigating students' survey scores and quiz scores to parse out the true potential of this assignment. While this assignment is not service-learning per se, I believe it has the potential to increase learning and civic engagement in the online course format. If it inspires faculty to start small and create a similar assignment, I would be thrilled of course. However, if faculty are looking to do even more, to better understand the challenges of online e-service learning and creating such a course, I highly recommend reading my fellow Saltmarsh Award winner Jennifer Purcell's 2017 symposium paper, "Community-Engaged Pedagogy in the Virtual Classroom:

Integrating eService-Learning into Online Leadership Education," published in the *Journal of Leadership Studies*.

**Leveraging Leadership Coaching to Disrupt Authority and Enable Conditions for Civic and Democratic Learning (Brandon W. Kliewer, 2014 Award Recipient)**

What if leadership activity in a democracy requires the systemic capacity for collective action in circumstances of uncertainty? The faculty at Kansas State University's Staley School of Leadership Studies has worked to design leadership learning and development experiences that reconsider formal authority. This essay briefly describes how leadership coaching is deployed in ways that intentionally disrupt operations of authority in the pursuit of civic and democratic learning.

The protection, direction, and order provided to students completing the Leadership in Practice course is limited to outlining academic requirements of the course and the general structure of each class session. The objective of the course is to create a space in which students can enact leadership concepts in practice around civic issues. The structure of the class sessions is the same every day. The first half of the class is for the student learning community to make progress around its shared civic purpose. The students have absolute and complete control over how that time is used; the instructor assumes a leadership coach stance and observes the operations of the system. The second portion of the class session becomes an opportunity to co-emerge meaning and learning in relation to associated course concepts.

Case-in-point methodologies and Intentional Emergence teaching practices have been developed to teach leadership. Though my use of leadership coaching is indebted to these approaches, it has been modified to account for the unique contextual and civic features of Kansas. One important distinction is that I work to make sense of identity, power, and systems in culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate ways. My orientation to enabling the conditions necessary for making sense of identity, power, and systems is focused on connecting the learning experience to civic capacities required to co-emerge collective action.

I enable the conditions for students to co-emerge such meaning through leadership coaching and systems mapping. Leadership coaching, as I understand the practice in the learning environment, is a "facilitated, dialogic learning process" (Cox, 2013, p. 1). As a teaching method, leadership coaching begins with the premise that students are whole, complete, and capable of addressing their civic leadership challenges on their own. Rather, the work of a leadership coach is to remain curious and ask students intentional questions that invite dialogic exchanges around operations of identity, power, and systems.

The course curriculum is broadly shaped around democratic, relational, collective, complexity, and adaptive leadership theory, but it is surfaced and

highlighted in real time in an effort to connect theory to what is going on in the room. The rhythm of this method is created as students make sense and meaning of how they function as a system, and then, through the debrief and leadership coaching, students devise theoretically informed interventions, both hypothetical and realized, that they work to implement in the following sessions.

This teaching method is quite messy but mimics VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) leadership challenges. Depending on who is in the room, the experience supports students' capacity to engage VUCA barriers to collective action in developmentally appropriate ways. Some semesters, students spend considerable time making sense of their own learning community. In other circumstances, the learning community has the capacity to organize and mobilize with others outside of class around civic issues that matter to them. This model supports civic learning and ensures that student learning and development do not come at the expense of community.

**Listening, Dialogue, and Empathy: Hallmarks of Community, Tools for Listening Across Differences (Emily M. Janke, 2013 Award Recipient)**

Many of us who have been steeped in civic engagement communities of practice for a long while often forget that there was a time when we wondered: What does civic engagement even mean? As a result, we design service-learning and other forms of community-engaged learning experiences for our students with specific outcomes in mind. For example, we might want students to practice working collaboratively in teams, or to become aware of the role lobbyists and activists play in shaping public policy, or to become empowered to participate in electoral processes, or to understand how their individual choices affect others. Each of us has a goal in mind, and if we are intentional, we design and structure activities and reflections that will help students to achieve these aims.

However, I find that the importance of clearly communicating one's aims for civic engagement—especially in dialogue with students—cannot be underestimated and is often overlooked.

The importance of setting one's own intentions—and then speaking about them with students—was highlighted in my first year at the University of North Carolina Greensboro through ongoing conversations with my colleague Darlene Xiomara Rodriguez, a first-year assistant professor in political science. As we each designed our community-engaged courses, we dialogued about the types and many different conceptions of civic engagement outcomes. In attempting to refine our own conceptions and intentions, we sought the experiences of others as expressed in scholarly literature—and by our students.

For instance, in our search we found Musil's (2003) study, which showed that rising high school seniors and college students did not have personal working definitions of civic engagement. Likewise, Cohen (2008) discovered—when his

course was nearly finished—that several of his students had conflated the term "public" with "poor." Though he had been speaking about society, or "the public," in an inclusive way that embraced each of his students, some of them thought he had been referring to someone else. They had missed the point.

Most helpful were Battestoni's (2002) 13 conceptual frameworks of civic engagement across academic disciplines. Battestoni's review of ways that civic engagement is defined in the academic disciplines showed us distinct categories of different orientations and preferences for engagement. We invited our students in our courses to address the question: What is civic engagement? We designed both of our courses, and an IRB-approved scholarship of teaching and learning study (Rodriguez & Janke, 2016), to engage students directly in exploring the concept of civic engagement and to develop their own civic values—what does civic engagement look like, and what is it meant to achieve? We believed that if we could identify our own conceptions, as well as our students' conceptions of civic engagement, we would be better able to support the learning of students enrolled in our courses.

The key takeaway from my experience is the importance of involving students in clearly defining their own conceptions of civic engagement. Otherwise, there is the great potential to be like ships passing in the night, each of us speaking the same words but meaning very different things. My colleague and I have shared Battestoni's (2002) framework with students as a way to delve more deeply into the nuanced differences, making apparent that which is often invisible— that each of us has different histories, traditions, circumstances, orientations, and preferences that shape our own ideas of what it means to be a contributing member of community or society. Battistoni's framework is accessible and comprehensive, yet we encourage others to try other ways to introduce these concepts to students. Clarifying what is meant by *civic engagement*, introducing varying conceptualizations of the term, and offering a useful framework can serve as a practical tool for helping educators and students better understand and explore multiple paths toward active democratic civic engagement.

Though seemingly simple, "What is civic engagement?" is a profound question. The search for the answer has the potential for students and faculty to go on a journey together, clarifying what each person believes, the values, outcomes, and action associated with their beliefs, as well as understanding how these may be formed similarly or differently by others. To answer this question, for ourselves and for our classroom community, we practiced listening, dialogue, and empathy—hallmarks of community and tools for listening across differences. What other important questions do we need to ask?

**Finding My "Community" in Community Engagement (Paul N. Markham, 2012 Award Recipient)**

Receiving the Saltmarsh Award and joining the company of other recipients has been a highlight of my life. The work, spirit, and values represented by the award has oriented my life and guided my career. It is surprising to many, therefore, that I stepped away from my job as a faculty member and university administrator focused on civic and community engagement. Shortly before leaving my last position in a higher education institution, I was teaching community organizing and directing a center for community-based engagement and research. I loved my students and my colleagues. So, why did I leave?!

For whatever reason, I have always been obsessed with large-scale change. I recall times when my students would learn in the classroom and apply that knowledge directly to neighborhoods in need, and their outcomes were remarkable. However, my pride in their accomplishments would quickly become overshadowed by a sadness that more people in more places could not experience similar positive change. Eventually, I left the classroom to become a program officer for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, where my job was to work on behalf of the most vulnerable students across higher education and help colleges and universities more effectively achieve their educational goals. In this role, my view of communities in need began to change. I had been accustomed to working with students on college campuses to prepare them to go out to local communities, where they would listen, learn, and in some way help the residents there to address their needs. After working with many colleges and universities across the country, I have come to see campuses as "communities" in great need of engagement and of multifaceted student supports.

Despite an expanding U.S. economy, an increasing number of families across the nation are suffering economically. Equity gaps are growing, and the spirit of division between Americans does not instill much hope that we can, together, address these problems. While there is no panacea for these systemic issues, we do know that education is the greatest lever for social and economic mobility and for creating a quality of life in which individuals can provide not only for themselves but for their families and contribute to society more broadly. Unfortunately, this powerful opportunity to start and complete higher education is not accessible to all students in equitable ways. Of those students who begin and intend to complete their higher education journey, more than 40% fail to do so, and these students are disproportionately low-income, minority, and the first in their families to attend college.

When I hit a "crisis moment" in exploring my direction in life and work, I decided to take the gifts the civic engagement world had given me—the knowledge, skills, tools, and experience from civic and community engagement—and apply them toward strengthening campus communities themselves to better deliver on higher education's social compact with America—that is, to better serve their students and democracy by becoming the great "way-makers" for social and

economic mobility they were intended to be. Since leaving the Gates Foundation, I have continued my commitment to helping colleges and universities fulfill their mission through the creation of Sova, a business partnership with Alison Kadlec (civic engagement practitioner and author of *Dewey's Critical Pragmatism*) that focuses on bringing the practical principles of community/civic engagement to the large-scale implementation of student success efforts at higher education institutions across the country.

**I Believe in Expansion (Cecilia M. Orphan, 2011 Award Recipient)**

I believe engaged learning is about expansion, through removing campus walls and expanding learning to schools, parks, nonprofits, and roads so that students can practice democracy. My approach to engaged learning is informed by my time directing AASCU's American Democracy Project. At AASCU, I worked with regional comprehensive university (RCU) faculty across the country to expand their ability to foster engaged learning experiences for students, many of whom are underrepresented. I remain in awe of the ability of RCU faculty to expand student learning for democracy, despite the funding and legitimacy challenges that RCUs navigate compared to flagship and private universities. My own work as a tenure-track professor has been influenced by RCU faculty, whose pedagogical practices and creativity I seek to emulate.

I believe that graduate education should be about expanding student learning beyond the city and state, and moving it throughout the country so that students understand the social, political, and economic contexts in which higher education exists. I partner with national educational associations in the engaged courses I teach to encourage this expansion. I also work to equip students with the research and administrative tools of expansion they will use once they graduate.

I taught an engaged seminar exploring the RCU sector through which students examined the funding, legitimacy, and policy challenges the sector faces, the important mission it serves, and the contributions it makes to regional civic and economic life and educational opportunity. I partnered with AASCU to support the Reimagining the First Year of College initiative to improve retention of underrepresented students. Students in the seminar completed three projects: students created a repository of research and resources related to success for underrepresented students; collected and analyzed data about retention challenges faced by RCUs; and designed the initiative's website. The projects were intended to expand the ability of AASCU and RCU's to foster student success.

Each spring, I teach an engaged policy course. This year, I partnered with the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) association, whose members are senior state policymakers charged with guiding public higher education. Students constructed a panel database of educational policy for the years 1980–2017 for all 50 U.S. states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Students collected nine identifying variables and 95 descriptive variables, and constructed

2,363 panels with 230,428 observations. The partnership expanded SHEEO's ability to analyze the efficacy of educational policy for education, particularly as SHEEO works to promote equity-focused policy and protect higher education's public purposes. The partnership also expanded students' policy analysis and research skills, and their ability to create research-informed policy for education.

I believe that partnering with national educational associations expands student learning far beyond what I could achieve if the walls of the classroom remained in place. Associations are intermediary organizations that guide policymakers and institutional leaders in improving access and protecting education's public purposes. My deepest hope is that these partnerships also expand the ability of associations to fulfill what I believe are vital missions.

Artifact: Student Presentation to SHEEO

**Conclusion (John A. Saltmarsh)**

These essays about pedagogical practice, shared by scholars who have been recognized as emerging leaders in the civic engagement movement, are hopeful reminders that, on campuses across the country, sophisticated teaching and learning practice is countering the dominant institutional learning environments rooted in Western ways of knowing and habits of being. I would like to offer a few observations from these teaching narratives.

Across the essays are common pedagogical tenets—first and foremost, asset-based education, which allows for what Paris (2012) called "culturally sustaining pedagogy" and draws on the cultural and knowledge assets of students in ways that validate their cultural identity as essential to effective teaching and learning. This is important for the academic success and psychosocial development of all students. Second, there is the democratization of knowledge in the classroom and community through an asset-based approach, conferring an equality of respect for the knowledge and experiences that everyone contributes to education in a community of learners. Third, a corollary of the first two, is an epistemic orientation, which Rendón (2012) called "participatory epistemology" (p. 134). It is out of this epistemological orientation that a particular pedagogical approach emerges. As Rendón explained, in this epistemological stance, "the learner is actively connected to what is being learned" (p. 86). The participatory co-creation of knowledge shifts the position of students from knowledge consumers to knowledge producers and also shifts community groups from being subjects or spectators of the learning process to collaborators in knowledge generation and problem solving.

A second observation is that, from this epistemological stance, each of the scholars intimates that their scholarly identity is integrated across faculty roles (as faculty) or that they assume an identity as scholar-administrators (as staff). The pedagogy they practice is linked to the epistemological orientation of knowledge generation in their research and is linked to the service role they perform. Their

identities, and the identities of their students, are intersectional, as is their work as scholars. Teaching is reinforced by and reinforces research, which reinforces and is reinforced by teaching, and both are reinforced by and reinforce their relations with community partners through service. They are whole scholars, not bifurcated by segmented roles.

A final observation relates to the perhaps surprising lack of *service-learning* terminology in these narratives of community-engaged *pedagogical* practice. It rarely appears. This may be worth exploring further. One hypothesis is that the engaged practice demonstrated by these scholars is not essentially about service or about student learning. Said differently, their central concern is not about pedagogy; instead, it may be about epistemic assumptions that inform a particular pedagogical stance grounded in the qualities of reciprocity, mutual respect, shared authority, and co-creation of goals and outcomes. This kind of relational and participatory epistemology is by its very nature transdisciplinary (i.e., knowledge transcending the disciplines and the college or university) and asset-based (where the strengths, skills, and knowledge of students and those in the community are validated and legitimized). Perhaps these scholars, as emerging leaders, are showing us the future of community-engaged teaching and learning.

## References


Ash, S. L., Clayton, P. H., & Moses, M. G. (2007). *Teaching and learning through critical reflection: An instructors' guide*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Battistoni, R. (2002). *Civic engagement across the curriculum: A resource book for service-learning faculty in all disciplines*. Providence, RI: Campus Compact.

Beugre, C. (2017). *Social entrepreneurship: Managing the creation of social value.* New York: Routledge.

Caravelis, C., & Robinson, M. (2016). *Social justice, criminal justice: The role of American law in effecting and preventing social change*. New York: Routledge.

Christopoulos, D., & Vogi, S. (2015). The motivation of social entrepreneurs: The roles, agendas and relations of altruistic economic actors. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship, 6*(1), 1-30.

Cohen, J. (2008). A portrait of a university as a young citizen. In D. Brown & D. Witte (Eds.), *Agent of democracy: Higher education and the HEX journey* (pp. 149-169). Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation.

Cox, E. (2013). *Coaching understood: A pragmatic inquiry into the coaching process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davidson, C., & Wilson, K. (2013). Reassessing Tinto's concepts of social and academic integration in student retention. *Journal of College Student Retention, 15*(3), 329-346.

DePrince, A. P., Priebe, S. J., & Newton, T. (2011). Learning about violence against women in research methods: A comparison to traditional pedagogy. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy, 3*, 215-222.

Fleck, B., Hussey, H. D., & Rutledge-Ellison, L. (2017). Linking class and community: An investigation of service learning. *Teaching of Psychology, 44*(3), 232-239. doi:10.1177/0098628317711317

Furco, A. (1999). Higher Education Service-Learning Survey. Retrieved from http://www.servicelearning.org/filemanager/download/HEdSurveyRel.pdf

Hartlep, N. D., Eckrich, L. T., & Hensley, B. O. (Eds.). (2017). *The neoliberal agenda and the student debt crisis in U.S. higher education.* New York: Routledge.

Hartlep, N. D., & Hensley, B. O. (Eds.). (2015). *Critical storytelling in uncritical times: Stories disclosed in a Cultural Foundations of Education course.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense.

Hartlep, N. D., Hensley, B. O., Braniger, C., & Jennings, M. (Eds.). (2017). *Critical storytelling in uncritical times: Undergraduates share their stories in higher education.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense.

McGorry, S. (2015). Hybrid IV: Online service-learning in an online business course. In J. Strait & K. Nordyke (Eds.), *eService learning: Creating experiential learning and civic engagement through online and hybrid courses* (pp. 119-129). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Moely, B. E., & Ilustre, V. (2011). University students' views of public service graduation requirement. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 17*(2), 43-58.

Mosley, P. (2015). Hybrid II: A model design for web development. In J. Strait & K. Nordyke (Eds.), *eService learning: Creating experiential learning and civic engagement through online and hybrid courses* (pp. 89-104). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Musil, C. M. (2003). Educating for citizenship. *Peer Review*, *5*(3), 4-8.

Musil, C. M. (2009). Educating students for personal and social responsibility: The civic learning spiral. In B. Jacoby & Associates (Eds.), *Civic engagement in higher education: concepts and practices* (pp. 49-68). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Nordyke, K. J. (2015). Hybrid I: Missouri State University embraces eService-learning. In J. Strait & K. Nordyke (Eds.), *eService learning: Creating experiential learning and civic engagement through online and hybrid courses* (pp. 69-88). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Palmer, P. J. (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life.* San Francisco, CA: Wiley.

Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41*(3), 93-97.

Perry, L., Lahm, B., Schauer, A., & Rumble, Z. (2016). The crossroads of social entrepreneurship, community engagement, and learning communities. *American Journal of Entrepreneurship, 9*(2), 1-22.

Purcell, J. W. (2017). Community-engaged pedagogy in the virtual classroom: Integrating e-service–learning into online leadership education. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 11*(1), 65-70. doi:10.1002/jls.21515

Reeb, R. N., Katsuyama, R. M., Sammon, J. A., & Yoder, D. S. (1998). The community service self-efficacy scale: Evidence of reliability, construct validity, and pragmatic utility. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 5*, 48-57. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0005.105

Rendón, L. I. (2012). *Sentipensante (sensing/thinking) pedagogy: Educating for wholeness, social justice and liberation*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Rodriguez, D. X., & Janke, E. M. (2016), Same words, different ideas: Why educators need to make explicit implicit notions of civic engagement. *Citizenship Teaching and Learning,11*(2), 175-190. doi:10.1386/ctl.11.2.175_1

Simons, L., & Cleary, B. (2006). The influence of service learning on students' personal and social development. *College Teaching, 54*, 307-319. doi:10.3200/CTCH.54.4.307-319

Strait, J. (2015). Hybrid III: Lessons from the storm. J. Strait & K. Nordyke (Eds.), *eService learning: Creating experiential learning and civic engagement through online and hybrid courses* (pp. 105-118). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

## Authors

**Nicholas D. Hartlep** began his career as a 1st grade teacher in Rochester, Minnesota, before receiving a PhD in Urban Education at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM). He also has a master's in K–12 education and bachelor's in elementary education, both conferred from Winona State University. Dr. Hartlep is an associate professor of urban education and the chair of the Early Childhood/Elementary Education department in the School of Urban Education at Metropolitan State University in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He also serves as the graduate program coordinator within the School of Urban Education. Dr. Hartlep has published 19 books, the most recent being Asian/American Scholars of Education: 21st Century Pedagogies, Perspectives, and Experiences with coeditors Amardeep K. Kahlon and Daisy Ball (2018) and The Neoliberal Agenda and the Student Debt Crisis in U.S. Higher Education, with Lucille L. T. Eckrich and Brandon O. Hensley (2017). In 2015, he received the University Research Initiative Award from Illinois State University and a Distinguished Young Alumni Award from WSU. In 2016, UWM presented him with a Graduate of the Last Decade Award for his prolific writing. In 2017, Metropolitan State University presented him with both the 2017 Community Engaged Scholarship Award and the President's Circle of Engagement Award. In 2018, the Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) granted Dr. Hartlep the John Saltmarsh Award for Emerging Leaders in Civic Engagement Award. Follow his work on Twitter at @nhartlep or at his website, www.nicholashartlep.com.

**Dr. Judithanne Scourfield McLauchlan** is an Associate Professor of Political Science and the Founding Director of the Center for Civic Engagement at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg.

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Civic Engagement in the Online Classroom: Increasing Youth Political Engagement in an Online American Government Course

Judithanne Scourfield McLauchlan
University of South Florida St. Petersburg

## Author Note

Judithanne Scourfield McLauchlan, Department of History and Politics, University of South Florida St. Petersburg

An earlier draft of this paper was presented in February 2018 at the American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference in Baltimore, MD, and during a think tank session at the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Conference in Anaheim, CA, in June 2018.

The author would like to thank Wayne Nealy, Emily-May Thatcher, Royale Heart-Oakes, Elise Hummel, and Tom Gay for their research assistance with the data collection for this project. The author also wishes to thank the University of South Florida St. Petersburg's Online Learning and Instructional Technology Services (OLITS) department (http://lib.usfsp.edu/online-learning/) under the leadership of David Brodosi for professional development training and for grant support to develop "American National Government" online. Thanks to Otis Wilder for leading the OLITS professional development workshops. And thanks especially to instructional designers Karla Morris and Steph Fuhr for their help moving my course to an online format.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Judithanne Scourfield McLauchlan, Associate Professor, College of Arts and Sciences, University of South Florida St. Petersburg, Davis 216, 140 7th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701. Phone: (727) 873-4956. E-mail: jsm2@usfsp.edu

**Abstract**

This article discusses the development and implementation of a civics project in an online American government course and explores the challenges and opportunities around managing civic engagement projects in an online format. Data analyzed for this article included 11 semesters of responses to anonymous pre- and post-project surveys, university end-of-course evaluations, Center for Civic Engagement surveys of Citizen Scholar courses, student reflection papers, and discussion board posts. Findings revealed that participation in the civics project increased students' civic knowledge and helped them develop the skills needed to become active citizens. Students indicated that they intended to continue following current events and that they would stay involved in the political process. Lessons learned are applicable to courses in fields seeking to incorporate service-learning, community-based research, or civic engagement in an online context.

*Keywords:* online learning, civic engagement, civic literacy, online classroom, political engagement, Quality Matters

> *Democracy can survive only as strong democracy, secured not by great leaders but by competent, responsible citizens. Effective dictatorships require great leaders. Effective democracies need great citizens.... And citizens are certainly not born, but made as a consequence of civic education and political engagement in a free polity.* (Barber, 1984, p. xvii)

The state of civic literacy and civic engagement has been on the decline in recent decades (National Task Force*,* 2012; Shaw, 2017). Speaking in terms of "civic illiteracy" (Shaw, 2017), scholars have declared that the United States is in a "civic recession" (National Task Force, 2012 p. xiii) and have lamented the current state of "civic malaise" (National Task Force, 2012 p. 6). The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012) pointed to specific indicators of this "anemic U.S. civic health," such as low voter turnout rates (the U.S. ranked 139$^{th}$ in voter participation out of 172 world democracies), low rates of interaction with elected officials (only 10% of U.S. citizens contacted a public official), and low levels of proficiency in civics (only 24% of graduating high school seniors scored at the proficient or advanced level in civics). Indeed, a recent survey conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center (2016) found that only one quarter of Americans could name the three branches of government, and a *Newsweek* poll found that less than one third of Americans knew that the U.S. Constitution was the supreme law of the land (Shaw, 2017).

The nation's civic illiteracy crisis is especially grave in Florida, where I teach at a state university. A recent study of Florida's civic health concluded that "Florida Millennials have the depressing distinction of being the most disengaged group in one of the most civically disengaged states in the nation" (Knuckey & Collie*,* 2011, p. 5). For example, in 2010, less than half of millennials in Florida were registered to vote, and of those who were registered, only one in five actually voted. Non-electoral political action was almost non-existent (e.g., only 3% contacted or visited a public official), and Florida's millennials had one of the lowest rates (ranked 48$^{th}$ in the nation) of participation in any type of civic, community, school, sports, or religious group. In addition, Florida was ranked among the bottom 10 states for community engagement—such as volunteering, attending public meetings, and working with neighbors in the community—among millennials. (See Table 1.)

Table 1

*Snapshot of Millennial Civic Engagement in Florida*

| | **Florida Millennials** | **National Average for Millennials** | **Florida Millennials National Ranking** | **Most Engaged State for Millennials** | **Florida "Youth Engagement Gap"** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Registered to vote in 2010 | 44% | 44% | 31st | North Dakota, 62% | -15% |
| Voted in 2010 | 21% | 22% | 34th | North Dakota, 35% | -23% |
| Contacted or visited public official | 3% | 4% | 41st | Oregon, 15% | -6% |
| Bought or boycotted product based on values of company | 6% | 7% | 32nd | Oregon, 26% | -3% |
| Group participation (any group) | 18% | 23% | 48th | Colorado, 36% | -12% |
| Volunteered for any group | 18% | 21% | 44th | Utah, 37% | -2% |
| Attended public meeting | 2% | 4% | 46th | Montana, 10% | -6% |
| Did favors for neighbors a few times per week or more frequently | 11% | 11% | 40th | Hawaii, 18% | -5% |
| Worked with neighbor to fix problem in neighborhood | 2% | 4% | 44 | Montana, 9% | -6% |

*Note*. Source: *2011 Florida Civic Health Index* (Knuckey & Collie, 2011, p. 4).

While the activism of the Parkland shooting survivors, for instance, is inspiring (National Public Radio, 2018) and the dramatic increase in youth voter turnout (to 30% [CIRCLE, 2018]) in the 2018 midterm elections is encouraging, there is still much work to be done to improve civic literacy and civic participation among younger citizens.

The Florida Legislature has taken steps to strengthen civics education in the state. In passing the Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act in 2010, for instance, the legislature mandated civic education (via language arts programs) in K-12, including a mandatory civics course for seventh graders that includes an end-of-course assessment.[1] In 2017, the legislature extended the civic literacy requirement to Florida colleges and universities, mandating that, beginning in the 2018-2019 academic year, entering students must demonstrate competency in civic literacy (see Florida Statute 1007.25). One way that Florida higher education institutions are attempting to meet this requirement is through the "American National Government" course described in this article. However, while these new state legislative mandates are encouraging, it should be noted that the data analyzed in this article—from the online American National Government course (2012-2018)—precedes their implementation.

Bolstering this generation's civic literacy is vital to maintaining and strengthening the foundation of democracy. At the same time the need to improve civics education, civic literacy, and civic health among today's college students is becoming more urgent, higher education institutions are under rising pressure to increase the number and variety of online course offerings on campuses. Thus, there is a need to increase civic literacy and civic engagement in online, as well as face-to-face, courses.

After teaching American government for many years, I have found that students "lack basic political knowledge, most are not interested in politics, do not feel motivated to participate, and do not know how to participate should they want to do so" (Colby, Beaumont, Erlich, & Corngold, 2007, p. 3). How can educators best develop the civic capacity of their students? How can educators help students develop the skills necessary to be active and engaged citizens in an online format?

Skeptics may assume that there are too many challenges and roadblocks to developing the civic skills of students in an online format; however, some scholars have found that online learning can facilitate, rather than inhibit, community-engaged pedagogies (Guthrie & McCracken, 2012; Purcell, 2017; Waldner, McGorry, & Widener, 2012). Indeed, one study concluded that "e-

[1] As a Fellow of the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship, I conducted teacher trainings for new teachers of civics when the Act was first implemented (see http://floridacitizen.org).

service-learning—the marriage of online learning and service-learning—holds the potential to transform both endeavors by freeing service-learning from geographical constraints and by equipping online learning with a tool to promote engagement" (Waldner et al., 2012, p. 145).

This article discusses the development and implementation of a civics project in an online American government course, and explores the challenges and opportunities of managing civic engagement projects in an online format. During each of the 11 semesters that I have taught American National Government online (from 2012 to 2018), I have administered anonymous pre- and post-test surveys and collected reflection papers and discussion board posts about each of the civics projects in the course. In addition, USFSP has administered anonymous end-of-course evaluations, and the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) has administered anonymous student surveys of this Citizen Scholar course. The survey data, along with the content of the student reflection papers and discussion board posts, have been analyzed in order to determine the impact of the civics projects on students' civic learning and engagement in the online course delivery format.

The lessons learned from the data presented and the experiences discussed in this article, while related specifically to American government and politics, would be applicable to courses in any field that seek to include service-learning, community-based research, or civic engagement within an online context.

**The Course: POS 2041: American National Government**

POS 2041: American National Government is now a state-mandated general education course in the Florida higher education curriculum. Prior to the general education mandate, the course was required of many majors at USFSP in the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, and the College of Education. The course is intended to introduce students to the theories institutions, and processes of American government and politics. In addition to teaching fundamental information about the American political system, the course is designed to help students think critically about American government and politics. Topics include an introduction to American government, the Founding and the U.S. Constitution, Federalism, civil liberties, civil rights, interest groups, political parties, campaigns and elections, Congress, the presidency, bureaucracies, the Supreme Court, and the American judiciary.

I have taught this course for more than 25 years. I enjoy teaching the class because it is a veritable smorgasbord of American politics. I warn my students on the first day that the university's History and Politics Department offers at least one full-semester course offering for each of the weekly topics, so the students will succeed only in scratching the proverbial surface of each topic. Still, we

cover a lot of ground. I treasure working with my students in the face-to-face classroom, and I was skeptical at first about using online pedagogy. How would I ensure that my course was rigorous? How could I know that my students were becoming well-versed in American government and politics? How could my course be as engaging online as it is in person? How could I best incorporate a civic engagement component in the online format?

After attending professional development workshops offered by my university's distance learning team, I decided to develop American National Government online. The team and I were able to use technology creatively so active learning components in the course could be retained (such as using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra for the synchronous simulations and substituting an interactive crossword puzzle for the "U.S. Citizenship Bingo" icebreaker I had created for the first day of class). In addition to the active learning components, I wanted to include a civic engagement component that would get students out from behind their computer screens and into the community, learning about American government first-hand.

**Online Course Design and the Quality Matters National Certification**

I would never have considered moving my course online were it not for the professional development workshops and trainings organized by the Online Learning and Instructional Technology Services department at my university. As part of the professional development programming, I participated in workshops related to the national Quality Matters (QM) certification.[2] After learning more about the QM rubric, I designed my online course with its rigorous standards in mind.[3] I was delighted when American National Government online received the Quality Matters certification in July 2016.

Quality Matters bills itself as a "non-profit quality assurance organization" that has developed a method for certifying the quality of online courses (https://www.qualitymatters.org/). As the USFSP distance learning department explains, "Quality Matters is a nationally recognized program that examines course design to assess the quality and alignment of an online course through a peer-review process using a rubric of evidence-based practices."[4] This process is designed to recognize online courses that meet the highest standards of quality course design. A team of three certified peer reviewers conduct a formal review

[2] See this QM at USFSP video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdkMBmOaxws
[3] For more information about the QM rubric, see https://www.qualitymatters.org/qa-resources/rubric-standards
[4] https://usfspdistancelearning.wordpress.com/2016/08/01/quality-matters-recognizes-dr-judithanne-scourfield-mclauchlan/

of the course based on QM's rigorous and research-based rubric for online course design.

The rubric includes eight standards: course overview and introduction, learning objectives, instructional materials, learner support, course technology, accessibility and usability, course activities and learner interaction, and assessment and measurement. For each of these standards, there is a rubric for evaluating whether the standard is being met. For example, QM reviewers will evaluate the instructions for getting started in the course, whether the learning objectives describe measurable outcomes, whether there are a variety of instructional materials used in the course, and whether the assessments measure the stated learning objectives or competencies.[5]

At USFSP, the distance learning team works with the individual faculty member on an internal review.[6] Once the internal review process is complete, the faculty member's application is referred to the external review process. The external QM review team consists of a master reviewer, who chairs the team, a subject-matter expert, and another experienced peer reviewer. Once the review is complete, the applicant receives a detailed report with extensive feedback, along with the scores in each category. If successful, the applicant also receives a certificate.

Designing the American National Government course with the QM rubric in mind, I developed a module for each unit that includes a description of the learning outcomes, the assigned readings, lecture outline, PowerPoint presentation to accompany the lecture, a video of the recorded lecture, and additional resources for further study. After completing the readings and watching the lecture, students take a quiz to complete each module. The textbooks assigned also include study guides for the students to practice before taking the quiz for credit. It is helpful to track students' progress on a module-by-module basis, rather than wait for the midterm and final exams for assessment (as when I taught the course face-to-face). Tracking the students' progress module-to-module also made me more comfortable with the online format. Between the quizzes and the discussion board posts, I found that, in many ways, I gave more feedback to and had more interactions with the students in my online class than I did with students in my face-to-face classes.

## The Civics Project

[5] For more about resources, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwM7UNzmovs

[6] For more about the USFSP OLITS professional development and support through the development of online courses and QM, see this video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdkMBmOaxws

In the face-to-face American National Government class, my civics project assignment required campaign internships. I would host a campaign internship job fair (open to all faculty, staff, and students on campus) during our class period, inviting all of the candidates and campaigns in order to assist students in securing campaign internships.[7] However, when deciding how to adapt the civics project to the online classroom format—so that students could complete it wherever and whenever they were taking the course—I realized that I would need to take a different approach. Specifically, I developed the civics project assignment as a series of hands-on activities.

As part of their final course grade, students have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of American government, politics, and political culture by completing a series of civics assignments and writing short reflection papers (four pages each). In these papers, students describe what they did for their project, and then they relate what they learned from the experience with the material covered in lectures and in the assigned readings.[8] The assignment also requires that students participate in discussion boards using the USFSP learning management system (Canvas) to post about their civics projects and to respond to others. Students must complete three different assignments (i.e., no two assignments can be of the same type; e.g., only one city council meeting). Only one of those civics projects can be "online" (e.g., watching a Florida Supreme Court oral argument online or watching a Sunday morning political TV show).

A civics project worksheet was developed as the first in a series of civics assignments (see Appendix A). While this civics project is well-suited for a course in which students are geographically dispersed (especially since the course is taught online during the summer, when students are spread across Florida, the United States, and abroad), students often need help identifying civics projects—and figuring out when and how they will complete them. In order to complete the civics project worksheet, students need to identify their state representatives and state senators, their members of Congress and U.S. senators, their county commissioners (and when/where the commission meets), their school board members (and when/where the school board meets), how and where to register to vote, the contact information for their Democratic and Republican party offices, etc. By completing the civics project worksheet, students develop their own customized civic engagement reference guide. Though students still do send me e-mail messages claiming that there is "nothing to do" near where they live, by

[7] See McLauchlan (2013)

[8] For more about "the importance of critical reflection to facilitate the construction of knowledge resulting from participation in e-service-learning courses," see Guthrie and McCracken (2014, p. 238).

using their completed worksheet, I can more easily help them identify projects that work with their schedule, wherever they reside.

The civics project worksheet has become a useful companion to the civics projects. The worksheet guides the students on a path to develop their own "database" of officials in their area so that they know how to become more actively engaged. In conjunction with the content covered in the lectures and readings, students learn more about what level of government and what government agency (or agencies) might be responsible for the issues with which they are concerned, and they learn how to reach out to those officials. The civics project worksheet and the civics projects themselves play an important role in skill building and increasing students' sense of political efficacy.

The "menu" of potential civics projects includes activities such as attending a city council/school board/county commission meeting, attending a homeowner's association meeting, volunteering for a community agency, visiting a federal or state courthouse and watching a proceeding, volunteering for a political campaign, and contacting an elected official about an issue of interest. The syllabus and the weekly materials include suggestions for civics projects related to each module. Students verify their completion of the civics projects by including an appendix with photos of them at the events and/or scans of business cards, meeting agendas, or other artifacts of the civic engagement activity.

Additionally, there is a cover page for the assignment included in the civics project assignment handout. On this cover page, students indicate what they did for the assignment, what units the assignment relates to, and whether the assignment was in person or online. The same cover sheet is used for civic projects 1, 2, and 3, so that all of the civics projects completed by that student are listed in one place

When introducing students to this civics project assignment, I encourage them to think about issues that interest them and then to think about how they can tie what they are learning in class about how government works to designing a civics project (or series of projects) related to those issues. For example, one student was concerned about the speed of traffic on the street outside his home because his young children played in the front yard. This became the focus of his first civics project. He was shocked that after calling City Hall, someone came out to study the traffic patterns on his street to determine whether there should be a speed bump. (Students don't tend to anticipate that they can "fight City Hall" and win.) For other students, issues might relate to the environment, gun safety, or reproductive health. Whatever issues students are concerned about or whatever their career goals or major field of study, a civics project plan can be developed to cater to those interests.

As Table 2 illustrates, the two most popular civics projects are those that can be completed online: watching a Florida Supreme Court oral argument and watching a Sunday morning political talk show. Every semester, it seems that students procrastinate on the first civics project. In their anonymous surveys, they have expressed their reluctance about getting out into the community and their feeling that they do not know how to engage. In order to complete their assignment on time, many students end up doing one of those online assignments at the last minute. However, as the semester progresses, they are "forced" to do the face-to-face projects. Students report that once they get out there, they find that it is not as difficult to get involved as they had imagined.

