



**LIBERAL EDUCATION  
AND  
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Steven Lawry, Daniel Laurison, Jonathan VanAntwerpen**

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**With a new Prologue assessing developments in the field  
since 2006 by Steven Lawry**

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## **Executive Summary**

This study surveys and assesses recent efforts by U.S. colleges and universities to cultivate in their students the intellectual skills and values conducive to lives of “civic engagement.” Preparing students to be effective citizens has long been among the goals of a liberal education. These efforts have traditionally taken place in classroom settings and have emphasized the development of intellectual skills conducive to critical thinking and reflection, combined with broad knowledge of history, the social sciences and the workings of civic institutions. While contemporary civic engagement initiatives often include a curricular element, they tend programmatically to emphasize service activities, such as volunteering to serve with campus and community organizations that work to alleviate poverty or suffering, or engaging in off-campus social advocacy.

The recent resurgence of concern with cultivating a commitment and interest among young people in civic engagement as part of their (typically) undergraduate experience has a variety of origins, both within academia and outside. Some attribute the concern to the rise around the world of an interest in the role of civil society in providing a framework for the citizens to participate directly in the resolution of social problems. Some see it as a response, and a potential remedy, to the decline observed by political analysts such as Robert Putnam of participation by Americans in the great array of voluntary activities and organizations that have historically been outlets for community problem-solving and local and national advocacy. Some civic engagement efforts have been fostered by college administrators in response to criticisms that today’s students are indifferent to the problems experienced by the less privileged, or in order to make available the intellectual talent and energy of faculty and students in helping solve social problems in distressed communities neighboring campuses.

This study reviews a variety of civic engagement programs as well as the statements of administrators, faculty and students about the appropriate goals, purposes, and design of these programs. Our review of these materials has identified a set of tensions and cross-currents within the field that provide the basis for further study and, we believe, reflection and discussion among those who care about the role of colleges and universities in fostering commitment by students to lives of civic engagement.

First, there is a tension between the respective roles and relative weights of curricular and co-curricular elements in civic engagement initiatives. Service learning activities do not always attract widespread interest and support among faculty, many of whom are reluctant to integrate service into their curricula, sometimes because they simply do not consider it the best or most legitimate way to teach their subject matter, and sometimes for fear of adverse consequences in promotion and tenure decisions. On many campuses volunteering programs place students in off-campus projects without direct reference to specific learning goals or classroom activities, raising doubts about the extent to which the experiences are conducive to rigorous and structured critical reflection and analysis.

In other words, the activities may ultimately be more about ‘service’ and provide limited scope for ‘learning.’ We believe that there is a danger that the gulf between faculty and program administrators on the purposes, structure and conduct of civic engagement programs will grow, and to the detriment of efforts to make civic engagement a fully meaningful outcome of the undergraduate experience.

Shifting the mix of faculty incentives and ensuring faculty concerns about critical reflection and structured learning are more directly reflected in the design of service learning programs may engage greater numbers of faculty in civic engagement initiatives. This brings us, however, to a second tension in the field. There is hardly consensus among faculty about the extent to which the intellectual foundations of their disciplines—and not least in the social sciences and humanities—sanction learning in direct service of social change or social betterment. Economics, sociology and anthropology as disciplines have long harbored strong intellectual currents arguing that their missions are to uncover and elucidate truth, relegating the exercise of power to ‘practitioners.’ While there are important exceptions to this view, including sociological research carried out purposely over many decades in support of civil rights legislation and litigation, it remains a considerable factor in shaping civic engagement initiatives and garnering faculty support and involvement. We take a close look at how this tension currently manifests itself in the field of sociology.

A third tension concerns what students themselves seek to achieve by participating in civic engagement programs and activities. Some studies suggest a split between students who find greatest reward in charitable activities that enable them to help others on a one-to-one basis and who are deeply disillusioned with politics, and those who seek active involvement in political activities and efforts that might lead to systemic changes in political and social structure. Clearly, these differences of expectation have implications for the design of both curricular and co-curricular aspects of civic engagement programs.

We end our paper with the recommendation that the tensions we have identified be among the bases for structured and hopefully lively and open discussion on the goals and purposes of colleges and universities in preparing students for lives of engaged citizenship. Moreover, we also believe that the entire field can benefit by more carefully and rigorously structured assessment of the effectiveness of current initiatives in having the kinds of impacts and influences on students that they intend.

*In late 2008, Alison Bernstein of the Ford Foundation asked one of the report’s authors, Steven Lawry, now Senior Research Fellow at the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard University, to take a fresh look at developments in the field, with a view particularly to assessing how some of the key debates shaping the field and identified by the co-authors in late 2005 and early 2006 might have evolved since the report’s initial publication in September 2006. His findings, in the form of a Prologue to the 2006 report, follow.*

## **Prologue**

### **New Currents in the Civic Engagement Movement: An Update of Key Developments Since 2006**

**By Steven Lawry**

**May 2009**

Though formally released in September 2006, the greater part of the research that informed the report that follows was carried out by my co-authors Daniel Laurison and Jonathan VanAntwerpen and me in the fall of 2005. The report describes an exciting movement that at once fosters debate within academia over how best to instill life-long habits of civic engagement among college students, while developing and teaching new curriculum and classes that serve that goal. The movement was encountering several obstacles to its growth and influence, some of which, such as the epistemology of specialization and expertise that has come to dominate American higher education and the promotion and tenure standards that sustain it, constitute formidable challenges to the very idea of education for democratic citizenship.

This brief re-introduction, if you will, to the 2006 report, prepared in May 2009, summarizes what I learned in revisiting the key issues affecting progress in the field of civically engaged learning identified by Daniel, Jonathan and me in 2006. These updated findings and new reflections grew out of conversations with a number of faculty and staff currently providing leadership to the field, on individual campuses and as leaders of national civic engagement initiatives. I am grateful for their time and thoughtful reflections. I also consulted a number of new reports and documents published since 2006 and report on the key ideas of some of these and their implications for the work of the field going forward.

In 2005 and 2006, we found that the movement's advocates were widely distributed in colleges and universities, public and private, across the country. We found that teachers and students dedicated to civically engaged learning were testing a number of new pedagogical practices and tools. Among these were courses that sought to integrate traditional text-based sources of knowledge with the study of current public issues in ways that invited students to actively participate in debates about the issues in a variety of civic forums. A number of colleges and universities had established centers, in some cases headed by faculty and in others by professional staff, that placed students in jobs and internships with local governments and nonprofit organizations. Some placements were linked formally with classes and served as laboratories for combining classroom and experiential learning. Others were relatively free of formal links to classroom learning. These more traditional internships gave students direct experience of real world problems and practical work experience.

As civic engagement programs based at individual colleges and universities grew in number beginning in the 1990s, a variety of membership organizations that affiliated campuses sharing common commitment to a set of pedagogical principles came into existence. Several of these initiatives and their programs were described in our 2006 report, including Campus Compact, Project Pericles, Project COOL, the Bonner Scholars program, and others. These multi-campus initiatives continue to be important resources to colleges and universities, including as venues for convening conversations and debates on issues that affect the civic engagement field generally.

Some, such as Project Pericles and Campus Compact, provide a national imprimatur to the efforts of campus leaders to build civic engagement initiatives at their individual campuses. Membership in Project Pericles, for instance, requires college boards of trustees and presidents to endorse a set of principles and practices agreed conducive to engaged learning. The high-level buy-in required to join Project Pericles has helped legitimate the civic engagement initiatives already present on member campuses and enhanced the flow of campus resources to them. These programs also provide venues to convene the civic engagement movement's faculty, staff and student leadership around shared programmatic and educational interests, including curriculum and course design and promotion and tenure policy. National networks also provide opportunities for students from member campuses to meet and engage in peer-learning activities, such as debates on topical issues.

New or nascent initiatives not noted in the 2006 report bear recognition now. Among these is Imagining America, a national project based at Syracuse University that affiliates over 70 member institutions, including small liberal arts colleges and large public research universities. Imagining America is committed to fostering “public scholarship in the arts, humanities and design.” Among other attributes, public scholarship is defined as “intellectual work that produces a public good.” Imagining America has given particular attention to the question of promotion and tenure for faculty engaged in public scholarship. Promotion and tenure was one of the key issues—or tensions—my co-authors and I identified in the 2006 report that animated discussions among proponents of engaged learning. Imagining America sponsored preparation of a major report<sup>1</sup>, published in 2008, that proposes a re-working of promotion and tenure requirements in ways that recognize the “value of publicly engaged scholarship.” I return to the report and its recommendations later in the prologue.

While several new studies and reports joined those we identified in the 2006 report in calling for a renewed vision of American higher education dedicated to preparation of an engaged citizenry, others raised serious questions about the movement's effectiveness to date. Most noteworthy among these is the “Democratic Engagement White Paper,” published in February 2009 by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education. The White Paper, a summary of a conference of 33 academic leaders convened by

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<sup>1</sup> Julie Ellison and Timothy K. Eatman. (2008). *Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University*. Imagining America, Syracuse University.

