

Diversity & Democracy

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Student and Institutional Engagement in Political Life



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About Diversity & Democracy

Diversity & Democracy supports higher education faculty and leaders as they design and implement programs that advance civic learning and democratic engagement, global learning, and engagement with diversity to prepare students for socially responsible action in today's interdependent but unequal world. The publication features evidence, research, and exemplary practices to assist practitioners in creating learning opportunities that realize this vision. To access *Diversity & Democracy* online, visit www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/.

FROM THE EDITOR

Student and Institutional Engagement in Political Life

The idea is set forth in that most foundational of American documents, the Declaration of Independence: the power of governments depends on “the consent of the governed” (1776). And yet, the power of a thriving American democracy depends on so much more than consent. It requires active engagement and involvement in public life—participatory practice that, in turn, necessitates a certain set of proficiencies among a nation’s people.

Higher education has a responsibility to help students develop these proficiencies (Adelman et al. 2014, 5). That is why, as detailed recently in Lumina Foundation’s Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP), all college students should be expected to demonstrate civic and global learning, which itself requires “analytic inquiry and engagement with diverse perspectives” (19). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has promoted such learning across its recent projects, from its work helping teams of educators apply the DQP’s recommendations to its collaborative leadership through the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Action Network (described on page 31) to its signature initiative, Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP).

This issue of *Diversity & Democracy* examines how educators can direct their efforts toward a particular and often-maligned sphere: the realm of political engagement. As detailed extensively by the Pew Research Center, the circulatory system of American democracy sometimes seems far from healthy. According to Pew Research, “partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive ... than at any point in the past two decades” (Pew 2014a, 6) and “public trust in government” is “near historic lows” (Pew

2014b). As a critical incubator for civic practice, higher education has an essential role to play in reviving public life.

Produced in partnership with the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (or IDHE, an initiative of Tufts University’s Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service) and guest edited by institute director Nancy Thomas, this issue of *Diversity & Democracy* invites readers to explore innovative practices supporting student and institutional engagement in political life. Framed by Thomas’s meditation on academia’s work to educate students for “the democracy we need” and highlighting curricular practices that IDHE researchers have found particularly effective in advancing such educational goals, the issue suggests the various roles that students, faculty, and administrators can play in education for a politically engaged and socially just democracy. The issue highlights practices consistent with IDHE research on campus cultures that promote political learning and engagement and illustrates how institutions are preparing students to bridge theory and practice in public life. It encourages readers to consider the role of student voting in political learning, while refusing to equate political engagement with voting alone.

The issue delves into these topics because, at a time when American politics are widely associated with partisanship, investment in political life—a single but critical aspect of civic engagement—must be a priority across partisan lines. As Thomas argues in her article, “a healthy democracy” requires civic participation, attention to equity, access to information, and strong government structures. By engaging in politics and policy issues, students can practice the proficiencies they need to help build

such a democracy and contribute to American and global society. Through higher education, they can hone critical skills in working collaboratively across difference, as they will be called to do in their professional and public lives.

As richly diverse as the American people are—in race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, and, indeed, ideological affiliation—there is one key aspect that they often share. As Abigail Adams wrote to Thomas Jefferson, first drafter of the Declaration, of partisanship in the early republic: “upon both sides are characters, who possess honest views, and act from honorable motives ... who tho entertaining different opinions, have for their object the public welfare and happiness” (1804). This issue invites readers to pursue that “welfare and happiness” by embracing the challenges and significant rewards of student and institutional political engagement.

—Kathryn Peltier Campbell
Editor, *Diversity & Democracy*

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[STUDENT AND INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL LIFE]

The Politics of Learning for Democracy

■ **NANCY L. THOMAS**, director of the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, Tufts University

Colleges and universities are facing a series of teachable moments as awareness grows about a range of social and political failures—among them, wealth inequality, racial injustice, sexual assault on and off campus, and the rapid increase in student debt. Driven by anger and frustration, many students are protesting these failures. At the same time, political polarization is on the rise among policy makers and within communities. Polarization off campus affects interactions among students and between students and faculty, which in turn affect the learning environment more broadly. In addition, many institutions have faced politically motivated external pressures. Seeing these trends, I worry that colleges and universities are unprepared for political turbulence, and that they might quash student energy or forego an opportunity for the academy to revisit and invigorate its role in democracy. Can higher education leverage these challenges to facilitate learning for democracy?

This article places college student political learning and participation in a broader context by focusing on two long-standing struggles in higher education: how the academy achieves its civic mission, and how it protects and *earns* its freedom to achieve that mission. The two issues—academic and expressive freedom and civic learning—are symbiotic. Yet both are inconsistently understood and practiced, making them vulnerable to distortion and dilution. Civic learning, academic freedom, and free speech *for what?* To academics, the importance of freedom is obvious; it is less so to policy makers, many Americans, and some students.

By clarifying and recommitting to its democratic purpose, the academy can articulate an educational rationale for the privilege of expressive and academic freedom while simultaneously advancing civic learning.

Academic Freedom, Free Expression, and Challenges to Democratic Discourse

To fulfill the research, teaching, and civic missions of our nation's institutions, faculty, institutional leaders, staff, and students must study and work in environments conducive to the robust exchange of ideas. In these environments, controversial issues can be discussed and debated without the threat of unreasonable intrusion or suppression. Faculty are free to select research topics and course content; challenge the views of students, colleagues, institutional leaders, and public officials; and publish provocative analyses designed to change the status quo. Students may express dissenting views, in ways that do not disrupt the educational process, without being censored, in an environment that values active listening. Faculty, institutional leaders, and students are part of a *college*, where they share responsibility and work together for the common purpose of facilitating knowledge, skills, and wisdom. Colleges and universities need intellectual autonomy and a commitment to the principles of shared governance so that they can be independent venues for examining matters of public concern.

Academic freedom originated in Germany in the late nineteenth century to facilitate and protect faculty self-governance. The twentieth-century

American version expanded faculty governance to provide protection for faculty research and teaching (Nelson 2010, 12). In 1915, the founders of the American Association of University Professors issued a Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure, which they restated jointly with the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities, or AAC&U) in 1940 (American Association of University Professors 2014); more recently, AAC&U's Board of Directors again addressed this topic with a statement on "Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility" (2006).

Over the years, the academy has faced repeated efforts, often politically motivated, to limit what is taught or studied. The most recent barrage of challenges to academic freedom seems highly charged and partisan. The University of North Carolina's Board of Governors recently voted to close three campus centers on poverty, biodiversity, and civic engagement, and supporters of the centers claimed that the decision was politically motivated (Jaschik 2015). University systems nationally have faced bipartisan budget cuts, with the University of Wisconsin system providing one prominent example (Kelderman 2015). Across the country, faculty members' research, teaching, and public statements have faced government intervention, trustee calls for sanctions, institutional investigations, public protest, targeted scrutiny by self-appointed watch groups, national media storms, and student ire (Thomas 2010). Challenges to the speech of individual academics come from left-leaning and right-leaning students, academics, public entities, and private individuals as well as from a well-organized "conservative rapid-response network" (Solow 2004).

Free expression also faces internal challenges, particularly when what constitutes free speech to one person may be

oppressive speech to another. The higher education media have reported countless cases of hecklers drowning out speakers. At Florida Atlantic University, hecklers targeting a guest speaker were escorted from a university building but allowed to continue their protest outside. The students sued the university, claiming they had been denied their civil right to free expression (Straumsheim 2013). At the University of Minnesota, the administration received a petition saying that a flyer advertising an event on political satire in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris was offensive and violated Muslim students' "deeply held religious affiliations" (Flaherty 2015). First Amendment tensions in public life over conflicting religious and expressive freedoms are growing on college campuses.

Hate speech, microaggressions, and poorly worded but unintentionally discriminatory remarks may work to create toxic and unequal learning environments, arguably violating Civil Rights laws such as Title IX. It is understandable that students who are frustrated about the slow pace of social justice in public life or about unwelcoming campus climates would want to challenge such speech. At the University of Washington, graduate students negotiated a new collective bargaining agreement indicating that "employees' work environments should be 'free from everyday exchanges—including words or actions' that denigrate or exclude them as members of some group or class"—a ban that has prompted concerns over free speech (Schmidt 2015). Actions of this type typically provoke claims that the liberal academy has yielded to political correctness. Some argue that efforts to shield students from microaggressions are "creating a culture in which everyone must think twice before speaking up, lest they face charges of insensitivity, aggression, or worse" (Lukianoff and Haidt 2015, 44).

Rhetorically, colleges and universities embrace American pluralism, welcoming new populations of students to their campuses and touting diversity of perspective as both an educational and a leadership asset. But these changes shake traditions and norms and introduce new uncertainties into established teaching and decision-making practices. For example, studies repeatedly show that people who act counter-stereotypically face bias. Women can express anger and men can express sadness; but to avoid being judged as diverging from stereotypes, they must offer explanations for their expressions (Brescoll and Uhlmann 2008). There is a need to establish new, more inclusive norms and to talk

Higher education's goals should be aspirational, not for the democracy we *have* but for the democracy we *need*.

through the implications of stereotype bias. Managing controversial issues in the classroom or negotiating consensus in shared decision making requires masterful facilitation skills on the part of faculty and institutional leaders. Both are simply more difficult to do when diverse social identities, ideologies, and lived experiences are considered. What's needed is a dialogue to generate new, shared standards for how members of a campus community study and live together.

These formidable challenges to academic and expressive freedom affect the academy's ability to advance civic learning and engagement. The academy must be able to articulate a rationale behind these privileges—and that rationale should underscore its role in educating *for democracy*. Higher education's goals should be aspirational, not for the democracy we *have* but for the democracy we *need*. With a clearer vision of success, campuses can better

resist pressures to inhibit freedom or to weaken civic learning programs.

Political Learning and Engagement in Democracy

When framed in the mid-1990s in response to declines in public participation and social capital, student civic learning and community engagement initiatives in higher education took what are now familiar and publicly acceptable shapes: community-based learning; service, research, and partnerships focused on local problem solving; study abroad; and programs that encourage personal and social responsibility, ranging from recycling to social entrepreneurship. All good, these kinds of experiences

foster in students empathy for others, an understanding of civic life, and a commitment to public service.

Yet after twenty years of investment in postsecondary civic learning, problems in public life remain, and, by many measures, are getting worse. The United States has substantially lower voter turnout than other democracies, around 60 percent for a presidential election (Leighley and Nagler 2014, 187). In 2014, young people (ages eighteen to twenty-four) voted at the lowest rate in forty years (CIRCLE 2015). Political inequality persists. Nearly 80 percent of wealthy Americans vote, compared to barely 50 percent of low-income citizens (Leighley and Nagler 2014, 1). Because elected officials respond more to voters than to nonvoters, those crafting US policies do not equally consider the policy preferences of low-income voters (Leighley and Nagler 2014, 188). American media are collapsing, and all Americans—but particularly those in

poor communities—find it challenging to access unbiased news and information (Napoli et al. 2015). Partisan animosity has increased exponentially over the last twenty years. Today, 92 percent of Republicans are to the right of the median Democrat, and 94 percent of Democrats are to the left of the median Republican. These intense partisans believe that the opposing party’s policies “are so misguided that they threaten the nation’s well-being” (Pew Research Center 2014). Even the US Supreme Court justices, who are supposed to be nonpartisan, render opinions along party lines “with greater frequency than at any time in recent history” (Abramowitz and Webster 2015, 1). Polarization is not limited to the political arena. Since the 1980s, Americans have been “sorting” themselves into homogeneous communities to live and work with like-minded people (Bishop 2008). The list continues: money in politics, declining interest in public service careers, and so forth.

