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Jeffrey L. Bernstein  
*Eastern Michigan University*

Rebecca S. Nowacek  
*Marquette University*

Michael B. Smith  
*Ithaca College*

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# THE CITIZENSHIP IMPERATIVE AND THE ROLE OF FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

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*Jeffrey L. Bernstein*, Eastern Michigan University

*Rebecca S. Nowacek*, Marquette University

*Michael B. Smith*, Ithaca College

*By teaching the capacity for citizenship across the curriculum, colleges and universities can better serve their role as socially responsive institutions. We argue that citizenship themes can be more central to a wide variety of classes, including some in disciplines not considered traditional homes for civic education. Faculty development centers can play a critical role in helping faculty integrate citizenship into the curriculum and evaluate the learning that occurs in their citizenship-oriented classes. We offer guidelines for how learning communities can best serve these purposes.*

Every fall the doors of our universities open to new students. During their time on campus, our responsibility is to educate them broadly (through general education requirements), help them build expertise in a few particular areas of knowledge (through major and minor requirements), offer them cocurricular opportunities to broaden their interests and build their leadership skills, and prepare them to pursue their careers and lives. In addition, universities must prepare students for their role as citizens in civil society by helping them develop the skills and dispositions of citizenship, broadly defined.

Advocating citizenship education is not a novel position in higher education (Battistoni, 2002; Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999; Carnegie Foundation, 2006; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003). Calls for “socially responsive knowledge” go back at least to Altman (1996), and arguably to Dewey (1916). Nevertheless, citizenship education remains uneven, often walled off in disciplinary silos. Despite gestures

toward its value over the past twenty years, colleges and universities have not always transformed the call for citizenship education into curricular innovation. There is reason to be optimistic that such needed change is happening.

If the potential of citizenship education is to be realized, faculty development will have to assume a leading role. Faculty development professionals and the centers they lead are crucial to such efforts, particularly on campuses that cannot devote institutional resources to establishing a dedicated center. While there are many roads to citizenship education, we draw evidence and illustrative examples from our experiences in a cross-institutional learning community to argue for the power of the faculty learning community as one way to sponsor education for citizenship among faculty and, eventually, among students.

## The Need for Citizenship Education

In recent years, respected scholars have spoken of the need to teach with an eye toward citizenship (Bok, 2008; Nussbaum, 2002; Schmidt, 2009). Nussbaum (2002) argues, for example, that the philosophical well-spring of higher education flows in the direction of citizenship education. Cultivation of our common humanity in the service of a functioning polity has “long been at the root of our aspirations, as we construct a higher education that is not simply pre-professional, but a general enrichment of and a cultivation of reasonable, deliberative democratic citizenship” (p. 291). Such academic discussions resonate powerfully with conversations in the public sphere, particularly regarding the need to inculcate the core values of civility. These various calls unite to sound a clarion that identifies citizenship education as an imperative for the academy.

In the public sphere, few officials have more eloquently emphasized the imperative of civility than Jim Leach, former member of Congress and current chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). In one of his many speeches on the subject during the 2010 midterm election season, Leach argued:

Citizenship is hard. It takes a commitment to listen, watch, read, and think in ways that allow the imagination to put one person in the shoes of another. Words matter. They reflect emotion as well as meaning. They clarify—or cloud—thought and energize action, sometimes bringing out the better angels of our nature, and sometimes, baser instincts. . . . Civility is an ancient virtue of civilized society. It is not simply or principally about manners. Rather it is about respectful

engagement with an understanding that we are all connected and rely upon each other.

The fact that Leach has made civility one of the cornerstones of his agenda as NEH chairman is significant. Even more significant is that Leach's definition of citizenship revolves around empathy, connectedness, and mutuality. As we shall see, thinking of citizenship in these terms not only gets to the core of what is necessary for sustaining human communities, but also makes it possible to teach citizenship in almost any discipline.