NERCHE and the Kettering Foundation in February 2008, asserted that “civic engagement remains a defining characteristic of few colleges and universities.”<sup>2</sup> The report identifies five factors that have mitigated the movement’s growth and influence, to the degree that, in the eyes of the participants, it is effectively stalled. These are: “(1) higher education’s perceived obligation to develop civic agency is not high on the public’s agenda; (2) our inadequate conception of what effective democratic education might look like is reflected in the imprecise and even conflicting language by members of the movement; (3) the movement is highly fragmented and compartmentalized; (4) the movement has largely sidestepped the political dimension of civic engagement; and (5) the dominant epistemology of the academy runs counter to the civic engagement agenda.”

The last finding presents particularly daunting challenges, while underscoring the vital importance of the civic engagement movement. It suggests that institutions of higher education are no longer built, or suitably adapted, to the purpose of educating a citizenry with the habits of mind and moral and ethical qualities essential to leading and defending a democratic society.

“The academy has established legitimacy within society in part through its widely-recognized ability to convey expertise. Specialization has produced a great deal of new knowledge. But it has also produced a technocracy that places certain kinds of expertise above all others. As one participant put it, “We see no other warrant for our existence than the expert model.” Excessive homage to a narrow disciplinary guild and the presumption of neutrality has robbed the academy of its ability to effectively challenge society and to seek change.”<sup>3</sup>

The White Paper concludes that, “Democratic engagement is not embedded in the institutional culture, remains marginalized activity, and its sustainability is questionable”

The report’s authors and sponsors are committed advocates of the civic engagement movement, asserting that a democratic framework of civic engagement, based upon constructive engagement and cooperation among diverse groups of citizens from the larger community, “holds the promise of transforming not only the educational practice and institutional identity of colleges and universities but our public culture as well.” Their conclusion that the “dominant epistemology of the academy runs counter to the civic engagement agenda” is valid but their assessment of the state of the movement as “fragmented and compartmentalized” is, in my view, unduly pessimistic.

Indeed higher education’s *dominant* epistemology remains ill-suited to the task of education for civic engagement. But a great number of faculty and administrators are working to shape a refreshed epistemological perspective, drawing on old and new arguments for civically-engaged higher education. These efforts are taking root in many

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<sup>2</sup> John Saltmarsh, Matt Hartley, and Patti Clayton. (2008). Democratic Engagement White Paper, New England Resource Center for Higher Education. p.3

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.5

colleges and universities across the country, and are making a tangible difference in the educational experiences of many thousands of students. In other words, the civic engagement movement today is in my view stronger than the White Paper suggests. It has multiple strands of activity and influence, emerging from individual colleges and universities and given impetus and strength by multi-campus initiatives and associations. By no means representative of a new epistemological orthodoxy, it has come to represent nonetheless an influential heterodox educational practice.

That said, the movement faces several challenges. These include the “tensions” my co-authors and I identified in the 2006 report. Some amount of tension is related to the ongoing debate about the core purposes of a liberal arts education. To what extent is preparation for responsible and engaged citizenship a legitimate part of the mission of liberal arts colleges today? Where there was particularly strong division among faculty around this question, a second tension arose: How were faculty members participating in shaping a civically-engaged education rewarded (or not) in tenure and promotion decisions?

Our review of the literature available in 2005 and 2006 found that the results of studies on the various citizenship effects of civic engagement curricular and co-curricular programs tended to find weak to moderate but rarely strong enduring impacts of civic engagement programs on the likelihood of volunteering, voting, participating in a campaign, etc., after leaving college. (Section four of our report, beginning on page 36, reviews studies of the “citizenship effects” of civic engagement programs available to us in 2005 and 2006.) One rather tantalizing finding was offered in a study by Perry and Katula (“Does Service Affect Citizenship?” 2001) that “there is strong evidence that service learning has more substantial effects on citizenship than service without a curricular component.”

These two issues, the tension around the purposes of a liberal arts education and allied questions around promotion and tenure, and questions about curricular design for enduring impact, seemed to me to speak to important aspects of development of the field, and I gave them particular attention in this effort to update, albeit in a selective way, how debates about civic engagement in the academy had evolved since 2006. There were new issues, for sure, that emerged from this brief review, and I note them as appropriate in what follows.

### *Classroom curriculum is integral to effective civic education*

My discussions in early 2009 with leading practitioners and advocates of civically-engaged higher education revealed a growing agreement, if not consensus, about the centrality of questions of classroom curriculum to the future prospects of the field. David Scobey of Bates College observes that a growing number of proponents of education for civic engagement believe that “the crux of civic education lies in the pedagogical

encounter between teacher and student.”<sup>4</sup> In 2005 and 2006, my co-authors and I had drawn attention to debates about the relative weight civic engagement pedagogy should give to curricular versus extra-curricular or so-called co-curricular learning. ‘Service learning’ was a term often used to suggest that education for civic engagement should have *civic* (‘service’) as well as *academic* (‘learning’) facets. In 2005 and 2006, we saw the term applied differently at different colleges and universities. In some schools, service learning was conceived in terms of extra-curricular activities that may or may not have been linked to classroom learning activities, leading some critics to conclude that service learning was more about service than about learning.

Today, there is growing reticence about use of the terms co-curricular, extra-curricular and service learning among proponents of civically engaged education. This reticence is borne, I believe, of a belief that their use, and confusion over their meaning, detracts from the central importance of learning outcomes to any discussion about curricular reform for civic engagement. An education for civic engagement should be as intellectually sophisticated as any other pedagogical tradition. It should be about instilling habits of mind that will prepare students to analyze and wrestle with problems of a public character as well as of private interest throughout their lives. Participating in public service activities can be essential components of educationally-effective civic engagement curricula. Though the services students provide may be socially valuable, the attention of faculty is ultimately focused less on “the changes [students] make than the changes they undergo.”<sup>5</sup>

This view has important strategic implications, for it draws the debate directly to questions of the effectiveness of the core curriculum in producing rounded graduates, capable intellectually and imbued with an appreciation of their responsibilities to contribute to the well-being of their communities. As one campus leader put it, “We are moving away from notions of service learning and co-curricular activities to infusing civic engagement in the curriculum.”

With attention firmly fixed on curriculum, a number of campus leaders spoke to new courses and academic policies that served this process of “infusing” civic engagement throughout the curriculum.

Elon University’s leadership mobilized faculty across campus to build study of the civic applications of the traditional academic material set for virtually every course. This was facilitated by the conversion of Elon’s academic crediting system from three to four credits per course, in 1994. The university president and faculty leadership stipulated that the new fourth credit hour was to be applied to the integration of basic and applied perspectives on the material, of textual knowledge and experiential learning. Elon, after years of practice and experimentation, has successfully created a *unitary pedagogy*, fully

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<sup>4</sup> David Scobey. (forthcoming 2009). Across: The Heterogeneity of Civic Education, In *Citizenship Across the Curriculum*. Edited by Michael B. Smith, Rebecca S. Nowacek and Jeffrey L. Bernstein, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

<sup>5</sup> David Scobey. (forthcoming 2009). *Ibid.*



integrating curricular and so-called co-curricular methods of learning in individual courses.

Elon's pathway to creation of a unitary pedagogy is untypical, to say the least. But it speaks to what can be achieved when leadership is fully committed to affirming the goal of educating the whole person and shaping the core curricular experience in ways that serve that goal.

A more typical pathway toward infusing civic engagement in the core curriculum is the process of building a critical mass of interest among faculty, and expanding on those foundations through effective course delivery and demonstration of strong learning outcomes. Indeed, this has been the tactic, if you will, employed by many leaders of the civic education movement across the country.

Building a critical mass of classes on behalf of a new pedagogy is daunting. Project Pericles has been able to encourage its members through its Civic Engagement Course (CEC) program, which in 2007-2008 competitively awarded 44 matching grants to faculty at 16 Periclean colleges and universities to develop, teach and evaluate courses that incorporated civic engagement. The CEC grants were distributed among a wide range of disciplines, including some that do not typically lend themselves to incorporating civic engagement, such as the natural sciences.

Course-development initiatives are likely to have greater systemic impact where they are deployed in aid of redesign of a curriculum in its entirety, or in ways that promote infusion of civic engagement educational values and practices widely. For instance, Project Pericles matching funds were used to support design of a new interdisciplinary, environmental studies curriculum at Allegheny College that integrates environmental and public health issues into 46 courses in fifteen departments in the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. The curriculum includes courses on environmental problem solving, health policy, and rhetoric and civic engagement.

Broad infusion of civic engagement pedagogy into college and university curriculum remains a large strategic challenge for civic engagement advocates. A review of 21 political engagement projects published in 2007 notes that attention has overwhelmingly been directed at design of individual courses. While courses are essential building blocks, success will ultimately depend on wide adoption of civic engagement values throughout the curriculum.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "We did not encounter any colleges or universities in which the campus culture was thoroughly infused with opportunities for political development. It is just that kind of thorough infusion that we recommend, however, if educators want to have significant long-term impact on their students' responsible, effective democratic participation." p. 20. Anne Colby, Elizabeth Beaumont, Thomas Ehrlich, Josh Corngold. (2007). *Educating for Democracy.* The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Jossey-Bass.

What is important, once again, is that the focus of these teachers and advocates has been on developing a new pedagogy and demonstrating its power. Proponents are challenging the notion that civic engagement represents a trade-off between rigor and service, arguing that integration can result in something more powerful educationally. As David Scobey put it to me, “Classroom learning and knowledge are activated by practice.” In effect, knowledge takes on new and more complex meaning where students apply what they learn in classrooms to activities that engage them in the public sphere. In this view, what happens in the classroom is vital, really generative, of this now more broadly conceived learning process.