The academy did not cause these problems, but it must do more to be part of their solutions. When framed in the context of these evolving and often conflicting societal forces, both on campus and in public life, civic learning becomes more complex, contested, precarious, and unavoidably political.

Education for the Democracy We Need

I believe the academy can clarify its democratic purpose. First, it should view democracy as more than engagement in government (e.g., voting). Democracy is also a culture, a set of principles and practices that guide American community life. Second, educators should distinguish between problems *in* democracy and problems *of* democracy (Mathews 2009, 101). Colleges and universities offer many optional programs concerning problems *in* democracy—for example, on climate change, poverty,

and public education. In contrast, too few students, including those who study major social issues, graduate with an understanding of the problems *of* democracy—for example, the influence of money in politics and citizen disengagement in policy making and community building—much less how to resolve them. Finally, the academy should develop a set of goals for teaching the problems *of* democracy that is clear enough to follow yet complicated enough to capture the messiness of a democratic society.

Last summer, for the annual Frontiers of Democracy conference and a related special issue of the *Journal of Public Deliberation* on “the state of the field,” I introduced Democracy by Design, a pragmatic approach to conceptualizing the democracy we need, not the democracy we have. Developed through years of conversation among representatives from civic organizations and academics working to strengthen democracy, Democracy by Design is not a mandate, but a discussion tool for identifying goals for democratic learning.

A healthy democracy depends on an ecosystem with four interconnected components, or foundations: (1) active and deliberative civic participation; (2) commitments to freedom, justice, and equal opportunity; (3) public access to quality education and information; and (4) effective government structures. (For a complete description, see Thomas 2014.) Each foundation consists of subcategories; for example, social networks as integral to civic participation. Democracy by Design suggests that all students should learn the four foundations while also mastering at least one subcategory, preferably through experiences embedded within the major field of study, by graduation.

How might a framework like Democracy by Design help colleges and universities navigate challenges to freedom? It would help establish

clear commitments for colleges and universities regarding outcomes for student learning. Consider the second foundation: freedom, justice, and equal opportunity. This foundation concerns structural approaches to combatting political inequality, protection of civil rights, the assurance of equal economic and political opportunity, the fair distribution of resources, and personal economic security. Equity should be seen as a nonpartisan issue. People may disagree about how to achieve political equality, but there should be no disagreement over its place as a problem *of* democracy. Students exploring this foundation might study, for example, basic rights under the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, how to examine issues through the lens of the least privileged in society, the value of opinions and cultural differences in public forums, and how socialization affects an individual’s sense of political efficacy.

Consider the foundation focused on effective governance structures. If colleges and universities accepted teaching governance structures along with equity as core to their civic missions, they would teach not just about voting but about *who* votes. The academy has an opportunity to challenge the dominance of money in politics—a problem *of* democracy—by encouraging students to talk about key election issues and exercise their right to vote.

Consider the foundation focused on civic participation. Political polarization affects how both the government and civil society function. Colleges and universities can tackle growing partisan divides by teaching students the causes and effects of polarization in the United States or the history of social movements, as well as certain skills: understanding the perspectives of others, exploring the merits of dissenting views, managing conflict, facilitating

compromise, and working together for social change.

Too often, issues judged to be political fall under unspoken (or even officially codified) “neutrality” rules, or are considered best avoided or left to personal conversations, opinion, or partisan rancor. While neutrality might shield students from “indoctrination,” it also allows institutions to fall short of realizing their potential and responsibility to educate for democracy. Colleges and universities should not be neutral about strengthening democracy, nor should educators forget that they have the privileges of academic and expressive freedom specifically for this purpose.

Engaging Students, Strengthening Democracy

How, then, can colleges and universities respond to student political interest? They can do so by using this interest as an opportunity to engage students in dialogue about the problems of democracy and how to solve them. Like Americans more broadly, students are turned off by polarized, moneyed governance at the national level, and frustrated or baffled (depending on their perspective) by inequality and the slow (or stalled) pace of social change. What they do not know is what to *do*.

Much of this issue of *Diversity & Democracy* derives from research conducted by Tufts University’s Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service’s Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (described more fully on page 9). In our mixed quantitative and qualitative research, we are learning more about campus practices that encourage political learning and engagement. We have learned in particular that political learning is not a matter of what happens during an election season, or the activities of a particular academic department or civic engagement office. Instead, a strong climate for political learning depends on the overall campus

climate—which is determined by a combination of institutional norms, faculty and staff attitudes and behaviors, and structures and programs that shape student experiences. Many of the authors in this issue of *Diversity & Democracy* represent campuses that not only navigate political turbulence but use it to craft teachable moments by intentionally incorporating controversial political issues across the curriculum and cocurriculum for all students.

American society needs an independent voice, an entity that can examine, critique, and affirm or suggest alternatives to the status quo, no matter the discipline or topic, particularly in relation to the shape of American democracy. That voice can and should be the academy. Higher education should reframe its civic mission as an effort to strengthen democracy, overcoming challenges by affirming the rationale for protecting academic freedom and by developing and defending a rationale for learning for a democratic society. ☐

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[STUDENT AND INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL LIFE]

Practicing Democracy in the Classroom: Equalizing Opportunities to Engage with Public Policies and Issues

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All students need opportunities to develop political skills and knowledge in order to become responsible and effective citizens. To create these opportunities for all students, higher education institutions must foster environments in which every individual can practice democracy (Barber 1984). Because most students have access to a classroom experience during college, the classroom has the potential to serve as an equalizer, distributing opportunities for students to engage in and practice democracy. Our research demonstrates that when political discourse and policy discussions are integral to the classroom experience, students across all disciplines can access political learning. Whether students are studying to become engineers, artists, or politicians, they can learn the public relevance of their disciplines and leave college with an understanding of how their fields integrate with, problematize, and strengthen civil society.

Equity and Access to Political Learning

At present, colleges and universities do not provide equitable opportunities for all students to learn about and actively engage in democracy both across and within institutions. Students who have an interest in political engagement typically must have the resources to participate in political activities on their own (Kim and Sax 2009). Students who lack this privilege cannot access these same opportunities due to barriers such

as lack of information, conflicting work schedules, and transportation challenges. These barriers only increase for students who commute to school, attend part time, or lack financial resources (Jarvis, Montoya, and Mulvoy 2005). Colleges and universities further expand participation gaps by implementing institutional policies that support this stratification, limiting opportunities for some students while increasing them for others (Bastedo and Gumpert 2003). As a result, many institutions fail to promote democratic educational experiences or political learning outcomes for all students. Yet most institutions, regardless of their resources or priorities, engage students in classroom learning experiences. The classroom can thus serve as a venue to increase opportunities for political learning.

Faculty can craft experiences in the classroom to ensure that all students have opportunities to succeed and thrive. For example, collaborative learning has surfaced as a promising pedagogy, in part because it aligns with learning styles that differ from those privileged by traditional pedagogies and is therefore more inclusive of traditionally marginalized students who may learn best according to those different styles, including some women and racial minority students (Lundeberg and Moch 1995). Faculty can use practices like these to develop political learning opportunities in the classroom that are accessible to students across

different economic, social, and racial backgrounds.

Students must be prepared to actively participate in democracy. The classroom can facilitate this preparation by providing opportunities to engage in political learning, which we define as the act of developing knowledge and skills related to government, systems, decision making, and public problem solving. When faculty members organize classroom experiences that incorporate political learning, students develop “political skills of influence and action, analysis and judgment, communication and leadership, while developing teamwork and collaboration skills” (Colby et al. 2010, 95). Students who participate in these experiences also develop a greater sense of political efficacy (Beaumont 2011) and cultural awareness (Misa, Anderson, and Yamamura 2005), two qualities that improve their ability to solve public problems. These pedagogies are thus important components of the college learning experience because they equip students to connect their learning to the problems and issues they will inevitably find within their communities, government, and democracy.

Learning to Practice Democracy

To better understand how political learning and engagement in democracy relate to campus climate, our research team at the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education, located within Tufts University’s Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, conducted four campus-based case studies. Using data collected through the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (described on page 9), we selected four campuses with student voting rates that were significantly higher than predicted (comparing *actual voting rates* to *predicted voting rates* based on predictors of voting such as student age and gender, institutional size, and geographic region). These four

campuses included an urban public community college, an urban minority-serving comprehensive university, a suburban private liberal arts college, and a suburban public college. At each campus, we conducted between twelve and sixteen focus groups and interviews with students, faculty, and staff, meeting with a total of 237 participants.

We were particularly interested in understanding how the classroom serves as a venue for engagement in discussions concerning political, policy, and public issues. Our case study findings suggested that faculty, students, and staff at these four campuses frame and structure classroom learning to align with public issues and policies relevant to their disciplines. Thomas (2001) describes this approach as teaching the public relevance of one's discipline. In this approach, faculty and students work together to create a positive climate for student political learning and engagement by providing individual, local, and global policy contexts for issue discussions and by constructively managing controversial topics. Yet even at campuses where the classroom functions as a space where students practice democracy, barriers to political learning and engagement in the classroom remain.

Establishing the Classroom's Public Relevance

On our case study campuses, we found that faculty infuse pedagogies centered on politics and policy into academic courses across disciplines and departments. Indeed, faculty members across departments are teaching the public relevance of their disciplines. For instance, students in our focus groups mentioned discussing fracking in a geology course, immigration and citizenship issues in a Spanish course, abortion in an ethics course, and policy affecting forests in a restoration ecology course.

Faculty on our case study campuses carefully and intentionally generate,

foster, and manage learning opportunities focused on politically oriented and policy-related topics. They use different tools to manage controversial issue discussions: for example, they might play devil's advocate in the classroom, require students to write about and defend opposing sides of an issue, and ask students to pair up and take opposing perspectives. One faculty member explained why he uses these tools: "I think it's more to get ... knowledge [to students] about what's going on, as opposed to, of course, trying to get them to pick a side or maybe think about what side they're on. It's more [about] knowing how to handle it, how to deal with people in a political environment." These approaches to learning reduce group-think tendencies and bolster opportunities for a diversity of

perspectives and solutions to emerge (Wanous and Youtz 1986).

Creating Safe Spaces for Political and Policy-Related Discussions

On our case study campuses, we found that discussions and debates about politically charged subjects occur when faculty establish the classroom as a space where all students can participate, regardless of their social, political, and economic identities. Faculty and students described feeling a shared sense of responsibility for creating this space, transforming the learning environment so that it supports student perspective taking and collaborative learning.

Faculty on our case study campuses create collaborative and safe learning spaces by gauging students' comfort with heated discussions, asking students

About the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education's Research and College Student Voting

Much of this special issue of *Diversity & Democracy* is informed by research being conducted at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service. In 2013, Tisch College's Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) launched the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), which measures college student registration and voting rates at the institutional level.

Through NSLVE, campuses receive free tailored reports broken down by demographic information (e.g., age), class level and field of study, and voting method (absentee, local). Over seven hundred colleges and universities, representing institutions of all Carnegie classifications, have signed up for the study. With the NSLVE database, Tisch College researchers are able to conduct innovative research, from using predictive modeling to study campuses with significantly high voting rates to identifying correlations between political participation and institutional characteristics such as diversity of the student population and financial aid recipients.