In recent years, lamentations like Leach's about the decline in civility have poured forth from the media, from the pulpit, at coffee shops, at town hall meetings, and in the halls of the academy. The academy has begun to address this, as evidenced by the work of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (most notably its Center for Liberal Education and Civic Engagement and its Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement initiatives; Dey, 2009; Knefelkamp, 2008), *Imagining America*, and dozens of initiatives within specific disciplines (Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities in the sciences, for example, and the American Association of Higher Education's service-learning in the disciplines monograph series). This body of work makes it clear that the turn to citizenship education and civic engagement in the academy is more than mere words. But too often, civically engaged teaching and learning continues to be seen as the province of certain disciplines or the responsibility of a center on campus.

The key to overcoming this may lie, we believe, in empathy. Developing empathy, the foundation for civil society, can be the province of any discipline. When we can empathize with the perspectives of others, we become more attuned to collective needs and the sense of reciprocity that ennobles civic life (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Putnam, 1993; Rhoads, 1997). Without empathy, community frays—and the desire to sustain functioning communities is at the core of citizenship. Rifkin (2009) argues that empathy is the glue that has held civilization together; recognizing this dimension of human community is the first step toward solving the problems of the twenty-first century. Cultivating an expanded capacity for empathy is foundational to citizenship education and makes it possible to embrace citizenship education by emphasizing disciplinary content in new ways.

Our experience as co-inquirers working together in an interdisciplinary faculty learning community suggests that two things need to happen for citizenship education to become as well integrated into the curriculum as

writing skills or numeracy. First, we need to cultivate models of citizenship education across the curriculum, expanding it beyond its perceived native habitats of history, political science, and sociology into the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, business schools, and other seemingly unlikely areas. Although we have noted some remarkable efforts to do this at the macrolevel, there is more that faculty developers can do at the campus level. Second, implementing citizenship education is only the first step. We need to be sure that as we infuse citizenship education across the curriculum, we develop a clear sense of what our learning outcomes will look like and have mechanisms in place for capturing, assessing, and studying student learning. Only after taking this second step will we be able to make a persuasive case for the effectiveness of our enterprise.

As scholars who have engaged in teaching citizenship across the curriculum and have engaged in rigorous investigations of our own classroom practice, we can offer our work as data. We draw on our own experiences to demonstrate how our participation in a faculty learning community enhanced our work and to suggest lessons for others who are considering engaging in such work.

### **From Individual to Community: Meeting the Challenges of Education for Citizenship Across Campus**

Our prior classroom-based research (Smith, Nowacek, & Bernstein, 2010) indicates that students emerge from our individual classes with higher-than-usual levels of citizenship skills, such as the ability to sort through conflicting political information and the ability to disagree civilly. We also have evidence that our students emerge stronger on developing a sense of empathy, a tolerance for ambiguity and for questions that have no easy answer, and a willingness to see themselves as part of something larger than themselves. In short, we see our students beginning to make movement toward future citizenship behaviors.

As pleased as we are by these achievements, we each remain somewhat isolated on our campuses, frustrated with our limited ability to move our respective institutions toward more robust, cross-curricular citizenship education. We know from our conversations with collaborators on other campuses that our frustration is widespread. Our efforts to be more effective curricular change agents are constrained by two significant factors. First, we are limited by our institutional roles: we are each faculty members, working inside disciplinary homes without the benefit of administrative

appointments. While we can accomplish much at the course or even the departmental level, we lack the reach and authority to sustain conversations about citizenship education across campus, much less implement initiatives to foster actual classroom experimentation. Second, while we each have allies in our quest to develop the teaching of citizenship across the curriculum, there are too few opportunities in the academy for allies in pedagogical and curricular innovation to find each other. The disciplinary silos in which we work limit interactions across campus; furthermore, joining with others to push our institutions to embrace the goal of teaching for citizenship necessarily becomes just one of many interesting and important initiatives competing for our time. Teaching and learning centers and faculty development professionals can become critical allies to faculty in these efforts.

As we individually pursued citizenship education goals, we were influenced by the supportive community we established as Carnegie Scholars with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in 2005–2006; ultimately this Carnegie experience can be described as a multidisciplinary, multi-institutional, residential faculty learning community (Cox, 2001; Cox & Richlin, 2004; Millis, 1990). In our learning community, we shared extended residencies that provided opportunities to read together, delve deeper into our projects, listen to and learn from our colleagues' presentations of their ongoing work, and engage in extended dialogue over shared meals and social outings. While this elaborate, well-funded model of a learning community is beyond the reach of most budgets, broader lessons can be drawn from it.

