PART TWO

Engagement Through Civic Education

Educating for Citizenship in a Diverse and Interdependent Society

By Nancy Thomas

Not long ago, I attended a meeting with the senior commissioner of a state agency who, almost in passing, commented, "I just don't understand it. Our office has partnerships with [specific universities in the state] but not with _____," naming several other institutions. He continued,

> *Why is it so difficult to find the 'front door' of some universities? We can offer students opportunities to do research or experience their career choice. We have money – not much, but we could certainly write grant proposals together or otherwise pool our resources. We can provide faculty with research opportunities that might do some actual* good *in this state. I can't imagine that a university wouldn't want the publicity of students or professors learning while simultaneously doing a service to the region. I can't understand why this isn't easier.*

Working in partnership with and reaching out to communities is not new to higher education. Some longstanding forms of university-community engagement include continuing education and cooperative extension programs, faculty consulting, student volunteerism, and community-based service learning. Commentators and researchers in higher education, myself included, have addressed at length "what works" to structure and sustain community collaborations.[32] Yet despite knowing a lot about the design and characteristics of successful partnerships, we instinctively know that not all campuses are equal in the eyes of a community. Some have a more obvi-

ous "front door" than others.

Institutions that can be counted on to support mutually valuable community-university partnerships are those with an obvious commitment to educating for a diverse democracy and global society. One might look to an institution's mission statement and publications to understand its priorities. A better way would be to examine the curriculum and look for a comprehensive, integrated set of academic programs and structures that support education for the public good.

The purpose of this essay is to place the community-university partnerships movement in the context of a broader reform agenda to advance higher education's role in American democracy and society in general. Understanding this, community members can better assess an institution's readiness for effective collaboration. There are many curricular and co-curricular strategies universities can undertake that encourage students to be productive, responsible citizens and that inspire a sense of public purpose in faculty and administrators. This essay examines: (1) global and multicultural studies, (2) interdisciplinary studies, (3) learning communities, (4) interactive pedagogies, (5) ethics and moral reasoning, (6) engaged scholarship, and (7) deliberative dialogue. The centrality of these reforms to the academic program can indicate how seriously an institution views its role in democracy and, in turn, how committed it will be as an institutional partner in addressing social and community concerns.

Global and Multicultural Studies

Nearly all institutions are immersed in efforts to recruit a diverse student population and increase retention by fostering an inclusive campus climate. Similarly, nearly all institutions provide students with opportunities to study abroad or otherwise study communities beyond U.S. boundaries. New scholarly approaches to diversity and international studies promote an integrated approach, one that educates for understanding diverse cultures and understanding cultures as diverse, developing intercultural skills, and understanding global processes.[33]

The events of September 11 and those since underscore the need to educate our students about cultures different from their own. This can best be accomplished by linking American diversity with non-American communities (e.g., understanding the Asian-American experience by studying the history, culture, and politics of Asia). Similarly, understanding cultures as diverse is also important. Bernstein and Cock advocate in favor of comparative cultural studies. They note, for example, "Both the United States and South Africa will need citizens who are not passive followers, who do not sit back and pin their hopes on charismatic leaders, who can find ways beyond apathy or violence to deal with elected leaders and the problems facing their countries."[34]

Creating opportunities for students to cultivate their intercultural competencies is equally important. This can be accomplished through creative living-learning arrangements, study abroad, intergroup dialogue, and foreign language study.

Alternatively, students can study particular issues (e.g., AIDS, poverty, terrorism) from a global perspective. "[S]tudents need to be able to discern, not how distant these world events are from their immediate concerns, but how their immediate concerns have threads which link them – their actions, their votes, their choices as consumers – to these world events."[35]

Interdisciplinary Studies

Several years ago, I directed an initiative for the American Council on Education (ACE) called Listening to Communities. ACE hosted eight public forums across the country, inviting local civic, political, and educational leaders to discuss the role of higher education in American democracy. Several participants expressed the view that student learning has become too much of a series of "disconnected, overspecialized fields" to be of much relevance to larger society. One participant reasoned, "*Real* solutions to problems are not specialized. *Real* solutions are interdisciplinary." Participants maintained that "higher education does our country a disservice by disconnecting specialties."

Interdisciplinarity is not new. "What is new," explains Deborah DeZure of the Center for Instructional Excellence at Eastern Michigan University, "is the intentionality with which these initiatives seek to promote connected learning beyond the discipline as a primary goal – pursuing knowledge that integrates and synthesizes the perspectives of several disciplines into a construction that is greater than the sum of its distinctly disciplinary parts." Reflecting the views of the Listening to Communities participants, Dr. DeZure comments, "Simply put: life is interdisciplinary."[36]

Most campuses are struggling with how to structure interdisciplinary studies. How courses are cross-listed, how interdisciplinary scholarship is recognized and rewarded, where faculty appointments are made, whether joint appointments are encouraged, how new courses are developed – these are a few questions interdisciplinary studies can raise.

At first, it might seem that the nuances of interdisciplinary studies have little to do with the establishment and sustainability of valuable institutional civic engagement. But interdisciplinarity really has everything to do with civic engagement if one views community-university partnerships as opportunities to study, experience, and address pressing public concerns. These problems are almost always interdisciplinary in nature. The structures in place at a university to support this kind of work are essential.