Table 2

*Student Civics Projects (2012-2017)*

| **Civic Project** | **Fall 2012** | **Fall 2013** | **Spring 2015** | **Summer 2015** | **Summer 2017** | **Totals** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Listen to/watch court proceedings online (U.S. Supreme Court, Florida Supreme Court) | 15 | 21 | 13 | 14 | 24 | 87 |
| Watch a Sunday morning political show (Face the Nation, Meet the Press, This Week) | 16 | 27 | 11 | 9 | 13 | 76 |
| Attend city council meeting, county commission meeting, school board meeting | 14 | 14 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 48 |
| Attend neighborhood association/ homeowners association meeting | 11 | 9 | 2 | 4 | | 26 |
| Register to vote | | | 6 | | 19 | 25 |
| Visit political party headquarters | 22 | | | | 2 | 24 |
| Volunteer for a community agency | 6 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 23 |
| Attend candidate debate | | 15 | | | 7 | 22 |
| Attend watch party (debate, election | 14 | | 7 | | | 21 |

| Civic Project | Fall 2012 | Fall 2013 | Spring 2015 | Summer 2015 | Summer 2017 | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| night, national convention) | | | | | | |
| Write a letter to the editor | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 21 |
| Write a letter to elected official | 5 | 7 | | 1 | 7 | 20 |
| Voted in an election | 18 | | | | 1 | 19 |
| Visit courthouse | 1 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 19 |
| Visit state or federal legislative office | 6 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 18 |
| Propose/respond to administrative rule change | 3 | 8 | 3 | | 1 | 15 |
| Volunteer for a political campaign | 11 | 3 | 1 | | 1 | 16 |
| Visit supervisor of elections/voter registration | 6 | 2 | | 2 | | 10 |
| Attend campaign event/political rally | 3 | 1 | 2 | | | 10 |
| Conduct interview | 1 | | | | 2 | 3 |
| Access government benefits | | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Write a petition | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Visit advocacy group | | | 1 | | | 1 |

In addition to completing the civics project and writing a reflection paper—integrating what they learned in the lectures and reading assignments with what they learned by doing their civics project—students participate in discussion boards associated with each of the assignments. For each civics project, students post about their own project and to also respond to at least one other student's project. Surprisingly, the discussion generated through the online discussion board posts regarding the civics projects is more robust (and much more extensive) than what was achieved in my face-to-face classes. It was not until I actually started grading the discussion board posts that I realized the magnitude of

the student engagement.[9] While I have long prided myself on delivering engaging lectures with active student participation, there is simply not enough class time available for each student to participate and for each student to respond to every other student. The format of the online discussion board made me appreciate the ways in which online courses can be even more vigorous and engaging than traditional face-to-face delivery formats.

## Method

### Participants

The participants in this study were the students enrolled in American National Government online at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg (USFSP) during the following 11 semesters from 2012 through 2018: summer 2012, fall 2012, summer 2013, fall 2013, fall 2014, spring 2015, summer 2015, summer 2016, summer 2017, fall 2017, summer 2018. From 2003 through 2012, I taught this class face-to-face at USFSP. (Previously I taught American government face-to-face at Rutgers University.)

USFSP is a separately accredited campus of the University of South Florida system, enrolling approximately 5,000 students (approximately 700 of whom are residential). The demographics of the student population have changed during the 16 years I have taught at the university—from a 100% commuter campus with primarily nontraditional students to a campus with residence halls and first-time-in-college students of traditional college age. The first residence hall opened in 2006, the second opened in 2012, and a third is now under construction. The gradual increase in the number of first-time-in-college, traditional-age, residential students was taking place during the study period.

### Materials and Procedure

During each of the 11 semesters, three different types of surveys were administered to obtain feedback about the course in general and about the civics project in particular: the pre- and post-civics project surveys, the Center for Civic Engagement Citizen Scholar student surveys, and the university end-of-course student evaluations.

**Pre- and post-civics project surveys**. During the semester, I administer pre- and post-civics project surveys to the students. These are administered within Canvas (the university's learning management system) as a quiz. Students are asked how much American government or civics coursework they have completed prior to taking the class, how much they like studying American government or civics, and how much they believe that having elections makes the

[9] For more about the pedagogical benefits of online discussion groups, see Clawson, Deen, and Oxley (2002) and Hoover, Casile, and Hanke (2008).

government pay attention to what people think before it decides what to do. Another series of questions asks students whether they have participated in activities similar to the civics projects before taking the course (e.g., whether the student ever contacted an elected official or ever attended a city council meeting). The survey also asks the students whether they are registered to vote and how often they have voted in the past. There questions pertain to the student's level of community engagement, such as whether the student has ever volunteered for a community service organization or for a political campaign. The survey also asks whether the students (prior to taking the class) have followed current events and activities related to local government. There are also open-ended questions, such as "What does it mean to be a 'citizen'?"; "What are your expectations going in to the civics project assignment?"; "What do you hope to learn from your civic engagement experience?"

**Center for Civic Engagement, Citizen Scholar course student surveys**. At the end of the semester, the CCE sends a representative to administer a survey of students enrolled in courses coded as "Citizen Scholar." Citizen Scholar courses are those in which students get out of the classroom and into the community, working on projects with community partners that are tied to the learning outcomes in the course. These courses include those with service-learning, civic engagement, and experiential learning opportunities for students. For online Citizen Scholar courses, the CCE uses a survey created in Google Forms and asks the instructors of Citizen Scholar courses to share the survey link with their students. A link to the survey is posted for students in Canvas.

In the Citizen Scholar course survey, students are asked how many hours they worked on the service-learning project (including direct service hours and reflection hours). The survey includes binary questions that address the following issues: whether the service activities enhanced understanding of the course content, whether the student was able to make a meaningful contribution to the community through the service-learning experience, whether the student believes that he or she could have learned more from the course if more time had been spent in the classroom rather than in the community, whether the student feels more comfortable participating in the community after taking the course, whether the student developed skills in the course that can be used in a future career, whether the student plans to continue serving with the community program after completing the course, and whether the student would recommend a course with this civic engagement component to future students. There are also a number of learning outcomes that are assessed using a 5-point scale (1 = "no change"; 5 = "increased significantly"): communication skills, critical thinking, understanding community needs, ability to apply concepts of one's academic discipline to the local community, understanding and appreciating diversity, ability to lead a group

effectively, and the likelihood of participating with community organizations/issues.

**University end-of-course student evaluations**. At the end of the semester, the university administers end-of-course student evaluations of their instructors. These are administered online (i.e., students receive a link via their university email) using the eXplorance Blue assessment system, and faculty can access the results in Faculty Academic Information Reporting (FAIR), the annual review tracking system for faculty. Faculty can access their overall instructor rating as well as view all student comments to the open-ended questions about the course and the instructor.

## Results

### Pre- and Post-Civics Project Surveys

Eight semesters of survey responses were compiled (fall 2012, summer 2013, fall 2013, fall 2014, spring 2015, summer 2015, summer 2016, and summer 2018): 225 students responded to the pre-civics project survey and 214 responded to the post-civics project survey. Eighty-five percent of the students who responded had taken at least one semester of American government or civics courses prior to taking the American National Government course. An overwhelming majority of students had not participated in civics projects before taking the class: 16% (36 students) had contacted a federal or state legislator about an issue; 10% (22 students) had attended a city council meeting; 8% (19 students) had attended a school board meeting, 3% (six students) had attended a county commission meeting, 5% (12 students) had written a letter to the editor; 20% (45 students) had watched a Sunday morning political talk show; 16% (35 students) had volunteered for a political campaign; and 26% (59 students) had volunteered for a community service organization in their neighborhood.[10] After completing the course and the required three civics projects, 100% of the students had become civically engaged.

After participating in the civics project assignment, completing three projects from the earlier examples, students reported feeling better informed about how American government works. Sixty-two percent (133 students) reported that they paid more attention to activities related to local government in their town since taking the course, and 50% (100 students) reported that they paid more attention to current events since taking the course (see Figure 1)

[10] Community service is a requirement of Florida's Bright Futures Scholarship program. See https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/SAPBFMAIN/SAPBFMAIN

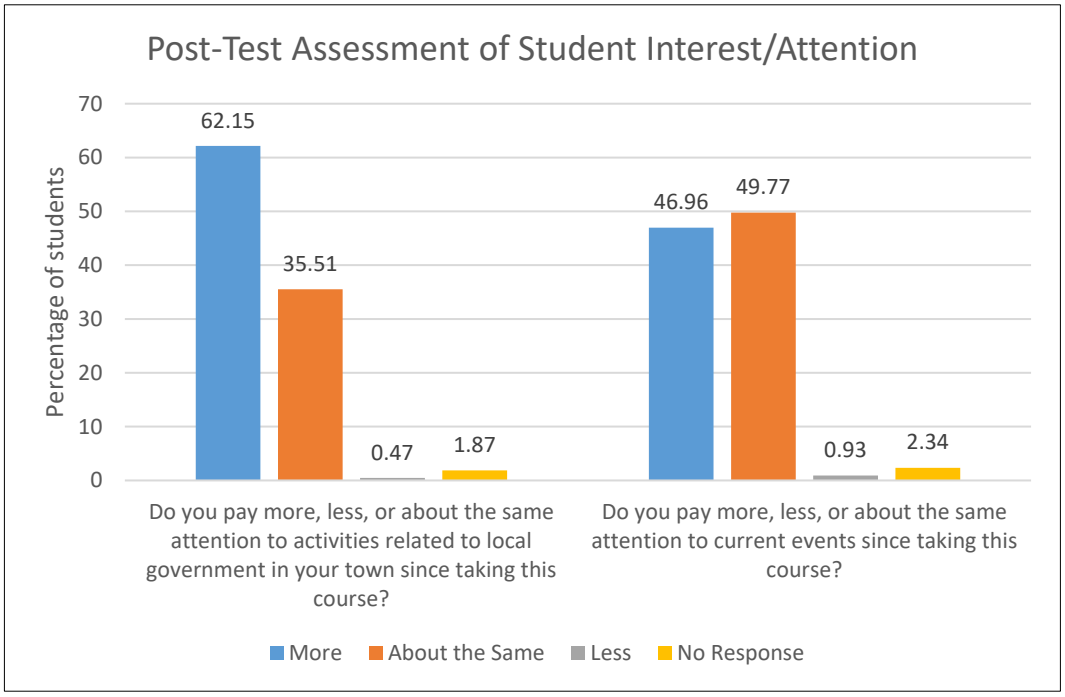



*Figure 1*. Student interest in current events and local government post-civics projects.

In their responses to the open-ended questions, students admitted that they had not initially looked forward to the civics assignments; however, in the post-civics project surveys, students reported that they found the projects to be a valuable addition to the curriculum. Typical responses include the following: "I learned to go outside my comfort zone, and to dive deeper into the subject to make sure I really understood what I was learning" and "I always find it difficult to get involved even though I always want to. These projects forced me and helped me see I could find the time." Particularly when I taught the course in non-presidential election years, students expressed an interest in local government and in local elections: "I learned that politics is much more than who is running for president and that government is more than just what is happening in DC." Moreover, students reported that they left the course feeling like they could make a difference after having participated in the civics project: "I learned that we could all be a part of our community and have a say in what government does," "I actually learned how easy it was to get involved," and "I learned MY part in government and how crucial it is that I participate."

Regardless of the type of civics project selected from the menu of options (or designed by the student), students reported that getting out into the community and getting involved in the process helped them to understand the course content and to feel more connected with their community. Table 3 includes sample student reflections about lessons learned though the various types of civics projects.

Table 3

*Student Reflections*

| **Civics Project** | **Sample Student Feedback** |
|---|---|
| Attend city council meeting | "This amount of access and openness to discussion gives me the sense that maybe the average citizen like me really can have some influence and have their voice heard. For that reason alone it was worth going to the meeting."<br><br>"I was able to view 'government in action' in a way I had never done before." |
| Attend homeowners association meeting | "At the beginning of this class I know I filled out the Pre-Civic Project Survey with a pretty 'what could I do as one person to make a difference attitude' in my answers. But listening to the lectures . . . I can see how people can make a difference. It has changed my mind about a lot of things." |
| Volunteer for political group | "After working with the College Republicans, I feel that I would like to work a campaign effort again in four years. I had a very nice time meeting members of the community, interested voters, and other supporters of the Romney-Ryan ticket."<br><br>"I realized that I helped citizens begin the process of exercising their right to vote. By participating in these activities, I also gained a sense of respect for the people who work hard to get others registered to vote. I understand more about how our government is run." |
| Attend forum/town hall meeting | "The different panelists discussed the amendments. When they mentioned the different outcomes for each amendment, I realized how important is to fully understand what we vote on. I also realized how important and great it is that I have the ability to vote and have a voice." |

**Center for Civic Engagement, Citizen Scholar Course Student Surveys**

Four semesters of data were compiled (spring 2015, summer 2015, summer 2016, and summer 2017), comprising 68 student survey responses. Students spent an average of 6.8 hours of direct service (65 students reported 441 hours) and 4.3 hours of reflection (65 students reported 277 hours)—an average of 11 hours spent on the civics project assignments during the course of the semester. Overwhelmingly, students agreed that the civics projects enhanced their understanding of course content (63 out of 64, or 98.4%). Only 17% of the students (9 out of 52) believed that they would have learned more from this course if more time had been spent in the classroom instead of doing service in the community. Moreover, students reported that they felt more comfortable participating in the community (58 out of 60, or 96.7%) and that they believed they could make a meaningful contribution by doing so (53 out of 58, or 91%). More than 80% of the students (49 out of 61) reported that they would continue their work on the civic engagement projects after completing the course. Additionally, 92% of the students (61 out of 66) enrolled in the course indicated that they would recommend the civic engagement component to future students. (See Table 4.)

Table 4

*Center for Civic Engagement Student Surveys of Citizen Scholar Courses (2015-2017), Binary Question Responses*

| Survey Question | Spring 2015 Yes Responses | Summer 2015 Yes Responses | Summer 2016 Yes Responses | Summer 2017 Yes Responses | Total Yes Responses |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Did your service activities enhance your understanding of course content? | 14/14 100% | 15/15 100% | 13/14 92.9% | 21/21 100% | 63/64 98.4% |
| I feel that I was able to make a meaningful contribution to the community through this service-learning experience. | 11/12 91.7% | 10/12 83.3% | 13/15 86.7% | 19/19 100% | 53/58 91.4% |
| I feel I would have learned more from this class if more | 1/10 10% | 4/14 28.6% | 4/12 33.3% | 0/16 0% | 9/52 17.3% |

| Survey Question | Spring 2015 Yes Responses | Summer 2015 Yes Responses | Summer 2016 Yes Responses | Summer 2017 Yes Responses | Total Yes Responses |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| time was spent in the classroom instead of doing service in the community. | | | | | |
| I feel more comfortable participating in the community after this class. | 12/12 100% | 15/15 100% | 13/14 92.9% | 18/19 94.7% | 58/60 96.7% |
| Do you plan to continue serving with this community program after completing this service learning course? | 9/11 81.8% | 9/14 64.3% | 14/16 87.5% | 17/20 85% | 49/61 80.3% |
| Would you recommend a course with this civic engagement component to future students? | 12/14 85.7% | 14/15 93.3% | 15/16 93.8% | 20/21 95.2% | 61/66 92.4% |

Students were also asked to rate the impact of the civic engagement component of their Citizen Scholar course using a 5-point scale, with 1 indicating "no change" and 5 indicating "increased significantly." The learning outcome which saw the most significant change was "Likelihood of Future Participation/Engagement with Community Issues and Organizations." Thirty-two percent of students rated this outcome with a 5 ("increased significantly"). Other learning outcomes that saw a significant change were "Understanding Community Needs" and "Understanding of/Appreciation for Diversity" (see Table 5). Not surprisingly, the learning outcome that saw the least amount of change was "Ability to Lead a Group" since there were no group projects that were part of the civics assignment. (The highest percentage of students—33%—reporting 1 ("no change") was in response to this question about working in groups.)

Table 5

*Center for Civic Engagement Student Surveys of Citizen Scholar Courses (2015-2017), Impact of Civic Engagement on Learning Outcomes, 5-Point Scale*

| **Learning Outcome** | **1 (No Change) Number of Students (%)** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5 (Increased Significantly) Number of Students (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Understanding Community Needs | 5 (8%) | 5 (8%) | 11 (17%) | 27 (41%) | 18 (27%) |
| Apply Concepts to Local Community | 5 (8%) | 7 (11%) | 21 (32%) | 17 (26%) | 16 (24%) |
| Appreciation of Diversity | 6 (9%) | 7 (11%) | 22 (33%) | 15 (23%) | 16 (24%) |
| Ability to Lead a Group | 22 (33%) | 13 (20%) | 14 (21%) | 12 (18%) | 5 (8%) |
| Likelihood of Future Engagement with Community Issue/Organization | 5 (8%) | 8 (12%) | 16 (24%) | 16 (24%) | 21 (32%) |

## University End-of-Course Student Evaluations

As a result of the university moving from administering paper copies of end-of-course student evaluations in class to an online system whereby students access the evaluations at home, student response rates have decreased significantly. (I do not have an exact figure, but this development is widely discussed in faculty meetings and is an issue that I tried to address while serving as chair of the College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Council.) Table 6 illustrates the rates of response to the end-of-course student evaluations in American National Government from 2014 through 2018. The response rates were higher than anticipated, given the widespread concern about low responses to student course evaluations on my campus since the evaluation system moved online. Another pleasant surprise represented in Table 6 was the overall rating of the

instructor. I had heard that, generally, student evaluations of instructors for online courses tend to be lower than for face-to-face courses. The overall instructor rating, between 4 and 5, was still above average. Given the student responses to the open-ended questions about the course and the instructor, it seems that the civics project contributed to overall student satisfaction with the course.

Table 6

*Rates of Student Response to the University End-of-Course Evaluations (2014-2018)*

| **Semester** | **Overall Student Responses (Student Survey Responses/Total Number of Students)** | **Overall Instructor Rating (5-point scale)** | **Open-Ended Comments: Instructor (Comments that Mention Civics Project/Total Number of Comments)** | **Open-Ended Comments: Course (Comments that Mention Civics Project/Total Number of Comments)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Summer 2018 | 19/33 (56%) | 4.17 | 1/8 (13%) | 2/5 (40%) |
| Summer 2017 | 17/44 (39%) | 4.52 | 3/12 (25%) | 3/9 (33%) |
| Summer 2015 | 14/21 (67%) | 4.58 | 2/10 (20%) | 4/6 (67%) |
| Fall 2014 | 23/43 (68%) | 4.35 | 2/8 (25%) | 3/7 (43%) |

Table 6 also illustrates the number and percentage of students who referenced the open-ended questions about the course and about the instructor in the evaluations. Between 13% and 24% of students referenced the civics project when commenting on the instructor, and between 33% and 67% of students referenced the civics project when commenting on the course. The student comments on the civics project were positive, praising the value of the civic engagement opportunity. There were no complaints about the difficulty of completing the projects. The civics project worksheet helps students think through what they can do for their projects, and it helps me assist those who may be struggling. Even students who were at first reluctant to complete this assignment

reported that, once they were out in the community, they were pleasantly surprised by their experiences. Tables 7 and 8 list sample comments from the evaluations.

Table 7

*Student Responses to Open-Ended Questions on University End-of-Course Evaluations (2014-2018), Instructor Comment*

| **Semester** | **Sample Student Feedback** |
|---|---|
| Summer 2018 | "Professor McLauchlan really went above and beyond in providing us resources in the modules.…The civics projects were really unique assignments and I found them to be really helpful in applying what we learned in class in my local community. There was enough time between projects to complete them even if you work outside of class and have other classes going on. It was a very manageable class, but we were still able to cover a lot of information and gain real world experience." |
| Summer 2018 | "This is one of the more active and 'go out and do it' courses I've had, which is excellent." |
| Summer 2017 | "Dr. Scourfield McLauchlan does an amazing job at getting you involved despite this being a summer class. She includes civics projects which demonstrate class concepts in the real world, and makes the material seem more relevant and interesting. She shows enthusiasm for the subject and is incredibly experienced in her field which really made me respect her work even more." |
| Fall 2014 | "Professor McLauchlan had a lot of knowledge when it comes to this course. She is very informative and unlike previous government classes I was able to learn a lot more than anticipated. For being an online class, this was very active class and she allows us to engage within the community by doing civic project assignments. I would recommend any student to take this course with her next semester." |
| Fall 2014 | "Enjoyed this class; the civics projects were fun." |

Table 8

*Student Responses to Open-Ended Questions on University End-of-Course Evaluations (2014-2018), Course Comment*

| Semester | Sample Student Feedback |
|---|---|
| Summer 2018 | "Excellent course! Definitely keep the civics project for future courses." |
| Summer 2017 | "Very interesting course, enjoyed writing papers for the Civics Project the most." |
| Summer 2017 | "The civics projects proved to be a very fun way of applying the material." |
| Summer 2017 | "This was one of the best classes I ever took. It was extremely helpful and gave me the confidence to meet with Congressmen." |
| Summer 2015 | "Civics assignments were a valuable component." |
| Summer 2015 | "Was not an ordinary online course. I was apprehensive about the civics project but they helped me learn more about the community and the class." |
| Summer 2015 | "This course helped me engage my community and it has helped me learn more about the American Government." |
| Summer 2015 | "Class was great, civics project made the online class very engaging." |
| Fall 2014 | "Excellent class that gets students out of the classroom and into the community. The amount of work is just right and the civic engagement assignments are great ways to get involved locally and explore interests you might not know you had!" |
| Fall 2014 | "This was a great course overall. I learned a lot about the American Government and learned a lot from the Civics Projects. The course is very organized and planned out, which I really liked." |

## Discussion

### Implementation of the Civics Project in the Online Setting: Observations

Throughout this article, I have discussed the lessons learned from adapting the civics project to the online format; however, I would like to share more about

the unintended consequences of incorporating the civics project in the online classroom. One side benefit of the civics projects was that they often gave me the opportunity to meet students in my online class in person (e.g., at campus events like mayoral/gubernatorial/presidential debate watch parties or at candidate forums that I was moderating). I would send a message to students through Canvas with ideas for events and activities that would "count" as civics projects (and where I would be in attendance). Students who were interested in meeting me in person had ample opportunities, and I welcomed those opportunities.

Another unanticipated outcome of the civics projects was the "ripple effect." Students tended to bring a spouse, friend, or parent with them to their civics projects. In the reflection papers and discussion board posts, students revealed that those additional participants not enrolled in the class also became engaged as a result of the civics assignments. For example, one student who brought a parent to a homeowner's association meeting for the first time reported that her mother ultimately became an officer of the organization. Perhaps since the students were not sitting next to each other in a physical classroom, they relied instead on friends and family to accompany them on civics projects. Of course, my primary intended "audience" is the students enrolled in my classes, but it was heartening to learn that so many others—friends, family, and roommates—had become civically engaged as well.

An additional unintended benefit was the impact that designing the online course had on my face-to-face courses. As it turned out, the lessons learned during the professional development trainings and the online course development process were helpful to me in improving my face-to-face courses. Indeed, I made changes to my course syllabi and other course materials using the standards, rubrics, pedagogies for the online course. For example, I revised several of the student learning outcomes included in my "U.S. Constitutional Law" and my "Introduction to Law and Politics" course syllabi after participating in a workshop devoted to Bloom's taxonomy (a workshop I attended only because it was a part of the online course development training).[11]

## Implementation of the Civics Project in the Online Setting: Recommendations

The lessons learned from incorporating the civics project into my online American National Government course over the last several years could be applied to courses in any discipline. For example, students will need very specific guidance. This is always the case with a service-learning assignment, but it is especially important when students are not physically present to ask questions before or after class—and when they are geographically dispersed (and working

[11] https://www.usf.edu/atle/teaching/blooms-taxonomy.aspx

on projects in areas where the instructor may not have as many connections). It is also necessary to develop tools for managing and tracking students completing the assignments (partly because students are likely to be geographically dispersed and partly due to the larger enrollments in online courses). Also, ultimately, one must be more flexible due to the constraints and challenges inherent in managing an experiential learning project like this in an online course.

**Conclusions: Online Learning and Political Engagement**

While I was initially skeptical of the online format, I found that, after developing and evaluating the course, students left with a better understanding of American government and, as a result of the hands-on civics projects, with greater confidence that they could make a difference in the community. During the course of the semester, my students reported that they became better informed about political issues and that this increased knowledge (and the self-confidence that followed) made them feel more comfortable voting. Students also reported that they were encouraged "to get off the sidelines and to get involved."

Weber State University developed a rubric for assessing civic engagement within the dimensions of civic knowledge, civic skills, civic values, and civic motivation (Murray, 2013). Table 9 demonstrates how the civics project aligns with these four dimensions and helps students to become more effective citizens.

Table 9

*Weber State University Civic Engagement Rubric Applied to the American National Government Civics Project*

| **Rubric Dimension** | **Definition** | **Evidence** |
|---|---|---|
| Civic Knowledge | "involves the process of applying discipline specific knowledge to civic engagement" | • Lectures and reading material increase students' knowledge of American government and politics; assessed in quizzes and exams<br>• Hands-on learning in civics projects helps students apply knowledge in their daily lives |
| Civic Skills | "involves the demonstration of engaging in a process to solve and | • Hands-on projects develop skills as students volunteer for |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | increase the awareness of some civic problem" | campaigns and community organizations |
| Civic Values | "involves having a disposition to the world that understands the need for civic engagement" | • Students report greater appreciation for diversity |
| Civic Motivation | "involves continued commitment to engaged citizenship" | • Students report motivation to continue to be engaged citizens |

The civics project, in conjunction with the content delivered in the American National Government course, increases students' civic knowledge. The civics projects, beginning with the civics project worksheet, for which students create their own civic engagement reference guide, help the students to develop the skills they need to become effective citizens. The survey data demonstrated that the students leave the course with a greater sense of political efficacy, greater understanding of community needs, and a greater appreciation for diversity. An overwhelming number of students (more than 80%) indicated that they planned to stay involved after the semester was over—strong evidence of civic motivation.

The findings in this study are particularly exciting given the demographics of the course. My classes are filled with entry-level students, primarily non-political science majors who often take the course only because it is required, not because they have an interest in learning more about American government and certainly not because they are eager to complete a series of civics projects. Improving students' civic literacy in a required general education course and developing a sense of political efficacy among freshmen, may be the best way to improve civic health. As the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012) found, "only one third of college students strongly agreed that their college education resulted in increased civic capacity" (p. 6). Incorporating assignments such as this civics project into required general education courses should improve this disappointing statistic.

One avenue for future research would be to conduct a longitudinal study analyzing the impact of the civics project over time. My students professed that they would continue to be curious, to follow current events, to reach out and do something if they saw an issue that should be addressed. I hope that the students are more likely to stay informed, more likely to vote, and more likely to volunteer. Certainly, after completing the civics projects, the students will have

the skills needed and the basic knowledge of how government works, and will know why and how to stay involved in the political process.

## References

American Association of State Colleges and Universities. Political Engagement Project (PEP). Retreived from http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/PEP/

Annenberg Public Policy Center. (2016). Americans' knowledge of the branches of government is declining. Retrieved from http://cdn.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Civic_knowledge_survey_Sept_2016.pdf

Barber, B. (1984). *Strong democracy: Participatory politics for a new age.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. (2018). Young people dramatically increase their turnout to 31%, shape midterm elections. Retrieved from https://civicyouth.org/young-people-dramatically-increase-their-turnout-31-percent-shape-2018-midterm-elections/

Clawson, R., Deen R., & Oxley, Z. (2002). Online discussions across three universities: Student participation and pedagogy. *PSOnline*, *35*(4), 713-718.

Colby, A., Beaumont, E., Erlich, T., & Corngold, J. (2007). *Educating for democracy: Preparing undergraduates for responsible political engagement.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Guthrie, K., & McCracken, H. (2014). Reflection: The importance of making meaning in e-service-learning courses. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, *26*(3), 238-252.

Hoover, K., Casile, M., & Hanke. R. (2008). How discussion boards drive course concept mastery in service e-learning. In A. Dailey-Hebert, S. Donnelli, & L. DiPadova (Eds.), *Service-eLearning: Educating for citizenship* (pp. 58-73). Charlotte, NC: IAP.

Knuckey, J., & Collie, T. (2011). *2011 Florida civic health index: The next generation.* Retrieved from http://floridacivichealth.org/files/next-generation.pdf

McLauchlan, J. (2013). Learning citizenship by doing: Integrating campaign internships into political science coursework. In A. McCartney, E. Bennion, & D. Simpson (Eds.), *Teaching civic engagement: From student to active citizen* (pp. 279-296). Washington, DC: American Political Science Association. Retrieved from http://web.apsanet.org/teachingcivicengagement/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2016/10/TeachingCivicEngagementBW.pdf

Murray, L. (2013). *Effectively using Facebook to foster civic engagement*. Paper presented at the 2013 American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference.

National Public Radio. (2018, June 16). Parkland students launch tour to register young voters and get them out in November. *Weekend Edition Saturday*. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/2018/06/16/620486174/parkland-survivors-launch-tour-to-register-young-voters-and-get-them-out-in-nove

National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. (2012) *A crucible moment: College learning and democracy's future*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Purcell, J. (2017). Community-engaged pedagogy in the virtual classroom: Integrating eservice-learning into online leadership education. *Journal of Leadership Studies, 11*(1), 65-70.

Shaw, M. (2017, May 25). Civic illiteracy in America. *Harvard Political Review*. Retrieved from http://harvardpolitics.com/culture/civic-illiteracy-in-america/

Waldner, L., McGorry, S., & Widener, M. (2012). E-service-learning: The evolution of service-learning to engage a growing online student population. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *16*(2), 123-150.

**Additional Resources**

Becnel, K., & Moeller, R. (2017). Community-embedded learning experiences: Putting the pedagogy of service-learning to work in online courses. *Open Learning, 32*(1), 56-65.

Bennion, E., & Laughlin, X. (2018). Best practices in civic education: Lessons from the *Journal of Political Science Education. Journal of Political Science Education, 14*(3), 287-330.

Fleck, B., Hussey, H., & Rutledge-Ellison, L. (2017). Linking class and community: an investigation of service learning. *Teaching of Psychology*, *44*(3), 1-8.

Forestiere, C. (2015). Promoting civic agency through civic-engagement activities: A guide for instructors new to civic-engagement pedagogy. *Journal of Political Science Education, 11*, 455-471.

Galston, W. (2007). Civic knowledge, civic education, and civic engagement: a summary of recent research. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *30*, 623-642.

Glazier, R. (2016). Building rapport to improve retention and success in online classes. *Journal of Political Science Education, 12*(4), 437-456.

Graham, B., & Hand, C. (2017). *America, the owner's manual: You* can *fight city hall—and* win (new edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.

Guthrie, K., & McCracken, H. (2010). Teaching and learning social justice through online service-learning courses. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 11*(3), 78-94.

Hamann, K., Pollock, P., Smith, G., & Wilson, B. (2016). Online teaching and assessment. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *49*(1), 107-110.

Jackman, J. (2012). *When virtuality and reality meet: Online courses, experiential learning, and political engagement*. Paper presented at the 2012 American Political Science Association Conference on Teaching and Learning.

Schweiger, D. (2015, September). Using a balance scorecard approach to evaluate the value of service learning projects in online courses. *Information Systems Education Journal*, *15*(5), 4-11.

Strait, J. (2008). Constructing experiential learning for online courses: Two models of service e-learning. In A. Dailey-Hebert, S. Donnelli, & L. DiPadova (Eds.), *Service-eLearning: Educating for citizenship* (pp. 45-58). Charlotte, NC: IAP.

Appendix A: Civics Project Worksheet

**American National Government**
POS 2041
**Professor Judithanne Scourfield McLauchlan**

## CIVICS PROJECT WORKSHEET

**Name**:
_____

**U-Number**:
_____

I live in **(town):** _____ (**county**): _____

(1) **neighborhood/condo/homeowner's association** (if applicable): contact information?

And when does the neighborhood/condo/homeowner's association hold regular meetings?

(2) I am **registered to vote** (Yes/No)

My **Supervisor of Elections** website is:

(3) My **town/municipal government** website:

The leadership of my town is (include **Mayor, City Council** names), if applicable:

**Mayor:**

**City Council/City Commission**:

Using the local government website, when/where does your town hold meetings (City Council/City Commission)? What is the process for public comment? What is the contact information for your municipal officials?
When are my municipal officials next up for election?

(4) My **County Commission** website:

Members of the County Commission:

Using the County Commission website, when/where does your County Commission hold meetings? What is the process for public comment?

In what Commission district do I reside? When are my Commissioners next up for election?

(5) My county **School Board** website:

Members of my School Board:

Using the School Board website, when/where does your School Board meet? What is the process for public comment?

In what School Board District do I reside? When do I next vote on School Board positions?

(6) My **State Representative** is

My State Representative's website is

My State Representative's contact information is (include Tallahassee and District Office)

My State Representative is holding a town meeting or office hours (day/time/location):

(7) My **State Senator** is

My State Senator's website is

My State Senator's contact information is (include Tallahassee and District Office)

My State Senator is holding town meetings or office hours (date/time/location):

When is my State Senator up for re-election?

(8) My **Member of Congress** is

My Member of Congress' website

My Member of Congress' contact information (include Washington, DC and District Office)

My Member of Congress is holding town meetings or office hours (Date/time/location):

(9) My **U.S. Senators** are

(1) Senator _____ website is

And his/her contact information is (Washington, DC and nearest office)

(2) Senator _____ website is

And his/her contact information is (Washington, DC and nearest office)

When are my US Senators up for re-election?

(10) The **Governor** is

The Governor's website is

The Governor's Contact information is

The **Lieutenant Governor** is

The Lieutenant Governor's website is

The Lieutenant Governor's contact information is

(11) For courtroom observations, in what Florida Judicial Circuit do you reside
http://www.flcourts.org/florida-courts/trial-courts-circuit.stml

My **Judicial Circuit** website is

When/where can I watch trial court proceedings?

In what Florida Judicial District Court of Appeal do you reside
http://www.flcourts.org/florida-courts/district-court-appeal.stml

My **Judicial District Court of Appeal** website is

When/where can I watch appellate court proceedings?

The **Florida Supreme Court** website is

This is how I can watch Florida Supreme Court Oral Arguments online:

The **U.S. Supreme Court** website is:

This is how I can listen to US Supreme Court Oral Arguments online:

The **U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida** website:
https://www.flmd.uscourts.gov/

When/where can I watch federal civil and federal criminal trials in Tampa?

(12) The contact information (office hours, address, phone, website) for the **local Democratic Party** is

**Local Democratic Party (Democratic Executive Committee, DEC) Meetings** are held (when/where):

Contact information for the Young Democrats and/or other Democratic Clubs in my county:
The contact information (office hours, address, phone, website) for the **local Republican Party** is

**Local Republican Party (Republican Executive Committee, REC) Meetings** are held (when/where)

Contact information for the Young Republicans and/or other Republican clubs in my county:

(13) **Upcoming elections** for my town/county/district/state:

(14) **Candidates and campaign websites (for candidates you may be interested in meeting, attending a campaign event, volunteering for the campaign):**
(In 2018 these may include candidates for US Senate, Governor, Members of Congress, Florida House of Representatives, Florida Senators, Florida Attorney General, Florida Chief Financial Officer, Florida Commissioner of Agriculture, judicial races, County Commission, School Board)

(Note: You can learn more about how to reach the candidates when you visit the Democratic and Republican Party HQs. Also, your Supervisor of Elections website will have the listing of the candidates who will be on your ballot.)

(15) Is there a community agency for which you are interested in volunteering? For more about local community agencies, attend the **USFSP Center for Civic Engagement's Civic Engagement Fair** and/or consult the **USFSP CCE's Community Partner and Service Learning Placement Directory**.

**(16) Issues that are of interest to me. Problems that I would like for my elected officials to address include the following:**

**(17) Some Ideas for what I would like to do for my Civics Projects. (And days/times that I am available to participate in a Civics Project activity – my plans for how to fit this assignment in my schedule):**

## Author

**Dr. Judithanne Scourfield McLauchlan** is an Associate Professor of Political Science and the Founding Director of the Center for Civic Engagement at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg.

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Infusing Creative Energy to Encourage Civic Values and Action in Project-Based Learning and Community-Based Research

Adrienne M. Hooker and David M. Wang
James Madison University

Carol-lynn Swol
Association of American Colleges and Universities

## Author Note

Adrienne M. Hooker, School of Media Arts and Design, James Madison University; David M. Wang, School of Media Arts and Design, James Madison University; Carol-lynn Swol, Civic Learning and Democracy Initiatives, Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Adrienne M. Hooker, Assistant Professor, School of Media Arts and Design, James Madison University, MSC 2104, 54 Bluestone Drive, Harrisonburg, VA 22807. E-mail: hookeram@jmu.edu

**Abstract**

Contemporary methodologies of art and design pedagogy offer ways to address pressing societal issues and to improve civic knowledge through purposeful inquiry and action. The creative energy inherent to art and design allows faculty to open dialogues, foster ambiguity, and deepen content for undergraduate students through a number of approaches—from project-based learning in foundation courses to community-based research in capstone experiences. This article details a creativity model comprising actionable methods for bringing civic consciousness into the classroom by aligning best practices from art and design pedagogy with the concepts and nomenclature of civic learning and democratic engagement to critically address broader issues. By examining selected case studies, the authors demonstrate that creative energy is a necessary component to applying civic skills and enabling collective action throughout a student's undergraduate education. Educational experiences that allow students to follow their curiosity and explore ambiguity in an effort to address wicked problems in their coursework, such as food insecurity, can have lifelong value.