To further scholarship on higher education, Tisch College created the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) as a higher education-focused corollary to CIRCLE. With NSLVE as a signature initiative, IDHE focuses on how colleges and universities can align institutional practices and culture with the goals of strengthening democracy and advancing social and political equity in public life. IDHE's work and the work it seeks to advance in higher education is inherently, and delightfully, political. To learn more about IDHE and the NSLVE, visit <http://go.tufts.edu/IDHE/>.

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to pause and check their temperatures, and mediating exchanges about controversial topics to ensure that the classroom is inclusive. They also encourage students to draw from assignments when expressing disagreement in class, teaching students to ground their arguments in facts or in the literature. At one campus, a faculty member shared that after debating contentious policy topics such as abortion and gun control, his students, who were racially and politically diverse, hugged one another. A student in this class mentioned that these interactions and understandings were possible because she felt safe and respected in the classroom space. Across diverse departments and disciplines, many students and faculty mentioned that their classroom dynamics influenced their comfort with engaging in political and policy-related discussions. Establishing spaces where students feel respected and encouraged to speak up is foundational for discussing policy and political issues in the classroom.

Contextualizing Policies and Public Concerns

Faculty at the campuses we studied use the classroom as a space to contextualize public issues that are relevant to and directly affect students. For instance, faculty raise for discussion issues such as financial aid in higher education, a topic that is relevant to today's students. Faculty also incorporate topics that will be relevant to students' futures, such as minimum wage and health care policies. One faculty member explained, "I often ... try to bring the political aspects of current events into the classroom, [for example,] raising minimum wage to \$15 and what the class thinks about that. And then we talk about the ramifications from an economic standpoint."

Faculty and students discuss course material not only in relation to individual concerns, but also in the context of local issues. For instance, faculty

and students at one campus discuss the implications of a local tax levy on the college and community. Faculty also use global comparisons to expand students' understandings of public issues such as environmental sustainability and race relations. One faculty member explained how she established these global connections with students: "We're reading something about [human] trafficking in Asia and then there's a [media] clip that comes up [in discussion] on something local [and] we can make those connections.... They can think about laws and policies and how that matters in understanding the picture not just in one area of the world but across place."

Content related to individual, local, and global concerns emerges from different activities such as film viewings, readings, articles, theatrical performances, faculty feedback on presentations, interviews conducted with local community members, and student-led discussions about research articles. During these activities, faculty from our case study campuses communicate to students how the assignment relates to public issues. Throughout these interactions, faculty and students discuss the structural components overlaying shared problems and related policy decisions.

Identifying Barriers to Political Learning

Although our case study campuses are paragons for embedding policy and political discussions into classroom activities, these campuses still face inevitable challenges to integrating political content into all classrooms across all disciplines. For instance, students mentioned that politics might arise in a sociology class more often than in a large math class; students also said that some faculty members are more comfortable raising political issues than others. Students mentioned instances when, in classes composed of particularly like-minded students, those who deviate from the class's normative

identity are not comfortable participating equally in class discussions. We found that students' ability to actively participate in the classroom depends on a variety of factors, including class size, whether individual students dominate class discussions, or whether students are given equal opportunities to speak. Therefore, it is important to figure out "what works" to create equal opportunities for all students to engage in political learning.

Moreover, faculty must design curricular experiences so that they are appropriate to where students are developmentally. We found that students, particularly younger students, come to class without fully formed ideas but knowing nonetheless that they want to shape the conversation. Students mentioned that they may not always have the language, efficacy, tools, and skills to discuss political issues in the classroom. For instance, we found that more academically advanced students (such as seniors) are often more comfortable engaging in issue debates, building arguments, and "listening to understand" than less experienced students. This reflects a developmental gap in political knowledge and skills (Beaumont 2011), suggesting that faculty should account for variations in student confidence and agency when designing equitable opportunities for students to participate in political learning in the classroom.

Call to Action and Future Research

Every academic discipline encompasses public problems that are relevant to democracy. Yet most college students successfully complete their degrees without actively engaging with the public features of their fields. Our research suggests that the classroom is an optimal space for fostering these connections and providing opportunities for students to practice democracy. We also found that across all departments and disciplines, faculty can embed

opportunities for political learning into their pedagogies and curricula. However, this cross-disciplinary attention to public issues in the classroom will not occur organically. Indeed, faculty need opportunities to learn how to manage controversial issue discussions, to develop strategies to mediate heated conversations, and to practice taking on the role of devil's advocate in the classroom. Likewise, students need opportunities to develop critical skills to engage in this learning effectively.

Despite the promising findings from our case studies, we need to further explore barriers preventing access to political learning and engagement in the classroom. Although the classroom can equalize access to political learning experiences, some students and faculty do not benefit equally and equitably. Further research exploring these barriers will allow us to better understand how to create spaces that provide opportunities for equitable learning and engagement in democracy. In the meantime, colleges and universities must use students' common experiences in the classroom to ensure that all students have opportunities to develop political skills, knowledge, and experiences. Only then will students graduate from college prepared to address the pressing issues we need them to solve in order to strengthen our democracy. ☐

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Examining College Student Political Learning and Engagement

Are college students politically engaged? The answer depends in part on what counts as political participation.

If measured by **voting**, college students could do better. Data from Tisch College's National Study of Voting, Learning, and Engagement (NSLVE) show that only 40 percent of traditionally aged undergraduates (ages eighteen to twenty-four) attending the institutions in the study voted in 2012, and only 17 percent in 2014. Measuring **engagement with government**, Harvard's Institute of Politics 2014 Survey of Millennials found that only 7 percent said they engaged in a government, political organization, or issue over the course of the prior year (Institute of Politics 2015).

Student activism such as protesting has gained visibility. Over the past year, hundreds of campuses have faced student protests, particularly over income inequality, racial profiling in the criminal justice system, campus sexual assault, and rising student tuition and debt (Wong 2015). **Online engagement**, such as writing a blog post, circulating political commentary among a social network, or starting an online political group, is rapidly growing. In 2011, 50 percent of college students report participating in at least one political activity online, and 27 percent participated in three activities (Cohen and Kahne 2015, 28). Other, more difficult-to-measure forms of engagement include **grassroots community organizing** and **deliberative dialogues**.

College students can be a formidable political force. The college experience should be ideal for fostering in students a sense of political agency and efficacy, a belief that they can, indeed, change communities, systems, and policies.

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[STUDENT AND INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL LIFE]

Students as Moral Teachers: A Survey of Student Activism and Institutional Responses

■ **BARBARA RANSBY**, professor of African American studies, gender and women's studies, and history; and director of the Social Justice Initiative at the University of Illinois at Chicago

Young people in the United States and across the globe have challenged and changed the world again and again: from Little Rock to Birmingham, Soweto to Tiananmen, Palestine to Chiapas, Wounded Knee to Cairo. In the past decade alone, college and university students have been a pivotal force in political movements for social change, including the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, the immigrant justice movement, the movement to address climate change, and Black Lives Matter. These students have tackled issues their elders

in the 1980s to sweatshop labor in other parts of the Global South today. At other times, students target the policies, practices, and culture of the university itself—for example, by campaigning for desegregation or by advocating for diverse representation in curricula and canons. In all these cases, students have challenged colleges and universities to reckon and wrestle with their morals and their missions.

US student campaigns in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have revolved around a core set

If we as educators are doing our jobs ... we will help our students become critical thinkers and committed agents of change in the world.

avoided, imagined new possibilities that previous generations had deemed unrealizable, and demanded redress for injustices that otherwise would have been ignored. In moments of sometimes uncomfortable tension and confrontation, our students become our teachers—and if we are wise enough to listen, they become our partners and allies in challenging injustice and democratizing the culture of the academy.

Student activism takes many forms. Sometimes students use the campus to blur the boundaries between higher education and the larger society, confronting national and international issues ranging from the war in Vietnam in the 1960s and the early 1970s to the racist apartheid regime in South Africa

of demands and ideals: justice, access, equity, and peace. Campuses are fertile grounds for the impulse toward greater justice in the world. After all, at a time when students are exploring their own identities and deciding who they want to be, college can expose them to new ideas, points of view, histories, literary traditions, and theories of justice. If we as educators are doing our jobs, certainly in the humanities and social sciences but also in the hard sciences and professional schools, we will help our students become critical thinkers and committed agents of change in the world.

Student Activism in the Twentieth Century

When vibrant social movements are

raging in the larger society, they invariably spill over onto our campuses. Thus it is not surprising that during the 1960s and early 1970s students and faculty were immersed in activities and debates surrounding the Civil Rights (Black Freedom) Movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and what is often termed the Second Wave Women's Movement.

In February of 1960, black students led a desegregation sit-in in Greensboro, North Carolina, sparking similar protests across the South. They later formed a regional organization of activists called the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which mobilized against southern racism and quickly put its members at the forefront of the growing protest movement—and sometimes also at odds with elite black educators who viewed the protests and ensuing arrests as an affront to the politics of respectability (Cohen and Snyder 2013, 3–4). Alabama State University in Montgomery, Southern University in Baton Rouge, and Georgia's Albany State were among a number of historically black colleges and universities that took harsh action, sometimes under pressure from donors and patrons, against students who engaged in civil rights activity off campus (Bynum 2013, 102–3, 176). Spelman College fired the young Howard Zinn from a teaching position because of his support of civil rights agitation and organizing (Joyce 2003, 71). Predominately white schools like Vanderbilt took similarly punitive measures against student and faculty activists in this period (Daniel 2000, 286).

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), founded in 1962 and inspired by the actions of civil rights activists, took aim at US military involvement in Vietnam. Like SNCC, SDS organized protests off campus; but ultimately, the campus itself became a scene of antiwar activities, from teach-ins and draft-card burnings to

demonstrations against pro-war speakers and Reserve Officers Training Corp (ROTC) offices. Students demanded various changes, ranging from an end to military research to the closing of ROTC programs (Sale 1974). The University of California–Berkeley became an epicenter of 1960s protests with its Free Speech Movement, led by Mario Savio, which, in the shadows of Cold War censorship, insisted on the right of students to protest and to dissent (Cohen 2009). In the 1960s and early 1970s, many campuses witnessed antiwar mobilizations, some of which turned violent. Members of the Ohio State National Guard opened fire on unarmed demonstrators at Kent State University in 1970, killing one and wounding several others (Michener 1982). Less than two weeks later, two black students were killed by the police on the campus of Mississippi’s Jackson State University after racial confrontations there (Spofford 1998).

The 1970s was also a time of social upheaval over traditional gender roles and the oppression of women. Before 1970, female students were underrepresented at most major colleges (with the exception of traditional women’s colleges), and full-time tenured women faculty were few. Student activists and faculty allies took aim at sexism in the academy. Agitation, petitions, rallies, and experimental courses set the stage for the introduction of women’s studies programs and departments in the early 1970s and also led to the establishment of campus women’s centers that provide counseling, advocacy, and educational programming related to sexual assault, harassment, and homophobia (Howe and Buhle 2000).

Around the same time, a militant five-month student strike (supported by faculty and community members) prompted San Francisco State University to establish the first black studies program in 1968. As documented by historian Martha Biondi in *The Black*

Revolution on Campus (2012), the San Francisco struggle caused ripple effects across US higher education. Chicano studies, Native American and indigenous studies, Asian American studies, and disability studies were later established at American universities in response to demands for inclusion in the classroom and the curriculum. These protests collectively changed the intellectual landscape of American

Our task as educators should always be to listen carefully, engage honestly, and respond with openness and willingness to change when appropriate.

higher education. Although frequently underfunded and under attack (see Brooks 2015; EurPublisher 2013; Powers 2008), interdisciplinary programs that originated in student-led protests and initiatives are fixtures on most campuses today.