Learning Communities

Learning communities[37]are structured opportunities to live and study across disciplines. Usually, learning communities are team-taught and involve a small group of students organized around an ethical or social theme or issue. One might find learning communities within first-year experiences, senior capstones, and interdisciplinary

studies such as women's studies. Learning community faculty are capable discussion leaders who facilitate learning. "Teaching as telling" is rare; active pedagogies such as service learning are the norm.

Learning communities provide students with an opportunity to *practice* what Richard Guarasci, President of Wagner College, calls "the arts of democracy."[38] The arts of democracy include critical thinking, problem identification and framing, collaborative problem solving and action, negotiating across difference, empathy, teamwork, and holistic thinking. These outcomes are usually on the list of civic skills or competencies many campuses seek to cultivate.

Interactive Pedagogies

Objections to the traditional model of "teaching as telling" are based both on what we know about student learning and on philosophical concerns. Studies estimate that in only a few months, students forget as much as 50 percent of course content that is communicated via lectures. Critical thinking – the ability to analyze, synthesize, apply, and evaluate – is most likely to result from interactive learning experiences. The philosophical objection goes something like this: there is something plainly objectionable to the notion that professors know everything and students know nothing. If the real goal of education not just the transfer of information but contemporary application of knowledge and cultivation of wisdom, then context is essential and students have much to contribute to a learning experience.

What probably works best is a combination of traditional teaching methods and interactive pedagogies. Those include:

- **Cooperative learning:** noncompetitive learning in which the reward structure encourages students to work together to accomplish a common end. Group work to study an issue or write a paper is a common example.
- **Collaborative learning:** more of an emergent process where the faculty member designs educational experiences and coaches the learning process along but allows the group to take collective responsibility for much of what happens in the process.
- **Service learning:** combines service and learning. Students receive course credit and the service experience is linked to course content. Effective service learning emphasizes context (understanding the political and social aspects of a community rather than studying the problem or organization in isolation) and reflection (through journal writing or portfolios).
- **Problem-based learning:** the learning experience is organized around an issue or problem, usually one of social, economic, political, or ethical import. Often these experiences are interdisciplinary in approach and intentionally bridge the gap between theory and practice.

- **Case method teaching:** learning that revolves around a fictional or nonfictional case that serves as the basis for discussion in the classroom. Case method teaching can involve students reading and discussing a pre-written case or having students study a situation and write up a case for discussion.

According to George Kuh, director of the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE), students who take advantage of the academic resources available to them on campus make higher gains in levels of learning and personal development than those who do not.[39] And engaged learners are, the theory goes, more likely to graduate and become engaged members of other kinds of communities. NSSE measures student activities that point to students' level of academic challenge, time on task, and participation in educationally purposeful activities. Campuses that score well on NSSE are generally campuses that provide students with a broad range of interactive pedagogies and opportunities to engage in learning. In other words, a good NSSE score is evidence that a campus values its democratic mission.

Personal and Professional Ethics

One can hardly open a newspaper without reading about corruption among the ranks of our political officials and business leaders. Universities, too, feel the impact of students who are morally on or crossing a line. Student cheating, hate crimes, vandalism, bad acts linked to alcohol abuse, and acts of incivility shock campuses. Researchers report that students are more interested in personal advancement and "being very well-off financially" than "developing a meaningful purpose in life."[40]

Campuses are responding with honor codes, programs on academic integrity, and other campus-wide efforts to foster a culture of honesty and integrity. What is probably needed is more of an "ethics-across-the-curriculum" approach that includes frequent analysis of and discourse about pressing moral issues.

The Scholarship of Engagement

Despite the broad range of institutional types and missions, promotion and tenure on most campuses continues to be based on a "publish or perish" standard that considers only theoretical, discipline-based scholarship. Teaching and service are lightly weighted in the promotion process and, as a result, faculty members teach and do service in ways that take the least amount of time and energy. Redefining reward systems to recognize the scholarships of engagement or teaching, much less interdisciplinary research, can involve a complicated change process. Most institutions simply won't or can't invest the resources necessary for this level of reform.

Some less rigid approaches are taking hold. They include: an integration of the scholarships of discovery, engagement, and teaching; outreach scholarship such as qualitative, action, applied, and participatory research – research that draws from and is responsive to society; and interdisciplinary research. Those who perform this kind

of research are viewed as public scholars, discoverers of new knowledge *and* its application throughout society.

Deliberative Dialogue

Drawing from the work of community builders, educators are calling for deliberative dialogue, what Peter Levine at the University of Maryland's Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) defines as "improved talk." In *The Magic of Dialogue,* Daniel Yankelovich of Public Agenda explains the need for attention to the quality of public discourse:

> *Until recently, most people made the assumption that no particular skill is required to do dialogue. They assumed that dialogue is just another form of conversation and that we surely know how to carry out conversations without requiring a special discipline… But in the past decade, a growing literature has demonstrated that there is something unique about dialogue when it is done well…*
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> *Today's diversity means not only that more people participate in decision making but that the new players bring different backgrounds and expectations to the table. Dialogue used to be simpler to do because we shared frameworks. When frameworks are held in common, there is no need to be self-conscious about doing dialogue. No special method is needed to arrive at mutual understanding. You just do it… But we can no longer "just do it." Reaching mutual understanding through dialogue doesn't come naturally to us anymore.*[41]