Allow me to conjure a case that illustrates the pedagogical relationships at work when Scobey speaks of “learning and knowledge activated by practice.”

Imagine the campus public engagement office placing a student in an internship position in a homeless shelter near campus. In the absence of classroom-based study of homelessness, the student’s time spent in the shelter might prove personally rewarding in a variety of ways. And the services she renders would likely be appreciated by the shelter’s staff and residents. But in the absence of classroom preparation the new knowledge gained and the quality of services rendered might be fairly modest, particularly in comparison to the arch of that experience if it had been integrated with classroom learning.

An integrated pedagogical approach would have required the student to study homelessness as an economic, social and political issue in a classroom setting. She would be introduced to material on the relevant public policy issues in play, touching perhaps on literature on mental health and drug addiction and health service delivery. As a public policy problem, she might have written a term paper comparing homelessness intervention programs in different cities, or the successes and failures of public-private partnerships. Taking up her position in the shelter, the student’s classroom learning would be a foundation for generating insights into what she was seeing around her that would not have been possible without the benefit of her academic preparation. And her work experience would likely *activate* fresh insights into what she had learned in class and altogether new learning would occur as a result. She may discover, for instance, that homeless services are delivered in ways that don’t take account of the particular obligations and trade-offs that homeless people must manage to get through the day. Arguably, by virtue of her classroom preparation she would make a greater tangible contribution to the shelter’s work also. Learning outcomes are greater, as is the quality of the civic service rendered.

#### *Recasting the debate on promotion and tenure*

By focusing on shaping a curriculum that is both academically rigorous and civically engaged, proponents of civically-engaged learning are taking the battle to the terrain of those who resist the civic engagement mission on the grounds that it is insufficiently rigorous. That said, theory-building that allows the testing of hypotheses about the potentially stronger learning outcomes of integrated classroom and practical pedagogies

is yet to be given the attention it merits.<sup>7</sup> Demonstrating stronger learning outcomes would go a considerable distance toward honoring in promotion and tenure teaching practices that are adapted for civically engaged learning.

Honoring teaching is, of course, only a part of the promotion and tenure puzzle. The other (apart from service; arguably not at controversy) is the character and quality of the research and scholarship carried out. There are important developments since 2005 and 2006 on this front that merit mention.

Perhaps most significant is an initiative by *Imagining America*, a national project based at Syracuse University, that convened a high-level team of 19 academic administrators and faculty in 2008 to debate and finally propose a set of recommendations for reshaping promotion and tenure processes in ways that honor what the tenure team calls *publicly engaged academic work*, or *public scholarship*.

Publicly engaged academic work is scholarly or creative activity integral to a faculty member's academic area. It encompasses different forms of making knowledge about, for, and with diverse publics and communities. Through a coherent, purposeful sequence of activities, it contributes to the public good and yields artifacts of public and intellectual value.

The report, *Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University*, gathers in emerging new practices for assessing a tenure candidate's evidence for excellence in scholarship that take account of scholarly artifacts in addition to, for instance, publication in peer-reviewed journals.

Portland State University's policy on tenure and promotion offers examples of a "continuum of artifacts"<sup>8</sup> that would contribute to a tenure candidate's dossier.

- Publication in journals or presentations at disciplinary or interdisciplinary meetings that advance the scholarship of community outreach;
- Honors, awards and other forms of special recognition received for community outreach;
- Adoption of the faculty member's models for problem resolution, intervention programs, instruments, or processes by others who seek solutions to similar problems;
- Substantial contributions to public policy or influence upon professional practice;

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<sup>7</sup> See Anne Colby, et.al. for an outstanding contribution to the literature assessing learning outcomes of civic engagement pedagogies. The book synthesizes quantitative and qualitative research on the learning outcomes of 21 civic engagement programs affiliated with the Carnegie Foundation's Political Engagement Project.

<sup>8</sup> Julie Ellison and Timothy K. Eatman. (2008). pp.11-12.

- Models that enrich the artistic and cultural life of the community; and
- Evaluative statements from clients and peers regarding the quality and significance of documents or performances produced by the faculty member

Significantly, the Tenure Team Initiative members who shaped these and other of the report's recommendations include senior academic leaders at some of the country's leading colleges and universities, including the Dean of the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, the Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Minnesota, the Dean of the School of Journalism at Columbia University, and the Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Chancellor for Research at Howard University, among others.

In 2006, Campus Compact, which has 1100 member campuses country-wide, and Tisch College at Tufts University, sponsored an inquiry by thirteen leading research universities into the particular challenges and opportunities they face as large, complex research institutions in deepening a commitment to education for civic engagement on their campuses. Their report offers examples of successful efforts to incorporate public values and concerns into university research, among other topics.<sup>9</sup>

### *Conclusion*

From the perspective of someone returning to the field after a three-year hiatus, my clear impression is that the civic engagement movement in higher education is making important strides.

Most importantly, the movement has fixed its attention on the content of the curriculum as the key arena for shaping and re-shaping American higher education. Distinctions between classroom curriculum on the one hand and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities on the other have collapsed into a focus on the effectiveness of the curriculum *writ large* in preparing graduates for civically-engaged lives. And because civic engagement is being proffered as integral to the core curricular experience, discussions about tenure are taking on a new character, grounded in questions of what it means to be an effective teacher and researcher in a civically-engaged college or university.

Steven Lawry

Cambridge, MA.

May 1, 2009

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<sup>9</sup> "New Times Demand New Scholarship: Research Universities and Civic Engagement." Campus Compact and Tufts University. (2006). Participating universities included Duke University, Stanford University, Tufts University, University of California-Los Angeles, University of Maryland, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of Pennsylvania, University of Southern California, University of Utah, University of Wisconsin, and Vanderbilt University.

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Several people gave generously of their time and ideas as I prepared this Prologue to the 2006 report. I wish especially to thank Eugene Lang and Jan Liss of Project Pericles; Julie Plaut of Campus Compact; David Scobey of Bates College; Allyson Lowe of Chatham University; Tom Arcaro of Elon University; Karin Trail-Johnson of Macalester University; Joy Charlton of Swarthmore College; and Jim Vike of Widener University.

## Section 1 Contextualizing Civic Engagement

In 1999, Eugene Lang published an article lamenting a diminishment of the historic promise of the liberal arts college to prepare graduates for “responsible citizenship”<sup>10</sup>:

“Today, unlike their forebears, liberal arts colleges do not as a general rule feel impelled to exercise a proactive role in preparing students for service in their communities. Contemporary liberal arts curricula are seldom designed to implement that civic dimension of their missions by reaching beyond the campus environment. Rather, conscious of their established prestige and historic role in higher education, they are substantially consumed by internal academic agendas.”<sup>11</sup>

That same year, Harry Boyte and Elizabeth Hollander wrote, on behalf of participants in a Wingspread conference devoted to exploring the renewal of the civic mission of American universities:

“Civic engagement is essential to a democratic society, but far too many Americans have withdrawn from participation in public affairs. Higher education can contribute to civic engagement, but most research universities do not perceive themselves as part of the problem or of its solution. Whereas universities were once centrally concerned with ‘education for democracy’ and ‘knowledge for society,’ today’s institutions have often drifted away from their civic mission.”

In the few years since Lang, Boyte and Hollander wrote these words, there has been a resurgence of the belief that institutions of higher education in the United States have an essential role to play in the promotion of “civic engagement” throughout educational and philanthropic circles. “Civic engagement” has become a prominent catchphrase in contemporary conversations regarding the “public purposes of higher education,” and the role of colleges and universities in furthering civic engagement and public participation has come to be seen as a matter of increasingly pressing concern. For example, in the words of Project Pericles, a not-for-profit organization founded to promote “education for social responsibility and participatory citizenship,” colleges and universities should seek to “provide students with a learning experience that, among its values, instills in students an active and abiding sense of social responsibility and the conviction that the processes and institutions of our democracy offer each person an opportunity to ‘make a difference’.”

Sponsored by the Ford Foundation, this exploratory research project has investigated current efforts to promote “civic engagement” on American college and university campuses. We have focused in particular on the work of college programs, university initiatives, academic centers, trans-institutional coalitions, and not-for-profit

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<sup>10</sup> Lang, Eugene M. “Distinctively American: The Liberal Arts College.” *Daedalus* 128.1 (Winter 1999): 133(1).

<sup>11</sup> Lang 1999: 135.

organizations that seek to make learning for citizenship a more fundamental part of campus and academic life, especially at the undergraduate level<sup>12</sup>. Our aim has been to critically investigate the relatively recent emergence of a focus on developing the intellectual skills and social values conducive to greater civic engagement, while simultaneously reflecting on the potential for more adequately assessing the success of such efforts.

Our inquiry has been guided by a series of questions. How do colleges and universities conceptualize “civic engagement” and how is this concept actually put to work in efforts to transform undergraduate curricula or develop new academic and co-curricular programs? What are the possibilities and problems associated with recent attempts on the part of colleges and universities to promote civic engagement? What can be learned from such efforts? What does available empirical evidence tell us about the effects of civic engagement programs on students’ civic values and life-long behavior? How might civic engagement programs be more adequately and reliably assessed? How might they be improved? What promise, in other words, do these nascent efforts to promote civic engagement hold?