One of the largest movements on college campuses in the 1980s and 1990s was the anti-apartheid movement. Students from Brown to Berkeley built symbolic shanties to draw attention to the dire conditions under which black South Africans lived and demanded that their institutions divest from companies doing business with the whites-only government there. In 1985, Columbia University’s Coalition for a Free South Africa, a group that I co-chaired in 1983–84, staged a three-week blockade of Hamilton Hall, resulting in the university’s eventual change of policy. Similar actions took place around the country, with activists disciplined by their institutions and in some cases arrested. Divestment was won in the context of a larger global movement against the brutal system of apartheid. While the whole world now seems to agree that apartheid was unjust, this was not the case at the time (Rhoads 1998).

Millennial Movements for Justice

In the 2000s, millennials continue the tradition of student activism, often serving as the conscience of the university as they voice their concerns about the status of undocumented students, university investments, and rising tuition in addition to ongoing issues of racial disparities, sexual harassment and violence, and homophobia on college campuses. “Undocumented and

unafraid” was the bold declaration of student activists in Chicago several years ago as they linked with the larger immigration rights movement. Their peers across the country suffered arrests in acts of civil disobedience from Arizona to Georgia, where campaigns against state legislation that denied higher education access to undocumented youth garnered national attention.

The ethics of college and university investment policies have been a target for student activists who argue that mission-driven institutions should put principles before profits. In spring 2015, student climate change activists engaged in protests during “heat week,” demanding divestment from fossil fuels with demonstrations and sit-ins at Dartmouth, Tulane, Harvard, and Yale, where nineteen students were arrested. A student-led campaign demanding divestment from private prisons won an unprecedented victory at Columbia University, where the Columbia Divest coalition carried out a yearlong effort that included distributing leaflets outside a classroom where the university’s president, Lee Bollinger, was teaching. Perhaps most controversial and hotly debated is the BDS (Boycott,

Divestment, and Sanctions) campaign, led by Students for Justice in Palestine, that targets the State of Israel and critiques its policies and practices in Palestine as a violation of human rights and international law (Redden 2014). Jewish students have found themselves on both sides of the issue and sometimes in the middle, as when students at Swarthmore broke with the Hillel International organization last year over hosting speakers critical of Israeli

We have to set our sights much higher than the crude business model of education that is becoming increasingly popular in academe.

policy and supportive of BDS, a practice Hillel forbids. Swarthmore students have joined the “Open Hillel” movement (Younger and StudentNation 2014).

Finally, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement against police violence, triggered by the killing of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown in August 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, has touched the hearts and minds of college students who have participated in symbolic solidarity demonstrations, “die-ins,” and acts of civil disobedience across the country, on campuses and in adjacent communities. Since most black victims of police shootings are not middle-class college students but their working-class peers, the BLM movement is as much an example of class solidarity as a protest against state violence and institutionalized racism. Concerns about police violence resonate for students of color, especially on predominately white campuses, where these students routinely experience racial profiling by campus police (Blow 2015; Schmidt 2014).

Implications for Educators

The survey above, while not exhaustive,

gives a glimpse of how the actions of students consistently provoke, cajole, and sometimes jolt professors and administrators into debates, dialogues, and deliberations that challenge us and, in many cases, make us better people within more just institutions. Our task as educators should always be to listen carefully, engage honestly, and respond with openness and willingness to change when appropriate. Some campus protests actually represent a backlash against

social justice campaigns. Even these cases present learning opportunities on which faculty and administrators can capitalize.

To be sensitive to and appreciative of the leadership of student activists, college administrators should resist the impulse to see themselves as CEOs and our students as customers and consumers. We are not peddling gadgets. At our best, we are educating young people who will become not only skilled and knowledgeable engineers, teachers, scientists, and poets, but also engaged, compassionate, and culturally literate world citizens, critical thinkers, and life-long learners, active in serving the public good and making the world a more just place. We have to set our sights much higher than the crude business model of education that is becoming increasingly popular in academe. That is one of the lessons our very brightest students have always been trying to teach us. ☐

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[STUDENT AND INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL LIFE]

Identity and Social Action: The Role of Self-Examination in Systemic Change

■ **TANIA D. MITCHELL**, assistant professor of higher education at the University of Minnesota

How do your identities inform your understanding of the community issue at the center of your service experience?

In response to this question, a student enrolled in a service-learning course I once taught wrote in her reflection journal:

I was taught that homeless people were lazy, drug addicts with no hope. That homelessness was a choice, or a series of bad choices that got you to that point. After ten weeks at [the soup kitchen], I understand that homelessness is a consequence of the problem of poverty. And poverty is way bigger than a choice. Who your parents are and what they do, where you grow up, what schools you go to and how good your teachers are, the availability of jobs in your community and how well those jobs pay, access to health care, the cost to rent an apartment ... all of these things affect whether or not you'll be poor.... While it is still true that I'm lucky not to be homeless, I'm also very aware that my housing, my middle class existence, is the result of a series of privileges that are not—should be—available to everyone.

Asking students to consider and speak to how their identities inform their understandings of and experiences with complex social problems is a central aspect of my teaching. I believe that in order to prepare students to engage with and take action on critical concerns facing our communities, we must help them understand how identity informs experience. For this student,

an exploration of identity in the context of homelessness not only made her cognizant of privileges that she had not previously considered important to her status as housed (versus unhoused), but also gave her the tools to change her per-

In order to prepare students to engage with and take action on critical concerns facing our communities, we must help them understand how identity informs experience.

spective. Instead of seeing homelessness as an individual problem, she began to see poverty as a systemic issue.

The Individual and the Systemic

The shift from the individual to the systemic can help students consider the limitations of charitable responses to social problems. It can clarify the urgency of nonprofit organizations' work responding to immediate needs (that is, applying bandages) while also helping students imagine and seek change-oriented solutions (or surgical approaches) to community concerns. Students in my service-learning course were able to see the value in their community-based service, but also to question public sector responses to issues of policing, affordable housing, and quality schools. By exploring identity in the context of community concerns, they began to recognize and question structural inequality.

Structural inequality is the bias entrenched in the organizations,

and systems that guide our society. Troutt reminds us that structural inequality is experienced, and that one can “see it in the quality of local schools and their test scores, smell it in the access to healthy food or not, feel it in a sense of safety or danger as we walk the streets” (2014). An acknowledgment of structural inequality is an acknowledgment that the resource imbalances faced by some communities are not the result of individual shortcomings but of a system of exclusion.

In 2008, the United Nations

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination found “stark racial disparities” in the United States and called for the Bush administration “to take effective actions to end racist practices against minorities in the areas of criminal justice, housing, healthcare and education” (Rizvi 2008). The administration responded that the differential impacts of “laws or practices that are race-neutral on their face but discriminatory in effect” could not be anticipated. But as Young has argued, “difference-blind treatment or policy is more likely to perpetuate rather than correct injustice” (2009, 278). In order for individuals to act in ways that might change systems and structures and result in equity and opportunity for marginalized peoples, an understanding of the place of identity in persistent structural inequality is necessary.

Intersecting but Distinct Dimensions

Identity is complex and multilayered. It comes into focus through a process of

understanding who you are, how you are seen by others, and the consequences of being seen in this way. Identity is not simply something that we claim; it is something that is also shaped through our interactions and experiences. Because social identity exists on multiple planes (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, citizenship status, language), each of our experiences reflects a unique combination of affiliations with and memberships in different communities.

Often, and for good reason, educators ask students to suspend thinking about the complexity of their identities to focus

why approaches to public problem solving yield different effects. Young uses the example of wheelchair access to explain the problem of difference-blind policies and treatment, arguing that “the opportunities of people with disabilities can be made equal only if others specifically notice their differences” (2009, 278). A focus on identity allows us to acknowledge the sources of our own knowledge, fears, and realms of ignorance. It provides space for us to understand how and why certain communities are disenfranchised, underresourced, and historically and structurally marginalized. It creates

of inequality and identify spaces where their identities can support them in pursuing action aimed toward change.

Informing Experience, Inspiring Commitment

Identity is structural, relational, and also deeply personal. I have been profoundly affected by the recent arrest and subsequent death of Sandra Bland. I did not know Sandra Bland, but aspects of her identity (black, woman, college educated) are traits we share. Her death and the traffic stop that preceded it weigh heavily on my consciousness. When questions are raised in the media or on Facebook about her attitude and demeanor toward the officer who arrested her, I feel personally attacked. When I am driving and a police car appears in my rearview mirror, my heart stops. To understand my reactions requires an awareness and understanding of my identity as a black woman. My experience of black womanhood and my witness to the ways in which other black women are treated in our society lead me to identify with Sandra Bland, and to fear being viewed by police as Sandra Bland was seen by Texas state trooper Brian Encinia.

Our identities often shape the issues that we feel are important or our comfort in taking action on certain issues or in particular communities. A service-learning student might return to class from her service site and claim that she was “really uncomfortable; no one there speaks English!” It is my responsibility to question that student about why she feels uncomfortable; to encourage her to consider the value in interrogating her discomfort; to challenge her to imagine the myriad places where monolingual Spanish speakers are the *only*, and how she might feel if this were something she experienced in multiple places, daily, for a lifetime rather than once a week for a semester. When one student expresses shame and disappointment at “seeing so

Identity is not simply something that we claim; it is something that is also shaped through our interactions and experiences.

on one key aspect. In a year where media conversations have been dominated by the hashtag #blacklivesmatter, initiating and maintaining conversations in the classroom about race and racism feels necessary, but it can also be challenging. In a conversation about race, some students will raise issues related to economics and class to displace the focus on race. A report on millennial attitudes toward race found that approximately 20 percent of respondents (across all racial groups) felt class was a more significant factor than race in explaining injustice in our society (Apollon 2011). Similarly, in conversations about gender and issues of sexism, students may invoke issues of race or sexual orientation.

Viewing ourselves along a single dimension is not easy, but it is important to understanding how issues of injustice affect different groups differently and

opportunities to name the roles of identity and power in policies and systems that have oppressed and continue to oppress specific groups. As Young explains, we must “notice the processes” of differential access before we can correct those processes (281).

An intentional focus on identity can result in deeply personal experiences that require acknowledgment of one’s connection to, investment in, and collusion with practices, policies, and communities that stigmatize, impoverish, and disadvantage. These experiences can be painful whether one is accepting one’s privilege as a beneficiary or one’s trauma as a target of structural injustice. A focus on identity may simultaneously result in depersonalizing experiences that allow students to push beyond defensiveness, shame, or guilt to recognize the structural realities

many people who look like me” at his service site and another expresses guilt at the recognition “that [he] didn’t even realize these kinds of programs exist in our community,” it is incumbent on me as the instructor to acknowledge these different responses and the emotions bound in them, and to support students in unpacking their assumptions, reactions, and intentions.

Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2013) prioritize both self-awareness and understanding others as important to leadership and to the ability to take an active role in one’s communities. It is essential to understand who you are and how your life experiences may differ from those of others, especially in order to move toward considering instances of injustice as structural and systemic rather than individual matters. This shift in understanding from individual concerns to structural injustice is key if students are to become capable of and committed to organizing for social change. Soltan establishes the aim of civic studies as work “to develop ideas and ways of thinking helpful to human beings in their capacity as co-creators of their worlds” (2014, 9). To co-create our worlds requires understanding that identity (both how we see ourselves and how we are seen) informs our experiences. It requires understanding that multiple, varied, and diverse approaches, policies, and treatments that both recognize and appreciate difference may be necessary in order for all people to feel able to actualize their full potential.