*Keywords:* civic inquiry, values and collective action, iterative dialogue, art and design education, integrative learning, food insecurity

The pedagogy of art and design compels students to engage with society. For artists and designers, expertise is rooted in the creative process and studio practice, which inherently foster a civic dimension for making choices about message, materials, and craftsmanship. The act of creation provides a way to reflect on and express compelling ideas with greater social impact, ultimately encouraging artists and designers to share ideas beyond themselves.

Historically, the study of art and design includes not only a rich cultural heritage tied to the art of production, but also activities that have inspired countercultural movements and socioeconomic revolution. Artists and designers have been central to instigating social change throughout history, ranging from the political propaganda of the Russian Revolution (Heller, 2017) and World War II (Little, 2016) to current artists reflecting upon and challenging established norms of location, religion, and race. Within cultures, artists and designers have visually addressed wicked problems to elevate issues for the world to ponder through unexpected perspectives. According to Kolko (2012),

> a wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that is difficult or impossible to solve for as many as four reasons: incomplete or contradictory knowledge, the number of people and opinions involved, the large economic burden, and the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems.

Recent examples related to gender roles have been brought to the forefront in works by the Guerrilla Girls (see https://www.guerrillagirls.com) and Barbara Kruger (Forster, 2018), while the works of Kara Walker (see http://www.karawalkerstudio.com) and Titus Kaphar (National Portrait Gallery, n.d.) have addressed racism. Indeed, there is much to be gained by viewers when artists visually explore societal issues; for instance, Banksy's subversive epigrams provoke the viewing public to discuss, debate, and even censor uncomfortable visuals (see http://www.banksy.co.uk). Likewise, higher education faculty—not only in art and design programs, but across multiple disciplines—can advance civic knowledge and collective action when they consider the value of creative energy in addressing wicked problems within the classroom.

For undergraduate students with a personal motivation to explore topics around community awareness and to respond to wicked problems, it is necessary to build a shared vocabulary that connects creative thinking with initiatives in civic engagement. Art and design faculty regularly require students to craft visual messages, master technical skills, and participate in dialogues in an effort to explore ideas and share feedback necessary to refining their work (Costantino, 2015). However, not all faculty in art and design encourage students to investigate the motivations behind aesthetics or to discuss social issues; rather, many tend to focus solely on visual composition. The world, and today's students, demand

more than technical skills for education. Thus, faculty should critically address broader issues by including a more diverse range of core values within individual competencies. Creative energy is a necessary component to applying civic skills and encouraging collective action throughout students' education in undergraduate degree programs.

In this article, we highlight correlations between studio/design course activities and practices that foster the development of a civic lens in curricula. To help reveal connections between such practices and civic engagement, we classified the categories of *civic knowledge, skills, values* and *action items*—found within *A Crucible Moment* (National Task Force, 2012) and in the blog series for the "Emergent Theory of Change" (Hoffman, Domagal-Goldman, King, & Robinson, 2018)—into three creative-energy methods common to project-based art and design courses: content, dialogue, and ambiguity. Aligning social impact outcomes from art and design curricula with the established and emerging skills and values of civic learning illustrates pedagogical and conceptual connections for civically engaged faculty. These concepts, distilled into the creativity model discussed here, can guide faculty across disciplines.

Table 1 offers a visualization of how dialogue, one of the three creative-energy methods, correlates with specific civic-engagement terms. For example, when comparing the civic knowledge of diverse belief systems (from *A Crucible Moment*) to the Emergent Theory of Change's ideas of dignity and humanity, we found that many of these values and actions are regularly practiced in art and design courses in which faculty encourage students to provide feedback on work from the maker's perspective rather than their own. Further investigation into the civic knowledge and skills outlined in *A Crucible Moment* and the civic values and collective actions of both *A Crucible Moment* and the Emergent Theory of Change revealed that these concepts align with the creative energy method of iterative dialogue.

Table 1

*Comparison of Iterative Dialogue within Art and Design Courses to Theories in* A Crucible Moment *and Emergent Theory of Change*

| **Creative Energy Methods** | **Civic Knowledge** | **Civic Skills** | **Values and Collective Action** | | **Art and Design Project-Based Course** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **A Crucible Moment** | | **A Crucible Moment** | **Emergent Theory of Change** | |
| **Iterative Dialogue** | Exposure to multiple belief systems and to alternative views about the relation between beliefs and government | | Respect for freedom and human dignity | **Dignity**—respect for the intrinsic moral equality of all persons | In a project-based studio course students are encouraged to provide feedback on the work created by classmates from the maker's perspective, rather than what one would do differently if they were the designers or makers. Assisting a colleague to make their project better encourages honoring the dignity of the other person and their concepts—regardless of message agreement. |
| | | Gathering and evaluating multiple sources of evidence | Empathy and Equality | **Humanity**—embracing environments and interactions that are generative and organic; rejecting objectification, and the marginalization of people based on aspects of their identities | |
| | | Seeking, engaging, and being informed by multiple perspectives | Ethical Integrity | **Decency**—acting with humility and graciousness; rejecting domination for its own sake | During formal critique students are encouraged to share their feedback with decency and respect. |
| | | Deliberation and bridge building across differences | Compromise, civility, and mutual respect | **Honesty**—frankness with civility; congruence between stated values and actions; avoidance of deceit, evasions, and manipulative conduct | Honest and open sharing is a near constant practice in the project-based course. Students are encouraged to be honest and kind (civil) during open studio and lab hours when students are working without faculty supervision. |
| | | Collaborative decision | Moral Discernment | **Participation**—action with other people to | Students in an art and design project-based course learn to |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | making | and behavior | develop and achieve shared visions of the common good | address a concept or problem within the assigned project parameters. Sometimes the assignment is more directive and sometimes less so. Students working in service learning or community engaged projects have the added opportunity to work on resolving problems with a partner. |
| | | Ability to communicate in multiple languages as well as formats | Public problem solving with<br>diverse partners | **Resourcefulness**—capacity to improvise, seek and gain knowledge, solve problems, and develop productive public relationships and partnerships | |

Iterative dialogue can have many meanings. The focus of this creative-energy method is to establish a sustaining role—that is, a role that is supportive and constructive—to question and provide feedback about a proposed solution. Students in art and design courses are taught to work actively with each other to develop each individual's solution to a concept. Students learn expectations for appropriate classroom behavior from their faculty, both through course syllabus guidelines and from the manner in which the professor facilitates discussions, which ideally model the civic values highlighted in *A Crucible Moment* and the Emergent Theory of Change. These values are intrinsic to the constructive critical analysis used regularly within iterative dialogue. Though these civic values and actions already exist within art and design classrooms, this method of focusing creative energy could also be applied to non-art courses.

The correlation of similar theories helps harmonize the many related schools of thought among diverse academic communities. Civic learning and democratic engagement practitioners use the civic value-related terms mentioned previously, whereas art and design programs employ parallel concepts such as *social impact* and *design for good* (Cooper-Hewitt 2013). However, the differing rhetoric should not dissuade anyone from participating in civic practices of engagement with students in the classroom. Instead, the use of varied vocabulary should stimulate a more holistic approach to curricula for all faculty and students.

To further investigate how best practices in art and design curricula can help address society's wicked problems, Figure 1 illustrates how self-initiated content and iterative dialogue foster ambiguity. The model, which was introduced in a workshop at the 2018 Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement meeting and highlighted in the "Creativity-Infused Pedagogy to Foster a Civic Consciousness" feature in the fall 2018 *Bringing Theory to Practice Newsletter* (Swol, 2018), infuses creativity into project-based courses, allowing students to practice civic values and actions within the process itself.

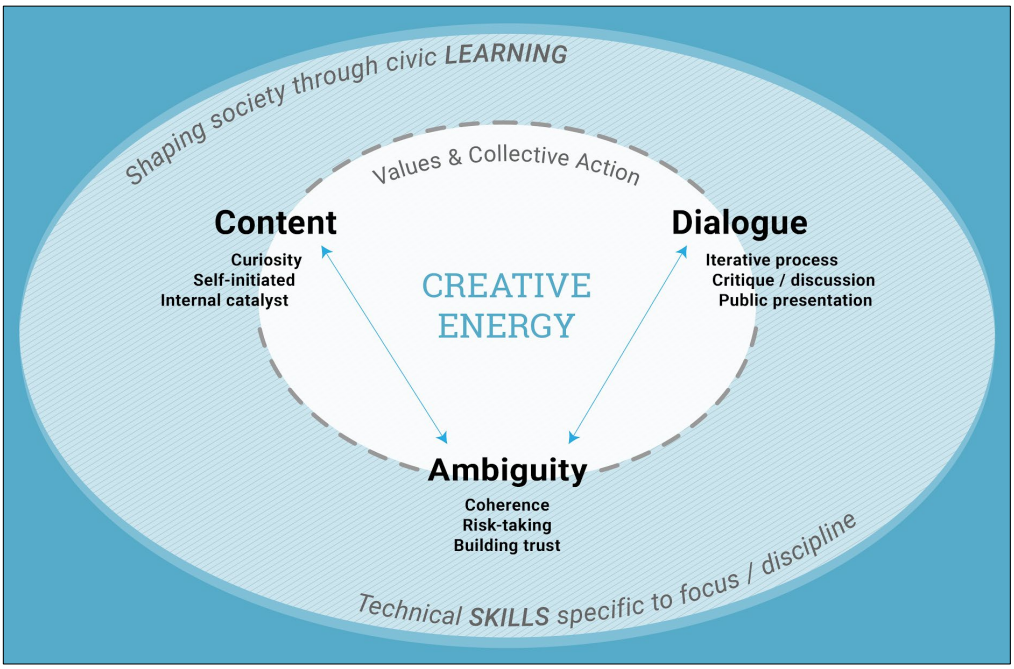



*Figure 1.* Methods for infusing creativity into project-based curricula.

This creativity model fosters civic learning and democratic engagement on two levels—within the classroom to encourage the next generation of democratic citizens and in collaboration with community partners to improve the quality of pluralistic society. The model is used in coordination with the disciplinary skills and knowledge necessary to meet course goals and fulfill assignments. When the creativity model is implemented through a scaffolded approach, foundation-level students can test concepts and apply skills within the safety of a training ground, then gradually expand their abilities as they complete higher-level courses. Moreover, after graduation, a civically motivated student can continue to practice the model using their increased expertise in projects to improve democracy and help solve the world's wicked problems.

A creativity-infused project built on the three pillars of content, dialogue, and ambiguity begins with the selection of content. The method of including self-initiated projects allows students to discover topics through their natural curiosity and to nurture and drive their critical thinking and inventive problem solving. When given even a small amount of freedom of choice within the context of a course, students will have increased buy-in and will ultimately be open to taking bigger risks and pushing conceptual ideas further. Research has shown the importance of self-determination for enhancing learning and improving life skills. Students who are intrinsically motivated (i.e., choosing the content of the project)

sustain creativity and efforts in solving issues (American Psychological Association, 2004).

Beyond self-initiated content, the creativity model also promotes civic values through the process of iterative dialogue. As previously mentioned, each student is consistently engaged in dialogue with their classmates to understand how others interpret their project and to understand other students' projects from the maker's perspective. This interaction, within peer-to-peer and larger groups, emphasizes and brings into practice empathy, civility, and dignity. Repeated discussions during the development of a project are essential to improving the work and to building the courage to present it publicly.

Both creative thinking and constructive dialogue facilitate a space for ambiguity within a project-based course (Constantino, 2015)—the final pillar of the creativity model which allows civic values to blossom. All participants, students and faculty alike, must grapple with issues that develop spontaneously. If handled with decency and honesty, this ambiguity can build a stronger sense of trust within the group and provide latitude in taking risks. It is the responsibility of faculty to bring coherence to the dynamic in order for students to be comfortable contributing to the class and to each other's projects.

## Case Studies

The following case studies represent a programmatic progression from a foundation-level course to an interdisciplinary capstone experience, illustrating how undergraduate students can use dialogue and build trust to help grapple with ambiguity in a media-arts and design-degree program.

The ideas of self-selection, discussion, and ambiguity are familiar to art and design programs as well as graduate studies; however, we propose that this creativity model should be incorporated within undergraduate curricula spanning the vast array of disciplines. Students in all majors should be encouraged to participate in civic inquiry and to practice civic values within as many courses as possible. When students are asked to use the creativity model in a variety of subjects, they have the opportunity to practice solving wicked problems in many contexts. This enhances their ability to think critically through larger, more complex issues by practicing inquiry-based learning.

Only with this pedagogical coherence from foundation to capstone will students gain the knowledge, capacity, and foresight to tackle problems outside the classroom. Each faculty member can evaluate how to incorporate small aspects of the creativity model within their individual course projects and discuss with colleagues within their discipline how to bring civic inquiry and values to their major curriculum, from foundation to capstone.

## Case Study 1: Foundation Level

Within James Madison University's (JMU's) School of Media Arts and Design (SMAD), faculty have begun incorporating the creativity model within individual courses. Colleagues have also begun conversations about how to continue civic inquiry and values across curricula so students develop a sense of social responsibility within their narrative media work. One such project adhering to the creativity model is used in the first author's foundation-level visual communication course, "SMAD 201: Foundations in Visual Communication." Once students are accepted into the media arts and design major, usually in their sophomore year, SMAD 201 sets the stage for building their civic capacity throughout the major. Each semester, the 40 to 80 students enrolled in this required entry-level course not only address topics of social importance in their own work at their level of expertise, but they also critique and revise major projects with their peers through iterative dialogue. Because this course represents the beginning of students' visual communication education, their knowledge/content and technical skill levels will likely increase across successive assignments within the course and further develop within the major. Additionally, the process of constant peer-to-peer discussion around the developing projects creates an environment of trust and exploration, building a space that reinforces feelings of belonging and promotes autonomy and self-expression.

At the end of the 15-week course, the culminating project demonstrates their newly acquired technical skills and requires them to consider how these competencies might assist a local nonprofit in its mission. Students must self-select an organization to research and then develop a meaningful call-to-action campaign. The project parameters require that concepts related to certain deliverables be linked using consistent messages and visuals; however, each student must decide what societal issue will be addressed through their campaign.

Each student is asked to frame their issue by selecting and researching a community agency as a "client"; however, they are not required to work with the nonprofit directly. This allows conceptual exploration of a topic without the impediment of client personal preferences or budgetary constraints. At the foundation level, students in general are not fully prepared to work with community partners due to their lack of confidence in technical skills and/or communication. The project is therefore a prime opportunity for students to self-determine their content, practice iterative dialogue skills, and learn to embrace working with ambiguity without fully executing the final product—essentially working within a training ground to nurture student confidence. It is the first step in a scaffolded approach to the creativity model within the context of civically engaged projects. Students can engage and grapple with ideas while thinking critically about solutions to wicked problems within the safety of the creativity-

infused classroom. If scaffolded properly, this model can prepare students who are advancing to intermediate and capstone courses to work confidently with community partners and to share concepts and products for real-world implementation.

One such student who engaged in this foundation-level call-to-action campaign chose food insecurity as her topic and selected the newly formed student organization Campus Kitchen as the nonprofit to research and on which to base her concepts. She developed an awareness campaign around fighting hunger on campus and within the local community by reducing the amount of food waste created. Specifically, through iterative dialogue with classmates, the student developed and refined a final call-to-action campaign targeting college students to engage in fighting food waste on campus. She created concepts for a poster designed to recruit members to join the organization and also developed concepts for a bus shelter and fundraising campaign that offered gifts of phone wallets, tote bags, or t-shirts at certain donation levels (see Figure 2).

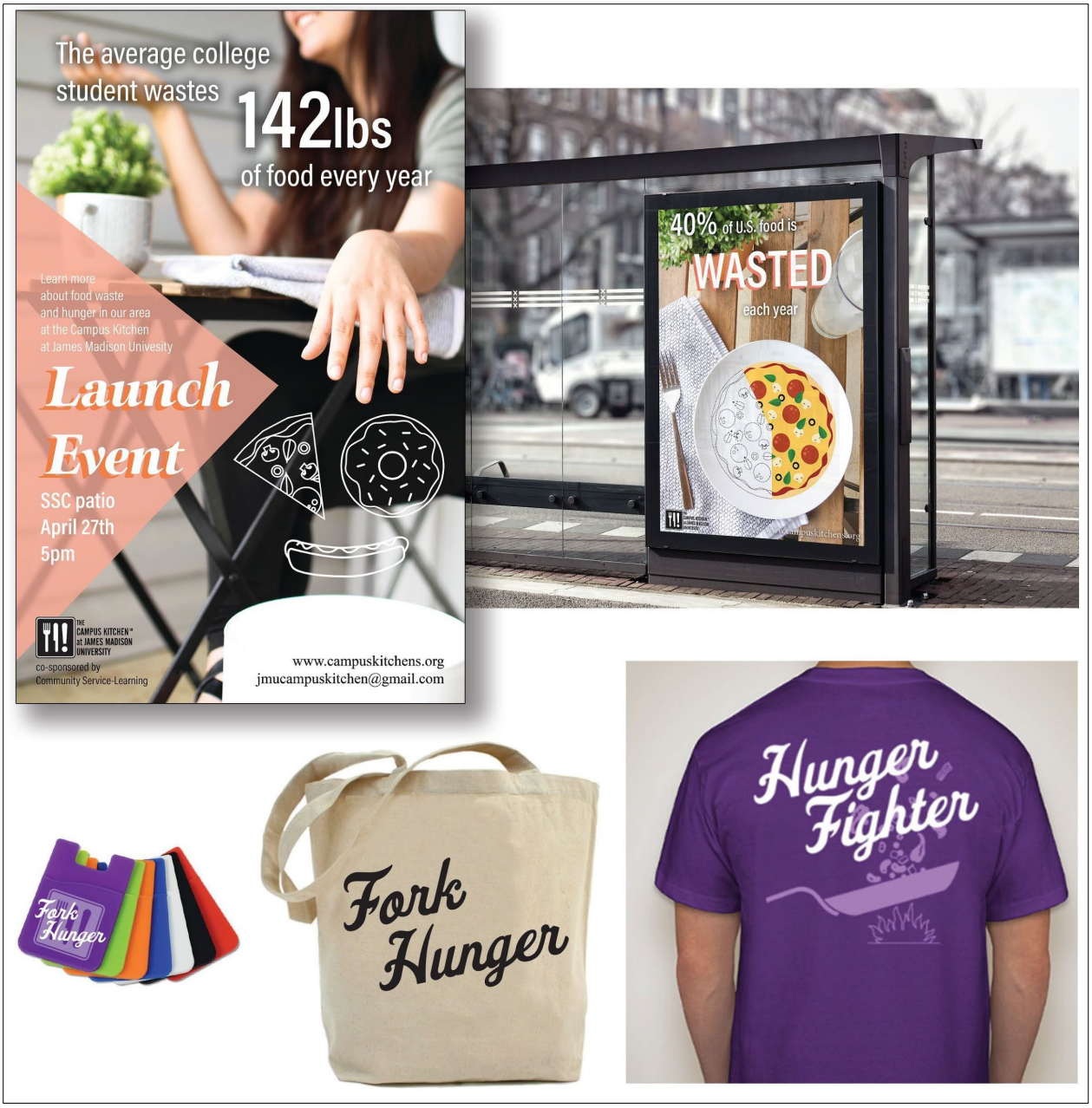



*Figure 2.* SMAD 201: Student call-to-action campaign for Campus Kitchen. Reprinted with permission.

Even though this civically motivated student did not work directly with the organization during her foundation coursework, she was able to use her

experience from the class and develop her technical skills while continuing to combat food insecurity. The opportunity to self-determine content within the safety of a foundation course allows students to try out ideas in a training ground and further develop their projects through the creativity model. Over the course of the next semester, this student took a leadership role within Campus Kitchen and, at the time of this writing, continually takes on projects within her upper-level coursework and in extracurriculars to address food insecurity.

**Case Study 2: Capstone Experience**

Another example of the implementation of the creativity model is represented in the second author's community-based research. This included an interdisciplinary project for capstone students in interactive design (SMAD 408) and computer information systems (CIS 484) to apply their skills and better understand the potential role of design in society. As many students typically prepare for opportunities outside of academia, addressing a wicked problem in a culminating project allows students to apply their civic knowledge to issues within a larger community and to participate in collective action that values faculty research and public education.

Through a campus–community partnership, teams of students developed an innovative approach to solving the critical problem of food insecurity and achieving a vision of a hunger-free and healthy America. This collaborative effort between the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and JMU aims to improve the food bank's ability to provide nourishing food and make informed purchasing decisions. Individual collaborators included faculty, researchers, and community partners with expertise within a variety of professional disciplines, including dietetics, health sciences, media art and design, and computer information systems. Three colleges within JMU combined efforts to offer an integrative learning opportunity for students in two undergraduate degree programs to build a technology around an evidence-based food scoring system. Students created an informational system that allows people to quickly search and identify healthier food options with visual stop-light cues. "Nourish," the current prototype, is both an analytical and creative approach to solving the wicked problem of food insecurity (see http://nourish.us.org). The system is a web-based interface centered on a user experience that is streamlined, data-driven, and easy-to-use, and aims to educate the public and inform future decisions about food purchases. The student work included the creation of a promotional video to help introduce the product, showcase its primary features, and highlight the benefits to the community (see Figure 3).

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u8Z4ws8toekt9D3-YlBw9yUoSpfGevjF/view?usp=sharing]

*Figure 3.* Promotional video for Nourish. Reprinted with permission.

To encourage outreach and inspire curiosity, students toured the facilities of a local food bank and participated in a kickoff meeting, which allowed the stakeholders to present the project's objectives and establish a dialogue between community partners and students. Through a series of formal checkpoints, work was competitively selected by the food bank for another iteration based on the quality of each team's research, insights from expert consultants, and continued dialogues. Each iteration added new perspectives, often including differing opinions, thereby fostering ambiguity within the creativity model. As part of the project's pedagogy, alumni offered mentorship and outside expertise to encourage risk taking, build trust, and guide discussions toward self-initiated improvements (see Figure 4).

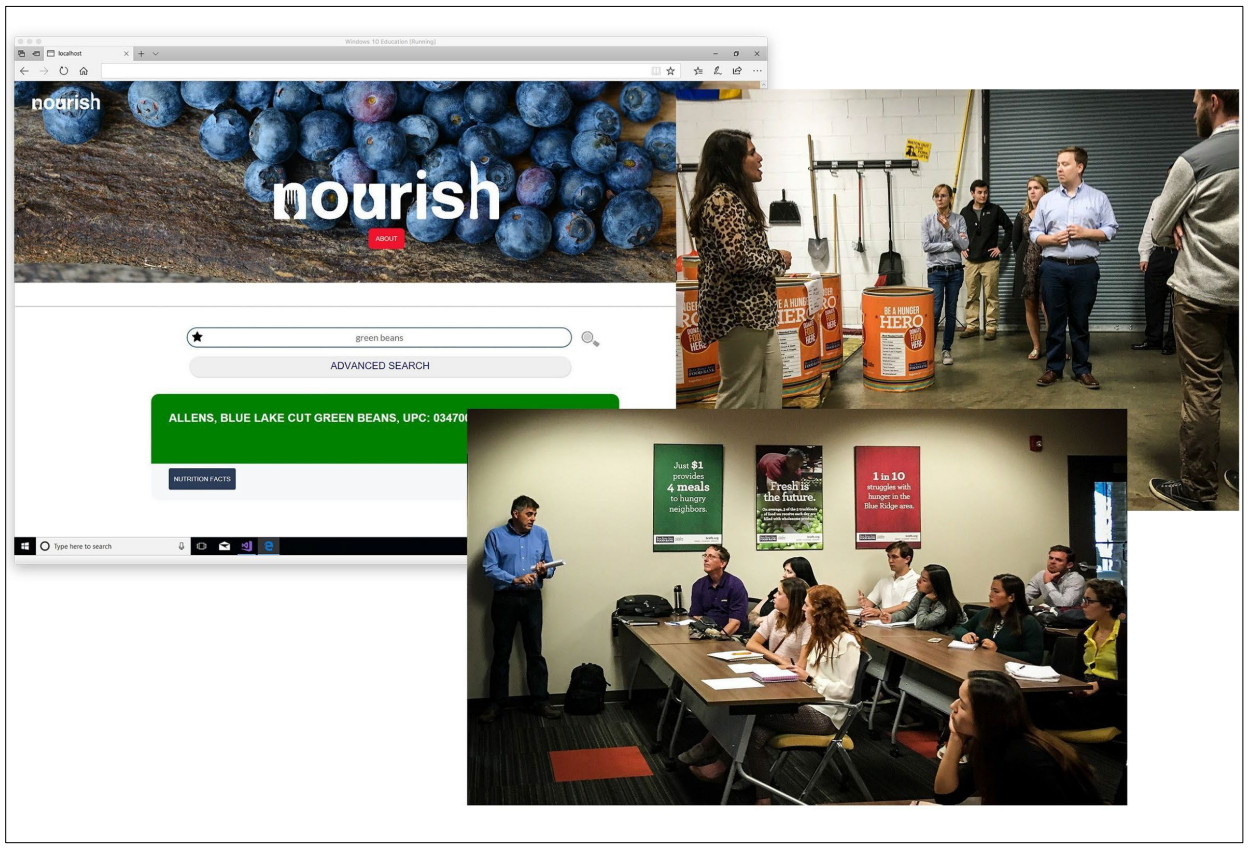


*Figure 4.* SMAD 408: Collaborative capstone project for Blue Ridge Area Food Bank. Reprinted with permission.

Students enrolled in SMAD 408 culminate their experience with formal presentations to a live public audience, which includes community partners, faculty, peer groups, alumni, industry leaders, and rising capstone students. As a demonstration of their civic knowledge, in addition to serving as a call for collective action, this inspiring work helps each generation of students improve their technical skills and, more importantly, encourage further pursuit of civically minded projects. The Nourish system was presented by the collaborative research team to key stakeholders of Feeding America, the largest hunger-relief organization in the United States, as part of ongoing efforts to increase access to nutritious foods through the use of technology. Faculty, students, and alumni maintain an ongoing relationship as partners in valuable community-based research and regularly consult with the food bank to guide design improvements for the system.

## Concluding Thoughts

As faculty explore opportunities to engage with new collaborators to enhance civic knowledge and collective action across all majors, it is important to consider how existing frameworks can connect creative activities responsible for inspiring change. The examples from within the School of Media Arts and Design at James Madison University offer a model for fostering greater imagination and open-mindedness within undergraduate education while increasing the opportunity to engage audiences. The creativity model, when used in a scaffolded approach—both within and across disciplines—can give students the confidence and motivation to use the knowledge and skills they have acquired and at the same time reinforce civic values and, more importantly, civic action. The processes and projects utilizing the creativity model encourage student curiosity, and the continued exercise of creative energy for personal and social responsibility can be leveraged for a lifetime.

## References

American Psychological Association. (2004). Increasing student success through instruction in self-determination. Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/research/action/success.aspx

Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum. (2013). *Design and social impact: A cross-sectoral agenda for design education, research and practice*. New York: Smithsonian Institution Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum. Retrieved from https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Design-and-Social-Impact.pdf

Costantino, T. (2015). Lessons from art and design education: The role of in-process critique in the creative inquiry process. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 9*(2), 118-121. doi:10.1037/aca0000013

Forster, I. (2018). Resisting reductivism & breaking the bubble: Barbara Kruger. Retrieved from https://art21.org/read/barbara-kruger-resisting-reductivism-breaking-the-bubble/

Heller, S. (2017). Five graphic design ideas from the Russian Revolution. Retrieved from https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/five-things-graphic-designers-owe-to-russia

Hoffman, D., Domagal-Goldman, J., King, S., & Robinson, V. (2018). Building a CLDE theory of change: 5 essays and an invitation. Retrieved from https://www.naspa.org/constituent-groups/posts/building-a-clde-theory-of-change-5-essays-and-an-invitation

Kolko, J. (2012). *Wicked problems: Problems worth solving—A handbook & a call to action*. Austin, TX: Austin Center for Design. Retrieved from https://www.wickedproblems.com/read.php

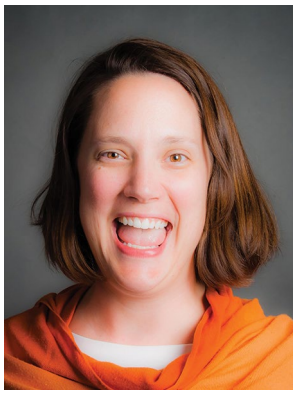
Little, B. (2016). Inside America's shocking WWII propaganda machine. *National Geographic.* Retrieved from https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/12/world-war-2-propaganda-history-books/

National Portrait Gallery. (n.d.). UnSeen: Our past in a new light, Ken Gonzales-Day and Titus Kaphar. Retrieved from http://npg.si.edu/exhibition/unseen-our-past-new-light-ken-gonzales-day-and-titus-kaphar

National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. (2012). *A crucible moment: College learning and democracy's future*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Swol, C. (2018). Creativity-infused pedagogy to foster a civic consciousness. *Bringing Theory to Practice Newsletter*, *Fall*(1), 3-5. Retrieved from https://www.bttop.org/newsletters/fall-2018-newsletter

## Authors



**Adrienne Hooker.** With more than ten years teaching in the classroom, Hooker focuses on design basics, the creative process, and visual communication in foundation courses while bringing real-world experience and contemporary theory to her students in upper-level courses. She has co-written and implemented large grants, directed a student-run design center, and presented papers and workshops at national and international educators conferences. Adrienne's work has been in various juried exhibitions and has won regional and national honors from American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) and University and Colleges Des0igners Association (UCDA). Professor Hooker holds an M.F.A. in graphic design from Indiana University Bloomington with a focus on book arts and letterpress. She also earned two bachelor of fine arts degrees from Drake University in Des Moines Iowa with an emphasis in graphic design and printmaking. Her creative work reflects the places she has been, and demonstrates a sense of home.

**Carol-lynn Swol** is a Program Associate working on Civic Learning and Democracy Initiatives at the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Prior to AAC&U her professional experience in higher education was as tenured art faculty at Kishwaukee Community College in Illinois, and after moving to Maryland taught art at Montgomery College. Her course project parameters focused heavily on student driven content where scaffolding within a semester fostered an ongoing trajectory designed to exhibit civic values and actions through the creative process. She received her B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Connecticut and her M.F.A in Metalsmithing and Jewelry Design from Indiana University Bloomington.

**David Wang.** With more than twenty years of industry experience, David Wang's work as an art director, photographer, and interactive developer translates to sensible design decisions. He teaches foundation courses in SMAD with an emphasis on creative process and interactive design. His experience in the classroom helps students engage in valuable research that focuses on design in society. He studied fine art and design with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design from Drake University and a Master of Fine Arts in Communication Design from Louisiana Tech University. His research interests include grant sponsored work for developing technology to help eliminate food insecurity.

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Engaging Through Design Thinking: Catalyzing Integration, Iteration, Innovation, and Implementation

Danielle Lake, Marc Lehman, and Linda Chamberlain
Grand Valley State University

**Author Note**

Danielle Lake, Liberal Studies Department and Accelerated Leadership Program, Grand Valley State University; Marc Lehman, Grand Valley State University; Linda Chamberlain, Frederick Meijer Honors College, Grand Valley State University.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Danielle Lake, Assistant Professor, Liberal Studies Department, Grand Valley State University, 318 Lake Ontario Hall, 1 Campus Drive, Allendale, MI 49401. Phone: (616) 331-8038. Email: lakeda@gvsu.edu

**Abstract**

In response to the challenges presented by traditional university and classroom structures, this article offers a set of hybrid pedagogical strategies for transdisciplinary, collaborative, community-based learning that responds to a "real-world need" in "real time." These strategies emerge from "Design Thinking to Meet Real World Needs," a project-based general education undergraduate course that harnesses best practices from research on design thinking, transdisciplinarity, and sustainability science. Seeking to inspire empathetic listening and creative confidence (Kelley & Kelley, 2013), the course begins in partnership and in place, engaging students in collaborative participatory action. Emphasizing integration, iteration, ideation, and implementation, the course encourages students to innovate in order to address a local wicked problem. This article is particularly relevant for educators and administrators hoping to catalyze innovative co-participatory engagement projects that move beyond traditional university structures and thus engage more directly with the needs of the community.

*Keywords*: community-based learning, innovation, feminist pragmatism, pedagogy, ideation

Mutually reciprocal community engagement efforts that yield sustained impact are persistently challenged by the dominant culture, structures, and processes of higher education, including narrow academic timelines, the framework under which abstract and theory-driven knowledge is constructed and valued, commitment to narrowly framed expertise, and a revolving student body. Given that complex social problems require collaborative and flexible problem-solving skills and sustained commitment across political, social, and institutional differences, the current structures and practices within higher education are particularly troubling (Brundiers, Wiek, & Kay, 2013; Fischer, 2000; Hiedanpää, Jokinen, & Jokinen, 2012; Wynne, 2007). In response to these challenges, this article highlights a set of high-impact,[1] hybrid pedagogical techniques that empower transdisciplinary collaboration around significant community issues, counteract and ameliorate such challenges, and foster change-agent skills. By *transdisciplinary work* we refer to "the cooperation of academics, stakeholders, and practitioners to solve complex societal or environmental problems of common interest" (Repko, Szostak, & Buchberger, 2014, p. 36). Transdisciplinary courses incorporate a wide array of knowledges in order to "frame questions, explore options, and develop and then apply solutions to challenges" (Ramaley, 2014, n.p.). Such courses inherently require collaboration—that is, an intentional effort to learn together across diverse positionalities and to honestly assess the risks and benefits of the work.

We begin by situating the philosophical and practical commitments behind "Design Thinking to Meet Real World Needs," a project-based general education undergraduate course harnessing best practices from research on design thinking, transdisciplinarity, and sustainability science. As an example of these commitments, this article is co-authored by the course designers and instructors as well as a graduate and teaching apprentice of the course. It is thus informed by our own practical and theoretical commitments to feminist pragmatist philosophy (Whipps & Lake, 2016), collaborative engagement, innovation, and design thinking. In practice, this means the class encourages students to engage with, in, and through diverse communities around real-world challenges. We then provide a brief overview of the course's essential dimensions, offering a set of hybrid pedagogical strategies designed to respond to the challenges noted earlier. These strategies have emerged from the praxis between—and integration of—community-based action project work (Miller & Archuleta, 2013), design thinking pedagogy (Fernaeus & Lundstrom, 2015; Miller, 2015; Morris & Warman, 2015), and a commitment to transdisciplinary, collaborative engagement (Post & Ward, 2016). We categorize our recommendations within four strategic dimensions: (1) integration (i.e., contextually connecting ideas and skills from diverse

[1] We define *high-impact practices* as those that foster learning environments in which critical and creative thinking and collaborative action are encouraged and are grounded in the real world (Finley & McNair, 2013; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013).

perspectives), (2) iteration (i.e., a cyclical process of revision), (3) ideation (i.e., collaborative brainstorming),[2] and (4) implementation (i.e., bringing ideas to fruition in and with community). We adhere to the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U's) definition of *integration* as efforts toward "connecting skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences … and utilizing diverse and even contradictory points of view" in context (Leskes, 2004). We conclude the article by recounting the challenges and benefits of this work from the students', the community partners', and the instructors' perspectives, providing a consolidated set of recommendations for interested, university-bound change agents. As a case study, this article is particularly relevant to educators and administrators hoping to uncover a means for catalyzing innovative co-participatory engagement projects that move beyond the limitations of traditional university structures and deeply engage with the needs of surrounding communities.[3]

## Course Overview

### Theoretical Framing

A commitment to engage with, in, and through collaboration in order to address collective, complex problems is the philosophic catalyst for the "Design Thinking to Meet Real World Needs" course.[4] Activist and educational philosopher Grace Lee Boggs advocated for a revolutionary paradigm shift toward creative, courageous, dialogic educational activism (Boggs & Kurashige, 2012). The goal of such a shift is for students to not only study, but also iteratively enact and reflect upon collaborative participatory engagement strategies designed to address a "real-world need" in "real time." Design thinking—as a collaborative problem-finding and action-oriented learning process—is the method by which engagement is enacted. While design thinking shares perspectives and practices with many other methodologies, within the context of higher education it is most often described as a process of experiential, project-specific learning designed to build skillsets, foster creativity, and initiate place-based change (Crouch & Pearce, 2012; Miller, 2015; Williams, Fam, & Lopes, 2017). A definition that has emerged from our own philosophic commitments also frames design thinking as an iterative problem-solving process that, most importantly, begins with empathy and extends

[2] Defined broadly, *ideation* encourages a wide range of idea generation and can be juxtaposed with critical analysis efforts (Morris & Warman, 2015).

[3] In an effort to align ourselves with Ellsworth's (1989) suggestion to engage in a "collective struggle" (p. 303) to learn together and ensure that diverse perspectives are represented, these insights have been shared with and confirmed by community partners and students from the course. In addition, this article is co-authored by a student alumnus of the course.

[4] Emerging from recent interdisciplinary scholarship, the term *transdisciplinary* refers to efforts to span both disciplinary and institutional boundaries in order to cogenerate and widely disseminate knowledge outside of the academy (Batie, 2008; Frodeman, 2013; Guston, 2001; Huutoniemi, 2015; Ramaley, 2014).

into collaborative action (Brown, 2009; Fernaeus & Lundstrom, 2015; Gibson, 2006; Lake, Fernando, & Eardley, 2016; Miller, 2015; Morris & Warman, 2015). Figure 1 illustrates the particular process and visual guide that students in the course follow.