Deliberative dialogue – improved talk – can be structured in many ways, but approaches share some common characteristics. They are:

- An explicit **exploration of the values** of the participants and the organization or community in which the conversations are taking place;
- **Enough time** to study and understand an issue, with an emphasis on process and relationship-building, in addition to outcomes and action;
- **Trained facilitators** who guide the discussions, help establish ground rules, synthesize views, and keep the process on course;
- A progression that starts with **personal reflections and perspectives,** that draws from the lived experiences of the participants;
- Language clarification and the development of **agreement on the nature of the problem,** the reason for the conversations;
- A **commitment by the group to *study* an issue,** to seek out additional information, and to explore views that might not be represented in the room;
- A progression that moves **from talk to action,** with ownership remaining with the group or individuals in the group.[42]

One might argue that our campuses already feel strained by task forces, committees, and meetings. Yet most educators would agree that these groups sometimes behave in ways that are less than civil and that the results of their efforts are inconsistent at best. Modeling the behaviors we expect of our students could, in turn, impact how we as a nation do our business. Were higher education as an industry to make deliberative dialogue a *habit* in our classrooms and our internal decision-making processes and a *foundation* for community-university partnerships, we would affect the very core of the institution and society.

Conclusion

The Listening to Communities initiative shaped my thinking about quality education in profound ways. I was struck by the comments of one community leader in particular who said,

> *We know that we can train social workers. We have good, for example, child welfare workers. But there is this absolute zone that I do not think has been thought through yet. Where and how is the preparation for people whose job is not social work in the classic sense as it is social and economic engagement of people? It is waiting to happen . . . It is crosscutting and interdisciplinary. It follows the trends of community builders. It makes the connection between human capital strategies and place-based strategies. Currently, the people who train people for jobs are not the same people who are doing, for example, affordable housing or welfare reform. They are in separate camps. One is accused of building a ghetto. The other is accused of only looking out for individuals who have no sense of community. The more advanced educational organizations are trying to break down that barrier. They are trying to do both.*

"Doing both" requires more than simply dabbling around the margins. This model implies significant reform – a culture shift and an examination of the institutional ethos. This kind of reform takes time, leadership, commitment, vision, campus-wide dialogues, and perseverance to implement these ideas in ways that make sense to students, faculty, and the public. Yet we know that the rewards are rich. Students who engage in the programs identified above are better problem solvers and critical thinkers. They have a sense of empathy and civic commitment. They are more likely to be life-long learners. They are creative, holistic thinkers. The rewards are there for faculty as well, for they will be inspired and renewed and feel a sense of public purpose.

Colleges and universities can inspire in students a sense of purpose and commitment to something larger than themselves. But doing so requires that they move beyond isolated, distinct initiatives.[43] A comprehensive commitment to educating for democracy and society – and commensurately its effectiveness as an institutional

community partner – can be measured by an institution's integration of interactive pedagogies, global and multicultural studies, learning communities, interdisciplinary programs, ethics, engaged scholarship, and habits of deliberative discourse.

Nancy Thomas, *J.D., Ed.D. is Director of the Democracy Project, Society for Values in Higher Education, Associate Vice Provost for Multicultural and International Affairs at the University of Connecticut, and a Senior Associate with Study Circles Resource Center.*

The Role of Higher Education in Preparing Undergraduates for Lives of Civic Responsibility

Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich,
Elizabeth Beaumont, and Jason Stephens

Most Americans know that the years 2003-2006 mark the bicentennial of the great exploration of the North American continent by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. What is much less well known is the extent of the preparations for that great journey. Under the guidance of Thomas Jefferson, and while living in the White House, Lewis collected a wide array of tools and learned how to use many that were new to him, including chronometers, sextants, and other scientific instruments; medical equipment; and so on. With the help of some extraordinary teachers and mentors, including Albert Gallatin, Benjamin Rush, and others, he mastered the knowledge that he would need (in geography, botany, natural history, astronomy, commerce, and American Indian culture) and learned scientific techniques that would allow him to use his explorations to expand the boundaries of knowledge.

Before assembling a team, Lewis thought hard about what kind of men he needed and how he could maintain a cohesive corps. He collected the best existing maps, however incomplete they were, and out of his experience with those maps and the integration of the disparate bodies of knowledge he had studied, his plans took shape. These preparations helped to chart the course of the Lewis & Clark journey and the adjustments the team would make in response to unexpected obstacles and events. When the extensive preparations were finished and the explorers set out, their direction may have been only slightly different than it would have been with less preparation. But over many months of travel, the initial shift in trajectory and the continuing, responsive alterations no doubt led to a route distinctly different from the

one they would have taken without such extensive preparations. The scientific, political, and cultural success of the expedition was critically dependent on lessons learned during the preparation period.

Those preparations are an apt metaphor for what a college education, at its best, can provide in preparing students for lives of civic responsibility. Faculty and administrators hope and expect that, like Lewis and Clark, their students will not just be traveling forward and trying to complete the journey but also learning and accomplishing valuable things along the way. They also hope that the college experience will shift graduates' life trajectories and give them new ways of responding to later experiences, as the explorers' preparation did, so that the shift in direction will be magnified over time, making the long-term impact of a college education substantial and influential.