Helping Students Make Sense of Their Roles

In my research, I found that students were able to make sense of their roles in responding to issues of injustice when identity became a central category for reflection (Mitchell 2014). When they mentored young girls of color, the students whose experiences I studied had to face the discrepancy between their

lives “as middle-class, college educated, White women” and those of their mentees (5). This incongruence helped the students understand that they needed to see beyond their own worldviews in order to conceptualize and work for a society that would be just, for them as well as their young mentees.

Centering identity in the classroom allows students to share stories that bring personal connections to lived experience. It highlights differences in societal impacts and, in doing so, encourages conversation, learning, and strategizing. It challenges individuals to examine their relationships and begin to

Centering identity in the classroom allows students to share stories that bring personal connections to lived experience.

bridge communities to build multiracial, intergenerational friendships and work groups whose members honor their collective investment as “co-creators of their worlds.” It supports relational work where collaborators consider appropriate place-based responses informed by the history and experiences of the people and organizations who have been most affected by the community concerns the work is designed to address. By centering identity, we move from assuming to understanding—or at least toward beginning to understand. As a result, in our approaches to solving complex problems in our communities, we are able to emphasize values of equity, inclusion, and social justice—while recognizing that access to, belief in, and work for those values have had (and still have) different consequences for different members of our society. ☺

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[PERSPECTIVE]

Faculty on the Front Line: Reflections on Research, Teaching, and Service

To provide perspective on this issue of Diversity & Democracy's focus on political engagement in higher education, the issue's editorial team invited several faculty members to answer questions about their engaged research, teaching, and service. Sharing their thoughts below are **Irene Bloemraad**, Thomas Garden Barnes Chair of Canadian Studies and professor of sociology at the University of California–Berkeley; **Michelle Dunlap**, professor of human development and chair of the Human Development Department at Connecticut College; and **Hahrie Han**, Anton Vonk Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of California–Santa Barbara.

Through research, teaching, and civic engagement, college and university professors are often on the front line of the most significant ethical, economic, social, and political debates facing society. In what ways do you engage on this front line?

HAN: The central question that animates my research, teaching, institutional service, professional service, and public engagement is the question of how we, as residents of our democracy,

capacities, to teaching students to be agents of change, to supporting institutions as they strive to meet their responsibilities in this domain.

DUNLAP: Like many, I engage on the front lines in informal ways that are difficult to document and assess, often through faith-based organizations, extended family, or community. These are not the kinds of forums where one signs in and out or tracks hours, goals, and tasks. For example, I have spoken

It can be difficult to “put away” my engagement, teaching, research, and service when I am done with each, as the lines of demarcation between these areas can be indistinct.

can strengthen the power and voice of ordinary people in the public arena. In all the work that I do, I am thinking about how organizations can and should equip people with the intellectual, emotional, and practical capacities they need to engage in public debates. This work includes everything from researching how organizations can best create spaces to develop people's democratic

at rallies for justice; consulted with or served on various community boards and organizations; organized educational, cultural, and intergenerational community events and field trips; written justice-oriented editorials; and facilitated caregiving circles to help young parents better understand the fundamentals of child development. In the classroom, as ethically appropriate,

I tell my students about some of these engagements, and I listen as they share their experiences. This sharing provides real-life context for my human development courses. It can be difficult to “put away” my engagement, teaching, research, and service when I am done with each, as the lines of demarcation between these areas can be indistinct.

BLOEMRAAD: I believe that teaching is a critical component of what my colleague Michael Burawoy calls “public sociology.” So in recent years, I've introduced an engaged scholarship component to some classes, where students are placed with a community-based organization that serves immigrants or low-income residents of neighborhoods with growing immigrant populations. Service learning becomes a way for students to apply research methods such as participant observation, and it brings to life the academic research that students read for class; sometimes, it inspires students to continue their engagement with the community after the semester's end. Beyond teaching, I bring social science to political decision makers through activities such as serving on a National Academies of Science panel on immigrant integration in the United States and speaking to Canadian legislators.

What challenges come with this role? Are there parameters to it, and if so, what are they?

BLOEMRAAD: One challenge is to ensure that a variety of perspectives are debated on their merits. Colleges and universities must educate students about the issues of the day, and we must give students the tools to evaluate competing viewpoints using evidence. In my courses, we talk about the difference between normative questions for which social science cannot offer data-driven answers (e.g., *do we have a moral obligation to open our borders to the global*

poor?) and empirical questions for which data and logic have purchase (e.g., *does low-skilled immigration depress the wages of native-born citizens?*). My students write essays on both types of questions and must consider opposing viewpoints seriously. Time demands are another challenge, as engaged scholarship courses require faculty to build relationships with community partners and manage students' off-campus activities. I was fortunate that Berkeley's American Cultures Engaged Scholarship program provided funding for a graduate student to help facilitate my early engaged learning courses.

HAN: Building the power of ordinary people often requires others (individuals or organizations) to give up or share the power they have. Sharing power is hard. If my research or teaching equips individuals or groups to exercise their voices more strategically, it can sometimes lead to tension with those who have power. That tension can put me and the students, organizers, and others with whom I work in tricky situations. In these situations, I have to think carefully about what my role is, to ensure that I am living up to my moral, ethical, and institutional responsibilities.

DUNLAP: When faculty are living some of the very issues their work addresses, their motives may be called into question. They may be accused of bias, of being reactionary, of being too outspoken, or of having ulterior motives. As a biracial African American woman, I can't recall a day in my life when I didn't have to think about gender, race, or socioeconomic status. People who have not had to constantly process their experiences in this way may find it difficult to understand why others may see the world through such multifaceted lenses. For this reason, the observations, experiences, and concerns of underrepresented minorities and allies may be denied, dismissed, or denigrated. Underrepresented scholars must take

care to connect with helpful resources that keep us from doubting ourselves and what we know.

In what ways does your public scholarship and engagement influence how you teach and what your students learn?

DUNLAP: I require my students to engage in service learning in local underserved communities, and I help them connect their experiences to course curricula in enlightened ways.

I find that both my scholarship and teaching are enhanced if I integrate them with each other instead of treating them as separate silos.

For example, when engaging with community partners, students quickly notice extended family kinship networks and collectivist child-rearing tendencies that may contrast with the nuclear models that are most prevalent in Western world media and society. In class, we recognize and grapple with these differences using theoretical, historical, and cultural frameworks that neither normalize nor pathologize diverse communities and practices. I also facilitate stereotype-bending group discussions centering not only on course texts, journal articles, and current events far and near, but also on what my students and I have seen and experienced with our own eyes and ears.

BLOEMRAAD: In the past, my courses were heavily oriented to teaching undergraduates the minutiae of academic debates on immigration, and I evaluated students through traditional exams and essays. But in giving public talks on immigration, interacting with journalists and decision

makers, and talking to those working in community-based organizations, I became less convinced that such highly specialized knowledge or academic skills best served my students or the larger community. Academic publications still dominate my course reading lists, but rather than focus on the theoretical influences behind a scholar's framework, I ask students to evaluate how concepts become transformed into data that are used in public debate. I also assign activities, such as conducting an oral history with an immigrant, that teach

distinct skills. The take-home final integrates academic readings with students' research, reinforcing what students have learned as they leverage data to advance an argument.

HAN: I find that both my scholarship and teaching are enhanced if I integrate them with each other instead of treating them as separate silos. I study how organizations can best generate commitment among their members, and then use the strategies I learn through my research in my classes. In both research and teaching, my goal is to create usable knowledge that helps strengthen the quality of our democracy. What I learn from my research thus informs how I teach and what I teach; likewise, the lessons I take from teaching help me better understand how to translate the ideas I have in my head for a broader audience. It is through this work that I am able to maintain an ongoing dialogue with the future. ☐

[PERSPECTIVE]

Reflections on the Politics of the Presidency

■ BRIAN MURPHY, president of De Anza College

What role can the college president play in public activism, both as an individual occupying a public position and as the leader of an institution devoted to the development of democratic citizenship? These questions are intimately related, especially for those of us serving in public institutions. My personal political engagement is framed by the public mission of my college, and my capacity to affect civic dialogue depends on the public reputation of my institution—De Anza College—as a place where students

reflects very different social missions, or different roles in a profoundly unequal and divided society. Each president acts within a context framed by the social function of an institution and its unique constituencies.

The president of a public two-year community college starts with the fundamental dualism of our social role, with the tensions and contradictions built into what our communities expect from us, and what those who govern us expect. While we have a populist history

The bully pulpit doesn't count for much unless the president leads a college that stands for something: equity, social justice, peace.

regularly engage in civic activism. And yet, the question of presidential leadership is often personalized, as if it were only a matter of individual will and commitment, when it is also, importantly, a matter of institutional identity.

Why institutional identity? American higher education prides itself on its institutional diversity, its bewildering variety of institutional missions, purposes, funding and costs, and degrees awarded. Most often, those of us in higher education speak about this diversity using the “eduspeak” of higher education itself: research institutions, comprehensive universities, public two-year colleges, and so forth. Viewed from another angle, however, institutional diversity

of serving working-class and immigrant students and their communities, and we believe deeply in social mobility with an implicitly egalitarian end, we have also played a functionalist role assigned by states and the national government: prepare the workers, teach the skills of the marketplace, increase productivity, align with industry. In the language of political economy: reproduce the social relations of production.

What happens if we want to challenge that functionalism, or call attention to it, or insist that our students deserve an education that both prepares them for work and prepares them to challenge the social roles that are available to them? What if we believe our commitment to

working families must go beyond workforce preparation, must include politics itself?

Standing Up Publicly

De Anza College is a large public two-year community college located in the epicenter of Silicon Valley. Our twenty-three thousand students are exceptionally diverse in their racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and class origins, reflecting the diversity of this century's California (and soon, the diversity of the country). The college is known as a superb academic institution, with transfer and completion rates among the highest in the United States. We accomplish this even though 85 percent of our students arrive with less-than-collegiate-level math and compositional skills, because we begin with our students' assets, the intellectual and social skills they do have. Seventy-two percent of our students speak at least two languages. They code-switch effortlessly, they navigate the public and private indignities of racism and class bias, and yet they get their work done. They are smart and talented, whatever the formal assessments say.

What does it mean to provide a presidential voice in such a place? Like any new president, I came with a history, one of political and civic work. My convictions were clear, and I was welcomed by faculty who had been working for decades to build a tradition of equity and cultural diversity and expected me to stand up for that tradition. More critically, I found that the faculty believed broadly in our students, appreciated our students' history of activism, and were convinced that there might be a connection between students' engagement and their academic success.

In this setting, it is perfectly ordinary for me to stand up publicly for our students and for their communities. It is not odd that I might argue for increased public support for public goods (not

only education), be quoted criticizing the tax avoidance strategies employed by wealthy corporations, or join others calling for a living wage in the state and country. In doing this, I am not narrowly expressing my own convictions, but standing for the institution and its people. At the same time, I am careful to differentiate—as a matter of principle and of fact—that my own views on certain issues are my own views and not those of the elected trustees of my district. The trustees expect that I will have my own views, and that I am doing my level best to advance the interests of our students.