### **Our Methods of Inquiry**

Given the relatively short time span of our project, we have not presumed to provide exhaustive or definitive answers to any of these questions. We have, however, formed preliminary conclusions regarding recent and innovative efforts on the part of colleges and universities to promote civic engagement, and we have also sought to identify those factors that might either constrain or enable the further advancement and potential success of such efforts. We wish above all to stimulate further discussion, and perhaps to point the way towards promising new lines of empirical research.

Our own research practice has been robustly collaborative, drawing on the particular skills and experience of each of the project’s three members. The greater part of the work on the report took place from September to December 2005. Our analyses and findings rely principally, though not exclusively, on published reviews and assessments and written program and project materials gleaned from a variety of sources. Laurison compiled a Reader of 39 key articles and documents consisting mainly of items from the journal literature, published books, promotional materials and project websites. Documents were organized under six categories that early reading suggested had general relevance to our onward inquiries: General statements on civic engagement and higher education; case studies of civic engagement programs at colleges and universities; mainly house publications of organizations promoting civic engagement; social science research on broad demographic and socio-economic factors affecting civic engagement; literature on what we came to call the service/politics split in the field of education and civic engagement; and studies providing empirical assessments of the impacts of civic engagement programs. A discussion of our individual readings of these foundational documents provided a basis for agreement among our study group on the broad lines of

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<sup>12</sup> We have focused this review largely on B.A.-granting institutions. Much of this report is also applicable at the community college level, but community colleges also bring their own specific concerns.

inquiry going forward and the shape of the draft report. Assignments for writing chapters were made. Authors worked principally from the written sources (in addition to the Reader, Laurison compiled an extensive bibliography, included here as Appendix I). Reading was augmented by selected interviews of persons with direct knowledge of key programmatic initiatives. Laurison interviewed a small number of faculty, students, and staff involved with civic engagement initiatives at three institutions: the University of California at Berkeley, Swarthmore College, and Brown University. Lawry and VanAntwerpen attended a national conference on “The Civic Engagement Imperative: Student Learning and the Public Good,” held in Providence, RI, in November, 2005, and sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. The conference provided an opportunity for Lawry and VanAntwerpen to test key early findings in conversations with experienced practitioners and researchers.

A preliminary draft of the report was submitted to the Ford Foundation on January 5, 2006. Alison Bernstein, The Foundation’s Vice President for Knowledge, Creativity and Freedom, convened a meeting in New York on June 21, 2006, that brought together key national authorities on the subject of liberal education and civic engagement for a critical discussion of the report. The very useful comments offered at that meeting served as the basis for revising the report in its present and final form.

At the outset of our project, Steven Lawry was director of the Office of Management Services at the Ford Foundation in New York and Jonathan VanAntwerpen and Daniel Laurison were graduate students in sociology at the University of California-Berkeley. In early 2006, and after submission of the preliminary draft report to the Ford Foundation, two team members moved on to new assignments. Steven Lawry is currently president of Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Jonathan VanAntwerpen is program officer at the Social Science Research Council in New York City. Daniel Laurison continues in his graduate studies in sociology at UC-Berkeley. We are all three grateful to Alison Bernstein for consistent encouragement of our work.

We have come away from our collective inquiries not only with a greater excitement about the range of university and college initiatives being carried out under the rubric of “civic engagement,” but also with the definite sense that there is much room for improvement—in both the intellectual conceptualization and the practical implementation of many of these ambitious initiatives, as well as in the concrete evaluation and assessment of their relative successes and failures. Our hope is to generate renewed reflection regarding such conceptualization, implementation and evaluation, both at the Ford Foundation and—perhaps through the future work of the Foundation and others—throughout the field of American higher education at large.

### **The Origins of “Civic Engagement” in the American Liberal Arts Tradition**

Higher education in general, and the liberal arts particularly, have always included among their central purposes the preparation of graduates for effective citizenship. In fact, “liberal arts” traces its origins to the meaning of liberal as “suitable for a free person”—in other words, the liberal arts constitute the knowledge, values and skills needed for



citizens to govern themselves in a democracy. As long as there have been colleges and universities in this country, there has been both a commitment at the heart of the curriculum to preparation for what we might call civic engagement, and conflicts around how to square that commitment with the other callings of higher education.

The earliest academic institutions in colonial America were based on the Cambridge and Oxford models, teaching Greek, Latin and Hebrew, and focused principally on preparing Protestant clergy to be effective pastoral leaders. Two of the greatest figures of the revolutionary era, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, put considerable energy into reforming higher education to be more responsive to the needs of citizens of the nascent country. They considered informed and responsible participation, at least by qualified men, essential to the success of the democratic experiment. Franklin convinced the College of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania) to teach in English rather than Greek and Latin, and to include courses in practical subjects such as accounting and agriculture—subjects not taught in any European university. Jefferson persuaded the College of William and Mary to drop some of its more esoteric areas of study and instead to teach more “practical” subjects, such as public administration and international law. Not satisfied with that, he then convinced the Commonwealth of Virginia to found the University of Virginia, dedicated in large part to teaching subjects of practical value to the needs of the new nation—including commerce and diplomacy.

Arguably the single most influential advocate for the role of the liberal arts in educating for effective citizenship was John Dewey, who in his 1916 treatise, *Democracy and Education*, wrote that the liberal arts experience should consist of “three essential elements: it should engage students in the surrounding community; it should be focused on problems to be solved rather than academic discipline; and it should collaboratively involve students and faculty.” Many recent civic engagement initiatives place themselves firmly within this vision of the purposes of the liberal arts.

More recently, the 1960s saw a growth in national initiatives to promote volunteerism, for example VISTA and the Peace Corps. The 1970s saw the first wave of initiatives which sought to bolster the effectiveness of universities and colleges in preparing graduates to be more effective and fully engaged citizens. The National Society for Experiential Education was founded in 1971, largely in response to the view of many students that the traditional college education was too far removed from “real world” concerns.

In the 1980s, there was growing concern about the apathy of Americans in general and college students in particular. *Habits of the Heart* (Bellah et al, 1985), written by sociologists and based on qualitative interviews with hundreds of “average” Americans, argued that Americans and American culture were becoming increasingly individualist, and decreasingly concerned with communal problems and solutions. President Reagan’s secretary for education, William Bennett, remarked that college students were mainly in school for their own personal advancement, and the media tended to portray undergraduates as materialistic and self-involved. In response to these conditions,

Campus Compact was founded in 1985 by the presidents of Brown, Georgetown and Stanford Universities and the president of the Education Commission of the States.

Through the 1990s, service-learning was the main programmatic goal of individuals and organizations who wanted college students to be more involved in their communities – the idea was that “action in communities and structured learning could be combined to provide stronger service and leadership in communities and deeper, more relevant education for students.”<sup>13</sup> Service learning was and continues to be a contested term in its own right, but is generally held to mean *doing something for the community beyond campus in the context of an organized learning experience in a for-credit class*.

One of the key assumptions or hopes driving the service-learning movement was that increasing students’ involvement in (and reflection about) community service would help them to be better all-around citizens – not only to be people who understood the problems of the communities they were serving, but also people who saw the importance of politics, who voted, and who were generally involved in the democratic process. Advocates of service-learning were “a small, marginal group within higher education”<sup>14</sup> until the 1980s.

The late 1990s saw a rise in the prominence of the concept of civic engagement, and a blossoming of intellectual and institutional concern with the issue. In September 1997, with support from the Russell Sage Foundation, a group of scholars was convened to discuss “Civic Engagement in American Democracy.” One of the results of this working conference, led by Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, was the publication, two years later, of an edited volume.<sup>15</sup> In the introduction to the volume, Skocpol and Fiorina set out to make sense of the recent academic debates over civic engagement. The “roots” of the “intellectual agenda” that helped spawn these debates, they suggested, could be traced in particular to the work of two prominent American social scientists, the sociologist James Coleman and the political scientist Robert Putnam.

Coleman had deployed the concept of “social capital” in order to “point to ways in which social ties and shared norms can enhance economic efficiency and help individuals become better educated, find jobs, amass economic capital, raise well-socialized children, and make careers.”<sup>16</sup> Putnam picked up on Coleman’s analysis of social capital, and put that concept together with an emphasis on voluntary associations derived from the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville. In 1995, Putnam published an article entitled “Bowling Alone”—in which he “argued that social capital has sharply eroded in the United States”<sup>17</sup>—that won him a wide audience.<sup>18</sup> Long associated with high levels of

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<sup>13</sup> Timothy K. Stanton, Dwight E. Giles Jr. and Nadinne I. Cruz, *Service-Learning: A Movement’s Pioneers Reflect on Its Origins, Practice, and Future* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999): 1-2. “Service-learning joins two complex concepts: community action, the ‘service,’ and efforts to learn from that action and connect what is learned to existing knowledge, the ‘learning’” (Stanton et al. 1999: 2).

<sup>14</sup> Stanton et al. 1999: 5.

<sup>15</sup> See Skocpol and Fiorina 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Skocpol and Fiorina, “Making Sense of the Civic Engagement Debate” in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (1999): 5.