Both personally and professionally, today's college graduates will set out to do many things in their lives. They cannot predict their many roles and responsibilities. But whatever else they do, college graduates should become active and morally responsible citizens of their communities. That is not only important for them, in order to lead fulfilling lives; it is also important for our country. If our democracy is to persist, then we must prepare the generation to come to be full participants. That civic engagement goal should occupy a prominent part of the "pre-expedition" preparation students undertake in college.

College is a critical time for "educating citizens," as we discuss in our new book by that title,[44] and from which material for this essay is drawn. In our view, moral and civic responsibility are inseparable. American democratic principles, including tolerance and respect for others, procedural impartiality, and concern for both the rights of the individual and the welfare of the group, are all grounded in moral principles. Likewise, the problems that the civically engaged citizen must confront always include strong moral themes – for example, fair access to resources such as housing, the moral obligation to consider future generations in making environmental policy, and the conflicting claims of multiple stakeholders in community decision-making. None of these issues can be adequately resolved without a consideration of moral questions. A person can become civically and politically active without good judgment and a strong moral compass, but it is hardly wise to promote that kind of involvement. Because civic responsibility is inescapably threaded with moral values, we believe that higher education must aspire to foster both moral and civic maturity and must confront educationally the many links between them.

Unfortunately, for many students, undergraduate education is simply a collection of separate courses and other experiences with little coherence. No less troubling, many campuses make little effort to structure undergraduate learning to ensure that civic learning is infused throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum or that it is an integral part of the campus culture.

The Components of Civic Maturity: Understanding, Motivation, and Skills

What are the educational goals of this preparation for responsible citizenship? Civic maturity is not a unitary phenomenon. It is made up of three closely related and interactive dimensions: (1) understanding; (2) motivation; and (3) skills. Research shows that all three can be profoundly shaped by undergraduate experiences.

All three categories include several important elements. One that is central to civic understanding is developing a sophisticated grasp of key civic and political concepts. Students need to master and learn to apply knowledge in areas of critical importance for responsible citizenship at every level – local, state, national, and international.

In order to be civically engaged and responsible, students must not only achieve a deeper understanding of the issues, they must also be highly motivated to do something about them. This means their interests and values must reflect social and moral concerns, and these concerns must be central to their sense of who they are, to their identity. If they are to be engaged citizens, they must also have a sense of political efficacy, that is, a belief that what they think and do civically and politically matters. And they need long-term faith and hope to get them through the inevitable times when their well-intended actions do not seem to move them toward their goals.

Finally, we want our college graduates to be skilled in their civic and political participation. This means they need to learn about the particular mechanisms that are likely to be effective in tackling different kinds of issues and to have the practical skills they need to succeed. These skills include political discourse and other forms of communication, interpersonal capacities, and many specific skills of civic and political engagement, such as how to negotiate differences of opinion and move a group forward under conditions of mutual respect.

Those campuses that are most successful in promoting the civic responsibility of their students do so with a high degree of intentionality that links the curricular, the extra-curricular, and the campus climate in ways that are reinforcing. At too many campuses, connections among and between student experiences in these three realms are made, if at all, by students. At some colleges and universities, however, conscious efforts are made by administrators, faculty, and staff to ensure that students have multiple opportunities in all three domains to strengthen their understanding, skills, and motivation. A few words follow about each domain.

Promoting Civic Responsibility By Linking the Curricular, Extra-Curricular, and Campus Climate

The College Curriculum

First, the curriculum should be center stage. Among undergraduates at every college and university are some who look for ways to contribute to something larger than themselves, who are inspired by moral ideals or passionate about social or political issues. They are primed to take advantage of the many ways a college education can

deepen those convictions and bring them to a higher level of intellectual and practical sophistication and competence. Even so, not all of these students find their way to the right developmental experiences. For some, the inspiration will fade during college, giving way to narrower, more self-interested concerns so that their earlier passion becomes only a memory.

Other students – perhaps most students – come to college less interested in questions of civic involvement and social responsibility. They may have done some volunteer work and found it discouraging or unexciting; they may find politics confusing or even repellent. Reaching this group of students – awakening in them broader concerns and giving them a sense that they can grasp and contribute to the complicated realities of civic and political life – is at least as important as reaching those who are more immediately receptive. Weaving civic issues into the heart of the curriculum is the best hope of connecting with the hard-to-reach students and making sure that students already on an inspired path will not lose their way.

At Wayne State University, for example, the late Otto Feinstein, professor of political science, taught a required one-semester introductory American government course that drew 300 students each year and provided them with a powerful experience in political participation. In addition to lectures and readings, the course includes various activities designed to foster civic literacy and participation. In the Youth Urban Agenda component, students work together in small groups to create five- to ten-point political agendas. They then conduct background research relating to their proposed agendas; articulate the issues and show why they are important; identify which groups have a stake in a particular issue and how they can be reached; search for solutions, including public policies that effectively respond to the identified need; and develop a strategy for pursuing the agenda. At the end of the research phase, each student group elects delegates to an Urban Agenda Convention, which is charged with developing a common political agenda for Wayne State and the Detroit community. Students also organize public information campaigns around the issues, conduct surveys on key issues, and interview candidates for political office about their views on the Urban Agenda. A survey of college students who took part in these activities found that they showed significantly higher rates of voting in the state primary and were more likely to work in an election campaign and engage in other political activities than a comparison group of students who did not participate in the course's political engagement components.