Developing Students' Capacities

If presidential leadership consisted only of making public pronouncements, it wouldn't yield much of lasting value. Where presidential leadership—or staff or administrator or faculty leadership, for that matter—counts is in the creation and support of programs and projects that develop the capacity of students and their communities to be politically powerful. At De Anza, I formed a broad-based task force on civic and community engagement; this task force, consisting of faculty and staff, developed a comprehensive plan for civic work, including the establishment of an institute (now named the Vasconcellos Institute for Democracy in Action, or VIDA) with staffing and a dedicated budget. Well beyond the task force, faculty and staff appreciated the role that civic work can play in the lives of students and took strong leadership in the relevant budget and planning bodies to support the college's civic mission.

The result is more than an institute. It is curricula and community service, a formal certificate program in social change leadership, and faculty and staff development in equity. It is an independent student government with a budget of over \$1.4 million and a tradition of annual political organizing. It is



Photo courtesy of De Anza College

a comprehensive strategic plan aimed at enrolling students from the most disadvantaged communities. It requires the development of entirely new pedagogies that draw on the social capital our students bring to their classrooms, where *familia* is an organizing principle of mutual support. It has resulted in a first-year experience where “decolonizing your education” is a topic of debate; multiple public programs on equity and global issues; and community conversations on violence, sexual and gender bias, police shootings, and poverty.

At an institution that defies the stereotype of a commuter campus—where students stay on campus after class to participate in organizations on every conceivable topic, from anime to robotics, hip-hop and spoken word to overseas service—political engagement is a natural part of the place. Faculty and administrators see our students as whole human beings, and we encourage them to develop the skills and capacities, habits and abilities we would want in good neighbors, union leaders, civic and community advocates, parents, and friends.

Beyond the Bully Pulpit

There is a politics in our refusal to

reduce our students to the national narrative of economics. Neither I nor my colleagues at De Anza believe it is adequate to educate narrowly for the workplace. While De Anza students know they will need to work, they also know their lives will be defined by issues that cannot be solved by the market: global warming, systemic and institutional inequality, racism and official violence, religious hatreds. All require the action of governments and states, and students who are not educated broadly in the liberal arts and sciences, or educated in how to organize and affect power, are systematically denied access to the debates surrounding these issues. They are vulnerable to the sound bites currently passing for political debate. Students must have civic and political skills if they are to work with others to confront global issues.

A college president can talk all he or she wants about these issues. But the bully pulpit doesn't count for much unless the president leads a college that stands for something: equity, social justice, peace. In order for the college to effectively represent these ideals, the college president must also ensure that students know how to fight for them. 📍

[PERSPECTIVE]

The Power to Influence Positive Change: A Student's Perspective

■ JOHN LOCKE, student at the University of Houston–Downtown

In 2008, the country was on the cusp of a truly historic moment, with Barack Obama on his way to becoming the first African American president of the United States. On Election Day, a powerful energy emanated from the streets as people waved flags and chanted “USA.” We were a nation filled with pride! I was imbued with a great sense of optimism, hopeful that a much needed change was in the wind. But somehow, I managed to skip casting my vote. I understood so

members to accompany her into the streets of her home municipality in Canada to share food with the local homeless population, a practice she called Sandwich Runs. Finding this selfless act truly inspiring, I suggested doing something similar in the community surrounding UHD, where homelessness is a major issue, and Vasooda agreed.

As Vasooda and I looked for ways to launch our UHD Sandwich Runs, a mutual friend suggested that I contact

This experience helped me become conscious of how local government affects me and my community. I became increasingly involved in SGA, working with a planning committee to launch the first annual Walk2Vote Initiative. This three-tiered initiative begins with a deputation drive to recruit students as registrars who then campaign to register as many student voters as possible. The initiative concludes with the Walk2Vote event, where students march together to vote en masse following speeches from prominent members of local government (including, in the initiative's first year, mayor Annise Parker).

The first Walk2Vote event shone a light on the power students have to influence positive change in our government and led me to become even more passionately involved. I have since written several research papers on homelessness in Houston, led endorsement campaigns during city elections, assisted in spearheading a statewide SGA, and collaborated with state officials and members of the White House staff in an effort to make higher education more affordable. I have also participated in public deliberations held by the UHD Center for Public Deliberations, where I learned how valuable and influential my peers' opinions could be. I went on to be elected to two successive terms as UHD student body president, and am currently in the infancy of my second term.

A long and winding road has led me toward becoming the active citizen I am continually attempting to be. This road was built on motivational friendships, the empowerment offered by a first-rate university, and an education that ignited a fire inside of me. I am certain that there are many paths to civic responsibility, and I sincerely hope that my tale inspires others on their journeys. The route, however, isn't nearly as important as the destination. ☐

I could never have guessed that I would encounter other students at UHD who would completely change the way I viewed the world.

little about how the government worked, and even less about the electoral process.

All that would change before the next presidential election. In 2011, I began my academic career at the University of Houston–Downtown (UHD). I was wholly unprepared for the college experience, having taken only a few courses at a junior college after receiving my GED. I could never have guessed that I would encounter other students at UHD who would completely change the way I viewed the world.

In my first semester, I took a class where I met and became friends with a fellow student, Vasooda Kumar. She shared a story with me that inaugurated my journey into civic engagement. Vasooda told me that on her birthday, she encouraged her friends and family

our school's Student Government Association (SGA) for help. In the SGA offices, I met Ivan Sanchez, who was then UHD's student body president and who became another inspirational friend. With Ivan's support, SGA created a committee to organize the Sandwich Runs as a volunteer project. Things seemed to be going well, until our research revealed a recently passed Houston ordinance that made it illegal to feed more than five people in one setting without permission from the city. Discouraged, but not beaten, we contacted a local nonprofit organization, Food Not Bombs (FNB), which was already fighting the ordinance. Although the ordinance remains in effect, FNB obtained special permission for UHD's volunteers to hold the Sandwich Runs.

[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

Cultivating a Safe Environment for Civic Education

■ **ABRAHAM GOLDBERG**, director of service-learning and community engagement and associate professor of political science at the University of South Carolina Upstate

■ **STACEY D. MILLS**, interim executive director and director of student services at the University of South Carolina Upstate, Greenville Campus

In a recent professional development workshop, a faculty member from the University of South Carolina Upstate (USC Upstate) pointed out that comfortable classroom environments are likely to be void of controversial topics—and of conflict, problem-solving, and risk. As these are essential characteristics of a high-quality civic education, students need exposure to *uncomfortable* learning environments to prepare for active citizenship. And yet, it is critical that students engage in learning without fear of being threatened, judged, or dominated when expressing their ideas. Thus learning environments that prepare students for democratic engagement must strike a careful balance, simultaneously being uncomfortable and safe.

At USC Upstate, we challenge students to take positions on divisive topics knowing that their views will be challenged. We ask them to become leaders and to solve serious real-world problems with skills that they recently acquired and have not yet perfected. These challenges are not always comfortable, but are essential for civic learning. Accordingly, USC Upstate strives to foster a campus environment where students feel safe while embarking upon the uncomfortable challenges that prepare them for effective and meaningful participation in civil society.

Regional Challenges and Opportunities

USC Upstate's mission is to offer baccalaureate education to citizens in the

ten-county northwest region of the state. Educational attainment in this region has lagged behind state and national averages, in part because the once dominant textile industry did not require college degrees for most job opportunities. Historically, community life centered on textile companies that provided housing opportunities, shopping, and recreational activities. But most mills ended operations over recent decades, and communities now are emerging from a comfort zone where the textile companies met most basic needs and made many community decisions. USC Upstate offers opportunities for residents to develop the skills needed in a region where decision-making power and community outcomes are now—more than ever—the responsibility of private citizens.

Just under one third of USC Upstate's 5,500 students are in the first generation of their families to attend college. Roughly the same fraction identify as students of color. More than seven of ten are from the region, and about 95 percent are from the state. The vast majority of students in this diverse community of learners will continue to live in the region following graduation, giving them a collective interest in the region's economic opportunities and quality of life. USC Upstate's students also share a purpose and a common fate with the faculty and staff, whose communities will be shaped by the very people they are educating.

A Comprehensive Approach to Civic Education

USC Upstate offers a variety of opportunities for students to develop civic skills beginning in their first semester. Civic skill development and democratic education are priorities in the first-year writing program, a general education requirement. This two-course sequence directly contributes to students' abilities to be effective citizens. In the first course, students learn about appropriate discourse and the power of rhetoric in communicating ideas. They learn to think critically, to craft organized writing with a clear purpose, and to analyze others' communication. A required textbook, which changes each year, focuses on a contemporary topic of interest. For example, the faculty recently selected a common book that included a collection of gay and lesbian memoirs to coincide with major Supreme Court decisions—a selection that stirred controversy in the South Carolina legislature and galvanized campus and community conversations about academic freedom, censorship, and competing values. An additional textbook, revised annually by USC Upstate English faculty, includes essays about social, political, and historical issues.

The second course in the writing sequence challenges students to critique others' work and to openly discuss competing interpretations of texts. Students thus gain exposure to viewpoints different from their own. Some faculty have used the course to engage students in specific issues confronting the Upstate region, structuring assignments to inspire students to take an interest in problems that directly affect their lives. The capstone writing assignment requires students to explain the causes of a local problem, propose a solution, and identify stakeholders who can act on students' recommendations. Past student-selected capstone topics include

reducing teen pregnancy in a county within the region and responding to pollution on the Carolina coast. While enhancing students' writing skills, the program encourages students to see themselves as active democratic participants and provides them with the tools to influence change.

This year, USC Upstate will implement a program to expand service-learning opportunities across the entire academic curriculum. The newly empowered Office of Service-Learning and Community Engagement will offer faculty development opportunities while also building individualized connections to viable community partners. By expanding service-learning opportunities, USC Upstate will empower students to influence real-world community outcomes through their coursework, regardless of their chosen major, positioning them to serve their communities after graduation.

The Office of Student Life complements these programs with workshops that afford students opportunities to develop skills in collaborative decision making, civility, and conflict management with the understanding that each is a key ingredient to producing positive societal outcomes. Students also can participate in volunteer projects, such as Habitat for Humanity, in communities across the region, and in an alternative break program involving intensive field experiences throughout the country. Recently, students travelled to New Orleans to aid revitalization and community development efforts in neighborhoods still rebounding after Hurricane Katrina.

A Safe Environment for Risk-Taking

Civic learning can be uncomfortable. The programs mentioned above intentionally put students in challenging situations so that they can learn skills that are necessary for effective citizenship. At USC Upstate, many students enter

this environment while also confronting other challenges that can hamper student success—for example, while working extensive hours in part-time jobs, or while navigating the undergraduate experience without family members or friends who successfully completed college. In these contexts, barriers that can seem relatively insignificant to some—such as receiving criticism on an assignment or not getting into preferred course sections—can tragically end the college careers of others. USC Upstate has made strategic efforts to foster a supportive and inclusive environment for students as they navigate the natural adversity that accompanies learning, development, and achievement.

The Are You Okay (R U OK) program recently emerged as a mechanism to improve student welfare and establish dialogue among students and professional staff. R U OK stickers appear prominently across campus, encouraging students to use campus support services and to inquire about the well-being of their peers. The program allows members of the campus community to anonymously report concerns about students who may be experiencing difficulties. The dean of students meets with each reported student and typically makes referrals to services including the USC Upstate Food Pantry, Housing, and Counseling Services. Established to cultivate a safe campus environment in light of the challenges many students face, the program has achieved broad success in promoting well-being and shared responsibility across the university.