<sup>17</sup> Skocpol and Fiorina 1999: 5.

civic engagement, the United States had—as Skocpol and Fiorina neatly summarized Putnam’s argument—“experienced a sharp downward spiral of social capital in the late twentieth century.”<sup>19</sup>

“Bowling Alone” referenced the “norms and networks of civic engagement,” emphasizing again the importance of “longstanding traditions of civic engagement” in determining “the quality of governance.” Noting that “the mechanisms through which civic engagement and social connectedness” produce “better schools, faster economic development, lower crime, and more effective government” were “multiple and complex,”<sup>20</sup> Putnam suggested that civic engagement and social connections “pervasively influence our public life, as well as our private prospects.” “Whatever happened to civic engagement?” he asked.<sup>21</sup> Putnam’s tale about the decline of civic engagement struck a chord, and scholarly discourses on the topic proliferated widely in the decade that followed.<sup>22</sup>

According to Thomas Carothers, while “civil society” had “become one of the favorite buzzwords among the global chattering classes, touted by presidents and political scientists as the key to political, economic, and societal success,” its “worth as a concept” had “soared far beyond its demonstrated returns.”<sup>23</sup> A few years later, Michael Edwards also advised the critical reevaluation of the concept and its varied uses, noting its “chameleon-like qualities” and suggesting that “when the same phrase is used to justify such radically different viewpoints it is certainly time to ask some deeper questions about what is going on.”<sup>24</sup> But Edwards ended his book on civil society on a more positive note than that struck by Carothers, admitting that in at least certain respects he was happy to be called “a civil society revivalist”:

“At its best, civil society is the story of ordinary people living extraordinary lives through their relationships with each other, driven forward by a vision of the world that is ruled by love and compassion, non-violence and solidarity. At its worst, it is little more than a slogan, and a confusing one at that, but there is no need to focus on the worst of things and leave the best behind. Warts and all, the idea of civil society remains compelling, not because it provides the tidiest of explanations but because it speaks to the best in us, and calls on the best in us to respond in kind.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Putnam 1995.

<sup>19</sup> Skocpol and Fiorina 1999: 5.

<sup>20</sup> Putnam 1995: 65-66.

<sup>21</sup> Putnam 1995: 67.

<sup>22</sup> For a recent review of one branch of academic literature that resulted from this proliferation, see Michael X. Delli-Carpini, Fay Lomax Cook, and Lawrence R. Jacobs, “Public Deliberation, Discursive Participation, and Citizen Engagement: A Review of the Empirical Literature.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 7 (2004): 315-344.

<sup>23</sup> Carothers 1999/2000.

<sup>24</sup> Edwards 2004: 3.

<sup>25</sup> Edwards 2004: 112.

In the context of the now vast philosophical, historical, and social scientific literature on civil society and civic engagement, this brief summary represents little more than the tip of the intellectual iceberg. But it does indicate the necessity of clarifying what civil society and civic engagement are (and what they might be); and it points to the existence of substantial resources for carrying such clarification out. If the institutions and practices of higher education are in fact to contribute in some way to the promotion of civic engagement (and likewise to theorize and assess this contribution), this sort of clarification seems essential. Programs and initiatives aimed at promoting and stimulating civic engagement must move beyond the mere invocation of the term, in order to grapple with the complex intellectual legacies—and the varied social realities and political possibilities—it connotes.

### **Challenges Facing Civic Engagement in Liberal Arts Education**

There are a variety of external and internal pressures that detract from colleges being more civically engaged, including: growing market pressures to prepare graduates for the workforce; fear on the part of college administrators of negative reactions from communities and funders for encouraging student involvement in potentially politically controversial issues; and resistance from faculty and others committed to more “traditional” education.

Yet the majority of accredited BA-granting institutions has some program in place to assist students who want to get involved in their communities in some way<sup>26</sup>. Campus Compact estimates that some 30% of students volunteer during the course of their college careers. In addition to Campus Compact, one of the oldest and largest, there are at least 10 other national initiatives which seek to promote some form of civic engagement among college students, and many more local, state, and regional initiatives.

Amidst all this activity, there are three substantial challenges facing the movement to get college students more involved in their democracy.

The first is one of coherence and clarity. Just as there are many institutions committed to “civic engagement,” there are many definitions offered of it. Many of these definitions disagree on the basic question of whether “civic engagement” can be observed in students’ behavior during college, sets of attitudes or skills, or a likelihood for future involvement. Some define civic engagement at the institutional level, as using the intellectual and people-hour resources of the university to attempt to solve community or national problems. Some think civic engagement can be learned in a more-or-less traditional classroom, while others emphasize service learning or co-curricular activities. There is also substantial difference on what kinds of behavior, skills, and attitudes constitute civic engagement. This confusion will be addressed more fully in the next section, which will look at the goals and activities of initiatives on campuses and initiatives which seek to influence campuses.

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<sup>26</sup> This is based on a number of sources – Campus Compact reports, our own survey of college websites, and Andolina et al’s survey of college students.

A number of these initiatives grew from a belief, within the academy and outside, that the liberal arts tradition and the academic disciplines had lost sight of their core mission of preparing graduates for effective citizenship. However, many of these initiatives originated outside of the faculty themselves, who have substantive responsibility for the core curricular experience. The second major challenge, then, is disagreement about how civic engagement initiatives, however defined, ought to be implemented, and by whom. Faculty and administrators often have different viewpoints on the importance, meaning, and place for these kinds of initiatives, and there are tensions (as well as promising developments) within disciplines and departments over the role of public scholarship in tenure decisions and classroom teaching. This will be addressed more fully in Section 3.

The final area in need of work is the evaluation and assessment of these programs. While there is burgeoning research looking at some of these programs, there is not yet a consensus about which kinds of activities designed to promote civic engagement among college students are most likely to have specific desired effects. Chapter 5 is dedicated to exploring what is known, and what is still unresolved, about the effects of civic-engagement-promoting programs on college students.

If we want to take seriously the various efforts to promote civic engagement, we need to ask a series of questions: What, precisely, is civic engagement? How, exactly, is civic engagement to be promoted? Can something called “civic engagement” be adequately measured—at either the individual or the social level? And how might the “success” of various efforts to promote greater civic engagement—within the realm of higher education and elsewhere—be reliably and convincingly assessed? This report seeks to deepen these questions and to point in the direction of some potential answers.

## Section 2

### The Meaning and Purposes of Civic Engagement

If measured in terms the number of recent programmatic initiatives in support of civic engagement and the scope of some of these initiatives<sup>27</sup>, the outside observer might reasonably conclude that the meaning and purposes of civic engagement as an educational concept were widely agreed in the academy itself. But because it is remarkably difficult to provide an authoritative or all-inclusive definition of the term, civic engagement remains a difficult subject either to study or to debate.

This chapter is intended to address some of the conflicts between different uses of the term “civic engagement” by describing the different types of civic activities students may engage in and the different types of support they may receive from their colleges and universities. It will also give a broad overview of the range of ways students are civically engaged, and the range of programs which aim to promote student civic engagement.

#### Using and Defining “Civic Engagement”

“Civic engagement” has become the rubric under which faculty, administrators and students think about, argue about and attempt to implement a variety of visions of higher education in service to society.

In recent years, the concept of civic engagement has been subject to a profusion of sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing attempts at greater definition.<sup>28</sup> We will examine four interlocking components of most conceptualizations and implementations of “civic engagement” programs on campuses – who the program aims to impact, the values or attitudes it hopes to instill, the skills or knowledge (if any) deemed important, and the activities or behavioral aspects of civic engagement. Not all definitions or programs include all these elements, and which of these aspects is a means and which is the intended end of programs is a moving target.

The “who” for civic engagement definitions (and initiatives) is most often simply “individuals” or “citizens.” Already there is disagreement – most definitions in the world of higher education focus on individual students (or citizens), but a few include larger groupings, such as communities or institutions, sometimes without even mentioning individuals. In the remainder of this section, we will focus on civic engagement initiatives aimed at students; in the following section, we will look at faculty and institution- and discipline-wide programs.

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<sup>27</sup> Nearly 1000 campuses are part of either Campus Compact or Project Pericles, just two of the national civic engagement initiatives; 30% of college students nationally report volunteering; many, if not most, campuses that are not members of Compact or Pericles have an office dedicated to promoting volunteering or community involvement.

<sup>28</sup> See appendix 2 for a broad, but not exhaustive, review of some of these definitions.

There is near consensus that an essential part of civic engagement is feeling responsible to and part of something beyond individual interests. Most programs we have encountered want students to develop a sense or feeling of being “involved,” “invested,” “responsible,” and/or “citizen-like” with regard to some group or context. These civic values have been characterized in almost as many ways as there are groups promoting them, from generally caring about one’s community, to a moral commitment to making the world a better place, or a belief that voting is an important duty. Instilling values is a difficult proposition, and most initiatives seek to develop these values indirectly, through learning or action or the combination of the two.

Knowledge and skills are building blocks for true civic engagement. In the programs we’ve looked at, student engagement is often said to be achieved by “learning,” “being aware,” “critical thinking,” and/or “skill-building.” Being informed and knowledgeable about community, national and/or world affairs is necessary to informed participation of all sorts, but doesn’t necessarily in itself lead to that participation. A civically engaged student should also understand the way our democratic processes work on the local, state and national levels, the ways that laws and budgets at each of those levels shape the world around us, and should have the skills to critically analyze the claims of elected officials, candidates, organizations or businesses. These kinds of knowledges and skills are not easily or automatically achieved by simply being a volunteer, an activist, or a voter.