Faculty development and logistical support are critically important to integrate civic concerns into the curriculum on a broad scale. Interested faculty who lack the substantive knowledge and pedagogical expertise they need to meet this objective can benefit from structured faculty development seminars, ongoing discussion groups, and connections with national programs that support civic education. One important issue, for example, is how best to avoid indoctrination while fostering civic responsibility in ways that encourage students to engage with both thoughtfulness and pas-

sion on controversial issues of civic concern.

Some faculty may say, "We can't concern ourselves with the civic development of our students – our focus is on academic learning." But our research has shown that incorporating moral and civic goals into the curriculum does not require a trade-off with more narrowly academic goals. In fact, we are convinced that the two strands of undergraduate education, disciplinary or "academic" and civic, are much more powerful when they are creatively combined. Part of the value of broadening the goals of higher education is that linking academic material to students' lives and personal concerns and passions will lead to deeper understanding and more memorable learning of the course's academic content.

The pedagogical approach used in civic education that has been subjected to the most empirical research is service learning, a strategy that ties disciplinary study and community service with structured reflection. The results of this research make it clear that service learning does enhance academic performance as well as many aspects of civic engagement. This is particularly true when it is linked to problem-based learning and collaborative learning.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Second, extra-curricular activities are often even more important in the enhancement of student learning than curricular programs. Although curricular attention to civic development is essential, extra-curricular life is also rich with sites of civic engagement, and its impact on students can be transformative. Civic learning beyond the classroom includes both structured extra-curricular programs and activities and many aspects of the campus culture. Leadership programs, service activities, disciplinary, religious, and political clubs, and programs designed to foster communication and respect across diverse populations are most directly relevant to students' moral and civic growth, but moral and civic learning can be incorporated into virtually any kind of student activity with sensitive guidance and support from faculty and staff advisors. That guidance is perhaps the single most important dimension of effective extra-curricular programs, and one that is too often absent.

On most campuses, extra-curricular activities are not intentionally designed with specific developmental goals in mind, nor are they coordinated with each other or with the curriculum. In contrast, we were struck by the special efforts taken at many of the campuses we chose in our book for site visits to think about the goals of their student life activities and to integrate the work of faculty and professional staff by linking academic learning with extra-curricular life.

A hallmark of good practice for powerful extra-curricular activities is careful involvement and oversight by faculty, student affairs staff, and administrators. Some students come to college knowing that they want to be involved in the theater or the student newspaper. But most are unsure. Campuses where students receive guidance not only about curricular programs but also about extra-curricular activities and how

these programs and activities can complement each other are much more likely to find that their students choose a positive path that matches their interests and the institution's goals for civic learning.

Campus Culture

Third, important elements in student life on every campus are located outside any formal program. They are part of the ethos of campus life and the campus's sense of community. Every campus has a distinctive culture in many ways, some quite conscious, others less so. At those we visited, we were almost always struck by some physical symbols of the mission and culture. For some, it is almost impossible to describe their distinctive approaches to civic education without mentioning certain features of their architecture, decor, landscaping, or other aspects of their settings. At Portland State University, for example, a bridge links two of the main buildings at the gateway to the campus. Across the bridge in bold letters is written, "Let Knowledge Serve the City," which became the mantra for the campus thanks to the energy and initiative of student leaders who proposed it. Another particularly dramatic example is Turtle Mountain Community College in rural North Dakota, which is housed in a building that powerfully reflects the college's commitment to Native American values. The building forms the abstracted shape of a thunderbird, and all the design elements reflect the college's efforts to integrate tribal culture into undergraduate education. The entrance is framed by a circle of columns, and within each is inscribed one of seven key teachings that are central to the Turtle Mountain Chippewa tribe. This physical representation of the school's values is mirrored in the curriculum, with many of the courses weaving learning about Chippewa culture with vocational and academic preparation.

In addition to physical symbols, institutional culture on many campuses was revealed in iconic stories that are told and retold in each new cohort of students and faculty. We heard stories relating to the institutions' founding or transformation, stories about heroes, and stories of transgression against cherished norms and areas where the boundaries of "right behavior" were contested. Incoming students heard those stories, often even before they arrived as freshmen.

Institutional attention is needed in all three realms—the curriculum, the extracurriculum, and the campus climate—if students are to become active, engaged, responsible citizens. No less important, students are much more likely to gain civic learning if there is conscious institutional attention to the reinforcing, interacting links among the three.

Lessons and Next Steps

We saw many examples of exemplary campuses in terms of civic learning, which we document in our book. We found no institution, however, that gave campus-wide attention to that subset of civic engagement that involves politics, however the term

is defined. It has been well-documented that undergraduates today are more ignorant about politics, more disengaged from politics, and more deeply cynical concerning politics than preceding generations, a trend line that has inched steadily downward since the 1960s. Many undergraduates see politics as corrupt and believe the problem of politics for hire is not fixable. We think that those of us engaged in higher education have an obligation to help those students gain the abilities, capacities, and the will to address these problems in our political system. Opting out is simply not an option for our democracy. Rather, the new generations of leaders, our students, need to reshape politics to meet the standards to which they and we aspire, and need to be prepared to accomplish that vital task.