Certain traditionally underrepresented students—including those who are first generation, have a documented disability, or are from low-income households—also have access to a robust support system. The Opportunity Network, a federally funded TRIO student support services program, provides selected students with academic and



At the University of South Carolina Upstate, the Are You Okay (R U OK) program encourages dialogue about student well-being. (Photo by Carol Loar)

personal counseling, access to social and cultural programming, financial literacy training, and undergraduate research and internship opportunities. The program serves over 170 students, and impressively boasts annual persistence rates that exceed 90 percent.

New Possibilities, High Stakes

Civic education removes students from their comfort zones, empowers them to take risks, and can serve as a springboard to new possibilities. Like USC Upstate's students, the Upstate region has left its comfort zone, depending as never before on skilled citizens to achieve positive community outcomes. Accordingly, the stakes of getting civic education right at USC Upstate are incredibly high—both for students, and for the future of the Upstate region. 📍

The authors thank their colleagues, particularly Peter Caster, Khrystal Smith, and Cassandra Jones, for providing insight and information for this article.

[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

Engaging Students Civically and Politically at Sinclair Community College

■ **DAVID BODARY**, service learning coordinator at Sinclair Community College

■ **DEREK PETREY**, associate director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Sinclair Community College

■ **KATHERINE ROWELL**, director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Sinclair Community College

As an influential swing state in the last two presidential elections, Ohio has attracted substantial attention from candidates and their parties. During recent primary and general election campaigns, automated calls to home phones were commonplace; it was nearly impossible for residents to avoid political messaging. At Sinclair Community College, we responded to the charged political environment in a variety of ways. During both election seasons, student political clubs, the Ohio Fellows (a student political leadership project), and the Global Awareness and Action Club held numerous voter information and registration drives, taking advantage of the county polling center's location across the street from the main campus to register voters. Many prominent political figures visited the Dayton area and campus, and students and faculty discussed the elections in political science courses.

Reflecting in part the success of these efforts, Sinclair has significantly high student voting rates. Yet while elections and political campaigns offer obvious opportunities to cultivate political awareness, Sinclair has successfully nurtured students' engagement in civic and political life between elections as well, through grassroots and institutionally-sponsored initiatives.

Institutional Context

Sinclair Community College is part of the University System of Ohio. While

the institution receives funding from the state, the majority of our students also receive public tuition support from the county, so the college is dually responsible to the public in a very real sense. The main campus is in downtown Dayton, a city with a rich history of innovation and a dire need for reinvention. Like most mid-sized Rust Belt cities, Dayton has suffered over the past several decades from a loss of factory jobs, urban flight, downsizing, and socioeconomic polarization of neighborhoods. At the same time, the city has a vibrant cultural and arts scene, a government committed to embracing diversity and welcoming immigrants, and access to a large network of colleges in Southwest Ohio charged with helping citizens become "employed, educated, and engaged" (SOCHE 2015).

Sinclair is a vital part of the community's transformation. The institution was founded in 1887 by a Scottish immigrant, David Ainslie Sinclair, in partnership with the YMCA. The sense of community collaboration on which the college was founded has driven faculty and staff to think collaboratively in times of financial and institutional crisis. Throughout its long history, the college has remained faithful to its founder's motto: "Find the need and endeavor to meet it." Today, this challenge continues to give purpose to faculty and staff, who regularly reflect on the motto and infuse its philosophy

into our discussions and decision making.

We believe that Sinclair's culture has encouraged our students to become actively engaged in the cultural, economic, and political life of the region. Our institutional culture depends in part on initiatives that directly foster student engagement, some of which are sponsored by the provost's office—for example, the Honors Program and Phi Theta Kappa (the international honors society of two-year colleges). Students involved in the Nu Pi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa are often hyperengaged in their communities. Each year, the chapter selects a hallmark issue as a point of focus for student activities. In past years, these issues have included food insecurity, homelessness, college completion, and Dayton's history as a center for innovation. More than four hundred students participate in the Honors Program each year, and many of these students conduct research or service projects that help them develop a sense of ownership in their fields or disciplines and in their communities while learning valuable career and life skills.

We define success as occurring not only when students complete their degrees or certificates, but also when students are directly involved in the political and civic lives of their community. Our commitment to the civic and political spheres of education is rooted in a robust culture of faculty engagement. This culture arises from a campus-wide commitment to recognizing and rewarding faculty efforts, investing in service learning, and nurturing faculty-driven grassroots initiatives.

A Culture of Faculty Engagement

Like many two-year colleges, Sinclair adheres to the mantra *community is our middle name*. This view affects the college's administrative culture, and, in turn, its faculty culture. Our annual faculty performance review, which is used

for promotion and tenure discussions as well as merit-based recognition programs, requires faculty to report what they have contributed to the workplace and the community. This annual assessment of faculty performance recognizes community engagement in many areas, including scholarship, professional development, teaching and learning, student development, assessment, curriculum design, and workplace and community service. Salient contributions to community efforts figure prominently in many faculty members' merit applications, with "service" understood as extending beyond one's department or division to include one's broader community. The review process, in use for several decades, continues to evolve to include new components such as intercultural communication and global education. As a result of the values reflected by this internal review process, numerous faculty members have been recognized for service at the regional and national level.

Former provost Helen Grove demonstrated her commitment to service learning and community engagement by creating the service learning coordinator position in 2004. While Sinclair does not require service learning of all students, many programs (such as the Honors Program, American Sign Language, and Dietetics) require students to complete between ten and twenty hours of service learning. Service-learning activities on campus have grown steadily over the last ten years, with approximately one hundred faculty members incorporating service learning into their instruction each year and nearly one thousand students participating annually. Much of Sinclair's service-learning outreach focuses on addressing areas of social and economic need in the community, with some projects helping to develop students' political awareness and civic engagement. For example, students enrolled in an English class edited the



A student leader at Sinclair Community College speaks at an event sponsored by the Honors Symposium. (Photo by Sam McConnell)

website and voter guide of the local League of Women Voters, providing advice about grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Sinclair's culture of collaboration and engagement is also strengthened by many faculty-driven grassroots initiatives fostered by departments, divisions, and the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). These initiatives include various faculty-mentored student political clubs (Campus Democrats, Campus Republicans, Young Americans for Liberty); a Model United Nations program conducted in partnership with twelve area colleges; activities surrounding the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday; and a Diversity and Inclusion track for instructors interested in this area of professional development. One unique faculty-driven initiative is the Sinclair Change Agents, consisting of faculty members who agree to attend at least two diversity training events a year and work collectively within their roles at Sinclair to enable positive change with respect to issues of diversity. This informal group, which formed after a CTL-sponsored campus visit from Frances Kendall, a national expert on diversity education, gathers six times

each academic year to discuss challenges, opportunities, and progress for people of color on campus. While advances have been sporadic, the group has strong support across campus and helps keep issues of equity at the forefront of the minds of administrators, faculty, and staff.

New Challenges, Tested Approaches

Sinclair's faculty continue to address contemporary challenges related to funding and other issues with the same approach we have used to survive critical moments throughout our history: by seeking allies, inspiring students, and constantly examining how we can, as David Sinclair charged us, "find the need and endeavor to meet it." We continue to strive to help students become responsible and engaged citizens and professionals who are educated in the issues that will affect their families, neighborhoods, and communities for generations to come. 📍

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[CAMPUS PRACTICE]

The Long-Term Impact of Learning to Deliberate

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A 2008 report commissioned by the Spencer Foundation noted the importance of assessing what we know and don't know about creating "long lasting habits of civic engagement" (Hollander and Burack 2009, 1). The report's authors argued for (1) the need to identify "academic and co-curricular elements that most impact student civic engagement and long term commitment to civic engagement," and (2) the need for longitudinal approaches and data (6–8). In 2012, the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement pointed to a survey of college students that found that only a third of respondents felt "that their civic awareness had expanded in college, that the campus had helped them learn the skills needed to effectively change society for the better, or that their commitment to improve society had grown" (41). In this essay, we respond to these two sets of concerns, reporting on a longitudinal study of the long-term impact of training in deliberation. Our results suggest that learning to deliberate in college can promote civic awareness and engagement and help students develop skills that continue throughout adulthood.

The Democracy Fellows Program, 2001–05

Between 2001 and 2005, the first two authors worked with a group of thirty students at Wake Forest University in

what was called the Democracy Fellows program. Participants were recruited from the entering first-year class and were selected to reflect the gender, race and ethnicity, and regional distribution of the entering class, as well as a diverse set of views about and experiences with civic engagement. During their first semester, participating students enrolled in a first-year seminar titled

Learning to deliberate in college can promote civic awareness and engagement and help students develop skills that continue throughout adulthood.

Democracy and Deliberation, where they learned both the theory and the practice of deliberation. In the second semester, these students collectively chose a campus issue around which to frame an issue guide, which they used during the sophomore year to organize and moderate a campus-wide deliberation. In their junior year, they organized and moderated a deliberation in the Winston-Salem community. During their senior year, they put their moderating skills to use in other campus or community settings.

We assessed the effect of participation in the Democracy Fellows in several ways. In order to distinguish between

the impact of Wake Forest's liberal arts education and the impact of participation in the program, we compared the fellows to a class cohort. We conducted entry interviews with all fellows in the fall of their first year, focus groups in the second and third years, and exit interviews in the spring of the senior year. Each year, we also conducted focus groups with the class cohort. During each of these sessions, we administered surveys about students' various activities on campus; during the senior year, we also included several questions in a larger survey given to all seniors by the Office of Institutional Research.

We reported the findings of this study in *Speaking of Politics: Preparing College Students for Democratic Citizenship through Deliberative Dialogue* (Harriger and McMillan 2007). Although students from the two groups were very much alike at the beginning of their college

careers, by the end they displayed some meaningful differences. The Democracy Fellows were more engaged with political activities during college than members of the cohort and had more complex and communally focused notions of citizenship and its responsibilities. While both groups felt that they were likely to be civically engaged after college, their reasons for believing so differed. The fellows saw themselves working with others in their communities to solve shared problems, while members of the class cohort were more likely to say that they would vote and pay attention to politics in order to protect their own interests. The fellows were also more

likely than members of the cohort to say that their college education had prepared them for their civic roles. Finally, the fellows talked about the ways in which they were using deliberative skills in their daily lives, including in the classroom, their student organizations, and their personal relationships. It was clear that, at least in the short term, their four-year exposure to the theory and practice of deliberation had had an impact on their civic engagement.

The Alumni Study, 2014–15

A decade later—after the fellows had graduated from college and entered the workforce, and with the United States experiencing an increasingly polarized

We conducted telephone interviews with both groups, using the same set of questions (with the exception of a few program-focused questions that we asked only of the fellows). Following the interview, both groups completed an online survey.

Our analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that there continue to be significant differences between the Democracy Fellows and the class cohort. Although both groups dislike the degree of political polarization they encounter in their daily lives, the fellows continue to be more engaged in the political process than does the class cohort. The fellows are still more likely to believe that their education prepared

the commitment of time and resources. At Wake Forest, we recently held three annual campus-wide deliberations on campus culture, with a particular focus on issues of diversity and inclusion. We are working to institutionalize deliberative training in both the curriculum and campus life. We also have shared our efforts with interested neighboring institutions.