This learning community model is at the core of our recommendation for how faculty development centers can enhance citizenship education across campus. Originally we and the authors in our edited volume (Smith et al., 2010) approached citizenship education with different motivations. For some, educating tomorrow's democratic citizens was always front and center in our work and in our motivations for doing it (Bernstein, 2010; Geelan, 2010). Others were initially motivated by other problems, including students' inability to accurately self-assess their learning (Werder, 2010), their difficulty making empathetic connections to the literature of the Shoah (Holocaust) (Tinberg, 2010), and the challenges of developing a robust understanding of other cultures (Halualani, 2010). Over time, we found that our understandings of those problems were intimately linked with a richer conception of citizenship. Our learning community enabled us to find each other and illuminate these common themes.

As we coalesced into a learning community, we derived many benefits from the relationship. Foremost was a strong sense of solidarity and camaraderie.

As we swam against the prevailing tides of our disciplines, departments, schools, and the academy more generally, it was useful to have supportive colleagues with whom we shared a vocabulary and an ethos. There was always someone to e-mail for advice or call for support, or discuss what happened in class that day. The benefits of having a community of supportive peers are substantial for faculty working against the grain.

Beyond moral support is the question of institutional change. As we contemplate the institutional challenges that confront us, the three of us have pondered, more than once, how much we might be able to achieve were we working together on the same campus. We would be able to draw on the professional relationships we have built, our shared perspectives on citizenship education, the exciting intellectual differences in our approaches, and our cross-disciplinary borrowing of teaching approaches and assessment methods. If we had the opportunity to work together all the time, we are convinced we could be more effective than we are individually.

Indeed, as we look around our own campuses, we wonder how many of our colleagues share, unbeknown to us, a commitment to education for citizenship. How are we to find these colleagues, these potential partners? Faculty aiming to educate for citizenship can accomplish far more working together than they can working alone. Given the values that citizenship education seeks to foster, making this kind of pedagogical and curricular initiative a collective endeavor is all the more important. Because faculty development centers are potentially the place where communities of pedagogical practice receive the most support—and are often a physical space where disciplinary cross-fertilization in teaching and learning happens—these centers can sponsor significant breakthroughs in citizenship education.

### **Four Lessons Learned from a Faculty Learning Community on Citizenship**

Based on our experiences, which form a case study of sorts, we offer guidance for faculty developers considering using faculty learning communities to build faculty capacity and institutional support for citizenship education. The literature on faculty learning communities (see, for example, Cox & Richlin, 2004) and on communities of practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) offers a thorough review of how to create faculty learning communities. Here, we focus on the unique challenges and opportunities for these communities in the realm of citizenship education, offering specific suggestions for how learning

communities might be structured and harnessed to provide maximum support to faculty working on citizenship education.

### *Embrace Diverse Definitions*

Defining precisely what we mean by “citizenship education” or “civically engaged education” remains a challenge for anyone working in this area. Saltmarsh (2005) observes that “a lack of clarity about what is meant by the term ‘civic engagement’” is ubiquitous whenever academics gather to discuss the subject. He suggests that “this lack of clarity fuels latent confusion about how to operationalize a civic engagement agenda on campus” (p. 52). We experienced this confusion when the participants in our learning community decided to extend and formalize our conversations by undertaking the project of writing a book: we tried to forge a shared definition, with little success. Definitional challenges briefly became an impediment to work in this area. They also, however, can become a source of strength.

Our definitions of what citizenship means, and what constitutes teaching for citizenship, evolved over many conversations over several years. We all began our work with a definition of citizenship in our heads and a sense of how we wanted to teach it in class. But as we saw how others taught citizenship, and how they articulated their goals for citizenship education in their classes, our individual understandings changed. Many of us learned to consider the role of different literacies, including scientific and quantitative literacy, in our understanding of citizenship, as a result of conversations with colleagues in the STEM disciplines (Burke, 2010; Fisher, 2010; Geelan, 2010). Many of our definitions pushed toward including an empathy component as we considered how one of our colleagues (Tinberg, 2010) used the literature on the Shoah to help his students explore how literature can develop their capacity for empathy. Although we cannot deny the allure of a compact, sound bite-friendly definition of citizenship, we have found that this messier, more capacious understanding has enriched our work in deeply rewarding ways.