In the course of working on *Educating Citizens,* we found many strong courses and programs focused on political engagement like the one at Wayne State. But our research convinced us that this arena needs much more attention, and it is now the focus of our Political Engagement Project at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. For this new project, we collected detailed information on many strong courses and programs, all of which share the explicit goal of educating for political understanding and engagement. We chose twenty-one that represent a wide range of disciplines, formats and strategies, student populations, and institutional contexts. In collaboration with the faculty and program leaders of these courses and programs, we are studying their impact on participating students.

Although the courses and programs address a wide array of goals and use many strategies to do so, we have identified four goals – such as political identity and efficacy – and five pedagogies – such as structured reflection and political action projects – for special attention. Together with the participating leaders, we are creating resources about the meaning and use of these goals and pedagogies for faculty and program staff wanting to educate for political engagement.

Conclusion

It has become commonplace to bemoan a loss of moral and civic responsibility, particularly among young people, and to urge increased attention to civic education among students at every level. If the issue were viewed simply as one of information transfer, the role of higher education would inevitably be a modest one. This is no less true if the issue were seen solely as proselytizing students to pay attention to politics. We have much more in mind. With John Dewey, we believe that democracy and education are inexorably intertwined. This is not simply because our citizenry must be educated to choose responsibly our political leaders and hold them accountable. Much more important, a democratic society is one in which citizens interact with each other, learn from each other, grow with each other, and together make their communities more than the sum of their parts. Our common task is to translate that goal into effective educational programs.

Anne Colby, *Ph.D. is a Senior Scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.*

Thomas Ehrlich, *J.D. is a Senior Scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.*

Elizabeth Beaumont, *Ph.D. is a Research Scholar and the Director of the Political Engagement Project at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.*

Jason Stephens *is a Research Assistant at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and a doctoral candidate in educational psychology at Stanford University.*

Brown University and Student Civic Engagement: A Recent Graduate's Perspective

Claiborne Walthall

University education stands apart from previous educational experiences. Not only are the level of scholarship and volume of work much more demanding, but students' motivations also make a pronounced shift. Where earlier schooling involved meeting the goals set out by others, university education requires a student to find an inner motivation, to begin seeing education as the means to some life goals. Though some people find this motivation earlier, in college it becomes necessary to have enough self-awareness to find a field to pursue, or at least a discipline that will provide tools for finding a vocation and involvement with one's community. University education focuses the individual on standards and knowledge, to be sure, but the larger goal is to help the individual develop in his own way, to become a unique person, contributing to the world in a useful manner.

I graduated from Brown University in 2002 and am still in the process of understanding the civic lessons of my college years. However, at two years' distance, I can already see my experiences much more clearly than when I was in the midst of them. In this essay, I begin with a discussion of Brown's open curriculum as a model of citizenship and community participation. Secondly, I turn to concentration (or major) requirements, the area where I see the most interesting approaches to civic engagement and the greatest opportunities for integrating public service and curriculum. Finally, I evaluate the considerable positive aspects of Brown's institutional effort to engage with the community, the Swearer Center for Public Service, while suggesting a few ways to expand its mission and continue the evolution of the curriculum.

The Open Curriculum

Compared to the demands of papers, tests, and presentations – not to mention a demanding lifestyle outside of class – the search for what one "likes to do" might seem simple. However, experience has taught most of us that this selection process is anything but easy. Uninspiring high school classes may turn off many students from subjects that they actually find interesting. New subjects and disciplines present hundreds of new directions for curious students. Curiosity may have killed the cat, but it generally just exhausts the new college student. Discouragement, burnout, and confusion haunt first-year dorms after a few months.

Many colleges and universities combat these problems by instituting a core curriculum that provides a framework for students to sample various disciplines and a basis for pursuing a major. Other universities have moved away from this model, with Brown University leading the way thirty-five years ago. Then called the New Curriculum, the movement in 1969 from a core curriculum to a no-requirements "open curriculum" marked a distinct break from the past and shifted the entire burden of designing an educational program onto each student's shoulders. The open curriculum allows a student to take whatever courses she chooses and for which she is qualified. The open curriculum forces a student to be self-motivated and to challenge him or herself. This exceptional approach to educational design provided a unique lesson for me as a student, moving me beyond the demands of others and forcing me to identify and pursue the fields that interested me the most.

The essential feature of the open curriculum is responsibility. Students find an impressive array of choices in every semester and can enroll in just about any entry-level class. The temptation to sample each department pulls strongly on all but the most intellectually incurious Brown student, but some simple arithmetic shows that one could indeed try out each department, taking only one class, and remain at Brown for many years without earning any degree. The student's first, most basic responsibility is to find courses that lead to a degree in an area of interest and craft a program that results in graduation. With many departments requiring ten to fourteen classes for the major – out of a maximum possible 40 classes in four years at Brown – this is not terribly restrictive. However, planning ahead, especially with sequences of courses, is a key part of a student's responsibility.