The kinds of actions that constitute civic engagement tend to be construed quite broadly – phrases such as “work to make a difference,” “promote the quality of life,” “engage in partnerships,” and “exercise agency” abound. Perhaps the most frequent goal, however, is simply “participating” – in “the common good,” “democracy,” “communities,” and a number of variants of “public” (public life, public domain, public affairs, etc) and/or “civic life” and “civil society.” Those definitions that provide more specific actions or activities normally list quite a few possibilities, including “service,” “joining or leading organizations,” “caring,” “expressing themselves,” and doing “advocacy, and/or politics.”

It is worthwhile to distinguish the different types of activities that are often called civic engagement. For some advocates of “civil society,” simply being part of any kind of group, even one without any kind of public purpose, could be considered worthwhile civic engagement. It is worth considering what civic virtues are indeed involved in connecting with one’s community for social or recreational purposes. However, for this report we will focus on civic engagement that seeks in some way to “make a difference.”

Activism or advocacy is probably least often promoted by the programs and initiatives we’ve reviewed, but certainly is encompassed by most definitions. We would define activism or advocacy as actions designed to create social change of some sort, either in people’s views or in policies or practices. Next there is political participation, which can include simply paying attention to politics, voting more or less regularly, and working for campaigns. Finally, the most often-advocated type of civic engagement is volunteering or service – unpaid work designed to help an individual or community, but not

necessarily to change structures or beliefs. While there are not always bright lines separating these three (is organizing a block party activism or community service?) it is important to be clear about which kinds of action should be promoted and supported by institutions seeking to graduate students prepared for lives of responsible citizenship.

This is especially important for contemporary students, who may see service as a replacement for, rather than an addition to, engagement with politics and policies. This was the main point of a Wingspread Declaration entitled “The New Student Politics,” which argued that doing good one-on-one will create change more broadly – traditional politics seemed too distant, confusing, and corrupt – so for these students, “service is alternative politics, not an alternative to politics.”<sup>29</sup>

One professor observed these exact attitudes in her students:

“Most of these students were involved in community service, and most of them were filled with disgust, disillusionment, and even dread toward politics. They wanted to ‘make a difference’ and they believed the best way to do that was by helping another person one-on-one. Working on policy, challenging decision-making structures, or engaging mainstream institutions rarely entered their thinking.”<sup>30</sup>

Many civic engagement initiatives have primarily sought to encourage one or more kinds of civic action, most often community service or service learning. It is simple enough to know what kinds of activities students are engaging in – about 30% of students volunteer in a year, for example<sup>31</sup>, and 77% reported voting in the 2004 Presidential election<sup>32</sup> (this is of course much lower in non-Presidential years). It is not so simple to know what motivates that participation, and how likely those behaviors are to continue after college – many students may volunteer in part because they believe it will help with getting into graduate school, or for some other reason unique to their time in college. Advocates of civic engagement programs hope that students will develop knowledge and skills, beliefs and attitudes which they will carry with them into the rest of their lives.

At the most general level, three themes emerge from these various programs and attempts at definition:

Civic engagement is described as being about cultivating *values* and *behaviors*. Students are encouraged to embrace engaged citizenship as a legitimate and central aim of their higher educational experience and their life beyond graduation.

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<sup>29</sup> Long et al 2002

<sup>30</sup> Walker T. 2000. The Service/Politics Split: Rethinking Service to Teach Political Engagement. *Ibid.*33: 647-9. See also Eugene Lang in *Deadalus* and Drogosz, 200?.

<sup>31</sup> Compact study, Andolina et al 2003.

<sup>32</sup> CIRCLE report, College students in the 2004 Election by Richard Niemi and Michael Hanmer. November 2004. This is probably high, as almost every survey reports higher percentages voting than actually voted.



Experiential learning, most often in the form of various kinds of service activities, is frequently promulgated as both the route to the cultivation of these values and behaviors, and also an expression, in itself, of civic engagement. Service provides opportunities for the student (and through the student, his or her college or university) to engage directly with local, national or international communities. Advocacy and political participation are much less frequently promoted.

Despite their inclusive and frequently open-ended quality, it is striking to note what is missing or understated in many of these definitions. While most imply some connection between engaged actions, engaged values, and skills and knowledge, few are explicit about how these links are forged. Critical reflection, reading, thinking and related activities often associated with learning and intellectual development (and central to the higher educational experience) are certainly present in some of these definitions and other literature on civic engagement, but they are hardly dominant.

### **Enacting Civic Engagement on Campus**

It is also important to distinguish the range of ways students are engaged and the range of levels of campus support/encouragement/involvement. This section focuses primarily on civically engaged behaviors rather than attitudes or skills, although the same basic observations apply to all types of student civic engagement.

Many students find internships or volunteer opportunities with non-profit, political, or advocacy organizations entirely on their own. Students may be voting, calling or emailing congress people, participating in political campaigns, volunteering, protesting, advocating or boycotting with minimal support and guidance from campus entities. Some campus cultures may serve to draw and nurture more students who are already inclined toward, and skilled at, organizing their own engagement. On the one hand, this is exactly the kind of student civic engagement initiatives are generally trying to promote; on the other hand, involvement organized outside the purview of college services or curricula lacks the opportunity for reflection and learning organized by the university.

Next, there are numerous primarily student-initiated and student-led groups on most campuses. Many groups are more directly involved in service, activism or politics. These include: fraternities and other social groups which occasionally organize themselves to volunteer; student clubs that are organized specifically to volunteer in communities around campus; political party groups; campus chapters of national advocacy organizations; groups organized around national or international concerns such as sweatshops or hunger; identity-based support and social groups which sometimes engage in advocacy or activism; and many more. The amount of institutional support these groups receive varies from campus to campus and also from group to group – some campuses, for example, support student-led volunteering clubs but not those that engage in politics or advocacy (especially if that advocacy challenges the administration, as living wage and anti-sweatshop campaigns often do). These kinds of groups meet most definitions of civic engagement, and yet (except possibly for the service-oriented groups) they are not always measured or discussed by those interested in promoting civic

engagement on college and university campuses. And once again, groups organized and led primarily by students may lack the resources or motivation to connect their work to the other kinds of learning students are doing.

The primary way many colleges actively seek to promote civic engagement is through offices dedicated to the task. Colleges and universities have been opening and expanding these programs in substantial numbers over the last ten years. A majority of BA-granting institutions have some kind of office or position dedicated to promoting civic engagement (under a variety of names) - 65% of college students in one survey reported that their college arranges or offers service activities or volunteer work<sup>33</sup>. They are as unique as the institutions which house them, and the tensions which plague other levels of civic-engagement promoting are not absent here.

At the very least, these centers connect students with volunteer opportunities, but they often do much more. They may focus on one-time volunteering opportunities, ongoing commitments such as tutoring in a nearby school, or formal internships with non-profit organizations; they may have strong or weak ties to the surrounding communities in which students serve; they may promote only service or work with student groups doing advocacy, activism and/or electoral work.

There is substantial variation in the amount of university/college support, and what part of the organization of the institution the center is operated by. Some civic-engagement/community-service offices have strong ties with the academic part of a campus; others with deans' offices and student services, while many exist almost entirely separately from the rest of the campus.

Finally, the stated goals of these programs are quite diverse: some focus primarily on the benefits to the students who participate in their programs while others are more concerned with their institutional commitments to social justice or civic responsibility and the needs of the surrounding communities<sup>34</sup>.

Beyond campus student engagement centers, there are the ways that the college curriculum itself may serve to promote civic engagement. Some courses in a variety of disciplines help students make connections between the material they are teaching and contemporary social and political issues. Some courses seek to teach civic skills and knowledge directly – such as how governments work, how various policies affect students' lives, or how social movements have changed the society in which we live. But the pedagogical tool which the field of civic engagement has given the most attention and most worked to promote, is service learning – where students, as part of a class, participate in some community action or volunteer work which the professor and the students seek to learn from and connect to the curriculum of the course.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Andolina et al. 2003. This may be a low estimate – students and faculty involved with such centers on a number of campuses report that they are not necessarily known to the entire campus community.

<sup>34</sup> See Ostrander SA. 2004. Democracy, Civic Participation, and the University: A Comparative Study of Civic Engagement on Five Campuses. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 33: 74-93.

<sup>35</sup> Stanton et al. 1999: 2

Finally, in terms of what institutions do, there is a lot of variation in terms of the amount of funding given to civic engagement initiatives on campus, and the integration of these programs into the college as a whole. Some of this has to do with the type of institution and the resources available at that institution – public universities generally have somewhat less funding to dedicate to any one program (at least any program that doesn't generate its own revenue). Religious schools often integrate “mission” or service work into the college experience, and many small private liberal arts schools foster a variety of types of community engagement and service. Campuses made up largely of commuters have a different opportunities to promote civic engagement; their students probably have more connection to the immediate community to begin with. There is some evidence that different types of institutions tend to have different levels of volunteering among their alumni<sup>36</sup>, but of course it is difficult if not impossible to fully disentangle from differences in schools from differences in students who choose to attend those schools.

