
The Democracy Decade Action Plan: 2027-2037

Civic and Democracy Learning for All College Students

It's time to reclaim higher education's indispensable civic role in sustaining democracy.

In the decade ahead, the [National Leadership Council to Advance Civic and Democracy Learning for All](#) (NLC) and its 20+ organizational partners will **work with all postsecondary institutions** (two and four-year, public and private)—and in coordination with the K-12 and business communities—to expand and deepen higher education's oldest and highest calling: preparing the next generation of students to contribute to democracy's future, and to bring civic and ethical responsibility to their communities and careers.

Our Goal:

By 2037—the 250th anniversary of the writing of the U.S. Constitution—high-quality civic and democracy learning will become a hallmark of U.S. higher education, reaching every undergraduate student and every degree.

Why This Work is Needed:

American democracy faces a season of strain. Public trust in U.S. institutions of every kind and in one another has eroded. Civic fragmentation has deepened. Employers report that civic hostility pervades the workplace, costing billions of dollars in lost productivity. Americans under 30—democracy's next generation—doubt whether U.S. democracy can solve urgent problems and express significantly more skepticism about it than older generations. U.S. democracy needs concerted efforts to ensure both the future of constitutional self-governance and the renewal of habits of mind and heart, including civil discourse and collaboration, on which a healthy pluralist democracy depends.

The Unprecedented Opportunity:

U.S. higher education is positioned as never before to respond to this difficult season. Today, nearly 2/3s of Americans enroll in postsecondary education. Over half of adult Americans hold a two or four-year degree. Further, almost all K-12 teachers prepare for their work in higher education, and they in turn teach almost every American. Far from an ivory tower, higher education has become an indispensable community partner, working tirelessly on research and problem-solving important to the wider society. By committing collectively to quality democracy and civic learning for all students and by winning wide support for that goal, higher education can add value to students' education and spark transformative change in the character and creativity of tomorrow's democracy.

The Democracy Decade Plan Leverages Civic Momentum Already in View:

At the institutional level, and increasingly through state, state system, and accreditation commissions' support, broad-based college civics movements are visibly gaining ground. The NLC's shared goal is to move from where we are today—with college civic learning usually available but typically still optional—to civic inquiry, dialogue, and problem-solving as an integral part of all students' college study and a valued component of career preparation.

A democracy can thrive only if Americans understand its principles and values; believe in democratic ways of solving problems; and have gained active experience in translating those broad principles into practical, collaborative problem-solving with diverse partners on issues that matter, both to the student and to society. To these ends, the Decade Plan features a flexible learning framework that **combines (1) Democracy Knowledge; (2) Civic Dialogue and Problem-Solving Skills; (3) Practical Experience with Real-World Problem-solving; and (4) Career-related Civic and Ethical Learning.**

The Democracy Decade Action Plan in Brief:

1. **Promote the Case:** Advocate continuously—with influential national partners, philanthropic leaders, employers, and student champions—on the necessity of civic and democracy learning for all college students, across all degree programs;
2. **Move from Silos to Synergies:** Help institutions connect civic and democracy learning initiatives with **closely related student success and career priorities** including completion, workplace readiness, and responsible uses of artificial intelligence (AI);
3. **Accelerate Campus-Level Innovation:** Assist higher education institutions in making civic and democracy learning—in the curriculum *and* experiential learning—part of what it means to earn a quality degree and prepare for a successful career;
4. **Engage and Mobilize Institutional Leaders:** Provide programs, resources and projects that engage leaders at all levels with the power and value of active civic and democracy learning, and with ways to connect that learning to related priorities including student success, career readiness, and artificial intelligence literacy;
5. **Catalyze Faculty Champions:** Build a national network of Democracy Decade Faculty Leaders—across all states—who can lead campus-level efforts to thread civic learning across the curriculum and strengthen faculty readiness to help students gain the intended knowledge, skills, experiences, and reflective judgment;
6. **Spark Policy Support and Public Investment:** Align policy, accreditation, investment, and accountability for continuous progress and providing civic learning at scale;
7. **Demonstrate Value:** Track and report progress in helping all college students gain the knowledge, skills, and examined commitments on which democracy's future depends.