The second tier of responsibility encouraged by the curriculum – and one that begins to have direct relevance to civic engagement – is that students must recognize when they need help and when to ask for advice. In the first year, Brown provides advisors for each student and requires that these advisors sign off on course selections. However, many advisees only seek out a signature, not developing relationships with these first year advisors. Departments also provide a similar arrangement, requiring students to secure the signature of the departmental concentration advisor before embarking on the degree path during their sophomore year. Often these concentration advisors become mentors, as happened in my case, but the most successful stu-

dents also find professors and teachers from courses, campus activities, jobs, or religious groups who become informal mentors. These advisors become a true support network and provide great advice for those of us just starting out on a life path.

Brown provides a toolbox from which to craft most any life imaginable. The open curriculum taught me that "it's your life; do it right." For me, this was the greatest citizenship lesson the University offered. It makes the students the primary stakeholders in their own education, therefore earning us a stake in the community. If the curriculum is not working, then it is up to students to take action. If free speech is threatened on campus, take action. If the right courses aren't offered, take action. While it remains a venerable institution, Brown is remarkably open to change because the daily transactions between students, professors, and administration are not between customers, providers, and support staff, but rather interactions among members of a community.

Concentration Requirements

Brown allows students great freedom in designing a curriculum to suit their interests, but it does not leave them completely on their own. In eight semesters, the University expects students to graduate with a degree from one of the departments.

The department in which I took my major, Urban Studies, was one of the more outward-looking in terms of community involvement. The descriptive literature given to prospective concentrators indicates that urban studies courses study characteristics of cities everywhere, but that the department specifically uses Providence as an urban laboratory. To fulfill this mission, the department offers a few in-house courses and seminars, but also cross-lists courses from many other departments throughout the university.

The in-house offerings include two seminars, at least one of which is required for the diploma, that compel department majors to seek out local resources and involvement. One seminar focuses on historic preservation, and the final project for the course is to examine some aspect of local preservation in detail, using local archives, agencies, and feet-on-pavement effort for research. The other seminar actually places students in various organizations and agencies for a semester-long internship. Many students become very involved in the municipal planning office, community garden movement, and mayor's office. These two seminars push students off campus and out of the library to experience their discipline on the ground and in the community they are studying. A number of students build on interests encouraged by these experiences and develop them into honors theses in their senior year.

The historic preservation seminar exposed me to the wide array of local resources Providence had to offer. I also got to know the folks "doing" preservation work. My project uncovered the history of a road project that had dramatically changed the relationship of one neighborhood to its waterfront. I also assisted a classmate in taking measured drawings of an historic structure slated for demolition. The drawings serve

as a community record of the building. These learning experiences have remained with me and led me to pursue skills and classes such as Geographic Information Systems software (computer-based mapping and analysis). This skill led to my first job as a GIS analyst and trainer with a nonprofit conservation organization in Washington, D.C.

Several Brown departments offer similar courses under the umbrella of "service learning." For instance, a Spanish class might meet daily for language practice, but also require that students spend four hours per week working with ESL students. Discussing one such course with a fellow Brown graduate, she commented that this service learning course was one of the best educational experiences of her four years. Coming from someone who studied abroad, this was no small praise.

Service learning was Brown's effort to encourage students not just to take courses that advanced their career and life goals, but also give something back to the community. A few generations ago, a university student was expected to share knowledge, either as a teacher or professional. In today's job market, a college degree is almost a prerequisite for any job that pays above the minimum wage, and we have perhaps lost some of this greater expectation of students. Through service learning, students gain valuable real-world practice in their subject – nothing makes you learn a subject as well as having to teach it – and the community benefits for little to no cost from the intellectual energy and resources of the university. Both students and the community are served by a mutual interest.

The unfortunate aspect of service learning at Brown is that few departments actually required it. Urban Studies requires some involvement and facilitates many other opportunities if a student desires. Several other departments such as public policy and education have similar opportunities that place students in the community. But most departments have no requirements that encourage students to stray from College Hill. Certainly many students become involved in their own ways in various community projects, and many students take great advantage of the service learning opportunities offered to them outside of their concentrations. But it is one thing to offer service opportunities as one of many options; it is another thing entirely to integrate service into the concentration requirements. Requiring service learning would restore the natural link between receiving a formal education and having a greater responsibility to others because of the advantages afforded a university student.

Through the open curriculum's writing requirement, first year students with weak application essays are required to take a writing class in the English department. The requirement is in place because Brown felt that writing was a basic academic skill that no student could afford to be without. Without imposing any core curriculum, the University could quite easily institute a public service requirement. Just as writing is necessary to function in an academic setting, public service is a vital experience for a university student. Concentration requirements could preserve the freedom and flexibility of the open curriculum while at the same time demand attention to public ser-

vice. In many cases, this would not necessarily add courses, but would strengthen the service learning program and mandate that all departments offer courses that include service learning components. In departments where the concentration requirements are numerous (for example, more than twenty courses are required for the engineering certificate), integrating service learning into those requirements would allow some students who would otherwise miss out to experience public service. Instead of adding some required "hours per week" of generic service, integrating public service with the curriculum itself would produce a well-trained and knowledgeable citizenry, as well as allow students to receive credit towards graduation for the good work they do.