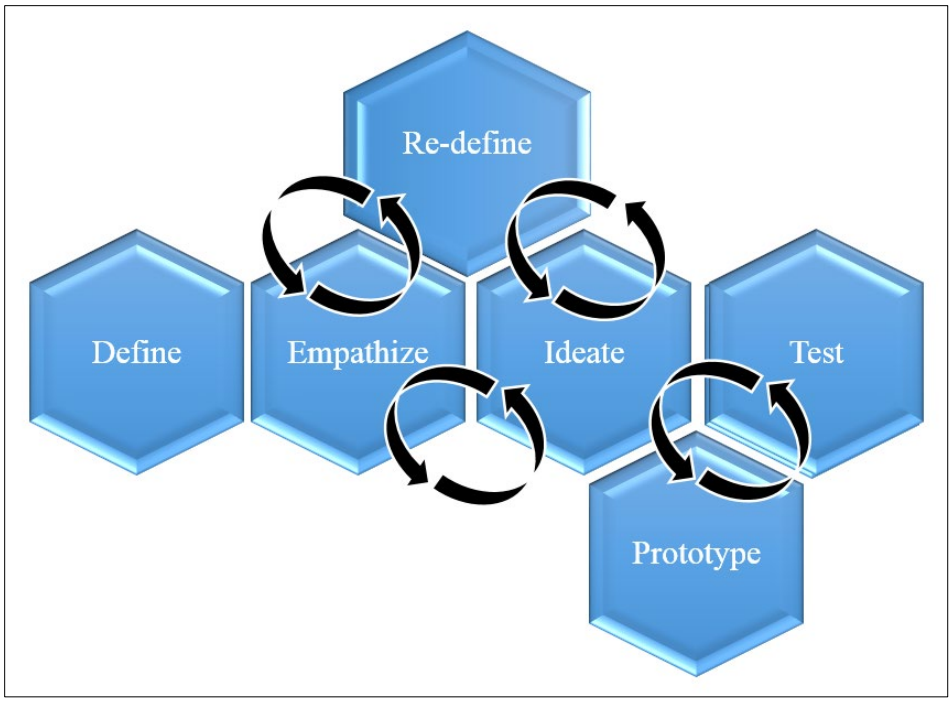



*Figure 1*. Visual design thinking guide.

The design thinking literature contains an array of similar valuable guides. In general, design thinking processes overlap with a wide range of other practices, processes, and systems of engagement, including soft systems thinking (Checkland 1999), participatory action research, the pragmatic method, experiential learning practices, deliberative dialogue and facilitation tools, and even care ethics work.

We argue that design thinking is incredibly useful as a pedagogy for and of engagement since it demands that instructors and students close the gap between the university and the community, encouraging virtues of collaboration, humility, courage, and tenacity. By expanding students' epistemological framework, design thinking opens space for valuing nonacademic expertise and moves students from serving simply as consumers of information to engaging as producers of knowledge and public actors (Post, Ward, Longo, & Saltmarsh, 2016). According to this framework, then, design thinking is about radical reconstruction, critical discourse across differences, and developing the capacity to act under difficult and confusing circumstances, while also recognizing the likely limitations of those actions.

## Course Description

With the previously described philosophic commitments in mind, the course requires students to collaborate with one another and community members to study and innovate around community-identified problems. Originally designed in the 2014-2015 academic year as part of an upper-division general education program, the course has subsequently been offered once every semester. As an interdisciplinary course designed to foster collaboration, integration, and problem solving among diverse majors, students from across the university are encouraged to enroll. The learning objectives include analyzing key concepts and theories in design thinking, developing a deeper understanding of collaboration—especially as it relates to empathy and innovation—and applying the process to real-world problems.

With a focus on the depth and breadth of particular issues and their social justice dimensions, as well as on reachable ecosystems and community partner readiness for such work, community projects in the course have thus far been structured around wicked problems impacting local communities (Rittel & Webber, 1973). For instance, students have examined challenges around food insecurity on and off campus (fall 2015), housing and homelessness in the local community (winter 2016), and the role of regional campuses in their surrounding communities (fall 2016 and winter 2017). Prior to the start of each semester, instructors choose a design challenge by reviewing current community-identified issues and course learning outcomes. Possible design challenges are then assessed according to a number of factors and scales, including whether collaborators can commit the time and resources needed to explore and potentially implement class innovations.

As the earlier figure highlights, students work in teams of four to six to *define* the problem, *empathize* with stakeholders, *synthesize* research and *redefine* the problem, *ideate* around possible solutions, refine ideas through *prototyping*, and eventually *test* their refined innovations. In an attempt to move beyond disciplinary silos and cross-semester divides, and leverage student innovations into future collaborative endeavors, students ultimately share their work through a public "innovation" symposium and an openly accessible publication of their project dossiers.

The course is supported by flexible project guidelines and timetables as well as consistent interaction with partners, collaborators, and local stakeholders. Course collaborators have included the directors of nonprofits and government agencies, and local stakeholders have included context, content, and process experts as well as interested community members. The course requires students to get out of the classroom (to observe and actively listen, map, and remap their understanding of situations, and to share their findings as they emerge) and invites community members into the classroom at key points in the semester in order to both honor their lived experiences and solicit their expert feedback.

Under the limits of a standard 15-week semester, students begin their work by uncovering and sharing their own values, disciplinary expertise, and skills through a personality assessment and workshop.[5] After identifying and leveraging their unique strengths in teams, students develop a team charter, documenting their individual and collective vision for the project, hoped-for outcomes, concerns, expectations, and group processes. After these initial efforts to better understand themselves and their team, students delve into the design thinking process, reaching out to the community and engaging in secondary research designed to generate a nuanced understanding of the specific project-based challenge. Students "download" and synthesize their insights every week in an effort to encourage iterative reflective action and to plan their next steps. In collaboration with the community, students' initial innovations are continuously refined into a consolidated list of innovations and, ultimately, their final prototype. The prototype chosen by each team is tested in a "call-to-action" presentation staged for full participation from the university and community. The class harnesses a variety of support mechanisms and enlists the help of a wide range of experts from within the university and the broader community in order to facilitate these practices. Table 1 highlights elements of the course that have proven critical to its success, the tasks that most support these objectives (and when they occur in the semester), and what support mechanisms have been most critical for empowering students to meet these objectives.

[5] This practice aligns with new research emerging around asset-based course design (Bauer, Kniffen, & Priest, 2015).

Table 1
*Core Course Components*

| **Theme** | **Tasks** | **Weeks** | **Support Mechanisms** | **Learning Objectives** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self and Team Identity and Assets | Personality Assessment Workshop | 1 | Counseling and Career Center<br>Personality Instruments and Workshops | Identifying, aligning, and leveraging unique strengths for collaboration— reflected in team charters |
| Span Boundaries: Get out and Invite in | Community Outreach:<br>Interviews<br>Observation<br>Debriefs<br>Dialogues | 2-15 | Observations<br>Ethnographic Interviews<br>Primary Collaborators<br>Community Members<br>Stakeholders<br>Local Experts | Empathetic listening and critical observation<br>Contextualize issue "in place"<br>Visualize system complexity<br>Generate feedback loops<br>Enforce iteration |
| Download, Integrate, and Iterate | Team Integration and Collaborative Modeling | 6-12 | Deliberative Best Practices<br>Facilitation Tools<br>Affinity Mapping | Foster ability to wade into complexity<br>Constructively harness tension between perspectives<br>Strengthen dialogue and integration skills |
| Ideate and Create | Visualize and Prototype | 9-14 | Data Inquiry Lab<br>Art and Design<br>Local Design Practitioners | Practice generative thinking and creativity<br>Foster confidence and humility<br>Practice prototyping |
| Sustain | Workshop Exploration: From Innovation to Implementation | 15… | Importance Difficulty Matrix<br>Offer Student Leadership Opportunities | Explore next step implementation and post-semester sustainability strategies<br>Wrestle with real-world constraints |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Empower long-term student investment |

The course sets out ambitious goals that the students may not always meet in the short-term. A critical reader may wonder what concrete changes such pedagogical commitments have yielded, and indeed tracking the place-based impact of student projects over time has proven challenging. In the year following the initial course symposium, however, we know the following happened:

- Environmental studies students—with their instructor's guidance—reviewed published portfolios, exploring how they might move these initial projects forward through their own course;
- film and video students created three promotional videos for the campus food pantry through internship opportunities;
- communication faculty developed a public relations campaign that led ultimately to the rebranding of the campus food pantry for more effective outreach;
- a second project specific to food access for elderly residents in the area was implemented with process leadership provided by an alumna of this course;
- alumni from the inaugural course presented at a regional Food Policy Council meeting;
- sustainability students sought community partnerships and funding possibilities for the student food pantry;
- the campus food pantry director, student manager, and two other course alumni presented on their collaborative efforts at a regional food justice workshop;
- another former student completed an independent study mapping the network involved in the initial projects, presenting the findings at a campus-wide event;
- food pantry resources are now included in the programming for all incoming freshmen; and,
- efforts to vastly expand and link pantry services to local and county resources are now underway.

In addition to tracking the impact of the course on community partners and local stakeholders, a study designed to track its long-term impact on alumni is currently underway. This is notable since research on the long-term impact of such practices is still sparse (Finley & McNair, 2013).

Given the initial lessons learned through this approach, we next highlight the need for integration, iteration, ideation, and implementation within such

courses, seeing each as critical for supporting effective collaborative engagement on "wicked" social challenges.

**Key Support Strategies**

In the following section, we emphasize four key dimensions of effective collaborative engagement and outline the most effective pedagogical strategies supporting such efforts. Based on our experience, these tools have either removed, reduced, or helped us work around barriers to catalyzing and sustaining "real-world" impact from within the current structures of the undergraduate classroom. These strategies are effective precisely because they encourage students to *integrate* their disparate insights, *iterate* in order to refine and enhance their initial efforts, *ideate* and thereby stretch beyond conventional thinking, and *implement*, ultimately offering opportunities to leverage their ideas into community impact. Thus, integration, iteration, ideation, and implementation, as core objectives of the course (and essential elements for collaboratively addressing complex shared problems), provide the infrastructural framework by which the strategies are outlined. First, however, we offer one important point of clarification: We recognize and deeply value the role context plays in such courses. Given the variable nature of course topics, projects, student backgrounds and interests, and community needs, these tools are adjusted each semester (i.e., we are not presenting fool-proof formulas in this article but context-sensitive, malleable strategies). Just as community-engaged courses tend to require significant flexibility of their students, so too do they require the same flexibility of their instructors.

**Integration**. Integration challenges commitments to narrowly framed expertise, requiring students to seek out complexity and encourage building "bridges that join together rather than erecting walls that divide" (Repko, 2012, p. 325). As a transactional method of growth, integration demands that we move beyond tolerating diversity to desiring it. This asks us to hold ourselves accountable to others' ideas and their practices, requiring epistemic humility and creative confidence—that is, a belief that we can see our way through (Lake, 2015; 2015; Martin, 2007). While the literature makes clear the value of fostering integration, there remains a gap in how to best support faculty in motivating genuine integration in their classrooms (Vrchota, 2016). On this front, we have found design thinking and collaborative engagement practices to be incredibly effective for enacting integration, since they require students to explore opportunities for reducing traditional barriers and moving around boundaries.[6]

In the course, we catalyze consistent integration through weekly feedback loops: In general, students share their findings with a wide array of stakeholders each week (including their interdisciplinary team, the class and course instructors,

[6] Williams, Fam, and Lopes (2017), for instance, encouraged students to operate as interlocutors by advocating "on behalf of diverse users and stakeholders," questioning their assumptions, asking tough questions, and unraveling "normative conditions" (163).

collaborators, on- and off-campus experts, and the wider public), receive feedback, dialogue about the implications, and brainstorm next steps. These dialogues counter tendencies to narrowly frame issues, fostering the creation of holistic visual models and prompting prototype concepts for implementation (Pohl, van Kerkhoff, Hirsch Hadorn, & Bammer, 2008). To accomplish this, students study and enact deliberative best practices, active listening, interviewing, and observation techniques, in addition to conducting secondary research. They also engage in exercises and use tools designed to integrate insights into actionable innovations (e.g., facilitation tools, affinity mapping, and theming). For instance, prior to engaging with stakeholders, students iteratively modify a general template that requires them to articulate their goals, frame dialogue questions, summarize their findings, highlight important insights, and reflect upon next-step opportunities. Of the tools used, low-stakes personalized engagement opportunities and iterative stakeholder mapping have proven essential for creating conditions conducive to integration; these are detailed in the following section.

***Low-stakes, personalized experiential learning.*** We guide students through in-class and in-their-life design activities that provide opportunities to practice empathetic listening, integration, ideation, and prototyping, as well as transitioning from one stage to another. Students' first experience with the design thinking process takes the form of a personal design challenge (PDC), wherein students (and instructors) empathize with themselves, define a personal challenge or problem they wish to address through innovative solutions, collaboratively ideate intervention strategies, and then prototype and test their various innovations over the course of eight to 10 weeks. From creating a garden to learning a new instrument to connecting more deeply with loved ones, students apply the design thinking process to their own life, often for the first time. Students are required to reflect on the current status of their respective challenge in weekly blogs, wherein they document the stages of the design thinking process they have tried, the barriers they face, lessons learned, and how their experiences and insights relate to course readings. Students have rated this assignment as one of the most helpful in the course, describing it as critical to overcoming fear, embracing failure, getting creative, and engaging deeply with the design thinking process.[7] Student teams also lead in-class activities and dialogues that incorporate theories and tools from the

[7] As one student wrote, "I think that the PDC process is one of the best parts of this class. A personal design challenge can teach us all to view a positive implemented change in our lives as accomplishable. We get to see the step-by-step motion of making change and really force the opportunity to iterate, generate ideas, think about the factors in play, and reflect on our progress. Using this as a stepping stone to more outward design thinking may be one of the keys to moving out of this project, and into creating change in the real world. What better way to understand how to be a catalyst for change than with practice in the realm of your own personal goals?"

weekly readings and require the class to practice, and thereby test, ideas. Our experiences in the course align with the literature on experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013), both verifying that such low-stakes experiential exercises "chunk" the learning process into fun, manageable sequences, reinforce course content and skills, and increase students' readiness to engage in and iterate around complex and messy processes (Williams Howe, Coleman, Hamshaw, & Westdijk, 2014). In fact, a wealth of evidence, including end-of-semester evaluations, instructor observations, written reflections, and informal interviews with students, have all confirmed that the support structures described earlier are effective mechanisms for fostering transdisciplinary collaboration and increasing the quality of team projects.

***Collaborative stakeholder mapping.*** Stakeholder mapping—in which the term *stakeholder* refers to any individual or group of individuals involved in or impacted by a design problem (Cervero & Wilson, 2005)—requires students to explicitly visualize their perception of the design challenge's social ecosystem. Initially co-created in week two of the course (as a student team and with core community partners), the stakeholder map is consistently revised over the first two thirds of the semester as mutual understandings of the design challenge's social ecosystem evolve. This process, also referred to as social network analysis (Marin & Wellman, 2014), aligns with best practices emerging from participatory modeling by including the voices of those directly impacted by the issue and fostering opportunities for co-learning (Voinov & Bousquet, 2010). Ultimately becoming a living, evolving visual of the team's research journey, the stakeholder map makes students' assumptions transparent, clarifies and moderates each team's focus and outreach efforts, and thus prompts reflection on the depth and breadth of their efforts.[8] For example, students in the last iteration of the course—who studied issues with satellite campuses within their communities—integrated local businesses and diverse communities into their maps (thereby becoming aware of their involvement) but failed to successfully complete outreach efforts to these stakeholders. Generally, stakeholder maps cue students, instructors, and collaborators to the potential for exclusionary practices and allow all players to flexibly adjust their next-step outreach efforts accordingly.[9]

**Iteration.** While integration is essential for uncovering key insights and trends, iteration—the requirement that students return to, reconsider, and revise

[8] Some of the current best practices include communicating information about various stakeholders and their relations to the design problem through the use of color shade and intensity, vertical and horizontal spacing, relative size, and arrows to mark relevant relationships.

[9] Interested readers can learn more about this practice through a variety of sources, including the freely accessible 2005 *Introduction to Social Network Methods.* Valuable resources can also be found through the Innovations in Collaborative Modeling conference: http://modeling.outreach.msu.edu/about.

their contextualized work—is essential for fostering community relationships and increasing the efficacy of students' innovations under the limitations of semester timelines. Given that students seek to address complex and dynamic community problems, their initial efforts are inherently limited by a lack of experience working across epistemic and ethical divides within real-world contexts and focusing on complex, contested problems. Thus, their initial ideas for intervention are likely to yield unforeseen consequences (Lake, Fernando, & Eardley, 2016; Ramaley, 2014). Our experience has shown that it is not enough to tell students that their work should undergo massive transformation over time; rather, iterative feedback loops, through which students review and revise ideas each week, are needed. Given that this process of constant revision is often foreign to students (many of whom are used to drafting work once before submitting), we structure course requirements so that students are held accountable to consistent iteration.

***Weekly accountability measures.*** Scaffolded accountability measures have proven essential to increasing the breadth and depth of student work within the confines of the traditional 15-week semester. We recommend that instructors aim for consistent positive iteration and suggest that they require students to (1) segment large, complex, real-world projects into short-term, manageable assignments, (2) provide quick and actionable feedback, and (3) explicitly link grades to the revision process. Thus, on a weekly basis, student teams are required to craft agendas, complete meeting minutes, assign tasks, and reflect upon the lessons learned from the previous week. For example, in any given week, team members might complete two to four interviews, review a secondary source, update their stakeholder map, and then collaboratively brainstorm their next steps. Tasks completed and lessons learned are reviewed in the following week's class; as a team, students (1) download their insights, (2) discuss what they each did and what they learned, (3) synthesize their disparate insights, (4) brainstorm next steps, and (5) delegate tasks for the following week. This process of reflective engagement encourages mutual understanding and moves students' projects forward in a flexibly responsive way, increasing the quantity and quality of their work while reducing the stress and anxiety involved in addressing a complex community problem.

**Ideation.** One of the most exciting aspects of the course is the opportunity it gives students to not simply study a complex community problem through a wide array of perspectives, but also ideate and offer validated interventions for the problem. In fact, the first two themes emphasized—integration and iteration—help ensure inclusive and effective ideation. That is, the support strategies for generating integration and iteration—low-stakes, personalized experiential learning opportunities, and weekly accountability measures, as well as stakeholder and insights mapping—prepare students to ideate, or generate a large quantity of ideas inspired by the insights gathered and synthesized throughout the process. Given the need to gather research first, ideation tends to unfold over the final weeks of the

semester, a time when they are under the greatest pressure. This makes empathetic listening, dialogic flexibility, and integration even more challenging; experience has shown that students often struggle to "let go" of pet innovations (often emerging from within their own disciplinary and conceptual worldviews), to listen openly to critique, and to synthesize insights into revision cycles. The following strategies were created in response to the challenges inherent to this stage of the course, in an effort to prod students to resist the temptations toward convenient willful ignorance and narrowly framed innovations.

***Collaborative modeling.*** We have found collaborative modeling and visualization techniques to be critical support mechanisms for improving the quality of student designs. Sometimes referred to as *vision planning work*, *participatory*, *companion* or *soft systems modeling*, this process employs inclusive and participatory methods for working toward integrated and action-oriented outcomes (Brundiers et al., 2013; Voinov & Bousquet, 2010). For example, cluster mapping, an essential strategy for uncovering potential synergies, explicitly visualizes insights and physically synthesizes them in order to uncover overarching ideas, systemic problems, or emergent themes.[10] Combined with round robin downloading of each team member's research-based insights, such a tool empowers equitably the voices of all team members.

By visualizing and collaboratively mapping students' key insights, we are able to explore how various innovations might align with and enhance one another, uncovering areas of convergence. In addition, collaborative modeling can be used to map student prototypes on an impact/effort matrix, helping key stakeholders uncover which innovations they want to advance. Completing this activity with community partners during the second iteration of the course revealed short- and long-term opportunities for innovation, and leveraged inter-team collaborative modeling in the classroom. For example, three of the four student teams found promotion to be critical for increasing awareness of food insecurity and on-campus resources related to this issue. Prototyping and modeling the structures, processes, and concerns through their collective outreach exposed opportunities for cross-team synergy and for integrating the best ideas with innovations more likely to yield fruitful change. Such mapping techniques represent powerful tools for encouraging students to wade into the complexities of their individual projects.

***Pie in the sky versus bare bones***. This tool, generated from innovation efforts during the first iteration of the course, provides a framework for stretching initial ideas by asking students to both dream big (i.e., generate "pie in the sky"

[10] Cluster mapping—also referred to as *affinity* or *convergence mapping*, *insight clustering*, and *insight sorting* (Kumar & LaConte, 2012)—takes large amounts of data and "clusters" them into themes. After downloading key insights from primary and secondary research each week (often captured through key insights written on sticky notes), students review their insights for connections.

ideas) and condense ideas down to their barest essence (i.e., to their "bare bones"). By first removing constraints identified early in their design process, students are encouraged to seek innovations that have the potential to drastically transform the system, and then, by whittling the idea down to its bare bones, they uncover its most essential components. As one student noted, this "process allowed me to get right to the edge and then circle back to figure things out, each time making my thoughts and prototypes a little clearer." We have found that this practice not only stretches students' thinking, but also increases the likelihood of securing buy-in from stakeholders, illuminating the range of possible interventions that could emerge from student innovations. Such a practice, then, tends to generate ideas that both seek to challenge or dismantle structural barriers *and* work within or around structural barriers.

Illustrating this point, the course's first partner, the student food pantry director, immediately implemented bare bones recommendations and then—two years later—implemented pie-in-the-sky recommendations. For example, the director immediately harnessed high-impact, low-effort innovations designed to promote the food pantry and increase awareness (e.g., information about the pantry is now provided to all incoming freshmen, and prospective students now go on tours past the pantry and hear about its food justice model). Pie-in-the-sky innovations, such as completely reimagining the food pantry service model or creating a student food truck that serves all campus locations, are still being pursued since, in general, the formal approvals and additional funding needed to implement such pie-in-the-sky ideas require a longer timeframe.

Verifying these insights, the course collaborator noted that "even ideas that cannot be implemented immediately" provided "aspirational goals." Given that "big easy" opportunities generated through students' design thinking work tend to comprise low-stakes, low-energy, and high-reward transformations, they are hard *not* to implement. While bare bones, big easy opportunities work within often problematic systemic barriers, they are crucial to community partners, who often operate under serious resource constraints. Since community partners willingly devote a significant amount of time and energy to the course precisely because they hope to receive a range of short- and long-term actionable innovations, we recommend presenting a range of innovation opportunities.

**Implementation.** Though the previous examples support the creative generation and integration of insight-based ideas, they do not move those ideas into reality. Implementation requires students—and the instructors—to not only engage in participatory, "transacademic," knowledge-generating work (Brundiers et al., 2013), but also wrestle with how they might enact those innovations (Batie, 2008; Frodeman, 2013; Guston, 2001; Ramaley, 2014). Such a commitment reflects our goal to ground the course in community and encourage accountability to those involved in the issues students address. For many students, the prospect of

implementing their ideas is both incredibly exciting and incredibly stressful since they are asked to publicly share their insights and push for change. Lacking systemic university-wide change to support such efforts, this commitment has required that we imagine and enact course infrastructure for boundary spanning—that is, co-creating, prototyping, testing, and revising a range of mechanisms for moving student innovations to implementation. Collaborator debriefs and collaborative modeling are the strategies we have found most valuable in this boundary-spanning effort.

***Collaborator debriefs and prototyping***. We organize a variety of debrief sessions throughout the semester as a key space and time for students and stakeholders to share their expertise with one another. These sessions transition and catalyze student work through the design process and serve as collective touch points, expanding students' thinking, helping determine their next steps, and inspiring creativity. In end-of-semester evaluations, students have often rated these debrief sessions as the most helpful and effective work completed throughout the course. While the focus and format of the sessions change as students move through the design thinking process, each session asks students to briefly present the current status of their work and engage in dialogue designed to both address tensions within their findings and generate "hybridized" next-step actions. Course instructors intentionally invite a variety of complementary and conflicting perspectives from across students' stakeholder maps. This practice tends to heighten awareness of critical issues, expanding and re-aligning students' frameworks with community needs. These sessions also tend to generate expansive networks, increasing the chances that student innovations will continue beyond the term limits of the course. On the other hand, as the literature on such practices has confirmed, implementation is still exacerbated by the standard limits of a traditional semester (Brundiers et al., 2013). Given that students end the semester with fairly rough prototype concepts, generating and testing support mechanisms for implementing these innovations is essential.

## Lessons Learned

The tools described in this article have proven invaluable for navigating the often overwhelming complexity of wicked problems, providing support structures for integrating perspectives, ideating ways forward, and implementing ideas under real-world constraints in an iterative manner. In our experience—and as research has shown—seeking and analyzing an array of diverse perspectives takes considerable time and effort, though this work fosters the development of a hybrid observer whose span of attention is vastly broadened (Huutoniemi, 2015, p. 5); it also encourages a more diverse and comprehensive knowledge ecology, enabling more holistic views of complex systems. As we discuss next, such measures also deepen boundary-spanning skills (Williams, 2002).

**Student Perspective**

The student perspectives noted in this section have emerged from both qualitative and quantitative analysis of assigned coursework and end-of-semester optional surveys.[11] Though many students have described the course as a "whirlwind," their feedback has also confirmed an almost "exponential" growth in student thinking. Unsurprisingly, final essays and end-of-semester evaluations have indicated that students find the course to be both incredibly challenging and rewarding. The course expectations are high, requiring students to (1) collaborate with their classmates and the community, (2) confront the complexity and inherent ambiguity of a complex problem, and (3) wrestle with the real-world implications of their innovations. Students have consistently highlighted challenges related to (1) the risk of real-world failure, (2) the pressure to confront their own assumptions, (3) the freedom inherent to the course and the messy nature of the problem, (4) gaining access to a wide range of stakeholders, and (5) the intensive nature of the collaborative process. Such experiences tend to run counter to students' previous coursework and thus their expectations. Shouldering these requirements—and the risks—in addition to the more common stressors of coursework overwhelms some students. Many students have also requested readings, narratives, videos, and tools to deepen their understanding of the process.

On the other hand, in their end-of-semester reflections, students have consistently indicated that they appreciate (1) the engaged, applied nature of the course, (2) the opportunity to instigate real change, (3) the iterative, reflective, and dialogic nature of the process, and (4) the subsequent connections and relationships that developed. By navigating the profound discomfort that comes with this course and reflecting on their experiences, students' final reflections have noted consistently that they have undergone transformative growth, defined as an expansion of their epistemological and ethical frameworks.

Indeed, one student team described the course as a lever upon which their vision of the world shifted: "Unbeknownst to us was the radical change in perspective—a dramatic rethink of the way we see and engage with the world." Students' final synthesis papers have confirmed this point. For instance, one student wrote, "The amount of skills that I have acquired from this course have been way more beneficial than a traditional class. This course gave me the ability to take what I have learned and apply it to real world needs." Another wrote, "*This was a wakeup*

[11] Supplemental student surveys gathered quantitative and qualitative data documenting student perceptions of course relevancy and challenges, the most and least helpful course projects and in-class activities, as well as students' level of engagement in their course work. The survey questionnaire consisted of both Likert-scale and open-ended questions. This study was labeled exempt by Grand Valley State University's Human Research Review Committee (HRRC): 17-179-H. In addition, students and course collaborators signed a release form agreeing to share their insights.

*call*," concluding that the course fostered trust across difference, a willingness to consider conflicting viewpoints, a recognition that one is at best partially wrong, and a desire to learn from failure. Yet, another student wrote that "an important lesson I learned in this class is that in order for change to happen, you must first believe that change is possible…. I was given the opportunity to put this idea into practice." These conclusions align with the research on the power of high-impact practices, which tend to yield growth in perspective, build capacity, and enhance self-efficacy (Brundiers, 2013; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). The opportunity to impact a real problem affecting the community, along with the development and implementation of carefully scaffolded and adaptable course infrastructure, foster change-agent skills. In addition, the integration of opportunities for students in subsequent semesters to operate as project champions through independent study or special project work, teaching and research assistants, and community liaisons, ameliorates challenges emerging from the rigid infrastructure of the traditional three-credit semester course. Thus far, students have most frequently decided to either engage in internships in order to enact their projects or become course teaching apprentices.

**Collaborator Perspective**

Analogous to students' final thoughts about the course, collaborators have summarized their involvement as slightly risky and demanding, but also motivating. Course collaborators have come from the campus and surrounding community. They have included individuals from nonprofits addressing homelessness and advocating for housing rights, campus-community liaisons seeking to foster community connections, and food justice organizations seeking to eliminate barriers to access. The nature of these collaborations is challenging on a number of fronts. Community partners are asked to invest a significant amount of time in exchange for no guarantees; in fact, collaborators are asked to "learn with students," agreeing to be points-of-contact for student outreach and to field additional questions from the community. In addition, while collaborators have influence, they have little control: Team projects are directed by students' primary and secondary research, their selection of key insights, and their own motivations. Furthermore, as students reach out to the community, collaborators cannot predict or direct the conversations that unfold. In the end, students' pie-in-the-sky innovations often demand significant effort and resources under the harsh reality of the real world, where a lack of resources means that implementation is often unlikely. These tensions align with insights about upper-level engagement efforts and design thinking pedagogy that highlight the need for collaborative design efforts to navigate issues of power and resistance, short- and long-term change efforts, risk and reward, and depth versus breadth (Dorst et al., 2016). Given the struggle to move students' ideas forward (and aligned with recommendations

within the literature on collaborative engagement), frank discussions with potential course collaborators occur prior to and throughout the semester.

At the same time, collaborators have also described the partnership as exhilarating and energizing, noting that the time investment has been worthwhile. Community partners have consistently emphasized two primary reasons for valuing the partnerships: First, the intensive process students go through yields a wide range of compelling innovations, and, second, student outreach tends to cultivate an extensive support network, raise awareness, and generate publicity around important issues. In addition, students' desires to make a real difference is often motivating. For instance, one student team researching housing and homelessness issues in the surrounding community recommended implementing a "community kindness wall" designed to encourage art, connection, and giving. The neighborhood organization was incredibly touched by and interested in seeing such an innovation move forward. As this example illustrates, students' commitment, enthusiasm, research findings, and recommended innovations tend to expand a collaborator's framework. Thus, even when student ideas are not immediately implemented, course collaborators have concluded that the partnership is rewarding.

**Instructor Perspective**

It is no surprise that this course also confronts instructors with a series of robust challenges, which emerge from efforts to implement high-impact practices that support and stretch a diverse group of students and yield valuable outcomes for course collaborators. However, like our students and collaborators, we see the course as at once demanding, risky, and rewarding. Supporting students, negotiating disparate contextual issues related to complex community projects, and collaborating with community partners requires immense plasticity, thoughtfulness, and patience. These challenges have been confirmed within the literature on design work and transdisciplinary community engagement efforts within the structures of higher education (Brundiers et al., 2013; Smith, 2017; Stauffacher, Walter, Lang, Wiek, & Sholtz, 2006). Foremost among the challenges of this course is striking a balance between instruction and facilitation. There is extensive delivery of content on process through course readings, followed by facilitation and application of the same. The lens of interaction with students can shift instantly, offering tremendous opportunities for meaningful and impactful engagement in the classroom. Moreover, these struggles have encouraged iterative innovation, requiring instructors to develop the very same skillsets they hope to foster in their students—skills found in boundary spanners and project facilitators.[12]

[12] Brundiers et al. (2013) coined the term *transacademic interface managers* to describe these essential skills. Transacademic interface managers initiate a "functional and continuous process of

Uncovering and harnessing diverse resources from across the campus and local community and implementing student innovations post-semester have proven to be the most tenacious problems encountered. We have discovered that student motivation, direct contact with key stakeholders, building and fostering networks, and offering bare bones, big easy innovations have been critical to yielding short-term transformation. We wonder, however, how we might better leverage the momentum, networks, skills, and innovations generated *during* the semester *after* the semester. We have thus far explored a few different means for doing so, including: (1) post-semester credit for students interested in operating as community liaisons, project champions, and/or teaching or research apprentices; (2) partnering with other courses in order to leverage student prototypes; and (3) pursuing implementation through the social networks developed in the community. The creation of a position designed to span boundaries, foster connections across the community, and implement projects would represent a potentially fruitful avenue for increasing the chances of sustained impact.

While we are committed to fostering these connections, current university structures make doing so challenging. Our experiences have confirmed our deeply held belief that institutions of higher education interested in having sustained impact must create the space, time, and resources to trace the outgrowth of social connections, uncover and connect with key players, and enact student prototypes.

However, we would be remiss if we did not also emphasize the rewards of such a course. Through this process, we help students access and combine place-based experiential knowledge with academic knowledge and sense-making structures, fostering important change-agent skills—flexibility, humility, tenacity, courage, and creativity—valuable at all stages in life. Our efforts have yielded actionable insights about how we can help our students, our community, and ourselves engage in collective problems. By reaching beyond the confines of our university, by extending into our community, we *become* a community.

**Conclusion**

This form of design thinking pedagogy offers students an opportunity to combine passions, values, and disciplinary training in a real-world context, helping them to see what they have to offer in addressing shared, high-stakes, complex problems. By providing opportunities to learn through collaborative reflective and iterative action, it also highlights how they might address messy, ill-defined, high-stakes problems (whether professional, civic, or personal). Such a pedagogy encourages students to see themselves as responsible and active members of their larger communities by providing opportunities to leave the campus for the "real world" and work within their campus community to affect change (Gallini &

collaboration, foster "mutual ownership and accountability among project participants," encourage integration of knowledge and a "solution-oriented" approach" (p. 4620).

Moely, 2003). We have observed that it fosters epistemic humility and creative confidence, empowers collaborative leadership, and builds change-agent skills. It encourages students to not simply walk away from the dominant systems that are failing society, but also study them—and to do so collaboratively and from a variety of angles. Indeed, the course objectives and processes align with Kuh and O'Donnell's (2013) eight key elements for quality high-impact practices. Specifically, the course sets high performance expectations, requires a "significant investment of time and effort" focusing on real-world problems, fosters much interaction around "substantive matters," exposes students to diverse circumstances and people, provides "frequent, timely, and constructive feedback," offers consistent reflection opportunities, and—in the end—requires a public demonstration of competence (p. 10). According to Wheatley and Frieze (2011), this collaborative work is critical; we conclude that the course helps to create what they call *trailblazers* (those willing to experiment into the future) and *illuminators* (boundary-spanning storytellers who make alternative choices visible). How does it do any of this? Through (1) scaffolding accessible practices for fostering iterative collaboration (i.e., low-stakes, in-class practice); (2) visualizing students' thinking, explicating it for others' review (i.e., collaborative modeling); (3) engaging the tension between disparate perspectives and uncovering possible synergies (i.e., cluster mapping, pie-in-the-sky versus bare bones ideation); (4) returning, rethinking, and redoing every step of the way (i.e., weekly accountability measures, collaborator debriefs); and, ultimately, (5) reimagining a better future *and* taking steps toward that future (i.e., personal design challenge, innovation symposium and project dossier). Indeed, the flexible infrastructural supports and hybrid pedagogical tools built over time align with and enhance the recommendations provided from a range of fields, including service-learning and community engagement, experiential learning, interdisciplinary studies, transdisciplinary research, transition management, policy administration, and science policy.

Beyond empowering students to engage in messy, high-stakes, place-based issues, the course validates community knowledge through boundary-spanning, transdisciplinary work. By doing so, it "counter-acts serious problems with the academy's tendency to legitimize and privilege only certain frameworks about what counts as expertise" (Gusa, 2010, p. 469).[13] That is, the publicly engaged nature of the course puts students, experts, the public, and key stakeholders on more equal footing, making their perspectives available for scrutiny. The public and iterative nature of this work can increase the chances of changing institutional structures that perpetuate and reinforce inwardly focused, artificially developed conditions and

[13] For current critiques of this approach within higher education, see Vinsel (2018).

mechanisms of self-preservation. Course processes expose stakeholders to the fallible and limited nature of initial perceptions, shifting perspectives about the relevancy and significance of the issues being addressed. We have found that outreach and engagement are paramount to creating a stronger community by creating connections across various boundaries, nurturing opportunities for mutual understanding of values and strengths, and thereby developing relationships across differences.

While the course leaves us with a few lingering questions and concerns about the role of the academy in preparing students for the world ahead, it also provides hybrid strategies for supporting transdisciplinary collaborative modeling around complex problems and shapes projects that increase the chances of more just, inclusive, and sustainable impact. We encourage readers to build upon these initial ideas, to imaginatively repurpose these tools, and thereby to more fruitfully and collaboratively engage in the unique challenges of your time and place.

## References

Batie, S. (2008). Wicked problems in applied economics. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics, 90*(5), 1176-1191. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8276.2008.01202.x

Bauer, T., Kniffin, L. E., & Priest, K. L. (2015). The future of service-learning and community engagement: Asset-based approaches and student learning in first-year courses. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *2*(1), 89-92.

Boggs, G. L., & Kurashige, S. (2012). *The next American revolution: Sustainable activism for the twenty-first century.* Berkeley: University of California.

Brown, T. (2009). *Change by design: How design thinking transforms organizations and inspires innovation*. New York: Harper Collins.