We recommend encouraging faculty to share their own definitions of citizenship with the community. While definitions can, and should, be modified based on feedback from others, faculty should not be encouraged to all use the same definition in their classes. Likewise, we suggest encouraging faculty to investigate different aspects of citizenship development even in different sections of their classes. Ideally, discussions of the many valences of citizenship, and how they intersect across classes and within the same class, can become a source of generative discussions.



One way a faculty learning community might structure this discussion is around Shulman's (2008; see also Sullivan, 2004) work on habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of practice. Each of our classes can help students learn essential knowledge for citizenship, whether these involve understanding how the political system works, how to evaluate scientific or quantitative arguments, or how to work with diverse groups of people to make collective decisions. Our classes can also help students develop dispositions of citizenship. We would all do well to cultivate in our students a tolerance for (and even a love of) problems that defy simple solutions, where the correct answer may be something about which reasonable people can disagree. Empathy, of course, remains a predominant disposition of citizenship, without which many other virtues are unattainable. Finally, we can strive to help our students practice the behaviors of citizenship through in-class simulations, group projects, or various forms of service-learning.

We would not suggest that faculty in a learning community ought to incorporate all of these aspects of citizenship into all in-class activities; that would easily overwhelm the courses we are teaching. But through a learning community, faculty can enrich their understanding of the many meanings of citizenship and think more about how to incorporate this diversity of perspectives into their classes. From an institutional standpoint, students can gain exposure to these varied perspectives through the sweep of their course work and emerge with a more complete picture of what citizenship can mean.

### *Use Citizenship Themes to Engage Students in Achieving a Course's Disciplinary Goals*

Instructors are overworked and courses are already overstuffed with content, and these realities work against finding room to incorporate education for citizenship into classes across the curriculum. Our learning community has taught us that to be sustainable, education for citizenship cannot be an add-on in already content-rich classes. Rather it must become a vehicle through which already existing course-related goals are achieved. In this, we take our cue from the writing across the curriculum (WAC) movement. WAC acknowledges that certain departments have a critical, foundational role to play in the teaching of writing, just as political science and history have a foundational role to play in citizenship education. Teaching *with* writing, however, can be used outside composition classes as a tool to help teach the lessons of other disciplines (Bean, 1996). Writing lab reports in physics or position papers in political

science are ways to use writing to teach through to the core of disciplinary knowledge. We believe an analogous process can be observed for citizenship.

Teaching biochemistry, as Fisher (2010) does, by focusing on diseases such as AIDS and Alzheimer's (and on the societal impact of these diseases) sacrifices little biochemistry content while helping to increase students' understanding of a major issue. Understanding the plight of those with these diseases also helps to cultivate the empathy that is critical to citizenship education. Fisher is one of many scientists who have discovered the power of this pedagogical twist (Rogers, Hamilton, Pfaff, & Erkan, 2010; Zobitz, 2009). Likewise, Mike Burke (2010) could teach the graphing of logarithmic functions using context-free values for  $x$  and  $y$ . He instead uses data sets based on real-world problems like nuclear waste disposal. By having his students use the rate of decay of radioactive material to calculate the length of time until it becomes safe, Burke allows students to learn mathematical principles as they gain a deeper understanding of a pressing social issue for global citizens of the twenty-first century. Along the way his students learn quantitative literacy, another important tool for citizenship education, within the context of learning mathematical functions in a precalculus class. Some math educators are even realizing their potential as force multipliers, as they help future primary and secondary teachers in training think about ways to integrate civic lessons into math (Jacobsen & Mistele, 2010).