The Swearer Center for Public Service

Since 1987, Brown has offered an exceptional resource to its students in the form of the Swearer Center for Public Service. Located near the heart of campus, the Center occupies an entire building with thirteen full-time staff and about forty-five part-time student staff members. The Swearer Center's main function is to serve as a centralized location for interface between the student body and service opportunities and organizations. With Brown's varied and capable student body, the Swearer Center does yeoman's work indeed, connecting the Brown community with organizations in Providence and throughout the world. One of the important aspects of the Center's work is providing funding for service projects. Through a variety of in-house grants and grant-making support, the Center offers invaluable resources and opportunities on campus for students who use it.

The Swearer Center also serves as a clearinghouse for information and a meeting space. Through the part-time student staff, volunteer coordinators, and partnerships with programs throughout the University, the Center provides a variety of local service opportunities. These range from more traditional Habitat for Humanity and mentoring programs to providing support for students interested in starting their own local outreach initiatives. The Center maintains an excellent web site with a wealth of resources. Moreover, it is guided by a set of pedagogical principles that emphasize public service as a learning experience. In connecting the ideas of service and education, the Center tries to assure a rich educational experience for students as well as the community.

For example, one relatively recent effort to integrate learning and service is the University-Community Academic Advising Program. This initiative, designed for fifty first-year students, helps identify and connect students who are interested in public service through an advising process and seminar designed to support exploration of this interest. This is an admirable effort, and I hope that the principles of the program can expand to become a part of every student's experience.

Many of the Swearer Center's programs require a weekly commitment for a semester. For students able to make the commitment, this allows for continuity and

stability in the programs in which students become involved. However, this commitment also limits the ability of many students to become involved. Campus life is never stable, and even a regular class schedule is at times stretched or altered to accommodate special projects or important events. Because the Swearer Center's programs focus on extracurricular service, many students are left out. Two possible strategies might address this shortcoming.

First, the Center might offer more one-day service opportunities. While no mentoring program would function effectively with this kind of commitment, a single-day or weekend service project could accomplish a great deal. Moreover, it is unlikely that a one-day event would detract from a semester-long program. In fact, it is more likely that a wider variety of students would be drawn in, especially those students who are not able to commit to a more regular schedule of service. Short-term projects would also serve to break the "cliquish" atmosphere that many students perceived surrounding the Center. When many programs require a "you're either committed for the long haul, or you're not needed" kind of decision, it gives the impression that there is only one kind of service, that which is offered by current programs. A better balance of short- and long-term opportunities would also allow more flexibility from one semester to the next for students. If during one semester a lighter class load allowed weekly service, then the student could take part. If the next semester a heavy class load only allowed for periodic commitment, then the student could still be involved. Providing a wider range of opportunities could increase investment of time and interest in the Center and also expand the definition of service on campus.

The other strategy would be to more fully integrate Swearer Center involvement with curricular service learning opportunities. While a printed list and web site guide of service learning classes was available while I was a student at Brown, it was not presented to students as part of the Course Announcement Bulletin. In a quick and admittedly unscientific survey of several fellow recent Brown alumni, most people's reaction was "List – what list?" While the Writing Center would send a salvo of reminder slips to our mailboxes several times a semester detailing its programs, the Swearer Center did little to publicize service learning opportunities. This is not to say the university students' hands need to be held through every step of public service opportunities. However, increasing the visibility of these opportunities, especially where they intersect with the curriculum, would yield great results.

The World Beyond Brown

In sum, the public service opportunities at Brown were and are vast in number and scope. As with many universities, the energy and interest among students to participate in the local and world communities is very strong. After graduating from Brown, many students continue on into a variety of service-oriented activities. I followed this path, myself. The spring and summer of my senior year were spent in a fairly traditional job search: finding postings, sending résumés, and hopelessly expect-

ing interviews that never came. As several months passed, I began looking at my skills and interests and making connections through friends and faculty. During my last semester, I had taken a course in Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, which is a computer-based mapping and database application. The course I had taken emphasized the use of this technology in public policy settings, requiring students to take on some real-world question as a final project. My enjoyment of this, as well as an awareness that GIS was becoming universally accepted as the urban studies and planning tool of choice, led me to seek out jobs that were using this technology in new and relevant ways. Through some conversations and legwork, I found an organization in Washington, D.C. that was working on conservation and urban forestry issues using this GIS technology. During the course of my employment there, I daily used the skills of that Brown course as well as the deeper lessons of service that I had been taught and that had become part and parcel of any activity I might undertake. Conversations with fellow graduates have yielded similar stories: a recent graduate whose brief involvement with a Swearer Center program led her to found a nonprofit organization in Providence called English for Action, or a fellow urban studies graduate whose thesis work on after-school programs led him to teaching in one such program in Boston after graduation . Brown continues to play an active role in many of these success stories as well, providing advising support, alumni networks, and even some monetary grants for graduates' service ideas. Overall, there is a culture of service that the University fosters, on and off campus, during a student's career and afterwards.

Brown is especially fortunate to have the Swearer Center, a well-regarded, funded and utilized center for encouraging and supporting good works. Any suggestions for improving Brown's civic engagement activities should be seen in light of the extensive service that many undergraduates are already doing. The main improvement would be to more fully integrate the learning process with public service. By seeing citizenship as a necessary component of the curriculum, universities can move beyond extracurricular service opportunities, to graduating students whose very lives are spent improving their world through the work they do.

Claiborne Walthall *is a 2002 graduate of Brown University.*