Brundiers, K., Wiek, A., & Kay, B. (2013). The role of transacademic interface managers in transformational sustainability research and education. *Sustainability 5*, 4614-4636. doi:10.3390/su5114614

Checkland, P. (1999). *Systems thinking, systems practice: Includes a 30 year retrospective*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Cervero, R. M., & Wilson, A. L.. (2005). *Working the planning table: Negotiating democratically for adult, continuing and workplace education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Crouch, C., & Pearce, J. (2012). *Doing research in design*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Dorst K., Kaldor L., Klippan L., & Watson, R. (2016). *Designing for the common good*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: BIS Publishers.

Fernaeus, Y., & Lundstrom, A. (2015). Practicing design judgement through intention-focused course curricula. *Design and Technology Education: An International Journal*, *20*(1), 47-58.

Finley, A., & McNair, T. (2013). *Assessing underserved students' engagement in high-impact practices*. Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/assessinghips/AssessingHIPS_TGGrantReport.pdf

Fischer, F. (2000). *Citizens, experts, and the environment: The politics of local knowledge*. London: Duke University Press.

Frodeman, R. (2013). *Sustainable knowledge: A theory of interdisciplinarity*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Gallini, S. M., & Moely, B. E. (2003). Service-learning and engagement, academic challenge, and retention. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *10*(1), 5-14. Retrieved from: http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0010.101

Gibson, C. M. (2006). *New times demand new scholarship: Research universities and civic engagement: A leadership agenda.* Boston, MA: Campus Compact.

Gusa, D. L. (2010). White institutional presence: The impact of whiteness on campus climate. *Harvard Educational Review, 80*(4), 464-489. doi:10.17763/haer.80.4.p5j483825u110002

Guston, D. H. (2001). Boundary organizations in environmental policy and science: An introduction. *Science, Technology and Human Values 26*(4), 399-408. doi:10.1177/016224390102600401

Hiedanpää, J., Jokinen, A., & Jokinen, P. (2012). Making sense of the social: Human-nonhuman constellations and the wicked road to sustainability. *Sustainability: Science, Practice, and Policy 8*(1), 40-49. doi:10.1080/15487733.2012.11908083

Huutoniemi, K. (2015). Interdisciplinarity as academic accountability: Prospects for quality control across disciplinary boundaries. *Social Epistemology: A Journal of Knowledge,Culture and Policy 30*(2), 163-185. doi:10.1080/02691728.2015.1015061.

Kelley, T., & Kelley D. (2013). *Creative confidence: Unleashing the creative potential within us all*. New York: Crown Business.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Kuh, G. D., & O'Donnell, K. (2013). *Ensuring quality and taking high-impact practices to scale*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Kumar, V., & LaConte, V. (2012). *101 design methods: A structured approach for driving innovation in your organization*. New York: John Wiley & Sons. Lake, D.

Lake, D. (2015). Dewey, Addams, and beyond: A context-sensitive, dialogue-driven, action-based pedagogy for preparing students to confront local wicked problems. *Contemporary Pragmatism, 12*(2), 251-274.

Lake, D., Fernando, H., & Eardley, D. (2016). The social lab classroom: Wrestling with—and learning from—sustainability challenges. *Sustainability: Science, Practice, and Policy, 12*(1), 1-12. doi:10.1080/15487733.2016.11908155

Lee, V. (2018). Design thinking is a boondoggle: Its adherents think it will save higher ed. They're delusional. *Chronical of Higher Education*, Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/Design-Thinking-Is-a/243472

Leskes, A. (2004). Foreword. In M. Huber & P. Hutchings, *Integrative learning: Mapping the terrain* (p. iv). Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Marin, A., & Wellman, B. (2014). *The Sage handbook of social network analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. doi:10.4135/9781446294413.n2

Martin, R. L. (2007). *The opposable mind: How successful leaders win through integrative thinking*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Miller, C. R., & Archulleta, A. (2013). Macro community-based practice: Educating through community-based action projects. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship, 6*(2), 59-69. Retrieved from http://jces.ua.edu/macro-community-based-practice-educating-through-community-based-action-projects/

Miller, P. N. (2015). Is "design thinking" the new liberal arts? *Chronicle of Higher Education: The Chronicle Review.* Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/Is-Design-Thinking-the-New/228779

Morris, H., & Warman, G. (2015). Using design thinking in higher education. *EDUCAUSE Review.* Retrieved from http://er.educause.edu/articles/2015/1/using-design-thinking-in-higher-education

Pohl, C., van Kerkhoff, L., Hirsch Hadorn, G. & Bammer, G. (2008). Integration. In G. Hirsch Hadorn, H. Hoffmann-Riem, S. Biber-Klemm, W. Grossenbacher-Mansuy, D. Joye, C. Pohl, … & E. Zemp (Eds.), *Handbook of transdisciplinary research* (pp. 411-424). New York: Springer.

Post, M. A., Ward, E., Longo, N., & Saltmarsh, J. (2016). *Publicly engaged scholars: Next-generation engagement and the future of higher education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Ramaley, J. (2014). The changing role of higher education: Learning to deal with wicked problems. Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 18(3), 7-22. Retrieved from http://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/index.php/jheoe/article/view/1286/783

Repko, A. F. (2012). *Interdisciplinary research: Process and theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Repko, A. F., Szostak, R., & Buchberger, M. P. (2014). *Introduction to interdisciplinary studies*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Rittel, H., & Webber, M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences*, *4*(2), 155-169. doi:10.1007/BF01405730

Smith, T. (2017). To be green, clean, and beautiful is progressive. In D. Fam, J. Palmer, C. Riedy, & C. Mitchel (Eds.), *Routledge studies in sustainability: Transdisciplinary research and practice for sustainability outcomes* (pp. 205-220). New York: Routledge.

Sofoulis, Z., Hugman, S., Collin, P., & Third, A. (2012, November). *Coming to terms with knowledge brokering and translation: Background paper*.

Paper presented at the Knowledge Ecologies Workshop, Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney, Parramatta. Retrieved from http://www.uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/405650/Coming_to_Terms_Background_Paper.pdf

Stauffacher, M., Walter, A., Lang, D., Wiek, A., & Scholz, R. W. (2006). Learning to research environmental problems from a functional socio-cultural constructivism perspective: The transdisciplinary case study approach. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education 7*, 252-275.

Voinov, A., & Bousquet, F. (2010). Modelling with stakeholders. *Environmental Modelling and Software, 25*(11), 1268-1281. doi:10.1016/j.envsoft.2010.03.007

Vrchota, D. A. (2016). The risk takers: The support faculty participants in integration initiatives say they really need. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 16*(6), 19-24. doi:10.14434/josotl.v16i6.19575

Wheatley, M. J., & Frieze, D. (2011). *Walk out walk on: A learning journey into communities daring to live the future now*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Whipps, J. & Lake, D. (2016). Pragmatist feminism. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/femapproach-pragmatism

Williams, J., Fam, D., & Lopes, A. M. (2017). Visual communication design research in transdisciplinary projects. In D. Fam, J. Palmer, C. Riedy, & C. Mitchel (Eds.), *Routledge studies in sustainability: Transdisciplinary research and practice for sustainability outcomes* (pp. 161-268). New York: Routledge.

Williams, P. (2002). The competent boundary spanner. *Public Administration 80*, 103-124. doi:10.1111/1467-9299.00296

Williams Howe, C., Coleman, K., Hamshaw, K., & Westdijk, K. (2014). Student development and service-learning: A three-phased model for course design. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, 2*(1), 44-62. Retrieved from https://journals.sfu.ca/iarslce/index.php/journal/article/view/86

Wynne, B. (2007). Public participation in science and technology: Performing and obscuring political-conceptual category mistake. *East Asian Science, Technology and Society 1*(1), 99-110. doi:10.1215/s12280-007-9004-7

## Authors

**Danielle Lake**, 2017 winner of the John Saltmarsh Award for Emerging Leaders in Civic Engagement, is an assistant professor in the Liberal Studies Department at Grand Valley State University. As a public philosopher, her work seeks to engage with, in, and through the public in order to address collective problems. Her interests include wicked problems and the processes most conducive to meliorating social problems, including: systemic engagement, public philosophy, design thinking, and participatory action. Recent publications can be found at http://works.bepress.com/danielle_lake/

**Marc Lehman** is an alumni from Grand Valley State University. He was also a student and, subsequently, a teaching apprentice in "Design Thinking to Meet Real World Needs." Mr. Lehman is interested in human centered design and its role within Anthropology and is currently pursuing Ph.D. programs.

**Linda Chamberlain** is the Frederik Meijer Endowed Honors Chair in Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Frederick Meijer Honors College at Grand Valley State University. She has also served as executive director of Grand Valley's Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. As the former senior vice president for Global Forex Trading and executive director of GR Current, a business incubator, Chamberlain has extensive experience in business, design thinking, and entrepreneurship.

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Fake It "Till You Make It": Debunking Fake News in a Post-Truth America

Joseph Zompetti
Illinois State University

Molly Kerby
Western Kentucky University

**Author Note**

Joseph Zompetti, School of Communication, Illinois State University; Molly Kerby, Department of Diversity and Community Studies, Western Kentucky University.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Joseph Zompetti, Professor, School of Communication, Illinois State University, Fell Hall 413, Normal, Il 61790-4480. Phone: (309) 438-7876. E-mail: jpzompe@IllinoisState.edu

**Abstract**

Since the 2016 U.S. presidential election, attacks on the media have been relentless. “Fake news” has become a household term, and repeated attempts to break the trust between reporters and the American people have threatened the validity of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In this article, the authors trace the development of fake news and its impact on contemporary political discourse. They also outline cutting-edge pedagogies designed to assist students in critically evaluating the veracity of various news sources and social media sites.

*Keywords*: fake news, social media, critical thinking, news courses, First Amendment

In 2016, the *Oxford English Dictionary* labeled *post-truth* as its word of the year (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018), maintaining that this word, more than any other, reflected the state of the times, since "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018). Long gone are the days when a U.S. senator is likely to say, as did Patrick Moynihan in 1994, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts" (as cited in Okrent, 2006, p. 85). In fact, today we are much more likely to hear a political candidate say, "There's nobody that has more respect for women than I do" (Krieg, 2016) or "I am the least racist person that you have ever met…. And you can speak to Don King, who knows me very well. You can speak to so many different people" (Scott, 2016). These statements by Donald Trump should come as no surprise. After all, in his 2009 book, Trump wrote:

> One of the things I've learned about the press is that they're always hungry for a good story, and the more sensational the better…. The point is that if you are a little outrageous, or if you do things that are bold or controversial, the press is going to write about you…. That's why a little hyperbole never hurts. I play to people's fantasies … people want to believe that something is the biggest and the greatest and the most spectacular. *I call it truthful hyperbole*. It's an innocent form of exaggeration—and a very effective form of promotion. (Trump, 2009, p. 98, emphasis added)

Since the 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump has not abated his use of truthful hyperbole.

Thanks to the type of media attention the election drew, current political communication is replete with what is now known as "fake news."

On the one hand, Donald Trump has taken to the social media platform Twitter to post the words *fake news* at least 260 times since June 2015 (Trump Twitter Archive, n.d.). For Trump, fake news refers to accounts, reports, and media attention with which he disagrees. On the other hand, there was a surge of actually fake—as in fabricated or false—news during the 2016 election season. Fictional stories with headlines like "Pope Francis shocks world, endorses Donald Trump for president" and "Ireland is now officially accepting Trump refugees from America," along with 140 other concocted stories from a small town in Macedonia, were posted at least two million times on Facebook alone (Ritchie, 2016). Undoubtedly, the words—as well as the concept of—fake news have not only entered the daily lexicon, but also come to dominate the way individuals now perceive political discourse.

As a result, in this article we attempt to provide a brief explanation of so-called fake news and offer an example of how we incorporate discussions about fake news into our classes and campuses. Although we are scholars in different but related disciplines, we discovered that our approaches to the contemporary issue of fake news are remarkably similar. We both teach at medium-sized universities, and we are both extremely concerned with how individuals can now readily dismiss facts, even reality, when they do not conform with a person's beliefs. We hope that our pedagogical approach to critical thinking helps to reduce this problem; however, we also hope, through this article, to contribute to the growing body of scholarly knowledge about fake news and its relevance to citizenship. We find Trump's notion of fake news and the actual fabrication of fake news to be related: Trump dismisses news that fails to align with his sense of reality, and fabricated news is sometimes manufactured when people need to create stories to combat true news that does not support their perspectives. In this way, our discussion here centers primarily on the definition of fake news as involving factual stories that are labeled "fake" because they do not correspond to the reality of certain individuals. Before discussing how we approach fake news at our universities, however, we first discuss in more detail the nature of fake news and consider some theoretical musings to help readers better understand this phenomenon.

**The Nature of Fake News**

We have already noted the frequency of Trump's use of the term fake news. Trump has repeatedly called mainstream media—with the exception of Fox News—fake news, particularly when referring to NBC, CNN, and the *New York Times* (Seipel, 2018). Recently, in a tweet, Trump even went so far as to characterize the mainstream and cable media as national threats: "Our Country's biggest enemy is the Fake News so easily promulgated by fools" (as cited in Seipel, 2018). Unquestionably, as the frontrunner for the Republican Party during the 2016 election and now as president, Donald Trump has made the term fake news a normal part of the American vocabulary. When the president of the United States can dismiss reports with which he disagrees, then the rest of us have permission to model this type of behavior. This, of course, calls into question the very nature of "truth." In other words, if something does not conform with one's sense of reality, they can easily discount it as fake news and then proceed with their ideological agenda (Bartlett, 2017).

As academics, we are interested in why fake news is now, seemingly all of a sudden, such a hot topic. After all, the political manipulation of facts to fit a particular agenda is not new to American politics. For instance, the fabricated story about the USS Maine started the Spanish-American War, the Tonkin Gulf incident triggered the United States' incursion into Vietnam, and the nation has

experienced historical moments of so-called "yellow journalism" and "jazz journalism" (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018). Furthermore, fake news is not new to the international political scene. Most notably, during World War II, the Nazis characterized foreign enemy news accounts as "Lügenpresse," or the "lying press," which simply meant "enemy propaganda" (Griffing, 2017). Indeed, one can mark definitive moments in history when public officials have labeled opposing news reports as "lying," "fake," "false," or "sensational." At other times, it has been apparent when and how the media and political elites have manipulated news accounts of particular events in order to craft situations that justified their ideological agendas.

Yet, unlike previous variations, fake news today is unique in that there exists a 24/7 news cycle combined with news posted instantaneously on social media from a limitless number of sources. In other words, anyone can report a news story on social media, rendering previous standards for ethical journalism or an expectation of credible expertise nonexistent. The constant news cycle also puts pressure on journalists and news-reporting citizens to report events as quickly as they can. Media sources are rewarded for acquiring the "scoop" on a story, even when all of the facts around that story have not been corroborated. The veracity of such stories is typically not questioned because the speed at which they are reported is of primary importance to producers and consumers of news information. Kavanagh and Rich (2018) suggested other factors contributing to the rise of fake news, such as the "competing demands on the educational system that limit its ability to keep pace with changes in the information system," and the "political, sociodemographic, and economic polarization" that seems to plague contemporary political discourse (p. xiii-xv).

While all of these elements add cumulatively to the atmosphere of fake news, we want to expound briefly on two other theoretical concepts that help perpetuate fake news. First, most individuals dislike being wrong, and so they naturally seek information that corresponds with their predispositions. According to this theory, known as "motivated reasoning" (McIntyre, 2018), people are motivated to find like-minded information sources that justify their beliefs. Their penchant for wanting to know or believe certain things opens them up to media influence. As McIntyre (2018) argued:

> If we are already motivated to *want* to believe certain things, it doesn't take much to tip us over to believing them, especially if others we care about already do so. Our inherent cognitive biases make us ripe for manipulation and exploitation by those who have an agenda to push, especially if they can discredit all other sources of information. (p. 62)

It is also known that cognitive dissonance reinforces political thinking—that is, when individuals believe something, they dislike hearing alternative explanations

(Festinger, 1957). Similarly, when people only expose themselves to media sources that correspond to their political ideology, then such information confirms their belief system, a phenomenon known as "confirmation bias" (Nickerson, 1998). This behavior is difficult to challenge because it relies less on cognitive processing and more on emotional inclinations. As Cooke (2018) noted:

> One of the hallmarks of the post-truth era is the fact that consumers will deliberately pass over objective facts in favor of information that agrees with or confirms their existing beliefs, because they are emotionally invested in their current mental schemas or are emotionally attached to the people or organizations which the new information portrays. The affection dimension of information-seeking and usage circumvents the cognitive processes of information-gathering and selection. (p. 7)

In this way, not only are individuals psychologically prone—if not primed—to seek ideologically consonant information, but their beliefs are also reinforced by such information sources.

Second, motivated reasoning and confirmation bias are also exacerbated by the presence of social media. Bartlett (2017) explained:

> The Internet and social media have made it very easy to peddle and promote lies…. [W]hen people who have been exposed to lies are confronted with the truth, they often believe the lie even more strongly. One reason is that simple repetition of a lie even in the course of refuting it, lends it credibility. Another reason is confirmation bias—people believe what they want to believe. (p. 97)

With a multiplicity of information sources from which to choose, individuals can self-select the information they want to receive, leading to the creation of "information silos" or "echo chambers" because their beliefs and the information they receive are in constant alignment without any threats from contrary sources (Lencioni, 2006; Papacharissi, 2010; Sanger, 2013). Given the current political polarization in the United States, "Americans increasingly tend to see their news through prisms of red and blue—to seek confirmation of their existing beliefs, rather than information that might contradict or complicate them. We often gravitate to sources aligned with our own biases and partisan leanings" (Miller, 2016, p. 276). In other words, most Americans live in their own information bubbles that are impervious to external and different perspectives. Of course, on the occasion when one does experience contrasting political information, they can easily dismiss it and resort back to their bubble by labeling the divergent views as fake news. With social media, self-selecting one's echo chamber of choice is far too easy—and it shows. According to McIntyre (2018):

> In a recent Pew poll, 62 percent of U.S. adults reported getting their news from social media, and 71 percent of *that* was from Facebook…. The result is the well-known problem of "news silos" that feed polarization and fragmentation in media content. If we get our news from social media, we can tune out those sources we don't like, just as we can unfriend people who disagree with our political opinions. (p. 94, emphasis in original)

Simply put, "there is a growing tendency to obtain news only from sources favorable to one's ideological or partisan point of view" (Bartlett, 2017, p. 2).

In these ways, while fake news as a concept is not new, recent experience of and exposure to it seems unique. As a result of the prevalence of social media and a diversity of news sources, the instances of fake news—and the opportunity to label news sources as fake—have become pervasive. The frequent use and labeling of fake news is a serious cause for concern. For example, we know that a gunman who shot up a pizza restaurant was motivated and inspired by fake news alleging that the restaurant was involved in a sex trafficking ring orchestrated by Hillary Clinton (Davis, 2016; Debies-Carl, 2017; Hennefield, 2017). Additionally, fake news could even be a trigger for war. According to McIntyre (2018):

> A few weeks after "pizzagate," the Pakistani defense minister threatened nuclear retaliation against Israel as a result of a fake news story he had read that said "Israeli Defense Minister: If Pakistan sends ground troops to Syria on any pretext, we will destroy their country with a nuclear attack." If the Spanish-American War was started by fake news, is it so outrageous to think that another war could be too? Where might this stop? Fake news is everywhere. (p. 111)

We also know that foreign entities, like Russia, can use fake news to manipulate elections, thereby seriously threatening democratic systems (Blake, 2018; Zarate, 2017). Moreover, fake news can, of course, erode individuals' understanding of source credibility, challenge the veracity of academic studies and reports, and heighten interpersonal disagreements that center on faulty premises and inaccurate information.

Therefore, as teachers and scholars, we are deeply concerned about the state of affairs concerning fake news. We teach classes that encourage and require students to conduct serious academic research—a process that is obviously complicated by fake news. We also are concerned about the nature of free speech on campuses and the toxic environment that fake news produces in political discourse. Hence, we have attempted to implement strategies for combating the nature of fake news at our respective universities.

## A Pedagogical Approach to Fake News on Campus

While modern political campaigns and debates have become a crucial part of the

U.S. electoral process, the broadcasting and reporting of these events has drastically changed. Traditional-aged students are more likely to view elections through social media rather than major television networks or print magazines and newspapers. Unfortunately, social conflict, public debates, propaganda, and fake news impede the process of civil dialogue and blur the lines of legitimate democratic discourse. In addition, recognizing misleading or false information can be difficult for students and is not limited to the political arena. Finding fact-based information for school projects, reports, and analyses can be challenging for young learners as well (McGrew, Ortega, Breakstone, & Wineburg, 2017; Wintersieck, 2017).

In order to combat the consumption and dissemination of ambiguous, distorted, or deceptive communication, information and civic literacy must be embedded in educational pedagogy, especially in higher education. One notable endeavor is the innovative online project known as the Digital Polarization Initiative, or DigiPo, created by Mike Caulfield at Washington State University Vancouver and sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) as part of its American Democracy Project (ADP). The methods of the project focus on assessing the credibility of Internet sites, including but not limited to online news outlets, academic journals, and viral photos. The initiative teaches students to think critically, process information contextually, and develop effective civic literacy strategies (AASCU, n.d.).

Another related endeavor, Deliberative Dialogues, focuses on two distinct processes: effective deliberation and cooperative dialogue. The most vital piece in understanding the concept of deliberative dialogue is defining its two correlated yet unique components. According to Heath, Lewis, Schneider, and Majors (2017), "*dialogue* is the microcommunication practice enacted in public dialogue and is more than just the back and forth exchange of conversations" (p. 3). Authentic dialogue requires active listening, understanding group dynamics related to power and privilege, communicating factual data, and engaging in respectful negotiation. It does *not* comprise superficial discussion, debate, or aggressive conversation. Further, related to the notion of cooperative dialogue, participants in this form of communication must employ critical thinking and reasoned argument, or effective *deliberation*, as a means of creating mutual understanding for the public good. The marriage of these two concepts then creates a type of public conversation that aids in building community relationships, solving public problems, and addressing social policy concerns (McCoy & Sully, 2002). DigiPo and Deliberative Dialogues serve as the

foundation for two courses at a large, comprehensive university in southcentral Kentucky.

**Fake News and Civil Discourse**

The course "Fake News and Civil Discourse" is offered as part of an undergraduate minor in citizenship and social justice in the university's Department of Diversity and Community Studies and as an elective in the Colonnade Program, the university's general education curriculum. The Colonnade Program is organized into three sections. The first section, Foundations (18 credit hours), centers on practical skills courses in English, math, history, and communication. The second section of the program, Explorations (12 credit hours), focuses on introductory-level courses in cultural, social, behavioral, physical, and natural sciences. The third and final section, Connections (9 credit hours) is dedicated to interdisciplinary courses in social responsibility (social and cultural), global issues and reasoning (local to global), and understanding complex interconnections (systems). To be eligible to take courses in the Connections section, students must complete the Foundations coursework and at least 30 earned credit hours at the university.

Fake News and Civil Discourse examines social and political conflicts that are particularly prone to fake news and discourse, and explores strategies promoting civil dialogue and informed democratic engagement from a systems perspective. The core content is divided into three parts: (a) First Amendment rights, definitions, and DigiPo; (b) Deliberative Dialogues; and (c) analysis, synthesis, and application. Each component of the course speaks continually to contemporary challenges around civic literacy, information literacy, and research sills. The student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the class are as follows:

1. demonstrate basic knowledge and interpretations of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution;
2. categorize sources of news and information;
3. evaluate public discourse rooted in social media;
4. formulate a cohesive argument using the principles of civil discourse; and,
5. synthesize a news pattern and propose alternative solutions for creative civil conversations.

The foundation of the course is based on a previously constructed path model of organizational sustainability derived from the conceptualization of systems thinking (Figure 1; Kerby & Mallinger, 2014). The model in Figure 1 depicts the interconnectedness of the national climate on social, economic, and

ecological equity, and demonstrates the causal relation between the external and internal factors related to the resilience of a particular organization, group, issue, etc. The model has utility for developing systematic views of public issues that begin with national climate and the imbalance of power (external factors). The external factors directly affect the climate of communities and organizations within the system (internal factors). The impact of the external factors on the internal factors produces factors that put the system at risk of failure or endanger the possibility of resilience. Figure 1 illustrates a general application of adaptive protective factors in the larger community. The paths from internal factors to protective factors emphasize the mediating or moderating effects on resilience (Kerby, Branham, & Mallinger, 2014).

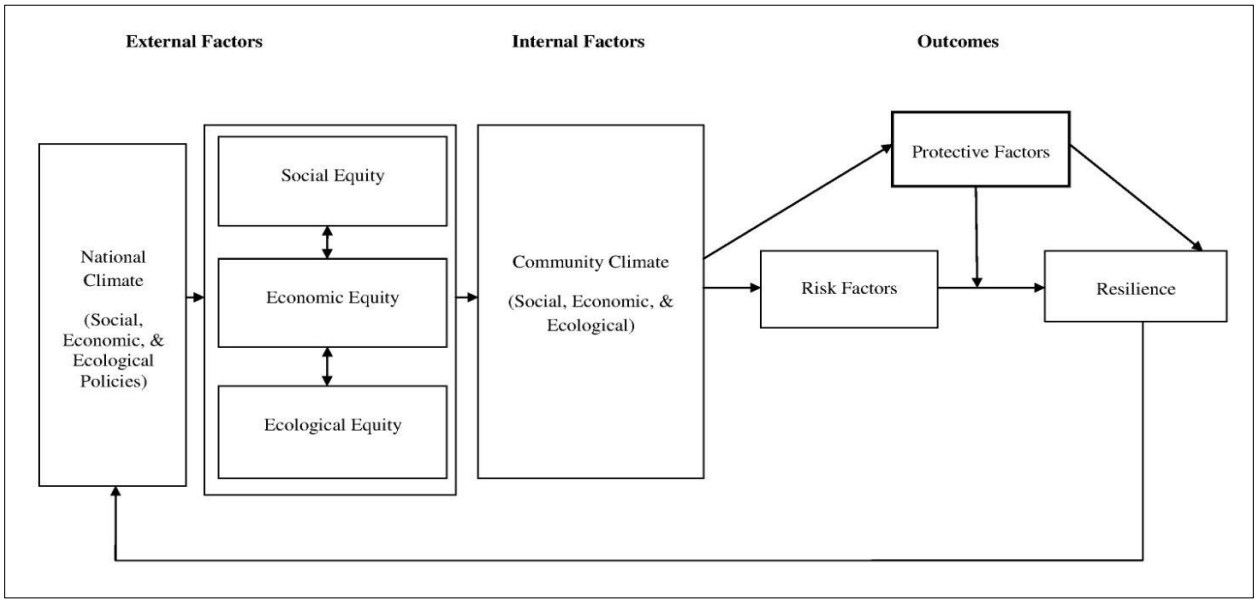



*Figure 1*. Theoretical model of resilience.

This general model was adapted specifically for the pedagogical design of the course (Figure 2). The external and internal factors (i.e., national climate, equity, and community climate) shaped the first half of the class. Students explored contemporary issues and debates in terms of current national climate as well as the historical context (First Amendment rights, Jim Crow laws, McCarthyism, etc.). Using DigiPo's online text—Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers (Caulfield, 2017)—students investigated the validity of news and media, communications with a concentration on social justice-themed reports subject to political biases, misinformation, and false reporting (e.g., Black Lives Matter). All

assignments were drawn from Caulfield's (2018) lessons blog, *Four Moves: Adventure in Fact-Checking for Students*: (a) check for previous work (i.e., has someone else fact-checked the information, (b) go "upstream" (i.e., find the original source), (c) read laterally (i.e., read what other people say about the source), and (d) circle back (i.e., if you get lost, start over with a different path).

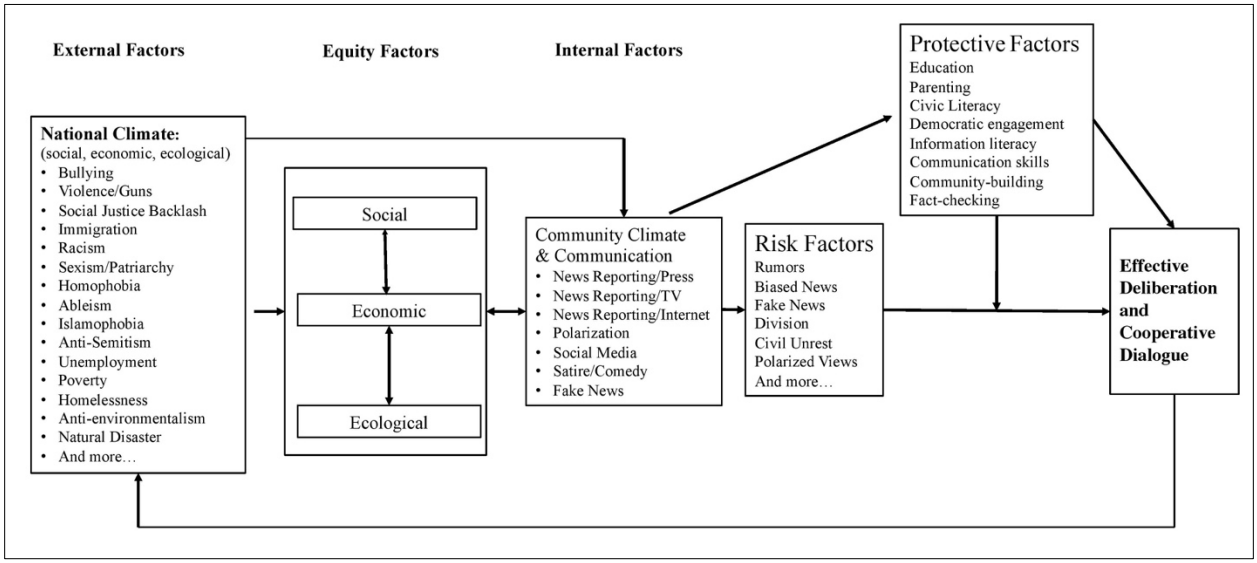



*Figure 2.* Theoretical model adapted for the course "Fake News and Civil Discourse."

The second part of the course focuses on the particular risk factors associated with the delivery and dissemination of deceptive, fallacious, and bogus information, as well as the mediating and/or moderating protective factors that lead to effective deliberation and cooperative dialogue (see Figure 2). In order to practice skills learned in the course, students participate in a coordinated deliberative dialogue with a class in the Department of Social Work concerning U.S. immigration called "Coming to America: Who Should We Welcome, What Should We Do?" In past semesters, materials for the dialogue were gathered from the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that promotes public deliberation around difficult issues. NIFI also publishes free issue guides and materials that encourage collaboration and civil discourse (NIFI, n.d.). The goal of this exercise was for students to evaluate the nature of public discourse rooted in social media and to formulate a cohesive argument using the principles of civil discourse.

The last part of the course is devoted to synthesizing controversial news patterns and proposing alternative solutions for creative civil conversations. For the final project, students work in groups to create issues guides (similar to those published by NIFI) on a social justice topic prone to fake news. Topics identified by the groups range from the legalization of medical marijuana to drones and counter-terrorism. Each group is required to generate a 25- to 30-page, long-form guide that included historical data, contemporary research on positions, and three detailed optional solutions. In addition to the long form, groups are instructed to provide a shorter (two to three pages), quick-view PDF version of the guide listing the possible solutions, a guide sheet for dialogue moderators, and an outcomes assessment protocol. In place of a final exam, the student groups conduct a one-hour deliberative dialogue with classmates on the topic chosen for the project. The final assessment includes an instructor grading rubric as well as a peer review.

Although this course is entirely devoted to the issue of fake news, the materials can be used in smaller portions of any course. In this example, the social work course only participated in the deliberative dialogue for two class periods, and the dialogue used to supplement the topic of immigration being discussed. Caulfield's (2017) text also includes a chapter on evalutating the impact factors of journal articles, for example, which can be used to introduce the topic of research in any course.

**Controversy in Contemporary Society**

We also teach another course called "Controversy in Contemporary Society." In this course, we train students how to construct an argument based on the Toulmin model (i.e., a claim represents the sum of evidence plus reasons), identify argument fallacies, locate rhetorical strategies, and understand different types of rhetorical spin as they occur in domestic political discourse. The SLOs for the course include the following:

1. know what a "wingnut" is and how it functions in contemporary U.S. culture;

2. understand different theoretical perspectives for analyzing wingnut rhetoric;

3. develop skills in using theory to analyze the texts of wingnuts;

4. articulate ideas in both oral and written contexts concerning the wingnut rhetoric;

5. discuss issues pertaining to wingnuts in civilized discourse; and,

6. construct arguments about the significance of wingnut rhetoric.

By framing the course around Avlon's (2014) notion of wingnuts (i.e., partisan extremists who dominate and polarize political discourse) the course examines the types of rhetorical techniques used by divisive rhetorical figures. Students must write two papers in the course—one that examines a conservative rhetor of the student's choosing and one that analyzes a liberal rhetor—and for each paper the student must identify, interpret, and explain the significance of the polarized rhetorical strategies used by the rhetor that could classify them as a wingnut. Students also read Zompetti's (2018) text, *Divisive Discourse: The Extreme Rhetoric of Contemporary American Politics*, as a way of exploring how polarized rhetoric emerges in significant current, controversial issues such as immigration, gun control, race relations, religion, health care, LGTBQ+ rights, etc. In this way, any instructor could take a controversial and contemporary topic and then frame that issue as a discussion topic. The idea is to present to students extreme polarities and then ask them to discuss why the ideas are extremes—thereby hopefully understanding the viewpoints of others and even, quite possibly, finding room for compromise.

In both cases, we teach these courses to improve our students' skills in critical thinking, advocacy, and media literacy. By teaching research from multiple perspectives, critical thinking, and how to construct arguments, we attempt to provide students with opportunities to be exposed to multiple news sources and to determine the veracity of each of those news perspectives. Our hope is that these two pedagogical examples illustrate how the concept of "fake news" is addressed in meaningful and useful ways for our students.

**Conclusions and Implications**

The advent of new technologies brings with it the need to examine information literacy and communication in different ways. Referring back to Figure 1, resilient organizations integrate external and internal systems in hopes of creating seamless transformations and competitive climates that reach beyond top-down management. Decisions and problem-solving strategies emanate from the notion of logical vertical integration and cooperation rather than from a small number of representatives in upper management. Members of the organization are consequently empowered to lead efforts that generate fresh ideas and lead to effective ways of producing positive outcomes (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2017).

Figure 2 also helps readers to understand the impact of the national climate and inequities concerning the way Americans communicate news and events to the masses. The more inflammatory the story, the more vulnerable democracy becomes. Extremist groups and international hackers, for instance, have systematically spread disinformation, rumors, and falsehoods through social media and the Internet in order to undermine the political landscape, polarize

citizens, and interfere with election results. Such fallacious stories thrive in an environment where critical thinking, media and information literacy, and basic civic education are deficient. The results of this phenomenon have been devasting to culture and society as a whole. The bedrock of American democracy has always been its unique amalgamation of empathic understanding, sound reasoning, tempered patriotism, and pride in citizenship. While none of these traits has disappeared, they are all being challenged at every junction (Reynolds & Parker, 2018).

In addition to illustrating the conceptual framework of resilience, Figures 1 and 2 are purposely constructed for assessment. Notably, our courses cover fact-checking news and media, civic and information literacy, library research skills, and construction of deliberative dialogues. Since most courses do not have time to teach all of these skills in addition to content, our goal is to determine which proficiencies contribute to greater competence around debunking misleading information. Our first course example is part of a cross-sectional study (which includes several other courses) examining various pedagogical methods aimed at information and civic literacy education. Similarly, our second example has been evaluated as part of a larger political engagement assessment; the finding of this assessment have indicated that our students' political knowledge, attitudes, and skills have statistically improved without altering students' political ideologies (e.g., Hunt, Meyer, Hooker, Simonds, & Lippert, 2016). This means, of course, that our class has contributed significantly to teaching skills, such as critical thinking and identifying fake news, while not indoctrinating students ideologically.

Our educational institutions have unfortunately been negligent in addressing the challenges facing the future of today's young people. Recent studies have indicated that students often graduate from universities with little knowledge of civic and information literacy or the ability to determine the validity of online resources (Crenshaw, Delgado, Matsuda, & Lawrence, 2018; Francis, 2018; Huda et al., 2018). As a pedagogical approach to holistic liberal arts education, faculty and administrators in higher education must take seriously the need to produce informed citizens who have skills beyond task-orientation. While the first example illustrated in this article is elaborate and spans the entire course, creating space for students to learn skills in deliberation and fact-checking does not have to be time-consuming or complex. An ideal place to start is general education. Designing universal, required courses that explore online communication, critical thinking, and information literacy, and that focus on argumentation and deliberation can help students apply these acquired skills to major programs of study. After all, the more contemporary goal of the American university is to prepare global citizens who can think critically, solve complex

problems, and participate fully in the nation’s political, social, and economic processes.

Of course, we recognize the challenges of developing and implementing new courses, particularly at the general education level. Such a move requires additional faculty and resources, stakeholder buy-in, and classroom scheduling, to name only a few. Institutions, however, should understand the significant problems underlying the nature of fake news and take measures to combat it. At the very least, individual departments and faculty members should devote courses, exercises, colloquia, and other pedagogical opportunities to improving critical thinking and information literacy skills. Colleges and departments should also support and promote faculty development in these areas. At a minimum, instructors can incorporate readings, exercises, assignments, etc. into their existing syllabi and curricula to heighten awareness of fake news in their classrooms. In other words, we firmly believe that the phenomenon of fake news demands significant and concentrated attention in higher education. Fake news not only frustrates and erodes the teaching of knowledge, it also jeopardizes the foundation of democracy by undermining the concept of political knowledge itself. As such, educators must take seriously this contemporary hazard. We genuinely hope this article contributes to the conversation around addressing in deliberative ways the menace of fake news.