These models make clear the broad applicability of citizenship education. When we start from the perspective that citizenship can be defined broadly, as requiring quantitative or scientific literacy, or empathy, or a tolerance for ambiguity, and that it can be taught in a wide variety of disciplines, the possibilities for using themes of citizenship to teach important course concepts expand dramatically. While different disciplines might excel at teaching different aspects of citizenship—we would not expect a poetry class to teach quantitative literacy, for example—all disciplines should be able to find aspects of citizenship to incorporate into their classes. At a course level, therefore, we argue that citizenship across the curriculum is eminently attainable. At a campus level, however, the challenges are greater, requiring the centralization and coordination that faculty development centers can provide.

### *Use the Learning Community to Enhance SoTL*

We encourage scholarly investigations of student learning about citizenship through investigations grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) (Bass, 1999; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999). Because teaching for

citizenship and civic engagement pushes the envelope in terms of what is taught, and perhaps even sacrifices small amounts of course content in service to larger goals, these efforts need to document carefully what is being done and what students are gaining from the experience in order to convince skeptics of the worth of this enterprise. Fisher (2010) and Burke (2010) provide compelling examples of such documentation.

Furthermore, the learning community can become an important resource for instructors undertaking SoTL inquiries by facilitating “methodological trading zones” (Huber & Hutchings, 2005). Participating in the Carnegie Foundation’s fellowship program brought us into close contact with colleagues wrestling with questions of how to examine and document the student learning that was taking place in their classrooms. In the methodological trading zone we established, faculty with expertise in survey research shared the benefits and techniques of quantitative methods, while those who used textual or discourse analysis in developing qualitative assessments of student learning opened up the possibilities of these methods for the scientists and social scientists. Each of us emerged with a greater set of methodological tools at our disposal. The traces of these exchanges can be found in each of our individual investigations. As one example, Nowacek, trained as a qualitative researcher of composition and rhetoric, has begun to use survey methods to study learning in her classes. This work is part of a collaboration with Bernstein, a quantitative political scientist who is now doing content analysis of student essays to study the impact of his pedagogical practices. This methodological trading continues to enhance our cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional conversations.

### *Embrace Student and Administrative Voices*

A final bit of advice we offer to faculty developers considering a learning community is to involve a broad cross-section of people in the conversation. As Werder and Otis (2009) argue, students have a great deal to contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Moreover, if a goal of these learning communities is to propagate this teaching approach across the curriculum, then the involvement of administrators, as well as professionals from divisions of student affairs, becomes an important piece of the puzzle. Faculty may have valid reasons for forming their own communities (such as to discuss specific pedagogical and epistemological matters in teaching citizenship and in evaluating the effectiveness of their approaches); other voices, however, ought to be part of the conversation in some way. Although we have not yet done as much with this theme as we would have liked (see, however, Gutman, Sergison, Martin,

& Bernstein, 2009) and were unable to do so during our joint residency, we believe this to be valuable advice for faculty wishing to form campus-based learning communities.

## Implications

As the world continues to suffer from an economic crisis, accompanied by attendant (and resultant) increases in the cost of attending colleges and universities, the public is quite correctly asking more questions about what students gain from a college education. Accordingly, the attention colleges and universities have devoted to assessing student learning through their course work is well placed. In addition, we would argue that institutions of higher learning have an obligation to consider the kinds of people they are graduating. Have we graduated students capable of understanding the perspectives of those different from themselves? Have we graduated students willing to roll up their sleeves and exert effort, frequently difficult effort, to help heal and repair the world? In short, we must look at the students graduating from our institutions and ask whether they have the skills and dispositions of effective citizenship.

We also need to consider how to improve the capacity of colleges and universities to deliver on this citizenship education. Many professors are doing this work in their classes. We hope these efforts continue, and multiply, in the years and decades to come. But from an institutional standpoint, more needs to be done to ensure that the sum total of citizenship education on a campus exceeds the individual efforts faculty may be exerting in their classrooms. To that end, faculty development centers can serve as a locus of such efforts; faculty development centers have the ability to centralize, coordinate, and coalesce the efforts of individual faculty. Furthermore, we suggest the faculty learning community as a model by which this can occur. We hope the efforts of faculty development centers can move us closer to the goal of graduating civically engaged and capable citizens.

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