All campuses and their students are unique, and every campus is going to have different goals, as well as different needs and different resources, when it comes to promoting civic engagement. It is our hope that this section can promote clearer thinking about what kinds of activities faculty, administrators and students themselves wish to promote, and what is the best means for achieving those goals.

### **Key Initiatives Promoting Civic Engagement Nationally**

Beyond individual campus initiatives are the many organizations, collaborations, projects, and scholars working to promote civic engagement (or its variants) on college campuses. Just as there are a multitude of definitions and operationalizations of civic engagement on the campus level, there are competing (or complimentary) conceptions of both what should be promoted on campuses, and how best to promote it.

There are at least a dozen national organizations, partnerships or projects (and countless smaller local and regional initiatives) dedicated to the task of promoting some aspect of civic engagement on college campuses. They vary in terms of their aims, their funding, and the part of the campus they seek to affect. Learn And Serve is a federal program (currently threatened by budget cuts) supporting student service through technical assistance and grants to community service offices and college consortia. Idealist/COOL is a national non-profit which works directly with students to facilitate their service and activism, and is explicitly committed to social justice and student empowerment. The American Democracy Project (a collaboration between the New York Times and AASCU) and the Political Engagement Project (funded by the Carnegie Foundation) focus mostly on electoral engagement. The Bonner Foundation provides fellowship funding to students attending colleges that commit themselves to planning and staffing service learning activities involving direct service to off-campus communities. And Project Pericles takes an institution-wide approach, working to increase all these kinds of engagement at all levels of its 22 member campuses.

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<sup>36</sup> Vogelsang, Lori J. and Alexander W. Astin. 2005. “Post-College Civic Engagement Among Graduates.” *Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA*

While almost every organization promoting “civic engagement” extols the virtues of a wide variety of types of engagement, there are substantial differences in focus. The majority of this “civic engagement” movement (with the exception of a few initiatives focused exclusively on electoral engagement) seems to be focused around trying to encourage service learning and community service. In this section, we’ll examine two different national initiatives in greater detail.

## **Campus Compact**

Campus Compact is perhaps the major organization devoted not only to service-learning but to civic engagement more generally, and has become widely associated with the movement for education in service of civic responsibility. Their organization statement reads, in part: “Campus Compact promotes public and community service that develops students' citizenship skills, helps campuses forge effective community partnerships, and provides resources and training for faculty seeking to integrate civic and community-based learning into the curriculum.”<sup>37</sup> National Campus Compact has a broad membership (975 colleges and universities nationwide as of 2005). The organization serves as a clearinghouse for information and resources on college student engagement, and the state chapters of Compact (in most states) provide networking and resource-sharing for member campuses.

The National Campus Compact provides services to both its member campuses and to those in higher education interested in questions of student civic engagement. It produces toolkits and provides workshops on a variety of topics around integrating service and civic engagement into courses, departments and disciplines. It organizes conferences to facilitate learning and networking among those who seek to promote engagement on campuses. Campus Compact also supports, sponsors, and publishes research into innovative and effective practices for developing more civically engaged students. Presidents of member institutions make a commitment to promoting service by joining, and generally increase the amount of volunteering on their campuses once they have joined<sup>38</sup>.

State Compacts help member campuses by leveraging resources (such as grants for scholarship and leadership programs) that individual campuses would not be able to secure on their own, and by working to form coalitions across campuses to work on specific issues. Many campuses rely on their state Campus Compact office to help them secure funding for a substantial portion of their civic engagement programs.

Campus Compact publicizes, through its annual membership survey and associated press releases, the quantity and monetary value of service work done by college students – it estimated that in 2004-5, students at member schools provided \$5.6 billion worth of

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.compact.org/aboutcc/mission.html>

<sup>38</sup> 2004 and 2005 Service Statistics, Highlights and Trends of Campus Compact’s Annual Membership Survey. It should be noted that the response rate is only about half the membership, and it’s plausible that campuses with less involvement or improvement are less likely to respond.

volunteer time to their communities<sup>39</sup>. Their annual reports work to counter the idea that college students are fundamentally self-interested and contribute little to society.

In Compact's most recent available membership survey (2004-5 school year), of 484 campuses responding to the survey, 98% offer service learning courses, 85% say they "reward community-based research or service learning in faculty review, tenure, and/or promotions," and "86% report having an office or center dedicated to coordinating service, service-learning, and/or civic engagement activities and programs." It completed a three-year initiative called the "Raise Your Voice" campaign, dedicated to engaging students in public life, documenting student engagement and issues important to college students, giving more voice to students in higher education, and making civic engagement central to higher education.

Campus Compact is designed as a broad array of resources and supports for colleges and universities seeking to promote civic engagement, community service, and service learning. It requires little from its member schools beyond annual dues and optional participation in a yearly survey of student service activity, but it seeks to respond to the needs of those schools wherever possible.

Some question the scope of Campus Compact's programs – while they count hours and numbers of students doing service, their annual reports do not examine whether that service provided truly meaningful benefits to the communities served, whether deep learning occurred on the part of students about those communities and about the broader systematic issues involved in creating community needs, or the extent to which durable relationships developed between campuses and communities. Relatedly, Compact focuses largely on service, rather than other types of engagement.

### **Project Pericles**

A number of civic engagement initiatives, and arguably the majority, are conceived and administered as additive or adjunct to the core activity of undergraduate colleges and universities—classroom-based teaching and learning. Many believe that a more pedagogically powerful experience of education for civic engagement will result from greater integration between classroom-based and experiential learning. Project Pericles is an effort that quite purposely adopts an approach to teaching and learning that integrates classroom and extra-curricular civic engagement.

Pericles founder Eugene Lang argues that the pathway to responsible citizenship is a purposeful and structured engagement between classroom learning and action on campus and in the local or national community. Colleges participating in Project Pericles develop and offer courses that prepare students for engaged citizenship. These "Civic Engagement Courses" are intended to encourage students to "take pride in their ability to contribute usefully to public affairs, to believe they can make a difference, and to recognize the importance of experiential learning" and "to ask penetrating questions and learn to communicate effectively with understanding and respect for the sensitivities of

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

individuals and groups.” Course syllabi are developed to reflect connections between specific disciplines and defined social issues. Once such courses are offered and evaluated, syllabi are made available to faculty at other Periclean institutions. At the campus level, Periclean schools promote “communal discussion and resolution” of those “aspects of citizenship and social responsibility associated with living together on campus and the problems of institutional life.” Project Pericles encourages Periclean schools to “promote thoughtful intramural dialogue on aspects of campus activities and policies relating to concerns such as diversity, multiculturalism, racism, harassment, social conduct, and academic performance.” In addition to helping Periclean schools develop their own projects, Project Pericles also invites collaborative participation in special programs that are developed by the national office. For example, Project Pericles has launched a co-curricular program for Pericleans, “Debating for Democracy,” in which students research current issues of public importance, develop their own opinions on the issues and advocate on behalf of the positions they support.

Boards of trustees of participating Periclean colleges are required to adopt resolutions that commit the institutions to the mission of Project Pericles, and to establish a discrete standing committee of the board charged with overseeing implementation of that commitment and to regularly report the progress of work back to the board. This emphasis on accountability at the highest institutional levels is a distinguishing quality of Project Pericles, and in our view is one of its strongest hallmarks.

Each participating institution develops and maintains comprehensive ongoing programs that very explicitly link classroom learning and critical reflection with student participation in campus and community activities supportive of social change.

Examples of projects<sup>40</sup> developed by Pericleans include: At Allegheny College, an academic minor in values, ethics, and social action (VESA), which “encourages students to consider thoughtfully and engage in issues of citizenship and values as a primary college learning experiences.” At Elon University there is now a Periclean Scholars Program, “in which a selected cohort of students take classes together over three years and dedicate themselves to addressing a selected major project of social concern through course-work and community-based research and service.” Ursinus College created “a required two-semester course called the Common Intellectual Experience, in which students explore fundamental questions related to human existence, learning how to develop informed opinions and [...] advocate them effectively.” Bethune-Cookman College “is developing an International Institute on Civic Participation and Social Responsibility that actively addresses social problems affecting African-American society.”

Among the great variety of civic engagement initiatives, Project Pericles has some distinctive qualities that merit careful attention. It reaches deeply into the academic life and practices on each of its member campuses, and works to promote a breadth of manifestations of “civic engagement.” Participating institutions are asked to make commitments at the highest level in adopting the project’s values and in assessing

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<sup>40</sup> (all cited on pp.15-16 of “Project Pericles: A Daring Work in Progress,” Lang, 2005):

progress in implementing programs. The small number of participating institutions accommodates careful assessment of programs and comparison of results and learning, promoting accountability to the project's underlying principles.

This section has not comprehensively cataloged all the programs and initiatives which seek to promote civic engagement among college students, but instead sought to identify themes, tensions, and areas in need of further development in these efforts. The next section will look at promising developments and challenges in efforts to involve faculty and institutions, not just students, in an educational experience that contributes substantially to both students and society.