## References

American Association of State Colleges and Universities (n. d.). Retrieved from http://www.aascu.org/AcademicAffairs/ADP/CivicFellows/

Avlon, J. (2014). *Wingnuts: Extremism in the age of Obama*. New York: Beast Books.

Bartlett, B. (2017). *The truth matters: A citizen's guide to separating facts from lies and stopping fake news in its tracks*. New York: Ten Speed Press.

Blake, A. (2018, April 3). A new study suggests fake news might have won Donald Trump the 2016 election. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/04/03/a-new-study-suggests-fake-news-might-have-won-donald-trump-the-2016-election/?utm_term=.2676569e93b1

Caulfield, M. (2017). Web literacy for student fact checkers [Creative Commons]. Retrieved from https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com/

Caulfield, M. (2018). Four moves: Adventures in fact-checking for students. Retrieved from https://fourmoves.blog/

Cooke, N. A. (2018). *Fake news and alternative facts: Information literacy in a post-truth era*. Chicago: ALA Editions.

Crenshaw, K. W., Delgado, R., Matsuda, M. J., & Lawrence, C. R. (2018). Introduction. In *Words that wound* (pp. 1-15). New York: Routledge.

Davis, W. (2016, December 5). Fake or real? How to self-check the news and get the facts. *NPR: All Tech Considered*. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/12/05/503581220/fake-or-real-how-to-self-check-the-news-and-get-the-facts

Debies-Carl, J. S. (2017). Pizzagate and beyond: Using social research to understand conspiracy legends. *Skeptical Inquirer*, *41*(6). Retrieved from https://www.csicop.org/si/show/pizzagate_and_beyond

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Berkeley, CA: Stanford University Press.

Francis, C. (2018). Academic rigor in the college classroom: Two federal commissions strive to define rigor in the past 70 years. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *2018*(181), 25-34. doi:10.1002/he.20268

Griffing, A. (2017, October 8). A brief history of "Lügenpresse," the Nazi-era predecessor to Trump's "fake news." *Haaretz*. Retrieved from https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/1.772836

Heath, R. G., Lewis, N., Schneider, B., & Majors, E. (2017). Beyond aggregation: "The wisdom of crowds" meets dialogue in the case study of shaping America's youth. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, *13*(2), 3.

Hennefield, M. (2017, February 19). Fake news: From satirical truthiness to alternative facts. *New Politics*. Retrieved from http://newpol.org/content/fake-news-satirical-truthiness-alternative-facts

Huda, M., Jasmi, K. A., Alas, Y., Qodriah, S. L., Dacholfany, M. I., & Jamsari, E. A. (2018). Empowering civic responsibility: Insights from service learning. In S. Burton (Ed.), *Engaged scholarship and civic responsibility in higher education* (pp. 144-165). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Hunt, S. K., Meyer, K. R., Hooker, J. F., Simonds, C. J., & Lippert, L. (2016). Implementing the Political Engagement Project in an introductory communication course: An examination of the effects of students' political knowledge, efficacy, skills, behavior, and ideology. *eJournal of Public Affairs*, *5*(2). Retrieved from https://ejopa.missouristate.edu/index.php/ejournal/issue/view/Educating%20for%20Democracy

Kavanagh, J., & Rich, M. D. (2018). *Truth decay: An initial exploration of thediminishing role of facts and analysis in American public life*. Washington, DC: Rand Corporation.

Kerby, M. B., & Mallinger, G.M. (2014). Beyond sustainability: A new conceptual model. *eJournal of Public Affairs*, 3(3). Retrieved from http://ejopa.missouristate.edu/index.php/ejournal/article/view/38/47

Kerby, M. B., Branham, K. R., & Mallinger, G. M. (2014). Consumer-based higher education: The uncaring of learning. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, *14*(5), 42-54.

Krieg, G. (2016, October 7). 12 times Donald Trump declared his "respect" for women. *CNN Politics*. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2016/10/07/politics/donald-trump-respect-women/index.html

Lencioni, P. (2006). *Silos, politics and turf wars: A leadership fable about destroying the barriers that turn colleagues into competitors*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Leu, D. J., Kinzer, C. K., Coiro, J., Castek, J., & Henry, L. A. (2017). New literacies: A dual-level theory of the changing nature of literacy, instruction, and assessment. *Journal of Education*, *197*(2), 1-18.

McCoy, M. L., & Scully, P. L. (2002). Deliberative dialogue to expand civic engagement: What kind of talk does democracy need? *National Civic Review*, *91*(2), 117-135.

McGrew, S., Ortega, T., Breakstone, J., & Wineburg, S. (2017). The challenge that's bigger than fake news: Civic reasoning in a social media environment. *American Educator*, *41*(3), 4-9.

McIntyre, L. (2018). *Post-truth*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Miller, A. C. (2016, June 25). Confronting confirmation bias: Giving truth a fighting chance in the information age. *Social Education*, *80*(5), 276-279.

National Issues Forums Institute (n.d.). About National Issues Forums Institute. Retrieved from https://www.nifi.org/en/about

Nickerson, R. S. (1998). Confirmation bias: A ubiquitous phenomenon in many guises. *Review of General Psychology*, *2*(2), 175-220.

Okrent, D. (2006). *Public editor number one: The collected columns (with reflections, reconsiderations, and even a few retractions) of the first ombudsman of* The New York Times. New York: Public Affairs.

Oxford Dictionaries (2018). Word of the year. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016

Papacharissi, Z. A. (2010). *A private sphere: Democracy in a digital age*. New York: Polity.

Reynolds, L., & Parker, L. (2018). Digital resilience: Stronger citizens online. Retrieved from http://www.isdglobal.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/05/Digital_Resilience_Project_Report.pdf

Ritchie, H. (2016, December 30). Biggest fake news stories of 2016. *CNBC*. Retrieved from https://www.cnbc.com/2016/12/30/read-all-about-it-the-biggest-fake-news-stories-of-2016.html

Sanger, L. (2013). What *should* we be worried about? *The Edge*. Retrieved from http://edge.org/response-detail/23777

Scott, E. (2016, September 15). Donald Trump: I'm "the least racist person." *CNN Politics*. Retrieved from

http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/15/politics/donald-trump-election-2016-racism/index.html

Seipel, B. (2018, June 13). Trump calls "fake news" the country's biggest enemy. *The Hill*. Retrieved from http://thehill.com/homenews/administration/392026-trump-calls-fake-news-the-countrys-biggest-enemy

Trump, D. J. (2009). *The art of the deal*. New York: Random House.

Trump Twitter Archive (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/archive

Wintersieck, A. L. (2017). Debating the truth: The impact of fact-checking during electoral debates. *American Politics Research*, *45*(2), 304-331. doi:10.1177/1532673X16686555

Zarate, J. C. (2017). The cyber attacks on democracy. *The Catalyst: A Journal of Ideas*

*from the Bush Institute*, *Fall*(8). Retrieved from https://www.bushcenter.org/catalyst/democracy/zarate-cyber-attacks-on-democracy.html

Zompetti, J. P. (2018). *Divisive discourse: The extreme rhetoric of contemporary American politics* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Cognella.

**Dr. Joseph Zompetti** is professor in the School of Communication at Illinois State University. His teaching and research interests include rhetoric, political communication, critical/cultural theory, and argumentation. He has published in the *Western Journal of Communication*, *Culture Theory & Critique*, the *Howard Journal of Communication*, and has recently published the 2nd edition of his primary book, *Divisive Discourse: The Extreme Rhetoric of Contemporary American Politics*.

**Dr. Molly Kerby** is associate professor in the Department of Diversity & Community Studies at Western Kentucky University. She teaches courses relating to organizational change, sustainability, and the social politics of place. As an expert in social science and environmental studies, she has published in premier journals such as the *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, the *eJournal of Public Affairs*, and the *Journal of College Student Retention*. She also works passionately for social justice issues and civic engagement in various communities.

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Blackmaleness at a Public Regional University

Mark Wagner and Katey Cleary
Worcester State University

## Author Note

Mark Wagner, Binienda Center for Civic Engagement, Worcester State University; Katie Cleary, Residence Life and Housing, Worcester State University.

This research has been supported by the Strategic Planning Incentive Fund, Worcester State University. The WSU Civic Corps project has been reviewed by the IRB chair and does not require further IRB review or oversight.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Mark Wagner, Director, Binienda Center for Civic Engagement, Worcester State University, Student Center 336, 484 Chandler Street, Worcester, MA 01602. Phone: (508) 929-8635. E-mail: mwagner2@worcester.edu

**Abstract**

The three exploratory case studies discussed in this article were drawn from a Civic Corps project at a public regional university and reveal challenges and obstacles that can disrupt the academic careers of Black male collegians. These barriers include the following: (1) University structures and disciplinary hegemony can suppress the needs of first-generation Black students, preventing the university community, and higher education institutions in general, from "hearing" how we might support them and enable their success; (2) first-generation Black students might require legal services to address conditions off campus that could undermine their persistence and success; and (3) university structures can fail to recognize the dramatic achievements and abilities of Black students. This article highlights how these structural obstacles, which are compounded by cultural, racial, and economic conditions, can be remediated through civic engagement and service-learning, organized by mentors sensitive to the financial, legal, and social needs of young Black men. Building on the minor success of the Civic Corps project, this article hopes to seed more research and to improve institutions' ability to acknowledge the persistence of inequity and to provide Black students resources and access to programs that include civic engagement and service-learning.

*Keywords*: Blackmaleness, Black males in higher education, service-learning, civic engagement, racial justice

Begun in 2015, the Worcester State University (WSU) Civic Corps is based in part on a 2011 program developed at Georgia State University in which the university gave small grants to approximately 200 students identifying as African, Latino, Asian or Native American (ALANA) and who had been dropped from classes for nonpayment. The grants—each less than $1,000 on average (Dovey, Ludgate, & Tutak, 2011)—kept most of the students from dropping out, resulting in higher graduation rates in the long term. Following this example, the partners in the WSU Civic Corps—the Office of Multicultural Affairs, International Programs, the Sociology Department, and the Binienda Center for Civic Engagement—received an internal Strategic Planning Incentive Fund grant of $5,000, which has been renewed by WSU's leadership for the next three years. This article examines how this financial assistance in combination with the educational tools of civic engagement and service-learning aided three Black male students at WSU.

The WSU Civic Corps has begun each year by working with the Office of Informational Technology to identify ALANA students who have accumulated between 18 and 30 credits and whose expected family contribution or Pell Grant eligibility indicates financial need. Respondents accepted into the program are given $500 for local service and $1,000 to participate in faculty-led study away. To date, 54 students have received Civic Corps scholarships: 11 are active this year and 43 have completed a project; of these 43, six identified as Asian, 11 as Black, 14 as Latino, two as White, and 10 as Mixed Race, 12 graduated, and 28 remain active.

Institution-wide programs and policies to improve the graduation rates of ALANA students include pre-college preparation, admission policies, affirmative action, and financial aid—all of which WSU employs. However, the following case studies explore how civic engagement and service-learning, which are non-traditional educational tools that are underrepresented in current research, remediated traditional obstacles and challenges faced by Black male students at WSU.

At four-year institutions in the Unites States, Black men complete their degrees at the lowest rate compared to all other demographics (DeAngelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor, & Tran, 2011; Tate, 2017). To redress this inequity, the case studies in this article explored how civic engagement and service-learning create linkages between classroom learning and real-world experiences to help three

students develop a sense of belonging and to support them in overcoming the "battle fatigue" brought on by the negative perceptions of Black males as "threatening, unfriendly, and less intelligent than any other distinguishable segment of the American population" (Cuyjet, 1997, p. 8). Highlighting civic engagement and service-learning organized by mentors who understood the financial, legal, and social challenges of their students, these case studies also allowed us to make specific recommendations aimed at improving the retention and success of Black male students.

## Literature Review

Boyer (1994) coined the phrase *New American College* to describe how civic engagement and service-learning in higher education could contribute to national renewal—a notion supported by Eyler and Giles (1999), Kuh, Kinzie, Cruce, Shoup, and Gonyea (2007), Furco (2010), and Saltmarsh and Hartley (2011), among others. As these scholars have maintained, through service-learning and civic engagement, the academy might effectively present solutions to pressing social, economic, and civic problems.

While ALANA students have historically had the lowest retention and graduation rates in higher education, those rates are lowest for Black males (Tate, 2017). In the past, the experiences and needs of this identity group may have been lost or gone undetected because they made up a small percentage of students, but higher education in the United States has become significantly less White. From 1999 to 2012, college attendance rose 58% among Hispanics/Latinos, 30% among African Americans, and 16% among Whites (Leiberman, 2015). The success of ALANA students, and Black male students in particular, is important to the integrity of higher education. As Travers (2017) wrote:

> In the field of higher education, there have been more peer-reviewed journal articles, books and national reports published on black college men than any other group. Yet still only about one-third of black men who enroll in college end up graduating. (p. 2)

While some literature has anticipated civic engagement and service-learning fostering a more inclusive campus climate (Plaut & Campbell, 2008), research on how (or whether) civic engagement and service-learning contributes to the success of ALANA students has been lacking. According to Hickmon (2015):

> Race, class, gender and all the other "isms" should be contextualized both

> in and out of the SL [service-learning] classroom…. Critical reflection about all participants' subject positions and how they interact with their work and with society at large is necessary if SL is to become a space that moves all who are engaged closer to becoming democratic citizens who operate with values that bend toward justice, equality, and freedom. (p. 88)

For this reason, the authors considered both the literature in civic engagement and service-learning the literature of the Black male experience.

Ehrlich (2000) located civic engagement and service-learning as areas of student development in higher education that "make a difference in the civic life of our communities and develop the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference" (p. vi). This collaboration between institutions of higher education and larger communities represents an opportunity for a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). As the Lumina Foundation (2014) maintained:

> Like other forms of application, civic inquiry requires the integration of knowledge and skills acquired in both the broad curriculum and in the student's specialized field. But because civic preparation also requires engagement—that is, practice in applying those skills to representative questions and problems in the wider society—it should be considered a discrete category of learning. Higher education is experimenting with new ways to prepare students for effective democratic and global citizenship. Virtually all of these efforts use experiential or field-based learning as a means to develop civic insight, competence in public affairs and the ability to contribute to the common good. (p. 9)

If one accepts civic engagement and service-learning as discrete categories of higher learning and as means to a common good, employing these tools to improve the retention and success of ALANA students, and Black male students in particular, will require an understanding of the social and economic milieus in which students develop. Brooms (2017) and Garibaldi (2007) held that examining Black males' collegiate experiences opens a broad canvas for investigating the intersections of race, gender, history, and political climate. In *Being Black, Being Male on Campus*, Brooms (2017) noted the "delicate nature of one's sense of self

and how normative masculine constructs might limit one's development, social interactions and engagement" (p.186).

Critical race theory (CRT) is one way to connect the disciplinary failures of higher education to students' social and economic situations. Growing out of the work of W.E.B. DuBois (1903/2005), CRT has been used to understand how race is situated within an overwhelmingly oppressive structure. In Dubois' classic framework, Blacks were born into an internal struggle as a result of being both American and Negro. According to Delgado (1995), CRT evolved further out of legal studies during the 1980s as a movement that sought to account for the persistent role of race and racism in the United States. The phrase *driving while Black*—reinforced by Ellison (1952/1995), Baldwin (1961), Coates (2015)—illustrated this social tension. Black men "drove" in a White space and faced the conundrum of being both being present and unseen: They were seen by the police as problems while driving but unseen as individuals with rights when confronted by the criminal justice system. They existed as problems or, in extreme cases, targets:

> Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some by feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All nevertheless flutter around it: … How does it feel to be a problem? (DuBois, 1903/2005, p.1)

Multicultural education has developed strategies for responding to the many issues created by the rapidly changing demographics of students in the United States. ALANA student support networks, which took the form of Black student unions, third world alliances and offices of multicultural education, grew out of the civil rights movement of the 1960s as a way to eliminate discrimination in public accommodations, housing, employment, and education. Arguably, higher education's multicultural focus grew in large part from the efforts of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which emerged from the first wave of student sit-ins and employed a totalistic approach, combining anti-war movements with a wide variety of programs and practices related to educational equity, women, ethnic groups, language minorities, low-income groups, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people, and people with disabilities (Maclean, 2009).

As a compliment to CRT and multicultural education, Blackmaleness is

also a useful framework for highlighting some of the forces working against Black men in academic life. Brooms (2017) noted that "Black men [continue] to be viewed as 'troubled' which has social, personal, and academic consequences" (p.15). These racial and gender stereotypes have come from media portrayals of Black men as criminal, oversexed, lazy, violent, and unintelligent, and from experiences and social learning over lifetimes in segregated or inhospitable schools and institutions. Educators, however, have not been immune to picking up and acting on such stereotypes. Brooms (2017) wrote:

> In theorizing black masculinities, Mutua argues that black men routinely faced suspicion, which narrowed their life possibilities … being black and male on campus leaves them open to an array of challenges and their activities, locations and forms of expression are insignificant in how they are often imagined and projected. (p. 15)

To explore the dynamics of civic engagement and service-learning as it relates to race, Hickmon (2015) recommended "questioning what SL experiences look like across identity groups and working to ensure the pedagogy truly becomes a space dedicated to social justice, community, and equality—values it has always championed" (p. 86).

## Method

Three Black male students from WSU's Civic Corps were identified for this exploratory study. (Pseudonyms have been used in the following cases to respect the students' confidentiality.) While the Civic Corps' initial goals were to foster engaged citizenship by promoting civic engagement and service-learning and to support ALANA students at a critical moment in their college experiences, the exploratory case-study method also allowed the authors to better understand complex social, cultural, and economic forces that obstruct academic success for Black male collegians. Such insights served "as powerful rejoinders to the current post-racial discourse" (Baldridge, Hill, & Davis, 2011, p. 133). Moreover, the case studies offered a "narrative pleasure," allowing the authors to focus more intensely on individuals whose experiences identified broader sociological trends from which the authors could make specific recommendations.

Due to the lack of general knowledge about how civic engagement and service-learning contribute to the retention and success of ALANA students, the exploratory case-study approach provided a phenomenological method for

considering the lived experiences of the study participants. Creswell (2013) wrote:

> Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. Through this process the researcher may construct the universal meaning of the event, situation or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon. (p. 77)

The authors gained access to this lived experience each year by inviting (via email) ALANA students who had accumulated between 18 and 30 credits to apply for a Civic Corps scholarship. In the application, the Civic Corps project asked students to identify a faculty member with whom they wished to work and/or a project on which wanted to focus. If they did not identify a faculty mentor or project, the Civic Corps offered to mentor them in taking on a project, such as Jumpstart, an AmeriCorps preschool literacy program, or another on-going service project that WSU's civic engagement center supported, such as the Neighbor Helping Neighbor program. In the application, the Civic Corps asked students to explicate the ways in which they had been introduced to civic or community engagement, and what those experiences had meant to their development as students, family members, and agents in their communities.

After evaluating applications, our team of faculty, residential life, and student affairs administrators invited each applicant for an interview during which we explained the expectations of the Civic Corps. Expectations included participating in an afternoon workshop at the start of the semester, attending a retreat at the end of the year, committing to completing a project, and delivering a presentation on the student's project at either WSU's annual Celebration of Civic Engagement and/or the annual Celebration of Scholarship and Creativity, both of which took place in April.

Finally, the Civic Corps project addressed issues of the historical fatigue of ALANA students by offering non-traditional forms of mentoring. That is, because WSU has a full-time Center for Civic Engagement, the Civic Corps project was able to provide mentoring that included more than test preparation or tutoring. For example, in one case study, our Center for Civic Engagement provided logistical support in setting up interviews for a study on men in recovery; in two cases, offered transportation to and from service sites; in one,

offered legal aid; and in another, helped a student transition from a menial job to employment at a university hospital emergency room. The Civic Corps' methodology included supportive mechanisms around aspects of student life that went beyond traditional approaches to the retention of ALANA students. Distinct from the Academic Success Center and the Office of Multicultural Affairs, WSU's Center for Civic Engagement provided a place to go—a place of belonging—and intervened with respect to students' projects. These interventions ranged from phone calls to probation officers to setting up presentations with city managers to locating jobs in students' chosen fields to welcoming friends to apply to the Civic Corps.

**Study #1: Ephemera of Grades, Reality of Books**

> *The [Civic Corps] assisted me where I constantly lack, and that is paying for books. My freshman year, I was not able to get my grades to where it needed to be because I was missing books. This semester the aid helped me out and took some weight off my shoulders. — Derek, Civic Corps member*

Derek was a business major, a track athlete, and had a fairly severe speech impediment, which lessened as the authors got to know him. His GPA was lower than 2.0 after his first year, which had put his athletic participation at risk. Derek worked on the Neighbor Helping Neighbor civic project, in which students assist elderly neighbors with snow shoveling and yard work. While his $500 Civic Corps scholarship helped Derek to purchase books, he also developed an ongoing relationship with an elderly resident, helping her with her pellet stove, snow removal, and yard cleanup. The resident reported "when [her husband] died, he left me tools to keep the house, but I am now getting too old to use them." Though this human quality to the Neighbor Helping Neighbor project is critical, when Derek reported that the Civic Corps helped him pay for books, his comment illustrated a central concern of our study—that there are no university structures in place to "listen" to this participant's particular situation. His "failure" in his first year was not a cognitive, academic occurrence, but an economic hardship. The fact that the university recorded his first year as an academic failure is a matter for discussion.

The modern disciplinary structure of higher education has its roots in the late-19$^{th}$ century, when the primary goals of colleges and universities were to

meet societal demands for "marketable" and business-relevant skills (Wallace & Clark, 2017). The structure of academic disciplines has remained largely unchanged since that time. Indeed, the "silo" structure of the disciplines, professional identities, and loyalties—and the resulting "turf language"—have hardened in the 20th century, with the "tribes and territories" of the academy laying claim to discipline-centric knowledge:

> These monolithic structures are blocking the next phase in the evolution of universities…. Students lose out too: poorly managed course development across disciplines can lead to a joint degree that is two mealy halves joined together rather than a seamless matrix of ideas and challenges. (Irani, 2018, p. 2).

In Derek's case, his oppression took the form of economic need, compounded by his inability to ask for help and the university's inability to create pathways to that help. Derek's grades in his first year should not be seen as valid assessments, but as codes that misrepresent Derek's intellectual ability. With access to books, Derek is capable of succeeding in the academic climate (at this writing, after his second year, Derek is again above a 2.0.), but that same climate largely ignores the long-term economic challenges created by academia's racial myopia.

By its third year, the Civic Corps project began to gain participants by word of mouth. In spring 2018, Sorcy came to the Center for Civic Engagement, asking where to find work that did not require unwieldy interviews and transportation arrangements. "I am a friend of Derek's," Sorcy introduced himself. This appeared to be a moment when the identity and character of one Black man was not threatened by the confines of economic needs and stereotype management. Derek and Sorcy were exhibiting cooperative masculinity; because Sorcy felt he could ask for assistance, the economic sphere became, at least for our little network, less racialized. Such referrals are welcome and point to some element of progress in combatting the "pressures, profiling, and insults that all work to diminish the values that black men bring to institutions" (Brooms, 2017, p. 106). When these Black men reached out for help to academics (some of whom were White) through word-of-mouth referrals and to the Neighbor Helping Neighbor project, it felt indicative of some minor transformation of campus-social and campus-public spaces. In addition, while Derek's speech impediment may prevent verbal elegance, Derek has become a notable figure on campus in the

years we have known him. He set a school record in track. He has also referred some of his peers to the center to secure work or support. The Civic Corps project allowed our community to "listen" to a Black man about economic hardship, to celebrate cooperative masculinity among Black men, and to argue for creating and redirecting campus resources to and for them.

**Study #2: Black Male Invisibility and the Police**

Chris—a tall Black gentleman sporting a sixties-style afro—came to the Center for Civic Engagement one day. He needed community service hours. In September 2016, while driving he had swerved to avoid an accident, and in doing so hit a light pole with his car. The police told Chris they needed to impound his car, claiming that he had damaged city property. Chris explained that his car was drivable, that he lived nearby and would drive home. The police refused to let him do so, and the situation escalated. As the police refused to hear this young man's interpretation of events and prevented him from keeping his car, Chris repeatedly verbally insulted the officers. The officers arrested Chris, eventually charging him with seven counts, including resisting arrest. They impounded his car and phone, and temporarily jailed him until he could be released on his own personal recognizance.

The Civic Corps accepted Chris as a member and began a two-year journey in which the Center for Civic Engagement provided mentoring and legal aid to support Chris in clearing this event from his record. The authors met with Chris frequently, sometimes more than twice a week, and secured him a job at the local YMCA. The head trainer, Brenda, was a local activist, on a first name basis with the police chief and congressional representatives. Through Brenda, who added to this narrative, we not only advocated that Chris' case be dropped, but also questioned the actions of the police.

Historical circumstances might have played a role in both Chris' frustration and the police officers' overreaction. In the month in which Chris was arrested, Black Lives Matter (BLM) was active in protesting police brutality. In Baltimore, BLM activists marched as hearings began in the Freddy Gray police brutality case. Chris informed us that he had been stopped 18 times, in what were clearly *driving while Black* incidents (Kocieniewski & Hanely, 2000). Brenda informed Chris that, in Massachusetts' courts, the claim that a person developed anxiety around police officers serves as a valid defense.

At the same time Brenda and the university's Center for Civic Engagement began to advocate for Chris in the legal system, Chris designed and delivered a chess program at Valley View School, teaching fifth graders the intricacies of the game. He also began to work with the YMCA's Super Saturdays program for teens. As he told us:

> I was always one of the kids who ended up going to school early…. One day, someone grabbed the chess set sitting idly in a corner of the classroom. Then we started learning, teaching ourselves every single morning for pretty much the whole year of school.

About his involvement with the program at Valley View, Chris' mentor wrote:

> Chris was a tremendous asset to [the] … Chess Club. The students looked forward to his Thursday visits to ask him chess questions and challenge him to a game. He developed a friendly competitive relationship with the students where he would challenge and teach at the same time.

Chris "found us" as a result of his community-service requirement (as a result of his incident with the police), but this pointed to the question: How is it that most public higher education institutions do not have dedicated resources for students facing legal issues?

Heilman (2014) wrote:

> The devastating effect that even a "minor" legal issue can have on an individual's academic progress makes it essential for both law professionals and academic leaders to recognize the absolute need for students to have access to low-cost/no-cost legal aid: providing assistance, advice, referrals, and representation. A single instance of this need going unattended can completely derail an individual's academic and career progress—in some cases, irreversibly. (p. 5)

Many Student Legal Services (SLS) programs developed in the 1960s and 1970s at colleges and universities did not survive education reform in the ensuing decades. Yet, the rise of BLM (for instance) highlighted the need for legal assistance for students. Some larger universities did maintain SLS programs. From its inception through June 2013, Rutgers referred 746 cases through its SLS program—but Rutgers is an exception. The totalistic approach to social justice issues that began in the 1960s has broken up into Pride movements, Women's

studies departments, disability service offices, and the creation of "Black spaces." As social commentator David Brooks (2018) opined:

> There is a *misplaced idolization of diversity*. The great achievement of the meritocracy is that it has widened opportunities to those who were formerly oppressed. But diversity is a midpoint, not an endpoint. Just as a mind has to be opened so that it can close on something, an organization has to be diverse so that different perspectives can serve some end. Diversity for its own sake, without a common telos, is infinitely centrifugal, and leads to social fragmentation. (para. 4)

This social fragmentation has left behind elements of the original purposes of multicultural education, one of which was student legal assistance. However, colleges and universities may serve as resources for rethinking the surging corrections cases and populations in the nation's prisons. To this point, on February 28, 2018, Chris came into our office and showed off his signed "continued without finding" paperwork, stating that his arrest record and the charges filed against would be scheduled to terminate. Chris graduated that spring with a degree in both business and sociology. At our end-of-year retreat, Chris reported:

> The Civic Corps gave me quality time outside my own personal bubble of selfishness, focus of school life, work life and the other stresses we face each day as individuals. To help give back to the community and humble myself, while ensuing more drive within me because of the faces of the children I would help, I met different individuals striving for their own path as well. The pursuits we have are to better our future networks, and being in school generates a better education for more than ourselves. Technically if you cannot be selfish for yourself, who will be? A part of being selfish is doing things you enjoy, a major one for me is working with kids. From Chandler Magnet, to Valley View and YMCA, the Civic Corps helped me out a lot. Even with the ever-changing landscape of our minds in the future we wish to have blowing in the wind, it made me really think about getting into the subject field [of working] with kids.

**Study #3: Black Male Intelligence**

> *When I began this academic year with an invitation from the [Civic Corps] I was both surprised and pleased. I'd honestly not known of the*

> *Center, but I was happy to learn about what they did. Throughout my life, service has always been a big part of who I am. Whether I served as a boy scout or through activities organized by my church, I learned to appreciate how pleasing it was to serve another person…. The support of the Center strengthened my resolve to serve others and afforded me the opportunity to take a step back from my own concerns and help someone else with theirs. In doing so I've felt reinvigorated as I've continued to pursue my path through academia and as I prepare to become a professional. The Center also gave me the chance to meet inspiring students who share a desire to serve and contribute to their communities. This chance to meet like-minded individuals has likewise helped me to understand how central service is to whom I am.—Andre, Civic Corps member*

Andre came to the Center for Civic Engagement hurried, since he was on his way to work, but he had been invited (and wanted) to apply to the Civic Corps. Our team asked about his job, and he told us he worked as a cashier at a local discount store. He was also a biology student with a 3.7 GPA who wanted to go to medical school.

In 1978, 1,410 Black males applied to medical school; by 2014, that number had dropped to 1,337. Likewise, the number of Black male matriculants to medical school showed virtually no change in that 35-year period: In 1978, 542 black males matriculated, and in 2014, the number had fallen slightly to 515. No other minority group experienced declines. The inability to find, engage, and develop candidates for careers in medicine from all members of society limits the ability to improve health care for all (Nivet, 2015).

An Honors student with a 3.7 GPA in a pre-medical track Andre had found support, and his intelligence was engaged. His struggles were not related to academic structure but to building a network that would support his goal to attend medical school. To that end, the university's civic engagement center had been involved for five years with an opioid recovery program, run by the state's Department of Public Health. Our work there had focused on financial literacy, access to health care, and "Back on the Books," a program for reestablishing active tax status for men who had been incarcerated. At the Hector Reyes House, a recovery program run by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, in collaboration with the Latin American Health Alliance, the WSU Center for Civic

Engagement had been active with Dr. Matilda Castiel, commissioner of Health and Human Services for our city. The authors introduced Andre to Dr. Castiel and developed an internship with the city in which Andre (and two other corps members) surveyed men in recovery and made recommendations to the city manager as to how to support successful recovery. (Andre's report that grew out of that survey was published as part of Celebration of Scholarship and Creativity, Worcester State University, March, 2018). With Dr. Castiel's direct intervention, Andre transitioned from his job as a cashier to a job as a "scrub" at the emergency room of a university hospital.

Though Black men may find support in the disciplines in exercising and developing their cognitive skills, the ability to advance in a career in the medical field requires access to influential people. The American Association of American Colleges and Universities (2013) found that practices involving direct application of skills are more critical to career success than acquisition of discrete bodies of knowledge. For Black men this skill application is confounded by racial and social factors. For example, Brooms (2017) noted that African-American males might act in ways that do not fit teachers' or professionals' preferences for proper etiquette. If they grew up in fragile families and neighborhoods marked by violence, drugs, or economic blight, Black boys and male teens may behave frenetically and respond to frustrations by acting tough and engaging in bravado posturing. These social factors become compounded as teachers and professionals bring stereotyped attitudes into the classroom or workspace, especially if they have had limited experience relating to Black males. Intelligent Black men with the goal of becoming doctors often face challenges different from those faced by Derek and Chris, challenges more deeply rooted in media stereotypes that distort Black male intelligence, challenges involving access to quality higher education, and challenges accessing influential people. As noted by Nivet (2015), this has resulted in declining enrollments of Black males in medical establishments.

The WSU Civic Corps project allowed Andre access to a social network and to a key figure in his chosen field. Andre also had an opportunity to present to city officials and to publish his work. In short, civic engagement allowed Andre to overcome some social and racial factors that have historically limited Black men in medicine and to advance his goals by publishing, by becoming more comfortable with people in power, and by landing a job in his field.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Worcester State University's Civic Corps project seeks to remediate the challenges and obstacles that can institutionalize persistent failure among ALANA students by implementing the educational tools of civic engagement and service-learning. To build upon the WSU Civic Corps' minor success, institutions need to provide resources and infrastructure for programs employing civic engagement and service-learning while educating mentors about the complex financial, legal and social forces that obstruct academic success for young Black men. The authors offer further recommendations in the closing paragraphs.

**Redirect Existing Resources**

WSU spends tens of thousands of dollars each year bringing speakers and promoting programs aimed at educating individuals about issues of social injustice and inequity. Each year, a campaign such as Latin American History Month might compete with the Diversity Lecture Series that might compete with the Provosts' programs. These programs are often built in accordance with traditional disciplinary hegemony and in some cases compete—and not always in a collegial manner—with other programming. The authors recommend establishing racial equity planning committees that assess how university monies are spent, particularly programs that advance "diversity," and to redirect some of these funds to scholarships for ALANA students that increase access to the high-impact work of civic engagement and service-learning.

**Reinstitute Student Legal Services**

The legal troubles facing young Black men are complex and endanger the academic success of many students. Colleges and universities, particularly in urban settings, need to develop access to legal services through which Black male students can receive guidance and support in negotiating what are oftentimes trivial legal matters that can nevertheless derail students' lives. University networks and local elected officials need to be made aware of and develop means to alleviate tensions between young Black men and the police, and to advocate for these young men in criminal justice systems when these matters process.

**Access to Social Networks**

Becoming a physician or pursuing a particular specialty may be less attractive to young Black men when they do not see people similar to them in academic classrooms or medical professions. Civic engagement and service-learning are tools for colleges and universities to employ in creating programs that

allow Black males to have meaningful interactions and to establish connections with people in positions of power who look like them. This will be aided by hiring practices aimed at increasing diversity among faculty and staff. As stakeholders build out these hiring practices, it will be important to resource civic projects that interface with governmental and community structures, and that gave ALANA student access to people in influential positions.

The authors look forward to continuing our with Civic Corps students, both during their enrollment and after they have graduated. We encourage more research that explores how civic engagement and service-learning can transform campus climates such that ALANA students can feel a greater sense of belonging, flourish, and become critical agents in the transformation of the negative consequences of the nation's racist history.

## References

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2013). Employer priorities for college learning and student success. Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/2013_EmployerSurvey.pdf

Baldridge, B.J., Hill, M. L, & Davis, J. E. (2011). New possibilities: (Re)engaging black male youth within community-based educational spaces. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 14*(1) 121-136. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com./10.1080/13613324.2011.531984

Baldwin, J. (1961). *Nobody knows my name*. New York: Dial Press.

Boyer, E., (1994). Creating the new American college. *Higher Education*, *58*. Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcehighered/58

Brooks, D., (2018). The strange failure of the educated elite. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/28/opinion/failure-educated-elite.html

Brooms, D. R., (2017). *Being Black, being male on campus*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Coates, T. (2015). *Between the world and me*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Cuyjet, M. J. (1997). African American men on college campuses: Their needs and their perceptions. *New Directions for Student Services*, *80*(Winter), 5-16. doi:10.1002/ss.8001

DeAngelo, L., Franke, R., Hurtado, S., Pryor, J. H., Tran, S. (2011). *Completing college: Assessing graduation rates at four-year institutions*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

Delgado, R. (Ed.). (1995). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Dovey, T., Ludgate, A., & Tutak, J. (2011). Success by design: Improving outcomes in American higher education. *Deloitte Insights*. Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/industry/public-sector/improving-student-success-in-higher-education.html

DuBois, W. E. B., (2005). *The souls of Black folk*. New York: Dover. (Original published in 1903).

Ehrlich, T. (2000). *Civic responsibility and higher education*. Westport, CT: Oryx Press.

Ellison, R. (1995). *Invisible man*. New York: Vintage. (Original published in 1952).

Eyler, J., & Giles, D. (1999). *Where's the learning in service-learning?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Furco, A. (2010). The engaged campus. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *58*(4), 375-390. doi:10.1080/00071005.2010.527656

Garibaldi, A. (2007). The educational status of African American males. *Journal of Negro Education, 76*(3), 324-333. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40034575

Heilman, D. C. (2014). *Student legal services: An emerging provider of legal aid on campus*. Retrieved from http://apps.americanbar.org/litigation/committees/access/articles/summer2014-0714-student-legal-services-emerging-provider-legal-aid-campus.html

Hickmon, G., (2015). Double consciousness and the future of service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *2015*(Fall), 86-88. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1137419.pdf

Irani, Z., (2018). The university of the future will be interdisciplinary. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2018/jan/24/the-university-of-the-future- will-be-interdisciplinary

Kocieniewski, D., & Hanley, R. (2000). An inside story of racial bias and denial.