As colleges and universities seek to answer the 2012 call to action from the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, they should consider ways to integrate deliberative practice both inside and outside of the classroom. Perhaps nothing speaks to the benefits of deliberation better than the words of a Democracy Fellow, responding to a question about her experience in the program. Noting how important it is that eighteen-year-olds learn to understand a “diversity of viewpoints,” she said, “I think that’s like the crux of deliberative democracy. It’s like allowing people to share their opinion and to be able to listen and then to walk away from that not making somebody an enemy because of a difference in viewpoint. And if everybody had that kind of training and education, imagine how much more productive [...] society would be [...]”

Colleges and universities should consider ways to integrate deliberative practice both inside and outside of the classroom.

political climate—we wondered whether the differences we saw in 2005 remained. Was there still a discernible difference in the fellows’ political engagement and attitudes about civic engagement, or had these differences been erased by their experiences in the “real world”?

To answer this question, we adopted a research design similar to that of the first study. With the help of the alumni office and of social media, we located twenty of the fellows. We also recruited a random sample of alumni from the class of 2005, matched to program participants by college major, gender, and race or ethnicity because such matching strengthens the ability to conclude that differences between groups were caused by the treatment in question rather than by other factors (Ho et al. 2007).

them for their civic roles, and they strongly indicate that the Democracy Fellows program was a key element of that education. They also continue to use the skills they learned in the program in all aspects of their lives and recount with considerable detail some of the key lessons that they learned, such as listening, seeking to understand people with whom they disagree, learning to disagree without hating others, appreciating that alternative viewpoints are valid and sincerely held, and asking who is not at the table.

Implications

Both the original study and our alumni follow-up study provide substantial evidence that teaching students to deliberate is a high-impact practice worth

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[LOOKING AHEAD]

Embracing Education for Democracy through the 2016 Election

■ **ABBY KIESA**, youth coordinator and researcher at the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, Tufts University

Although all students will be affected by elections and the majority will be voters over the course of their lifetimes, most will encounter few learning opportunities intentionally designed to engage them even in major components of our democracy. Over the next year, college students will encounter information about the 2016 election from a wide variety of sources, both online and in person. And yet a lack of actionable information about the registration and voting process can still result in barriers to student voting. As educators, if we want students to actively participate in democratic processes such as elections, we must design learning opportunities that support this goal.

First, we need to dispel the myth that students know where to find the information they need. On Election Day 2012, 65 percent of college students aged eighteen to twenty-four (approximately 7 million students) were registered to vote, but hundreds of thousands of these students did not vote because of barriers that might have been addressed with better access to information. For example, 24.7 percent said they were out of town or away—suggesting the need for better access to information about absentee voting. Another 4 million students in this age group were not registered to vote, and hundreds of thousands of these students reported encountering barriers to registration that also might have been addressed with better access to information: for example, 7.5 percent said they did not know where or how to register, and 29.3

percent said they did not meet the registration deadline (author's calculations from US Census Bureau 2012).

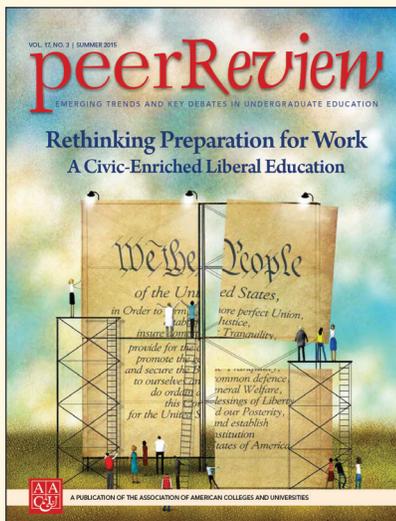
Higher education can embrace the 2016 election cycle as a way of educating students not only for voting, but also for broader participation in democracy. In fact, the federal Higher Education Act requires voter registration outreach by institutions that receive federal funds. Beginning with the steps outlined below, faculty, staff, and administrators can work together to make learning about voting and democracy a part of students' college experiences and their future.

- **Begin to plan now.** Begin planning early to develop election-related activities resulting in deep and thoughtful learning rather than transactional and superficial engagement that is so often associated with politics. Administrators can offer incentives such as minigrants to encourage faculty to incorporate elections- and voting-related topics into their courses, or they can offer faculty development workshops on effectively facilitating safe and balanced discussions.
- **Designate a staff or faculty lead and create a working group** of faculty, staff, and students focused on building a strategy for crafting learning experiences focused on the election. This working group should leverage the potential of peer-to-peer learning, which can play a key role in how youth become politically engaged (CIRCLE 2012).

- **Provide basic information to students.** Use existing communication channels, like the institution's website and learning management system, to spread information about voting and election-related activities.
- **Build a relationship with your local election official.** By understanding how the election official's office works, educators can help students navigate registration procedures and avoid unexpected barriers to registration and voting (Tisch College, forthcoming). It's important to clarify the registration and voting process before the election cycle becomes hectic.
- **Use existing resources and leverage local partners.** For resources focused on voter registration, dialogue facilitation, and state-by-state information about voting rights, see <http://go.tufts.edu/IDHE/>.
- **Embrace the institution's role in preparing students for life.** Many institutions have mission and values statements related to engagement, problem solving, and diversity. We deny our students tools for acting on these values if we fail to show them how messy democracy can be. In fact, we underestimate their potential and ours as educators if we fail to embrace elections as opportunities for teaching and learning. 📍

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Rethinking Preparation for Work: A Civic-Enriched Liberal Education

In a world where college graduates spend the majority of their public lives engaged in work, this issue of *Peer Review*, sponsored by the Kettering Foundation, focuses on how colleges might reconceive preparation for work in addition to preparation for citizenship. Instead of making the case for civic learning only by noting that civic skills are useful in getting a job, this issue explores whether there is a more expansive and civic notion of work to which higher education might contribute. Are there civic skills and attributes that students need to be successful workers? If so, what are they? Does this enriched concept of work have resonance with employers, and does it challenge prevailing notions of work? In this issue you will find a series of articles that serve to challenge and provoke those committed to a fundamentally civic understanding of liberal education.

To order print copies or read online, visit www.aacu.org/peerreview/2015/summer.

Selected Resources on Political Learning and Engagement

For a complete list of resources for faculty and administrators working to create opportunities for political learning and engagement, see <http://go.tufts.edu/IDHE/>.

Everyday Democracy

Everyday Democracy provides technical assistance and support to help communities address pressing challenges through organizing, dialogue, and action at the intersection of democracy and equity. Information about Everyday Democracy’s growing national network of civic engagement coaches, trainers, and practitioners is available at <http://everyday-democracy.org>.

Fair Elections Legal Network

Through its Campus Vote Project (CVP), the Fair Elections Legal Network works to ensure that college students are able to exercise their right to vote. CVP offers resources to help colleges and universities collaborate with election officials and to educate students about voter registration and voting procedures. To learn more, visit <http://fairelectionsnetwork.com/students/>.

Rutgers University’s Center for American Women and Politics

The Center for American Women and Politics works “to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women’s participation in politics and government and to enhance women’s influence and leadership in public life.” To access the center’s research on women in politics or learn about its education and training programs, visit <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/>.

Andrew Goodman Foundation

Through initiatives like its nonpartisan, campus-based Vote Everywhere program, the Andrew Goodman Foundation aims “to empower all individuals to take action to address systemic social issues such as poverty, educational access, economic opportunity, equality and social justice.” For information, visit <http://andrewgoodman.org/>.

Brennan Center for Justice

The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law conducts research, analyzes and crafts policies, and litigates to protect Constitutional and civil rights. To download center resources, including an online student voting guide, visit <http://www.brennancenter.org/student-voting>.

SAVE THE DATE: AAC&U’s 2016 Annual Meeting

AAC&U’s 2016 Annual Meeting, “How Higher Education Can Lead—On Equity, Inclusive Excellence, and Democratic Renewal,” will convene from January 20 to 23 in Washington, DC. Focusing on higher education’s most pressing educational challenges—those centered on the intersections of equity and quality—the 2016 Annual Meeting will foster discussion and encourage action to address the deepening disparities that endanger America’s economic and democratic future. To learn more or register, visit <http://www.aacu.org/meetings/annualmeeting/am16>.

Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Calendar

The following calendar features events on civic learning sponsored by members of the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Action Network and others. For more information, please visit AAC&U's CLDE Calendar online at <http://www.aacu.org/clde/calendar/>.

MONTH	DATES	CLDE MEMBER EVENT	LOCATION
JANUARY 2016	20–23	AAC&U 2016 Annual Meeting: How Higher Education Can Lead—On Equity, Inclusive Excellence, and Democratic Renewal	Washington, DC
	22–24	Interfaith Youth Core—Interfaith Leadership Institute	Atlanta, Georgia
FEBRUARY	18–20	AAC&U Network for Academic Renewal Conference—General Education and Assessment	New Orleans, Louisiana
MARCH	12–16	NASPA Annual Conference—Common Purpose: Shaping a Vision for Higher Education	Indianapolis, Indiana
	17–19	AAC&U Network for Academic Renewal Conference—Diversity, Learning, and Student Success	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
	21–23	Campus Compact Thirtieth Anniversary Conference	Boston, Massachusetts
MAY	9–11	Connecting Campuses with Communities Conference (Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis and Campus Compact)	Indianapolis, Indiana
	29–June 3	NAFSA 2016 Annual Conference and Expo	Denver, Colorado
	31–June 4	National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education	San Francisco, California
JUNE	2–4	Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement 2016	Indianapolis, Indiana

AAC&U and the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Action Network

As part of its commitment to preparing all students for civic, ethical, and social responsibility in US and global contexts, AAC&U has formed the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Action Network. The CLDE Action Network builds on the momentum generated by the 2012 White House release of the report *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*. Coordinated by Caryn McTighe Musil, AAC&U senior scholar and director of civic learning and democracy initiatives, the network includes thirteen leading civic learning organizations that are committed to making civic inquiry and engagement expected rather than elective for all college students. *Diversity & Democracy* regularly features research and exemplary practices developed and advanced by these partner organizations and their members:

- American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- Anchor Institutions Task Force
- Association of American Colleges and Universities
- The Bonner Foundation
- Bringing Theory to Practice
- Campus Compact
- Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement
- The Democracy Commitment
- Imagining America
- The Interfaith Youth Core
- Kettering Foundation
- NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
- New England Resource Center for Higher Education



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Upcoming AAC&U Meetings

MEETING	LOCATION	DATES
AAC&U 2016 ANNUAL MEETING How Higher Education Can Lead—On Equity, Inclusive Excellence, and Democratic Renewal	<i>Washington, DC</i>	JANUARY 20–23, 2016
NETWORK FOR ACADEMIC RENEWAL General Education and Assessment: From My Work to Our Work	<i>New Orleans, Louisiana</i>	FEBRUARY 18–20, 2016
NETWORK FOR ACADEMIC RENEWAL Diversity, Learning, and Student Success	<i>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</i>	MARCH 17–19, 2016

About Diversity & Democracy

Diversity & Democracy supports higher education faculty and leaders as they design and implement programs that advance civic learning and democratic engagement, global learning, and engagement with diversity to prepare students for socially responsible action in today's interdependent but unequal world. According to AAC&U's Statement on Liberal Learning, "By its nature... liberal learning is global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world. To acknowledge such diversity in all its forms is both an intellectual commitment and a social responsibility, for nothing less will equip us to understand our world and to pursue fruitful lives." *Diversity & Democracy* features evidence, research, and exemplary practices to assist practitioners in creating learning opportunities that realize this vision. To access *Diversity & Democracy* online, visit www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/.

About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,300 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, and universities of every type and size. AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.

AAC&U Membership 2015