*The New York Times.* Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/03/nyregion/inside-story-racial-bias-denial-new-jersey-files-reveal-drama-behind-profiling.html

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Cruce, T., Shoup, R., & Gonyea, R. M. (2007). *Connecting the dots: Multi-faceted analyses of the relationships between student engagement results from the NSSE, and the institutional practices and conditions that foster student success*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. Retrieved from http://nsse.indiana.edu/pdf/Connecting_the_Dots_Report.pdf

Leiberman, D. (2015). Rethinking how we perceive and approach service learning. Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/leap/liberal-education-nation-blog/rethinking-how-we-perceive-and-approach-service-learning

Lumina Foundation, (2011). *The degree qualifications profile*. Retrieved from https://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_QualificationsPProfile.pdf

Maclean, N., (2009). The civil rights movement: 1968-2008. Freedom's story. Retrieved from http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1917beyond/essays/crm2008.htm

Nivet, M. (2015). *Altering the course: Black males in medicine*. Retrieved from https://members.aamc.org/eweb/upload/Altering%20the%20Course%20-%20Black%20Males%20in%20Medicine%20AAMC.pdf

Pew Center on the States. (2009). *One in 31: The long reach of American corrections.* Retrieved from https://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/assets/2009/03/02/pspp_1in31_report_final_web_32609.pdf

Plaut, J., & Campbell, J. (2008). Promoting inclusive access and success through community engagement. Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/2008/spring/plaut-campbell

Saltmarsh, J., & Hartley, M. (Eds.). (2011). "*To serve a larger purpose": Engagement for democracy and the transformation of higher education*. Philadephia: Temple University Press.

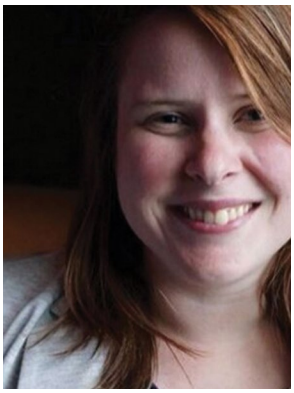
Tate, E., (2017). Graduation rates and race. *Inside Higher Education*. Retrieved

from https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/04/26/college-completion-rates-vary-race-and-ethnicity-report-finds

Travers, C. (2017). When do you feel smart? *Inside Higher Education.* Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2017/11/03/rethinking-how-teach-black-male-students-essay

Wallace, R. L., & Clark, S. G. (2017). Barriers to interdisciplinarity. *Issues in Interdisciplinary Studies*, 35, 221-247. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/chen17382

**Dr. Mark Wagner** live on a small farm in Dudley, MA. His research subjects involve Care Theory, community engaged scholarship, and classroom communication. His published works include *The Immediate Field, a Brief History of the Communicative Body* (Verlag Spring, 2011), *Homebuilding,* (Finishing Line Press, 2010), and *A Cabin in a Field*, (Mellon Poetry Press, 2001). He is Founding Director of The Binienda Center for Civic Engagement at Worcester State University in Worcester, Massachusetts.



**Katie Cleary** is an Assistant Director for Residence Life and Housing at Worcester State University. She has a passion for helping students advocate for themselves and teaching them to become civically-minded, engaged citizens of the world.

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Taking a Deep Dive into the Emergent Theory of Change

Lindsey Woelker, Kristina Gage, and April Marshall
University of North Carolina Greensboro

Tara Centeno
New College of Florida

Scott Smith
Barry University

## Author Note

Lindsey Woelker, Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement, University of North Carolina Greensboro; Kristina Gage, Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement, University of North Carolina Greensboro; April Marshall, Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement, University of North Carolina Greensboro; Tara Centeno, Student Activities and Campus Engagement, New College of Florida; Scott Smith, Division of Mission and Student Engagement, Barry University.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Lindsey Woelker, Interim Director, Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement, University of North Carolina Greensboro, Suite 217, Elliott University Center, Greensboro, NC 27402. Phone: (336) 256-1484. E-mail: l_woelke@uncg.edu

**Abstract**

The civic learning and democratic engagement (CLDE) emergent theory of change builds on the 2012 report *A Crucible Moment*, asking vital questions about higher education's role in advancing CLDE. Though it can be difficult for practitioners to dive deep into such questions once the school year begins, if they do not continuously ask how their efforts contribute to a thriving democracy, they may miss opportunities for richer student experiences and collaborative efforts across their respective campuses. As a lead consulting institution for the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, the University of North Carolina Greensboro decided to frame its cohort conversations around this theory of change and to apply the theory to initiatives and programs at institutions across the United States. This article expands upon the presentation the authors delivered at the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting in June 2018 in Anaheim, California, centering on the transition from theory to practice.

*Keywords:* theory of change, civic engagement, food insecurity, leadership, voter engagement, service, democracy

The Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement (OLCE) at the University of North Carolina Greensboro (UNCG) served as a lead consulting institution for the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Lead Initiative during the 2017-2018 academic year. As representatives of a consulting institution, we facilitated conversations with institutions across the United States about best practices, current programs, and concerns, as well as leading models for civic learning and democratic engagement (CLDE) work, including NASPA's emergent theory of change. Through these monthly dialogues, campus representatives, including those from UNCG, Barry University, and New College of Florida, developed an understanding of the theory in relation to specific programs at our respective institutions and used the theory's four key questions—centering on vision, learning outcomes, pedagogy, and strategy—to deepen our connection to and utilization of the model. As practitioners, implementing theories into our work is an important exercise that can be difficult as the school year progresses. However, our monthly cohort calls allowed us to dissect topical areas, such as food insecurity, dialogue programs, and voter engagement initiatives, in the context of the theory. Asking questions of one another about learning outcomes, strategic planning, pedagogical influences, and ultimate visions led to rich conversations and professional development opportunities for all involved. This also allowed us to reflect on our roles as community-engaged scholar practitioners and to recognize our impact, both on campus and in our communities.

As our conversations progressed, we recognized that our work could assist other professionals in enhancing their understanding of this emergent theory of change. The CLDE emergent theory of change builds on threads of the 2012 *A Crucible Moment* report, which asked, "What Would a Civic-Minded Campus Look Like?" (National Task Force, 2012, p. 15). The theory argues that higher education institutions must build campus environments in which students gain skills and competencies to advance CLDE work. Specifically, higher education professionals must develop civic ethos, civic literacy, civic inquiry, civic agency (a later addition to the model), and civic action in students and campus communities (National Task Force, 2012). As practitioners of the theory, we do this by asking questions of our work around vision, pedagogy, learning outcomes, and strategy. This publication is a compilation of findings that have grown out of our exploration of these questions, including developing strategic partnerships, aligning learning outcomes to CLDE, incorporating democratic practices into student programming, and infusing CLDE at the institutional level.

## The Vision Question

### What Are the Key Features of the Thriving Democracy We Aspire to Enact and Support Through Our Work?

At New College of Florida, the vision for a food pantry originated from passionate students who identified the need through conversations and surveys. Their vision eventually came to fruition in January 2018, and the pantry now stands as a prime example of multi-level collaboration. Organizers of the campus food pantry creatively leveraged every available resource within the financial and time constrictions of the project. They strategically sought assistance from various campus departments, local nonprofits, and community members to support the initiative, which immediately gained traction on campus. Specifically, the organizers acquired the following resources and services from departments at New College of Florida:

- Student Affairs provided the physical space and its associated components such as pest control, security, and electricity.
- The New College Student Alliance (NCSA), the student governing body of the institution, donated cleaning supplies, shelving, and a refrigerator for fresh food. The NCSA also spearheaded the acquisition of seed money from fundraisers and a donation from Metz Culinary Management.
- The Student Activities and Campus Engagement Office provided support for volunteer recruitment and facilitated Pantry management.

Working from the emergent theory of change, the 'vision' question was applied to the development of the campus food pantry, providing a lens onto and a scope for the work being done. The first question asked was, "What are the key features of the thriving democracy we seek to enact and support through our work?" Three features emerged, each of which is discussed in the following sections.

**Stewardship**. This feature incorporates the shared responsibility to act individually and collectively in ways that support others' well-being, and the preservation and cultivation of resources, including norms and processes, necessary for all to thrive (American Democracy Project [ADP], NASPA, & The Democracy Commitment, 2017). In the context of the food pantry at New College of Florida, this view of stewardship directly supported actionable themes of food justice and equity. Indeed, the right to food was a core belief in the pantry's development, informing decisions about not only how to supply food, but also how to supply inventory so that all members of the community—vegans, vegetarians, and others—could eat.

**Resourcefulness**. Students brought forward a proposal identifying food insecurity as a critical issue and calling for action to address it. That is, the student body saw a problem and then started working collectively to respond to it. Need identification morphed into a student-staff collaboration, with capacity to

improvise, seek, and gain knowledge, solve problems, and develop productive public relationships and partnerships to open the food pantry.

**Community**. As the project progressed, new partnerships across campus were created, and the community came together as a group to combat food insecurity. This joint action grew from a shared belief that advancing the general welfare requires collective work to produce benefits greater than the sum of individual contributions.

## The Learning Outcomes Question

### What Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions Do People Need to Help Create and Contribute to a Thriving Democracy?

UNCG addresses this question through its leadership programming, adhering to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2011) dictum “Leadership for a Public Purpose." The Leadership Challenge program offered by the OLCE is a three-tiered program (Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels) that spans several years and is scaffolded to help students continually build and develop the skills they need to effect positive change in their communities and to create engaged citizen leaders on campus, in Greensboro, and beyond. Since it takes students two to three years to complete all levels of the challenge, they are immersed in the work of the program for a significant portion of their college experience.

In 2002, staff and faculty worked together to devise eight competencies they believed all UNCG graduates should possess by the time they complete their degree. These competencies are informed by Greenleaf's (1997) servant leadership theory and Kouzes and Posner's (2006) leadership challenge. The eight competencies—self-awareness, relationship development, task management, creative visioning, effective communication, intercultural knowledge, community engagement, and ethical decision-making—set the foundation for OLCE programming and tie into the knowledge, skills and dispositions of the CLDE movement—which is the reason the office determined to drill down into UNCG’s approach to student leadership development and to very intentionally shift the focus to civic action and civic agency.

At the Bronze level, students focus on self-awareness and defining a personal definition of leadership, then connect this knowledge to civic engagement through 15 hours of exploratory service work, during which they can follow their interests through engagement with their community.

At the Silver level, students center on relationship development, community engagement, and intercultural knowledge, focusing on understanding how they impact and connect with people around them. They do this by engaging in a

minimum of 30 hours of service work with a single organization, further developing their "passion area" of civic engagement.

At the Gold level, students focus on impacting and engaging with the future. Students are asked what "footprint" they want to leave behind on campus and in the community, and their plans after graduation. Answers to these two questions start students on their path to developing a community-based project that involves a minimum of 60 hours of service, working directly with a community partner organization to address the partner's needs.

UNCG's Leadership Challenge helps build students' sense of efficacy as active change agents who have the capacity to change their world, learn to navigate complete societal institutions, and develop strategies for individual and collective action.

## The Pedagogy Question

### How Can We Best Foster the Acquisition and Development of the Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions Necessary for a Thriving Democracy?

This question is not new. For over a decade, those involved in civic engagement, service-learning, and student leadership have been asking questions about the effectiveness of such efforts to educate students for citizenship.

In *Students as Colleagues*, editors Zlotkowski, Longo, and Williams (2006) argued that by partnering with students as colleagues in CLDE efforts, we can create powerful alliances that contribute to the renewal of both the academy and democracy. It is this line of thinking—that democracy is a process, and therefore the best way to teach it is by practicing it with our students—that heavily informs our interpretation of the pedagogy question, applied to the nonpartisan election engagement programming at UNCG. Kristina Gage, the OLCE staff member responsible for this program, also cites Paolo Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as a work that was foundational to her understanding of education. Freire asserted that the traditional model of education, which involves a producer and learner, is a false dichotomy and that knowledge can and should be co-created. With this framework in mind, there are two key aspects of the election engagement programming that allow it to claim democratic processes and values. First, the program is student-informed and -led. Student Democracy Fellows receive a stipend for their work developing and leading the UNCG Votes initiatives. They contribute significantly to the yearly election engagement plan and carry out its activities with guidance and support from staff. Because leading activities involves navigating partnerships with other administrative offices, student organizations, and academic departments, the student fellows learn about organizing events in a complementary way and making decisions deliberatively, weighing trade-offs needed to meet the abilities and needs of others.

Student fellows also created a survey through which they solicited peer feedback. Fellows asked UNCG students to identify political issues they believed were most relevant to their lives, why they vote or do not vote, and what might motivate them to get to the polls. This information was used to advise the type of programming offered and the development of messaging.

The second key aspect of democratic pedagogy in this program centers on encouraging regular feedback about its processes and activities. At the beginning of each Democracy Fellows meeting, they responded to the question, "What is working about how we work together and what isn't working about how we work together?" This allowed for open dialogue and adjustments to processes and communication as the year went on.

Aside from the student Democracy Fellows, the UNCG Votes program is receptive to feedback in other formal and informal ways. After participating in our Voting 101 classroom module, a student who was an active leader on campus came to meet with the UNCG Votes team and offered feedback that the information, while useful for knowing how, where, and when to vote, did not motivate students *to* vote. The team conducted a few additional informational interviews and, after hearing similar feedback, decided to edit the content of Voting 101 to list a few examples of the direct impact that legislation and elections have on college students. They also decided to add two fun and more celebratory events on campus aimed at creating a buzz around elections and encouraging students to vote.

Through these two simple democratic practices—giving students real voice and power, and soliciting regular feedback from which to make changes—the team of students and staff fostering civic engagement on UNCG's campus strives to work together in a way that develops the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for a thriving democracy.

## The Strategy Question

### How Can We Build the Institutional Culture, Infrastructure, and Relationships Needed to Support Learning that Enables a Thriving Democracy?

In their 2016 book *The Undergraduate Experience*, Felten, Gardner, Schroeder, Lambert, and Barefoot challenged university leaders to ask "What Matters Most?" when considering strategic initiatives. The authors identified learning, leadership, alignment, expectations, relationships, and improvement as essential themes for strategic planning. Focusing on these themes, they argued, strengthen an institution's efforts to build an institutional culture and the relationships necessary to support learning that enables a thriving democracy.

Primarily, leaders must "move the effective learning practices from the margins to the center of the student experience" (Felten, Gardner, Schroeder, Lambert, & Barefoot, 2016, p. 28). Providing learner-centered experiences that facilitate student academic, social, and professional success is central to Barry University's new University Strategic Agenda. The university's leadership team is committed to this idea, supports this work, and promotes this approach. The university president's endorsement to create a campus civic action plan as part of the institutional strategic plan is evidence of this commitment. This endorsement illustrates the importance of an institutional leader aligning "What Matters Most" with the commitments espoused in the institutional vision, mission, and values. This provides a clear and concise direction for the university and promotes a more efficient use of resources. Furthermore, program planning and development is most effective when it maps back to the institutional vision, mission and values. Aligning and integrating programs "is essential for colleges and universities to create meaningful and relevant educational experiences" (Felten et al., 2016, p. 110). Barry's mission articulates that this matters by emphasizing an educational experience characterized by the integration of study, reflection, and action. The alignment of the civic action plan—an example of the mission's call to action—with institutional values manifests in the expectation that members of the community accept social responsibility and commit to serving local and global communities.

Barry's involvement with CLDE, which advocates an emergent social change model informed by *A Crucible Moment* (2012), supports the development of the university's civic action. Sponsored by the Department of Education and written by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, *A Crucible Moment* espouses a framework for higher education institutions to apply in developing students' democratic and civic engagement. As noted in the report, institutions are encouraged to construct campus cultures and contexts or relationships that foster the following dimensions of a civic-minded campus: civic ethos, civic literacy and skills, civic inquiry, civic action, and civic agency. According to Campus Compact (2012), higher education institutions are vital agents and architects of democracy and should embrace their responsibility to promote civic learning and community engagement. Similar to Barry's civic action plan, the university's quality enhancement plan (QEP) also demonstrates a commitment to fostering a civic-minded campus. As a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) to receive accreditation re-affirmation, Barry is required to engage in a collaborative process to develop and implement a QEP to enhance student learning and improve institutional effectiveness. Accreditation re-affirmation is a critical strategic objective for any institution, and continuing to utilize the strategic planning themes outlined in "What Matters Most" are evident in the development of Barry's QEP.

Barry's QEP (2014) focuses on social and personal responsibility, two areas highlighted by Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP; AAC&U, 2005) as essential learning outcomes of a liberal arts education for developing successful and active members of civic life. Using experiential learning that focuses on social and personal responsibility, Barry's QEP includes three learning domains that are directly related to the university's mission and values: ethical and moral reasoning; engaging diverse perspectives; and community engagement and collaboration. Each domain outlines two undergraduate student learning outcomes that Barry has identified as successful indicators of student learning. Strategically, to infuse the intent of QEP across curricular and co-curricular programs, the following action items were implemented:

- criterion for service-learning course designation in the course catalog have been developed;
- faculty purposely integrate the QEP learning outcomes with course content;
- undergraduate students are required to complete 27 total credit hours of coursework to fulfill the QEP requirements;
- community-engaged scholarship is recognized explicitly in Barry's rank and promotion guidelines; and,
- co-curricular programs that align with the QEP learning outcomes have been created.

Through assessment activities of academic and curricular programs, Barry University tracks the number of undergraduate students who participate in the programs and determines whether these students demonstrate proficiency in the learning outcomes associated with the three domains. For accreditation purposes, these assessment activities assist in evaluating institutional effectiveness at the university. Theses action steps help build institutional culture, infrastructure, and relationships to support learning that fosters a civic-minded campus. More importantly, these action items offer additional evidence that planning and development of a strategic, mission-driven program at Barry University is learning-centered, is supported by leadership, is strategically aligned, includes clear expectations, is characterized by collaborative relationships, and utilizes assessment to evaluate improvement. They follow the essential themes for strategic planning purposes outlined in "What Matters Most."

## Closing Thoughts

As practitioners, continual reflection is critical to our success and growth as we work to educate the next engaged citizenry. The emergent theory of change is one tool institutions can use to think deeply about programs, learning outcomes, strategic visions, and collaborations on and off campus. To accomplish this work,

it takes a concerted effort from all levels of leadership and a commitment from stakeholders to invest resources—of time and money—in efforts to create civically minded campuses. In our conversations, we kept returning to the importance of "champions of the work"—finding community partners, students, staff, and faculty who believe in CLDE, and using our collective passion and drive to push forward. Together, our campuses can become more civically minded, and the emergent theory of change can help us get there.

## References

American Democracy Project, NASPA, & The Democracy Commitment (Producers). (2017). CLDE: Emergent Theory of Change [Video webinar]. Retrieved from https://olc.naspa.org/catalog/clde-emergent-theory-of-change

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2005). *The LEAP challenge: Education for a world of unscripted problems.* Washington, DC: Author.

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2009). *The LEAP vision for learning: Outcomes, practices, impact, and employers' views.* Washington, DC: Author.

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (n.d.). *Character traits associated with the five dimensions of personal and social responsibility*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www.psri.hs.iastate.edu/dimensions.php

Barry University (2014). *Quality enhancement plan: Fostering personal and social responsibility through experiential learning*. Miami Shores, FL: Author.

Campus Compact. (2012). *A praxis brief: Campus Compact's response to A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*. Boston, MA: Author.

Felten, P., Gardner, J. N., Schroeder, C. C., Lambert, L. M., & Barefoot, B. O. (2016). *The undergraduate experience: Focusing institutions on what matters most*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Continuum.

Greenleaf, R. K. (1997). *The servant as leader*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2006). *The leadership challenge (vol. 3)*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2011). Presidential leadership for public purpose. *National CrossTalk, 19*(1). Retrieved from http://www.highereducation.org/crosstalk/ct0511/insert0511-presidents.shtml

National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. (2012). *A crucible moment: College learning and democracy's future.* Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Zlotkowski, E., Longo, N. V., & Williams, J. R. (2006). *Students as colleagues*. Providence, RI: Campus Compact.

## Authors

**Lindsey Woelker, M.Ed.**
*Associate Director for Leadership, UNC Greensboro*
Lindsey Woelker received her B.A. from the University of Michigan. She holds an M.Ed. in Student Affairs and Higher Education from Loyola University Chicago. Lindsey served on the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership research team and published an article focused on social perspective taking and its influence on student leadership development. Prior to joining UNCG, Lindsey was the Associate Director for Student Life at St. Edward's University in Austin, TX. There, she oversaw student leadership programs and taught courses on various topics related to leadership development. Lindsey is heavily influenced by her undergraduate involvement in Michigan's Alternative Spring Break program, where she experienced the inherent connection between leadership and service and has since sought to incorporate community engagement into all the leadership programs she creates. At UNCG, Lindsey oversees the Leadership Challenge portfolio, supports leadership conferences, and works to institutionalize UNCG's Leadership Framework and the eight competencies of a UNCG student leader.

**April Marshall, M.S., NCC**
*Assistant Director for Leader Development, UNC Greensboro*
April Marshall manages the Peer Leader Educator's (PLE) program, student leadership conferences, and the Silver Leadership Challenge program at UNCG. April's passion for leadership development began during her service in the U.S. Air Force, where she served both active duty and active reserve terms of enlistment, strengthening her ability to lead, to follow, and to manage enlisted men and women within the moral framework of integrity, service, and excellence. Originally from southern California, April has been a Spartan since 2007, when she moved to North Carolina to attend UNCG to finish her B.A. in English. After working in high school education for five years, she earned her M.S. in College Counseling and Student Development through UNCG's Counseling and Educational Development program and has become a nationally certified counselor.

**Kristina Gage, M.Ed.**
*Associate Director for Civic Engagement, UNC Greensboro*
Kristina Gage earned her M.Ed. in Student Affairs Practice in Higher Education from the University of Virginia. She also holds a B.A. in Justice Studies from James Madison University. In her role as Assistant Director for Community Engagement, she builds community partnerships with nonprofits, schools, and government agencies, and provides leadership for co-curricular service programs including service trips, servGSO one-time events, campus-wide days of service, and the Civic Engagement Fellows program. A two-time AmeriCorps VISTA, Kristina has experience working in the nonprofit sector and has served in both the Office of Community Engagement at The College of William and Mary and the Bonner Center for Community Service and Learning at Guilford College. Through her professional and volunteer experiences, Kristina has learned the power of community partnerships to both create positive social change and transformative learning experiences.

**Tara Centeno**
*Director, Student Activities and Campus Engagement, New College of Florida*
Tara Centeno received her B.S. from the University of Wisconsin and studied neurobiology. Her experience at UW informed her decision to pursue an M.S. in College Student Affairs and Conflict Analysis and Resolution from Nova Southeastern University. She currently works at New College of Florida as the Director of Student Activities and Campus Engagement, overseeing leadership programs, campus events, clubs and organizations, and community engagement initiatives. Tara loves working with students to craft their own experience.

**Scott Smith**
*Vice President for Mission and Student Engagement, Barry University*

Scott Smith joined Barry University in 2011 and serves as Vice President for Mission and Student Engagement. He has more than 25 years of higher education leadership experience, having previously served at Saint Louis University, Seattle University, Ohio Northern University, and Marquette University. Smith received his B.A. in Psychology from The University of the South in 1989, a master's degree in Adult and Community College Education and Counselor Education from North Carolina State University, and a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from The Ohio State University.

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Creating Cohesive Paths to Civic Engagement: Five Approaches to Institutionalizing Civic Engagement

Garret S. Batten
Project Pericles (New York, New York)

Adrienne Falcón
Metropolitan State University (St. Paul, Minnesota)

Jan R. Liss and Arielle del Rosario
Project Pericles

## Author Note

Garret S. Batten, Project Pericles; Adrienne Falcón, Department of Public and Non-Profit Leadership, Metropolitan State University; Jan R. Liss, Project Pericles; Arielle del Rosario, Project Pericles.

The authors are are grateful to the Eugene M. Lang Foundation and The Teagle Foundation for their support of "Creating Cohesive Paths to Civic Engagement"; to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund for hosting the July 2014 convening at The Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund[*]; and to the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) for hosting the January 2016 convening. We also give special thanks to Barbara Holland and Ariane Liazos.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Garret S. Batten, Assistant Director, Project Pericles, 551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1910, New York, NY 10176-0899. Phone: (212) 986-4496. E-mail: garret.batten@projectpericles.org

[*] Rockefeller Brother Funds Disclaimer: "As is the case with all materials resulting from meetings held at The Pocantico Center, the views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, its trustees, or its staff."

**Abstract**

As colleges and universities prioritize civic engagement in the curriculum, there is a need for coherent program design and the diffusion of civic engagement practices throughout the undergraduate experience. The authors suggest that curricular mapping is a powerful catalyst for institutionalizing these practices on campus that can be undertaken with limited resources. Project Pericles launched an initiative to assess and promote the institutionalization of civic engagement and social responsibility in higher education. Analyzing the responses of 26 campuses to an inventory designed by Project Pericles, the authors identify five types of program organization that campuses may consider as they seek to strengthen their community engaged efforts: civic engagement and social responsibility (CESR) requirements, Civic Scholars programs, pathways approaches, certificates, and entrepreneurial/open-choice models. The authors also argue for sustained analysis, sharing across campuses, and ongoing support for the implementation of improvements through a process of mapping the curriculum.

*Keywords:* civic engagement, community-based, community engagement, curriculum design, curriculum development, higher education, mapping, service-learning, social responsibility

Creating Cohesive Paths to Civic Engagement: Five Approaches to Institutionalizing Civic Engagement

Civic engagement in higher education has taken on new urgency in recent decades (Global University Network for Innovation, 2008, 2014; Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999; Tapia, 2012). The nation's future depends on ensuring that all students have the dispositions, habits, and skills needed to apply academic knowledge to real-world problems in ways that are ethical, meaningful, thoughtful, and sustainable throughout their lifetimes. While early literature in the field described how to initiate civic engagement programs, courses, and projects that engage with the community, many scholars, in response to this new urgency, have increasingly focused their research on the effects of participating in community-engaged efforts on students, faculty, and community partners (Cress, Collier, Reitenauer, & Associates, 2013; Jacoby & Associates, 1996, 2014).

A movement that started with individual practitioners on particular campuses has swelled to create a new field of study and practice with the potential to transform higher education in the United States. Entire journals, such as the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* and the *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, have contributed to the field's development. However, one of the notable challenges in the field relates to the naming of its practices. As Mooney and Edwards (2001) described, there are multiple terms for describing these practices—for instance, community-engaged learning, service-learning, and even experiential learning—each possessing a slightly different meaning. For the purposes of this article, we use the term *civic engagement*. With the significant growth in and of this field, many leaders have discussed how best to support and sustain civic engagement efforts and have called for the institutionalization of associated practices (Furco & Holland, 2009; Holland, 2014). By "institutionalization," they mean that civic engagement efforts should move from the periphery to the core of the institution's purpose, as reflected in "mission, promotion, tenure, hiring; organization structure; student involvement; faculty involvement; community involvement; and campus publications" (Holland, 2009, pp. 85-98).

Over time, various tools have been developed to support colleges and universities seeking to institutionalize civic engagement work, including the Holland (1997) matrix, the Furco (2002) rubric, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships Classification (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.). Holland (2014) provided a comprehensive analysis of efforts centering on "documenting, evaluating, and measuring the impacts of an institution's civic agenda" (p. 19-20). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U; 2009) created a series of rubrics for examining and evaluating civic engagement and social responsibility projects; these have been further developed by the Massachusetts Department of Higher

Education (2016) with two new rubrics on civic knowledge and civic values. Carnegie, through its revised Community Engagement Classification, has developed a tool for assessing the institutionalization of civic engagement efforts (Driscoll, 2014; Holland, 2009). All of these national developments in the field have provided materials for other projects to build upon as they develop their own civic engagement tools.

Project Pericles is a not-for-profit organization that encourages and facilitates commitments by colleges and universities to include and promote social responsibility and participatory citizenship as essential elements of their educational programs (Project Pericles, 2018). Individually, collectively, and institutionally, these programs involve students, faculty, administrators, staff, trustees, alumni, and community members in a growing range of socially oriented enterprises and collaborations.

Since its founding in 2001, Project Pericles has witnessed the transformative effects that incorporating civic engagement initiatives into the curriculum have had at all levels of its member institutions— on students, faculty, administrators, staff, alumni, and community members. In its recent initiative "Creating Cohesive Paths to Civic Engagement," Project Pericles expanded its focus beyond individual courses and individual faculty leaders to also examine questions about how civic engagement is integrated and structured across the curriculum and in the community. Creating Cohesive Paths was a three-year project designed to reimagine the organization and integration of civic engagement across the undergraduate experience. On 26 participating campuses, teams inventoried, mapped, strengthened, and developed more cohesive curricular and co-curricular programs incorporating civic engagement.

Many of the ideas presented here were first developed in the white paper *Creating Cohesive Paths to Civic Engagement: Five Approaches to Institutionalizing Civic Engagement* (Batten, Falcón, & Liss, 2017). Based on the review of detailed inventories conducted on the 26 campuses, the authors of this article propose a typology of different approaches to organizing this work. From our analysis, we offer a combination of model development and issues to consider in designing and structuring curricular and co-curricular programs for civic engagement and social responsibility (CESR) at the undergraduate level. In so doing, we aim to bridge earlier forms of scholarship on models with current forms of research on program effects. Project Pericles is uniquely positioned to accomplish this goal as it is a strong network of colleges and universities that have institutionally committed to CESR at the highest organizational levels (i.e., president, provost, and board of trustees). In this article, we also discuss curricular mapping as a powerful catalyst for institutionalizing civic engagement that can be undertaken with limited resources across a variety of campuses.

## A Note on Terminology

We use the term *civic engagement and social responsibility* (CESR) in our work; however, in this article, we frequently abbreviate the term to *civic engagement*. For some Periclean campuses, CESR is synonymous with civic or community engagement; others use a broader definition that includes social responsibility or social justice. In almost all the cases we describe here, civic engagement includes some community-based activity, whether in the college community or the local community. In general, as an organization with a diverse membership, Project Pericles uses broad and inclusive formulations, recognizing that each campus defines, understands, and implements these terms in its own way. We acknowledge that *civic engagement* and *community-based* are not synonymous. However, in the context of the work described here, there is significant overlap, and it is not within the scope of this article to examine the differences.

## Creating Cohesive Paths to Civic Engagement: Project Overview and Goals

With support from the Eugene M. Lang Foundation and The Teagle Foundation, work commenced on the Creating Cohesive Paths project in 2013. The initial goal was to gain an accurate picture of how civic engagement programs were organized on the participating campuses as a prerequisite for discussions about how each institution might want to shape its programs. All of Project Pericles' members (29 at the time) were invited to participate, and 26 chose to do so, receiving small stipends for their involvement. The 26 participating institutions were: Allegheny College, Bates College, Berea College, Bethune-Cookman University, Carleton College, Chatham University, Dillard University, Drew University, Elon University, Goucher College, Hampshire College, Hendrix College, Macalester College, New England College, The New School, Occidental College, Pace University, Pitzer College, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Rhodes College, St. Mary's College of Maryland, Swarthmore College, Ursinus College, Wagner College, Widener University, and The College of Wooster.

Using a survey instrument developed by Project Pericles and Barbara Holland, the participating colleges and universities conducted inventories of all curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular opportunities that incorporated civic engagement on their campuses and in their communities. After the data were submitted, Project Pericles staff prepared a preliminary analysis of the material, which they shared with campus leaders in preparation for a three-day retreat. At the retreat, participants discussed how the inventory findings could be used to strengthen existing programs, provide greater coherence, and develop additional offerings. Each campus also began to develop an action plan for implementing changes and strengthening the organization and structure of its civic engagement programming.

In addition to understanding the state of civic engagement programs on campuses, Project Pericles sought, through this initiative, to expand, integrate, promote, and strengthen civic engagement opportunities and programs for students on participating campuses. By asking each campus to draft an action plan, Project Pericles set out to apply knowledge gained from mapping the curriculum to further enhance existing CESR programming, develop new courses and opportunities that addressed gaps, and ensure that sequences of courses had clear learning outcomes that built upon and supported one another.

Project Pericles also sought to improve and institutionalize communications and structures of support for civic engagement by creating clear avenues for students to integrate CESR into their courses of study. This included certificate programs, formal minors, introductory seminars, concluding capstone seminars, thematic pathways with links to courses and co-curricular activities, and programs of study for majors across all disciplines. These new avenues organized civic engagement opportunities into more coherent programs of study and enhanced their visibility to make civic engagement more accessible to students. They also provided a framework for faculty members in a wide range of disciplines to better understand the connections between their own classes and work and other civic engagement opportunities on campus and in the community. Finally, the project sought to encourage campuses to improve communication around civic engagement with faculty and advisors as a way of increasing student knowledge and participation.

**Team-Based Inventory Process, Data Gathering, and Review**

The questions that guided the project included: Were there common threads in the organization of civic engagement programs? Could one even talk about curricular programs, or were they really individual courses? Were there programs, courses, and areas of expertise that were known within departments or divisions but not widely recognized across the campus? What was the role of civic engagement centers on the campuses? What impact did those centers have on the campuses and on the organization of programming?

Project Pericles promoted a team-based data-gathering process. Recognizing the unique culture of each campus, Project Pericles asked each institution to develop its own team, which included different combinations of representatives from civic engagement programs and centers, faculty, students, student life or other co-curricular arenas, institutional research, and community partners. Teams ranged from a few Project Pericles program directors on some campuses to more than 15 faculty members and administrators, including deans and department chairs. Through the team-based process, campus civic engagement leaders became aware of new forms of civic engagement programs and actions on their campuses. Furthermore, individuals from civic engagement centers and programs built new relationships with other institutional agents, such as

institutional research, which led to additional opportunities to strengthen the coherence and logic of courses and programs.

The goal of the inventory process was to gather from the participating colleges and universities as much information as possible about their organization of CESR courses and programs. The Creating Cohesive Paths inventory asked teams on each campus to consider as CESR any course incorporating a combination of specific learning outcomes and teaching strategies associated with civic engagement. Both the learning outcomes and teaching strategies are detailed in the *Civic Engagement in the Classroom* white paper and emerged from an analysis of more than 50 courses in Project Pericles' Civic Engagement Course (CEC) Program™ and interviews with faculty members (Liazos & Liss, 2009). Institutions were asked to include courses and programs that incorporated the following CESR learning outcomes:

1. Ability to recognize and view issues of social concern from multiple perspectives and to formulate and express an informed opinion on these issues.
2. Ability to relate academic materials to their practical applications regarding issues of social concern.
3. Motivation and capacity to utilize these abilities to take action in the community. (Liazos & Liss, 2009, p. 6-8).

The inventory comprised 17 questions about the scope and organization of CESR activities on campus and in the community (Batten et al., 2017). These included questions about the organization, coordination, and management of CESR, strategies for integrating CESR into the curriculum (e.g., first-year seminars), and any specialized programs such as certificates. It also asked questions about learning goals and institutional commitments to CESR, as well as open-ended questions about promising approaches and practices. This article is based upon four sources of material: the inventory data, observations from participants (including three of the authors), grant reports, and a series of semi-structured interviews conducted toward the end of the initiative in preparation for a white paper (Batten et al., 2017). In reviewing the material, we paid particular attention to commonalities and differences in the ways CESR was integrated into the curriculum as well as promising and emerging practices.

**Results from the Inventory Process**

All of the campuses that participated in the Creating Cohesive Paths project have a commitment to CESR, though their implementation of this commitment varies. On some campuses, a number of entrepreneurial professors have designed an array of stand-alone courses incorporating CESR, while other campuses have developed structured, multi-year CESR programs. Through our analysis, we identified five ideal approaches to integrating CESR into the curriculum: CESR

requirements, Civic Scholars programs, pathways approaches, certificates, and entrepreneurial/open-choice models.

We selected a few cases to illustrate the five approaches to organizing courses and activities and to highlight context-specific concepts. These are proposed as ideal types rather than as prescriptive models to implement. Although Project Pericles brings together diverse colleges and universities, we recognize that each campus has a unique culture, student body, and faculty, and thus will have its own connection to these five models.

**Approach One: CESR as a Requirement—Achieving Breadth**

Incorporating a CESR requirement into a college or university's general education or distribution requirements is an effective means of ensuring broad exposure and participation. This approach achieves greater breadth in terms of reaching students than most other approaches**.** Integration into these larger institutional frameworks guarantees that all students will incorporate at least some CESR work into their college learning. Based on our review of campus inventories and reports, as well as interviews with Project Pericles program directors on participating campuses, it is clear that implementing a CESR requirement necessitates a sustained faculty commitment to integrating CESR goals into courses and an institutional commitment to providing sufficient resources. We found that CESR requirements vary, with some colleges and universities utilizing a general distribution requirement, others requiring a specific first-year course, and still others mandating a sequence of courses. This model necessitates a system for tracking and recording student enrollment in CESR courses.

When Pitzer College started the mapping process, the campus already had a general CESR requirement in place that could be fulfilled with "one full-credit course that involved either community service, community-based fieldwork, or a community-based internship" (Pitzer College, 2013, p. 4). There were 31 CESR courses offered across 11 departments, including two first-year seminars. Other academic options included an independent study or a study-abroad program involving a community-based internship or community service. Pitzer described these as social responsibility courses and left their designation largely to the discretion of individual faculty members.

As part of an ongoing strategic plan, Pitzer revised its requirement after the mapping process, replacing the one-course social responsibility graduation requirement with a two-course social justice requirement. The new requirement includes both a social justice theory course and a social responsibility praxis course, as well as revised learning outcomes and criteria for each course. The college coupled its course requirements with "a systematic college-wide process for programmatic assessment of student learning outcomes" (Pitzer College, 2013, p. 7). The new requirement "adds rigor and structure to the ways in which we fulfill

our stated commitment to social responsibility, community engagement, and intercultural understanding" (p. 2).

Many campuses have adopted or are moving toward a system in which faculty members submit their courses for review prior to receiving a CESR designation—a process detailed in Jacoby's (2015) *Service Learning Essentials.* Participating Project Pericles campuses found that a review process is preferable as it offers assurances about quality, learning goals, ethics, and outcomes. In their discussion of the new requirement, the Pitzer team members specifically mentioned moving away from a system in which faculty designate their own courses. The participating campus leaders found that, in order to ensure consistency and quality, it was preferable that CESR course designations be made through an institutionalized process with guidelines, rather than on an ad hoc basis by faculty members teaching CESR courses because that gave them greater academic credibility on campus. Based on our interviews and conversations with participating campuses, we recommend that any review process be established with clear criteria and that the review be carried out by a civic engagement committee or a related curriculum committee. According to Strait (2009), "faculty … adopt … pedagogy more readily when it is found under the academic affairs umbrella" (p. 11).

Participating campus leaders shared that requiring a sequence of two or more courses was likely to foster a richer learning experience. Reflecting general recommendations in the civic engagement/service-learning field for preparation (Erickson, 2009), campus leaders felt that multi-course sequences gave students more time to reflect before and after their community-based experience and that students needed time prior to the experience to reflect on their positionality and to think about the intersections between academic and community/local knowledge. Participants also identified a side benefit of course sequencing: By requiring a sequence of two or more courses, the institution signals to faculty and students that it takes CESR seriously and is willing to devote significant resources to implementation.

Hendrix College developed sequential programs that begin in the first year of study and span multiple years (Hendrix College, 2013). Hendrix has a required first-year seminar, "The Engaged Citizen," in which students apply academic course content to understanding current social and political issues and community engagement. Students go on to the Odyssey Program, which is designed to promote active learning (Hendrix College, n.d.). Prior to graduation, students are required to complete three Odyssey experiences from six different categories: artistic creativity, global awareness, professional and leadership development, service to the world, undergraduate research, and special projects.

If a campus is considering revising or implementing new requirements, it is worth considering the institution's ability to deliver appropriate courses and the

community partners' capacity to work with and benefit from additional students. Faculty development workshops are helpful and will likely be needed to populate new requirements with courses. For example, the Pitzer team offered a series of workshops in preparation for the new requirement and conducted outreach to encourage STEM faculty members to offer courses that would fulfill the requirement.

The benefits of a CESR requirement approach ensure success when required activities and classes are of the highest quality and rigor. Students may perceive formal requirements as a hurdle and, without sufficient cognitive challenge, may not gain the deep learning the requirement is meant to deliver. While a commitment to a requirement is effective and efficient, it must be grounded in rigorous design and delivery and supported by institutional infrastructure (Jacoby, 2015).

## Approach Two: Intensive Programs—Civic Scholars—Models to Promote Depth

Civic Scholars programs offer an intensive programs for select cohorts of students. The Bonner Program is a recognized national model of this kind (Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation, n.d.). Bonner scholars apply to join a cohort and receive need-based scholarships for their demonstrated record of and commitment to community service. While the Bonner model incorporates course and policy work, Bonner cohorts focus on the co-curricular, whereas the Periclean model (explored here) emphasizes coursework as a central component of the cohort experience. The design of the Periclean colleges' Civic Scholars model commonly employs a group project that focuses the work and activity for each new entering cohort. This cohort approach, with shared coursework and projects undertaken as a group, differentiates the Civic Scholars model from other CESR models and approaches. While other researchers have examined formal certifications, majors, and minors (Butin & Seider, 2012), our review of campus reports of forms of civic engagement suggests that this model is different from others.

Elon University has the longest standing and most highly developed scholars programs among Periclean schools. Started in 2003, Elon's Periclean Scholars program is a

multidisciplinary service and engaged learning academic program that recruits select current first-year students who demonstrate a clear interest in and an ability to make a long-term commitment under the mentorship of a faculty person who guides them through their three years as a Periclean Scholar. (Elon University, 2013, p. 21). Starting in the second year, a cohort of approximately 30 Periclean Scholars takes a credit-bearing seminar each semester. As a group, the scholars develop a service project. Many seminars focus on developing the service project, which the cohort implements through a January term travel course to the region of study. Cohorts have undertaken travel to local and international destinations (e.g.,

Appalachia, Ghana, Haiti, and Sri Lanka), and projects have centered on topics such as environmental education, malnutrition, and rural development.

Specialized programs offer a select group of students a highly focused CESR experience over the span of their college experience. From a design perspective, the programs offer a series of sequential courses in which students build competencies while also engaging in group community-based learning/service projects. In addition to the CESR exposure, students gain experience designing, organizing, and managing extensive group projects. The Civic Scholars model offers promise for depth of experience for the students and incorporates high-impact practices identified by AAC&U (Kuh, 2008); however, it is often resource intensive, requires more faculty and staff commitment, and serves fewer students.

Civic Scholars programs, with their long-term projects, offer unique opportunities for students to develop the ability to work effectively with others and to practice leadership skills. Students also work over an extended period of time on tangible projects that allow them to demonstrate their problem-solving skills to employers. When campuses with these kinds of programs shared their experiences, leaders from other campuses indicated interest in this model. As a result, we (along with the participants) concluded during the project that this aspect of CESR deserves more attention, especially as an example of how liberal arts institutions can emphasize the effectiveness of such programs in enhancing career readiness.

**Approach Three: CESR Pathways—Choice and Visibility**

Some institutions are exploring pathways models for organizing CESR activities for students, faculty, and community partners. Pathways can be collections of courses and co-curricular opportunities on particular topics that a civic engagement center catalogs, or they can comprise a series of sequential courses with cumulative learning goals and integrated co-curricular offerings (Batten et al., 2017). Pathways are typically organized around issues or themes such as education/access, food/sustainability, health, and human rights and humanitarianism. By design, they are interdisciplinary in nature, bridging departmental silos and helping students learn different perspectives on important issues (Carleton College, 2017; Macalester College, 2019). Pathways models can help campus CESR development in a variety of ways, serving as a means for a college to make its commitment to community engagement visible to students, helping faculty understand how their courses may be linked with other courses, and providing a vehicle for campus partners to come together.

Carleton College and Macalester College are currently offering and developing additional pathways. Carleton has developed a series of pathways with faculty and community partners "to build organically on identified student passions and connect them with internship and career exploration opportunities" (Carleton

College, 2013, p. 21). Staff members from the Carleton Center for Community and Civic Engagement conceptualize CESR development on three levels: the institutional level, where the pathways model is utilized as a method for organizing work; the issue level, where different stakeholders (e.g., faculty, community partners, students) are pulled together based on shared concerns; and the student level, where meaningful CESR opportunities are made available and visible to all students (Carleton College, 2013). The second and third levels emphasize the degree to which pathways provide an opportunity to cross multiple boundaries—interpersonal, between departments, and between the campus and the community.

Macalester's approach comprises academic concentrations that "offer coherent pathways for students to fulfill general education and major requirements around a central set of inquiries or interdisciplinary areas of study" (Macalester College, 2013, p. 7). Internationalism and civic engagement are core values of a Macalester education; thus, study away/abroad is another element that Macalester builds into its pathways. At Macalester, pathways are noted on student transcripts, and in this way, the model can be seen as what Butin and Seider (2012) described as a new form of institutionalization of the field whereby majors, minors, and certificates are increasingly being developed.

Pathways are an excellent place to start if an institution is interested in strengthening students' CESR opportunities. Since they may initially rely on existing resources, pathways can be organized relatively quickly. Depending on the institution, the approval process is likely to be less onerous compared to a certificate or minor. One way to start is by researching what topics or issues interest students, faculty, and community members. A review of courses, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and college-community partnerships relevant to the topic should be carried out to determine if there are enough resources already available to offer a pathway. The next step is to pull together opportunities and present them in a way that is visible and accessible to students. Adding coherence to what is already available makes the offerings more accessible.

Significantly, developing a successful pathway involves bringing together existing constituencies for collaboration such as community partners or faculty members who have an interest in linking their work with the pathway. While pathways can play to existing strengths or existing interests among students and/or faculty, the model is flexible and the threshold for establishing a themed pathway is fairly low, perhaps only a few courses and co-curricular or extracurricular opportunities. With this scaffolding in place, additional components can be added or developed.

### Approach Four: Certificates—Offering Recognition

Butin and Seider (2012) addressed the need for programmatic forms for civically engaged higher education institutions: "Without 'academic homes' such

as … certificates, minors, and majors ... it becomes difficult to develop and sustain safe spaces for critical reflection and action over extended periods of time" (p. 6). Occidental College is creating such an academic "home" through certificate programs that highlight civic engagement opportunities and recognize the commitment and work of students. Occidental's Partnership for Community Engagement (PCE)—a joint project of the Center for Community Based Learning, the Office of Community Engagement, and the Urban and Environmental Policy Institute—developed a "Civic and Community Engagement" certificate:

> The development of this certificate program was grounded by the prior work done by the PCE in the Project Pericles mapping exercise.… The mapping exercise helped to establish collaborative efforts between the three offices of the PCE by highlighting the intersection among the curricular and co-curricular community engagement efforts. (Occidental College, 2015, p. 1)

In the first year, the PCE convened advisory groups of faculty, community partners, and students, implementing the certificate model early in the second year.

Certificates offer a format that is familiar to faculty and students alike, but establishing a certificate program is a more complex and involved undertaking than establishing a pathway. Certificates inhabit a middle ground between pathways and minors/requirements. Before launching a certificate program, faculty and staff must agree on and codify criteria for earning the certificate. In most cases, the proposed certificate program needs to be approved by the appropriate committees on campus. This additional administrative layer makes the creation of a certificate a more involved and lengthier process. Similar to earlier recommendations in this article, Furco and Holland (2009) recommended aligning efforts with institutional goals as a way to overcome resistance to increasing civic engagement efforts. In other words, demonstrating to administrators how the proposed changes will help advance the goals of a strategic plan or help further the institution's mission can provide leverage.

### Approach Five: Entrepreneurial/Open-Choice Model

On many campuses, there are a large number of CESR courses offered as part of the overall curriculum without a specialized program. In many ways, this is also how the field of higher education and community-engaged courses started (for more on the history of the field, see Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). By generating a large number of courses in a wide range of disciplines, colleges and universities reach a high percentage of their students. On some campuses, individual faculty members or groups of faculty members in particular departments have been the main impetus behind the development of CESR courses. In other instances, there is strong support for the development of CESR courses from either a civic engagement center or the administration. This flexible model enables faculty to

develop projects and programs that meet their needs and to respond to the interests of students and community groups.

Our research echoed trends from the larger field and highlighted a shift away from entrepreneurial/open-choice model toward greater institutionalization among many of the campuses participating in Creating Cohesive Paths (Batten et al., 2017). Especially on campuses without formalized programs or approaches, faculty and staff were beginning to realize the limits to what individual professors working with community partners could accomplish. Part of these limitations relates to scalability: As demand for CESR opportunities grows, it becomes increasingly difficult for individual faculty members to address this demand without some coordination and support from the college or university.

At Bates College, faculty, in collaboration with the Harward Center for Community Partnerships, developed over 50 community-based learning (CBL) courses, resulting in a total of over 75 CESR courses (offered across 23 departments) infusing CESR into the institutional culture (Bates College, 2013). The Bates example demonstrates that is possible to have successful CESR programming without a pathway or specific requirement. It should be noted that the Harward Center is very active on campus and in the community, and represents a clear commitment to and institutionalization of CESR. In many ways, the presence or absence of a strong civic engagement center represents a distinct variable outside of the five ideal approaches presented in this article. The Bates example raises another question for future research regarding the roles and responsibilities of different centers and the processes whereby they shape the civic engagement culture of individual campuses.

**Conclusion**

While supporting faculty leadership and curriculum development, the ultimate goal of Project Pericles' Creating Cohesive Paths was to promote an intentional approach to CESR that prioritizes coherent program design with sequential learning goals and the widespread integration of CESR programming throughout the undergraduate experience, particularly in the curriculum. Promoting this type of curricular reform and change is a multi-year process. Through Creating Cohesive Paths, Periclean campuses began important conversations, explored ways to take action to best integrate CESR opportunities into the curriculum, and launched initiatives to institutionalize this work.

Far too often, reports and reviews of institutional engagement efforts end up on a shelf upon conclusion. In this case, Project Pericles was able to support campuses in moving to implementation through two components: (1) Learning about each other's campuses through an intensive three-day retreat gave campuses concrete models, each with strengths and challenges; and, (2) mini-grants of $3,000 to $7,000 were provided to implement projects on some campuses based upon their action plans. The value of meaningful sharing cannot be underestimated. While

lessons can be gained from reading articles, participants stressed the importance of building personal relationships so that campus leaders can learn from and build trust with one another. Repeatedly, those interviewed indicated that gathering together enabled a deeper kind of learning about the broader field of civic engagement and the possibilities therein.

In addition to interactions on and between campuses, participants felt that the funding support also helped them move closer to achieving their individual campus goals. They also mentioned the value of having the imprimatur of an external institution. The funding, while small, and the opportunity to work on action plans together meant that campuses dedicated time to implementing the changes each had identified as relevant. In sum, the entire mapping process, as well as the action plans and mini-grants, enabled the campuses to build upon and refine their approaches to civic engagement while learning from other campuses in an approachable manner. The mapping/survey work identified the five approaches discussed in this article (i.e., requirements, Civic Scholars programs, pathways approaches, certificates, and entrepreneurial/open-choice models). This conceptual framework allowed campuses to locate their own approach within a constellation of approaches and to consider models or elements of other models to incorporate into their own programming.

When evaluating which CESR approaches to adopt, participating campuses recognized that serious consideration should be given to institutional context and what may be possible at any given time within that context. These approaches can be mutually supportive; that is, pursuing one approach does not preclude a second approach or connecting efforts across approaches. Drew University exemplifies this. With an already strong Civic Scholars program, Drew sought to develop programming that would expose more students to the civic engagement opportunities on campus and in the local community. It conducted a review of potential topics of interest and of existing resources and developed three pathways described as "thematic clusters": "Combating Disease," "Feeding the Hungry, Feeding the World" (food and sustainability), and "Leadership for the Future" (Drew University, 2015). Relying on existing resources, Drew developed these thematic clusters over the course of a summer. Drew is just one of the many campuses that incorporate more than one model. Future research may consider not just how campuses fit into one model, but how different models could be developed together to further strengthen the development of the whole.

Creating Cohesive Pathways promoted efforts to think comprehensively about the work of civic engagement on campus, how it can be structured to be accessible, and how to achieve participation by the majority of students. In her presentation at the three-day convening, Barbara Holland stressed that thought should be given to the number of students that can be reached utilizing any one approach. Much like the general trend toward institutionalization, Project Pericles

has argued that civic engagement and social responsibility are so important that all undergraduates should have some meaningful exposure to them as part of their academic experience.

Conversations with faculty and staff involved in this project proved that conducting an inventory (mapping) can be an empowering process for those involved. Campus after campus reported how helpful the process was for advancing civic engagement at their college or university. Indeed, a mapping exercise can be an important first step in developing more coherent and integrated approaches to CESR. In this case, participants realized that while the mapping is only an initial step, there was much to be gained from the exercise. Elements they shared at both the convening and in later interviews included the following. (1) Undertaking an inventory allowed multiple stakeholders to learn what was already available on campus and in the community. (2) Making these opportunities more visible to faculty members and students expanded the circle of those participating in CESR. (3) Conducting an inventory promoted collaborations between faculty and staff who had not previously worked together and provided an opportunity to exchange information and ideas with others on campus from different departments and units. (4) It raised interest among faculty members about incorporating CESR into their work. Finally, (5) it provided survey teams with time to contemplate how CESR was organized on their campus, to discuss particular strengths, identify where gaps exist, and begin to develop action plans for moving forward.

This project demonstrated that a mapping process can be undertaken, with limited resources, by campuses willing to invest time in understanding what is happening vis-a-vis civic engagement on campuses. This project pointed to the need for further definitional work within the field of civic engagement so that shared terminology around different practices, models, and organizational structures can be more accurately discussed. Additionally, while some of the models have already been studied—namely, the requirements, certificates, and entrepreneurial models—others, such as the Civic Scholars and the pathways models, could benefit from additional research on how engaging with others over time or around particular issues affects students, faculty, and community partners.

More practically, with the information gained through mapping and the five approaches to CESR proposed in this article, campuses should be able to take critical steps toward formalizing and institutionalizing their approaches to civic engagement. Giving serious consideration to how CESR is organized on campus represents an important step in moving toward a more coherent, intentional, and rigorous approach to CESR. The successes of the Creating Cohesive Pathways project demonstrate that civically engaged education has the potential to help students acquire the necessary knowledge, motivation, skills, and values to take action in their communities as thoughtful, engaged, and socially responsible citizens.

## References

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2009). *Inquiry and analysis VALUE rubric.* Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/inquiry-analysis

Bates College. (2013). *Report on mapping exercise*. Unpublished report, Project Pericles, New York.

Batten, G. S., Falcón, A., & Liss, J. R. (2017). *Creating cohesive paths to civic engagement: Five approaches to institutionalizing civic engagement*. Unpublished white paper, Project Pericles, New York.

Butin, D., & Seider, S. (2012). *The engaged campus: Certificates, minors, and majors as the new community engagement.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Carleton College. (2013). *Report on mapping exercise*. Unpublished report, Project Pericles, New York.

Carleton College. (2017). Welcome to Carleton's pathways! Retrieved from https://apps.carleton.edu/pathways/

Carnegie Foundation. (n.d.). Previous classifications. Retrieved from https://www.brown.edu/swearer/previous-classifications

Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation. (n.d.). The Bonner program. Retrieved from http://www.bonner.org/the-bonner-program/

Cress, C., Collier, P., Reitenauer, V., & Associates. (2013). *Learning through serving: A student guidebook for service learning and civic engagement across academic disciplines and cultural communities.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Drew University. (2015). *Report on mini-grant activities*. Unpublished report, Project Pericles, New York.

Driscoll, A. (2014). Analysis of the Carnegie Classification of Community Engagement: Patterns and impact on institutions. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, *2014*(162), 3-15.

Elon University. (2013). *Report on mapping exercise*. Unpublished report, Project Pericles, New York.

Erickson, J. (2009). Service-learning's impact on attitudes and behavior. In J. Strait & M. Lima, *The future of service learning: New solutions for sustaining and improving practice* (pp. 106-118). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Furco, A. (2002). *Self-assessment rubric for the institutionalization of service-learning in higher education.* Retrieved from https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/education/self-assessment-rubric-institutionalization-service-learning-higher-education

Furco, A., & Holland, B. (2009). Securing administrator support for service-learning institutionalization. In J. Strait & M. Lima, *The future of service learning: New solutions for sustaining and improving practice* (pp. 52-64). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Global University Network for Innovation. (2008). *Higher education in the world 3: Higher education: New challenges and emerging roles for human and social development.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI). (2014). *Higher education in the world 5: Knowledge, engagement & higher education: Contributing to social change.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hendrix College. (n.d.). Your Hendrix odyssey. Retrieved from https://www.hendrix.edu/odyssey/

Hendrix College. (2013). *Report on mapping exercise*. Unpublished report, Project Pericles, New York.

Holland, B. (1997). Analyzing institutional commitment to service: A model of key organizational factors. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning 4*, 30-41.

Holland, B. (2009). Will it last? Evidence of institutionalization at Carnegie classified community engagement institutions. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *2009* (147), 85-98.

Holland, B. (2014). Strategies for understanding the impact of civic learning and teaching. In A. Finley (Ed.), *Civic learning and teaching* (pp. 19-31). Washington, DC: Bringing Theory to Practice.

Jacoby, B., & Associates. (1996). *Service-learning in higher education: Concepts and practices.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Jacoby, B., &Associates. (2015). *Service-learning essentials: Questions, answers, and lessons learned.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kuh, G. D. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter.* Washington DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Liazos, A., & Liss, J.R. (2009). *Civic engagement in the classroom: Strategies for incorporating civic and social responsibility in the undergraduate curriculum.* Unpublished white paper, Project Pericles, New York.

Macalester College. (2013). *Report on mapping exercise*. Unpublished report, Project Pericles, New York.

Macalester College. (2019). Academic Concentrations. Retrieved from https://www.macalester.edu/igc/academicconcentrations/

Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. (2016). *Civic knowledge rubric and civic values rubric.* Retrieved from https://civiclearningrubric.wordpress.com/value-rubric-protocols/

Mooney, L., & Edwards, B. (2001). Experiential learning in sociology: Service learning and other community-based initiatives. *Teaching Sociology*, *29, 2,* 181-194.

Occidental College. (2013). *Report on mapping exercise*. Unpublished report, Project Pericles, New York.

Pitzer College. (2013). *Report on mapping exercise*. Unpublished report, Project Pericles, New York.

Stanton, T. K., Giles, D. E., Jr., & Cruz, N. (1999). *Service learning: A movement's pioneers reflect on its origins, practice, and future.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Strait, J. (2009). Critical questions and directions for the next generation of practitioners. In J. Strait & M. Lima, *The future of service learning: New solutions for sustaining and improving practice* (pp. 3-8). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Tapia, M. N. (2012). Academic excellence and community engagement: Reflections on the Latin American experience. In L. McIlrath, A. Lyons,

& R. Munck (Eds.), *Higher education and civic engagement: Comparitive perspectives* (pp. 187-203). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

## Authors

Garret S. Batten is the Assistant Director at Project Pericles. He was part of the leadership team that designed and developed Creating Cohesive Paths to Civic Engagement. He has extensive experience in higher education designing multi-campus initiatives. He previously served as a consultant for two Vice Presidents at the Ford Foundation, where he assisted with the design and development of the Difficult Dialogues Initiative, a multi-million dollar national program focused on promoting pluralism and academic freedom at universities. He subsequently served as the Associate Director of the Difficult Dialogues Initiative at The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression, where he supervised activities and worked with grantees at 29 institutions across the country. He holds a B.A. from Kenyon College, an M.A. in Sociology from New York University, and an M.A. in Political Science from The New School for Social Research, and. His contact information is garret.batten@projectpericles.org.

Arielle M. del Rosario is the Program Manager at Project Pericles where she leads programs promoting student activism and civic participation. Her previous experience spans the college access field, including recent roles at the Schuler Scholar Program in Illinois and the “I Have a Dream Foundation” of Boulder County, Colorado. She is dedicated to youth and community empowerment and is a proud Bonner and AmeriCorps alum. Arielle graduated Phi Beta Kappa, Summa Cum Laude, with a B.A. in Psychology from Rutgers University and holds a M.Sc., with Distinction, in Cognition in Science & Society from the University of Edinburgh. Her contact information is arielle.delrosario@projectpericles.org.

Adrienne Falcón is an associate professor in the Department of Public and Non-Profit Leadership at Metropolitan State University (MN) where she directs the Masters in Advocacy and Political Leadership program. Prior to this, she was the founding director of the Academic Civic Engagement (ACE) program in the Center for Community and Civic Engagement at Carleton College where she also lectured in the sociology department. She was the founding Program Director for Project Pericles at Carleton and led the assessment of civic engagement efforts for the Center as well as supporting faculty to develop more than 50 courses yearly across the disciplines. She spent 2015-2016 at the Universidad de Cuenca with a Fulbright fellowship researching the construction of universal civic engagement efforts for Ecuadorian college students. Adrienne received a B.A. in Latin American Studies from Carleton College and a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Chicago. Her contact information is adrienne.falcon@metrostate.edu.

Jan Risë Liss joined Project Pericles as its second Executive Director in 2005. At Project Pericles she has developed, launched, and implemented the Civic Engagement Course (CEC) Program™, Debating for Democracy (D4D)™, the Periclean Faculty Leadership (PFL) Program™, Creating Cohesive Paths to Civic Engagement, and Creating Curricular Coherence through Inquiry-Based Curricula and Thematic Pathways. She has senior leadership experience in management, planning, publishing, and financial development for a wide range of organizations, including The Aspen Institute, Consumers Reports, The New York Public Library, The Brookings Institution, American Express, and The Portland Art Association. Jan serves on the Board of Directors of Project Pericles. She served on the Reed College Board of Trustees from 2009-2013 and on the Board of Directors of College and Community Fellowship from 2006-2016. She received a B.A. in Psychology from Reed College and an M.B.A. from the Yale School of Management. Her contact information is jan.liss@projectpericles.org.

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Book Review:
# *Learning Through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Across Academic Disciplines and Cultural Communities (2nd Edition)* by Christine M. Cress, Peter J. Collier, Vicki L. Reitenauer, and Associates

Lori McKinney and Lisa Kim
Metropolitan State University of Denver

*Learning Through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Across Academic Disciplines and Cultural Communities (2nd Edition)*, by Christine M. Cress, Peter J. Collier, and Vicki L. Reitenauer. Stylus Publishing. July 2013. ISBN: 978-1-57922-990-0. 240 pages. Paperback, $27.50.

## Author Note

Lori McKinney, Applied Learning Center, Metropolitan State University of Denver; Lisa Kim, Applied Learning Center, Metropolitan State University of Denver.

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to Lori McKinney, Applied Learning Center, Metropolitan State University of Denver, P.O. Box 173362, Campus Box 7,
Denver, CO 80217. Phone: (303) 615-0985. E-mail: lmckinn9@msudenver.edu

Educators frequently adopt pedagogies, such as service-learning, that are purported to comprise best practices. However, students are not always privy to the background research that informs and supports these strategies. In *Learning Through Serving* (2nd edition, 2013), Cress, Collier, Reitenauer, and Associates address group work, community partnerships, identities, critical reflection, and other topics that are integral to service-learning. Their exposition provides students with insights into the rationale behind this pedagogy and how to successfully navigate service-learning, rather than simply imposing activities on them. If students have had previous negative experiences with group work or community involvement, for instance, it is particularly important to unpack these dynamics so that they give new experiences a fair chance and avoid repeating negative patterns. The authors also address student concerns about "what difference" service-learning makes by talking about starting from anywhere and moving forward from that point.

Each chapter of *Learning Through Serving* begins with an explanation of one aspect of service-learning (e.g., building community partnerships) followed by targeted exercises and reflection activities related to the topic. Although Cress et al. indicate the critical nature of specific exercises in the book, we did not always agree, as our comments reflect both a faculty perspective and a non-traditional-aged student perspective. Traditional-aged students or students who are earlier in their academic careers would most likely benefit from some of the guidebook's basic clarifications, as well as its straightforward guidance about professional and participatory behavior in community settings. Older students, however, may have already encountered some of the self-reflection exercises in the book or discovered successful ways of working with others. Faculty should therefore choose exercises to suit the diversity of students they are teaching.

The most energizing exercises in *Learning Through Serving* provide a compelling mix of challenging and opinion-based questions. For example, Exercise 2.6 ("Exploring Breakdowns") is designed to help students anticipate and problem-solve common breakdowns in communication and expectations when working with multiple stakeholders. The exercise presents vignettes in which students can evaluate communication breakdowns from different perspectives. There is an appropriate mix of scenarios that encourage students to both take ownership of their mistakes or confusion and to address potential conflicts with community partners. This exercise would serve as a fitting team project in which teams respond to one scenario and then discuss that response with the entire class, since an individual

student would not be able to respond to all of the scenarios posed. Exercise 8.1 ("A Leader You Admire") asks students to think about someone they consider a leader and to answer questions about that individual's qualities. The exercise highlights the importance of finding a balance between thinking about the self and about others in leadership. Indeed, there are many examples of leadership (at all levels), and it is important to recognize and acknowledge moments of great leadership in today's uncertain and polarizing times. Another exercise—Exercise 10.1 ("Menial Tasks")—offers younger students guidance around tying menial tasks to the big picture and, as a result, shifting their perspective on boredom. Specifically, the exercise directs students to make a list of tasks that seem menial and to link them to bigger goals. A modified version of this exercise might involve asking students to list ways they stayed present in, or made the most of, their menial tasks—an opportunity to shift from negative thinking to forward thinking.

We felt that other chapters in the book, while informative, presented too many reflection questions (e.g., Chapter 1, "What are Service-Learning and Civic Engagement?"; Chapter 8, "Leadership and Service-Learning") to answer in one exercise. Faculty should consider requiring students to only respond to three or four of the questions if the instructor is looking for lengthy or thoughtful responses. Exercises 2.2 to 2.5 ("What Can a Community Partner Expect?"; "Hopes, Fears, Needs, and Expectations"; "Mapping Assets, Interests, and Needs"; "Organizational Action Research") along with Exercises 2.7 and 2.8 ("Action Learning Plan for Serving"; "Which Type of Community-Based Learning is Right for Me?") all represent effective means for getting students to step outside themselves and think about the entire context surrounding community partners. However, all of the latter exercises are very similar and could be consolidated and simplified into one "form" or worksheet. Likewise, Exercise 8.5 ("Tools for Instrumental Leadership") may be redundant since it is the sort of self-assessment exercise that would likely be covered in other classes; on the other hand, if a student has not had a chance to engage in "real-world" experiences, the exercise would be a good opportunity to identify personal strengths, weaknesses, goals, and interests. Some exercises (e.g., Exercise 2.3: "Hopes, Fears, Needs, and Expectations") might be considered from different perspectives as well. Instead of asking about students' hopes and fears, it may be more meaningful to rephrase these questions so that students can practice seeing experiences from the perspective of community partners. Though, overall, these exercises could be very powerful and useful in helping students to think critically, identify client/community needs, anticipate

challenges, create action plans, and manage projects, the book consists of too many overlapping items.

Additionally, while we understand the intent of Chapter 5 in defining, categorizing, and illustrating different cultural contexts, the tone of the chapter seems overly academic and theoretical. We would have preferred that the authors be more direct in their discussion about setting expectations of behavior and professionalism. Students need to learn how to conduct themselves when they are interacting with vulnerable populations that are often drastically different from them. The book's student reflections about culture are excellent examples of students learning cultural humility and cultural awareness, but the examples are limited. Perhaps instructors can pull from their own personal observations when discussing cultural contexts.

The final section of the book succeeds in encouraging students to think about outcomes beyond the attainment of an academic grade. For instance, Chapter 11 presents the CIE (concept, indicator, evidence) model, whereby students identify the concept being evaluated (e.g., student awareness of homelessness), measurable indicator(s), and evidence to support the evaluation. Chapter 13 argues that focusing on small changes is a way to get started on making a difference. The book concludes by urging students to consider how they have changed in the process of completing the exercises and how they will move forward as the change they would like to see in the world.

Overall, we consider *Learning Through Serving* a valuable resource for students taking service-learning courses and for teaching assistants leading such courses. It explains many of the processes involved in service-learning and the rationale behind them. The exercises are suitable and relevant or can be easily modified to suit target audiences. Furthermore, the book is reasonably priced, making it possible to add the volume to a course reading list without placing much financial burden on students.

## Authors

Lori McKinney, Ph.D. is faculty/administrator in service learning at the Applied Learning Center, Metropolitan State University of Denver.

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161

# Book Review: *Factfulness: Ten Reason We're Wrong About the World—and Why Things Are Better Than You Think*, by Hans Rosling with Ola Rosling and Anna Rosling Rönnlund

Martin Shapiro
California State University, Fresno

*Factfulness: Ten Reason We're Wrong About the World—and Why Things Are Better Than You Think*. By Hans Rosling with Ola Rosling and Anna Rosling Rönnlund. Flatiron Books. 2018. ISBN: 978-1250107817. 352 pages. Hardcover, $27.99.

**Author Note**

Martin Shapiro, Department of Psychology, California State University, Fresno.

Correspondence regarding this book review should be addressed to Martin Shapiro, Professor, Department of Psychology, California State University, Fresno, Science II Bldg., Rm. 359, 2576 E. San Ramon ST11, Fresno, CA 93740. Phone: (559) 278-2358. E-mail: mashapiro@mail.fresnostate.edu

Things are worse than they have ever been—or at least that is the way it feels sometimes. We watch commentaries from our favorite cable news channels or view pithy memes with comments from our online social circle, and it feels as though the world is a much scarier place than it once was and that it is only getting worse. The world's population is exploding, violence and terrorism are on the rise, and abject poverty is gripping developing countries. However, what if many of these global statistics are actually *improving*, from extreme drops in poverty rates to stabilizing population growth to increased availability of education for girls? In Hans Rosling's latest book, *Factfulness*, he and his coauthors (his son and daughter-in-law) address common misperceptions of the changing world.

Hans Rosling was a Swedish professor of public health (he passed away in 2017) and had worked as practicing physician in some of the poorest places in the world. He is probably best known for his imaginative TED Talks about statistics related to global issues, including population growth, socioeconomic status, and healthcare. Knowing that statistics can be a rather dry topic, Rosling's often humorous talks employ wonderfully animated graphs or clever visual props designed to make global statistics more engaging and relatable. *Factfulness* continues in this vein, using humor and creative presentation to deliver well-researched information. His talks, and to a large degree his book, focus on three fundamental observations: (1) Many problems in the world are not as bad as they once were and are projected to get better; (2) when surveyed about statistics on global issues, most people show biases and are systematically wrong; and (3) there are reasons for these biases, and there are ways to combat people's negative instincts.

*Factfulness* begins with a series of multiple-choice questions that Rosling had been asking for many years while touring the world giving his talks. The questions deal with population demographics, economics, education, and healthcare. For example, he asks, "In all low-income countries across the world today, how many girls finish primary school (20%, 40%, or 60%)?" and "How many of the world's one-year-old children today have been vaccinated against some diseases (20%, 50%, or 80%)?" (The answers are 60% and 80%, respectively.) He had surveyed the general public, college students, professors, heads of state, and high-ranking officials in the United Nations and found that, regardless of education or experience, people underestimated progress around these issues. Rosling points out that not only are most people wrong about the state of global issues, but their assessments are also systematically worse than random chance; as he often says in the book, chimpanzees would do better if asked the same questions. In other words, we are often not simply uninformed—we are misinformed and pessimistic, and have selective memories. There are systematic and predictable biases that prevent

individuals from learning about and believing some facts; yet, accurate information is necessary for making good decisions and policies going forward.

The chapters of the book take on some of these questions and present the best, most current statistics available. For example, regarding wealth and poverty, Rosling points out that for a long time, public dialogue has centered on "us vs. them," "the first world vs. the third world," "developing vs. developed countries." He calls this the "gap" instinct to maintain such separations. His foundation, Gapminder.org, was named after this problem and is a very useful resource for finding statistics and creating the kind of animated graphs he presented in his talks. Although there was some validity to this thinking 50 years ago, most people today live in middle-income countries, and the world has become a more homogenous place in relation to wealth, education, and access to healthcare. As he states, "while the world has changed, the worldview has not, at least in the heads of the 'Westerners'" (p. 27). He spends each chapter addressing different human instincts that bias perceptions such as negativity, fear, and blame. He takes the reader through each of these problems in thinking and provides tools to combat the biases.

The book succeeds in many ways. The statistics, tables, and graphs are kept to a relative minimum, and when they are used, they are clear and relevant. Rosling uses anecdotes and examples to illustrate fundamental points that, again, are often humorous but poignant. He not only presents the problems that people have with information, such as biases, negative instincts, and selective memories, but he also provides useful remedies. I did struggle at times with the book's optimism about the present and future world. Though he does discuss broad issues that are not improving, such as growing inequality, climate change, and ecosystem and species decline, I wish he had addressed these concerns with more urgency. That said, I too might be falling into the same cognitive traps—for instance, he dedicates a chapter to the "urgency" instinct. As Rosling writes, "I am not an optimist. I'm a very serious possibilist. It's a new category where we take emotion apart, and we just work analytically with the world" (p. 69).

*Factfulness* is an excellent book for those who value good information over gut feelings especially in this age when social media, political discourse, and cable news programs often employ hyperbole, fear, and xenophobia as tools to convince individuals of untrue information. This book is extremely important for educators who are relied upon more and more to serve as guides for students on how to assess and consume factual and reliable information. Indeed, *Factfulness* is ideal for educators designing lesson plans for several reasons. First, it provides compelling but underreported information about how the world has slowly become a better place, what Rosling calls "the secret, silent miracle of human progress" (p. 51). Second, it shows that average caring citizens have achieved these improvements related to poverty, energy, healthcare, education, and women's rights by taking

action—that one person's vote matters and that behaviors make a difference. Third, it provides tools for avoiding cognitive and emotional pitfalls while consuming information. College students need guidance and practice in dealing with the deluge of often-biased information coming from peers, parents, social media, television, advertisements, and school. While the content of *Factfulness* should be taught at any level of high school or college, it might be best reserved as required reading for college students at the upper-division and graduate levels. Reading this book will encourage students to identify their own biases, engage in excellent discussions, and perhaps even take action.

## Author

**Dr. Martin Shapiro** is a Professor of Psychology at California State University, Fresno. He specializes in psychophysiology and decision making. Dr. Shapiro was a member of AASCU's Global Challenges Committee from 2007 to 2014 and is an editor on both a manual for teachers and an e-book for students. He has taught a course on Global Challenges for the Smittcamp Honors College since 2008 and helped develop training for faculty members teaching in a First Year Experience Program with the theme of Global Challenges. Dr. Shapiro is the chair of a Taskforce on High-Impact Practices at CSU Fresno and has conducted workshops on project-based learning. He has presented and held workshops at the American Democracy Project Conference on teaching Global Challenges.