## Section 3

### **Civic Engagement, Disciplinary Transformations, and the Public Good**

As Eugene Rice noted in a recent address to participants in a conference on “The Civic Engagement Imperative: Student Learning and the Public Good,” current efforts to promote and educate for civic engagement are closely tied to—and will ultimately be importantly dependent on—specific attempts to transform particular academic disciplines. The challenge that advocates of civic engagement offer is one that cuts to the very purpose of higher education itself, calling on colleges and universities to rethink and transform their relations to and with various extra-academic publics. It is a challenge that might be aimed at all levels of the university, from research and teaching to administration and student life. Too often, however, the challenge is taken up only piecemeal, in one of these sectors rather than another.

A recurring theme at the conference on civic engagement at which Rice spoke was the lack of coordination between faculty and administration—and the presumption that when it comes to the innovative initiatives associated with civic engagement, faculty are often a substantially conservative force. Among administrators seeking to promote education for greater civic engagement, there is a clear impression of faculty recalcitrance.

Neither attempt to bring higher education into better alignment with the goals of the wider society nor conflicts between faculty and administrators or other constituencies over those attempts is a new phenomenon.

One early instance of struggles between faculty and administrators over how and whether to make higher education meet the perceived needs of the country came in the 1820s, when the boards of first Amherst and then Yale asked their faculties to teach a more “practical” curriculum. Amherst’s faculty responded by affirming the aims of the proposal, but demurring on its ability to implement it. Yale’s faculty, however, directly challenged its board’s proposal, arguing that the traditional liberal arts curriculum served best the aim of preparing students for lifelong learning and effective participation in society<sup>41</sup>.

There have also been important moves in the disciplines towards an objectivity divorced from the “bias” of values, and a research agenda that eschews practical questions in favor of loftier theoretical concerns.

Concerns with the public purposes of academic research have a long history in the American social sciences. As Lisa Anderson has written:

“The dual aspiration to understand and to change the world of which early modern social science was born marked it with a profound ambivalence about

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<sup>41</sup> We are grateful to Dan Fallon for talking with us about these ideas, as well as giving us two unpublished articles on the history of liberal arts.



power and policy. The story of the development of the social sciences is a story of repeated oscillations between the embrace of active, indeed assertive, participation in policymaking, and retreat into the ostensibly neutral posture of scientific objectivity. This ambivalence about policy in the practice of science—the divorce of truth from power—is a distinctly American element of the story of the rise of the social sciences.”<sup>42</sup>

While the conditions that shaped the development and growth of the American social sciences have changed, as Anderson argues, the tensions between truth and power—and with them attendant debates over science and advocacy, academic rigor and civic participation—have continued to recur. This has been true not only in the social sciences, but in the humanities as well—indeed, debate has arguably been more heated and more wide-ranging in the humanities than it has elsewhere (though individual disciplines have been subjected to, or buffered from, the effects of these debates in substantially different ways).

Faculty, for their part, have a wide range of concerns, commitments and beliefs that serve to make many of them reluctant to transform the ways in which they teach and conduct their research. Doctoral programs, the structure and requirements of peer-reviewed journals, and academic conferences work to develop a deep sense of identity with the traditions and canon of one’s own discipline. Academics learn to expect, and work to protect their autonomy over their own intellectual work, both teaching and research.

There is a presumption on the part of many faculty that the liberal arts canon itself will do the work of preparing graduates for citizenship, and without purposeful engagement between curriculum and current campus and community problems. Eugene Lang voices the skepticism many advocates have towards this assertion:

“While professing allegiance to the canon, liberal arts curricula are not explicitly designed to impart the knowledge, understanding, and ability to make thoughtful and ethical judgments of social issues—to feel the motivation and moral responsibility that encourage constructive participation in a democratic society. Liberal arts colleges seem content to presume... that the traditional liberal arts education in itself infuses special qualities of citizenship into student psyches that eventually emerge in various ways as postgraduate dividends to society.”<sup>43</sup>

Some faculty even question whether creating good citizens is a worthwhile goal. The most public statement of this position was made by Stanley Fish in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

“My main objection to moral and civic education in our colleges and universities is not that it is a bad idea (which it surely is), but that it’s an unworkable idea. There are just too many intervening variables, too many uncontrolled factors that

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<sup>42</sup> Lisa Anderson, *Pursuing Truth, Exercising Power: Social Science and Public Policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003): 3.

<sup>43</sup> Lang 1999: 136.

mediate the relationship between what goes on in a classroom and the shape of what is finally a life.

You might just make them (students) into good researchers. You can't make them into good people, and you shouldn't try.... Democratic values and academic values are not the same and confusion of the two can easily damage the quality of education.”<sup>44</sup>

There are, however, plenty of faculty who are interested in and committed to addressing public concerns and community problems with their research, or incorporating service-learning or civic education into their teaching. But many of these, especially if they are not yet tenured, are reluctant to do so. They are concerned, often with good reason, that their research questions or teaching methods will be deemed insufficiently intellectual or professional by their peers, putting publication and tenure in jeopardy.

It is not so surprising, given the history and current priorities of the academic disciplines, that faculty are resistant to calls for research and teaching aimed at greater civic engagement, especially when the push comes from outside their ranks. Yet despite these concerns, many faculty across the disciplines are actively working to connect their work to concerns outside the academy.

While there are disciplines seeking to become more engaged, more publicly involved, in the humanities as well as the sciences, we will focus here on the social sciences. One prominent example is the movement for public sociology. Michael Burawoy (a professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, and the former President of the American Sociological Association) and others have called for greater attention to the ways that the work of sociologists might transcend the academy and engage wider audiences. Burawoy and other advocates of public sociology have encouraged the discipline to engage in explicitly public ways with issues stimulated by debates over public policy, political activism, the purposes of social movements, and the institutions of civil society, aiming to revitalize the discipline of sociology by leveraging its empirical methods and theoretical insights to engage in debates not just about what is or what has been, but about what might yet be.

The project of public sociology, as Burawoy sees it, is not limited to the question of research and publication. It also concerns the question of teaching and the centrality of students in the educational mission of the university. Like the more general debates over civic engagement and higher education, the promotion of public sociology has ultimately entailed renewed debate over central questions regarding the purpose and scope of higher education and academic research. As the current president of the American Sociological Association, Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, has written, echoing the sociologist Robert Lynd,

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<sup>44</sup> “Aim Low: Confusing Democratic Values With Academic Ones Can Easily Damage the Quality of Education,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 16, 2003.

“one must always be asking the question, knowledge for what?” She continues: “Neither knowledge without values nor values without rigorous knowledge is sufficient.”<sup>45</sup>

Concern with the public implications of social scientific research and the public engagements of social scientists have not been limited to sociology. Similar movements for greater public engagement have stirred debates throughout the social sciences. As Craig Calhoun, President of the Social Science Research Council—who has made “public social science” a prominent part of the Council’s work—wrote in 2004:

“...a variety of efforts are underway both to call more attention to the public value of social science and to make sure social science is published in ways that reach broader publics. ... A ‘public anthropology’ section has just formed in the American Anthropological Association. Related concerns were part of the ‘perestroika’ agenda for reform of the American Political Science Association. Several associations have either founded or are considering new journals to bring scholarship to a broader public.”<sup>46</sup>

It is important to remember that such debates shape not just research agendas at elite universities, or relations between social scientific experts and practitioners of public policy, but the basic teaching and learning practices of higher education as well—from the shape of the syllabus, to the design of classroom learning and discussion, to the extension of off-campus programs and the expansion of “service” activities for students and faculty alike. Contemporary concerns to craft a “scholarship of engagement” can and should be more closely linked to efforts to transform the educational experience of undergraduates, and, indeed, to nascent attempts to critically assess and credibly evaluate the successes and failures of those efforts. In the context of current concerns over the relationship between liberal education and civic engagement, this would require a more vigorous and sustained attempt to link discussions regarding the changing world of scholarship with discussions regarding the pursuit of curricular reform, the expansion of service learning, and the concrete efforts to promote education for responsible citizenship—efforts aimed, in the words of Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich, Elizabeth Beaumont, and Jason Stephens, at the preparation of America’s undergraduates for “lives of moral and civic responsibility.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, “Asking Questions, Preserving Irony” in *Courses in Courage: Antioch College and the Social Sciences*, edited by Richard A. Cuoto (Xlibris, 2005): 60. See also: Robert Lynd, *Knowledge for What? The Place of Social Science in American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946).

<sup>46</sup> Craig Calhoun, “Toward a More Public Social Science.” *SSRC President’s Report*, 2004. See: <http://www.ssrc.org/programs/calhoun/>.

<sup>47</sup> See Colby et al., *Educating Citizens: Preparing America’s Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003). All four authors were associated with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which sponsored the book. As Lee S. Shulman wrote in his foreword, the book “exemplifies The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching’s commitment to a vision of education that integrates intellectual with moral virtues and connects the values of civic responsibility to the classic academic mission of higher education.”

## Section 4

### The Impact of Civic Engagement Programs

There are a plethora of studies attempting to answer variants of the question “how effective are programs aimed at promoting civic engagement on college campuses?” Yet there is little consensus about the answers. This is in no small part due to the polysemic nature of the term “civic engagement” and the consequent lack of agreement on which outcomes ought to be measured, or on how to measure them. Most studies have focused primarily on community service/volunteering and/or service learning rather than on other efforts to promote civic engagement more broadly conceived. In this chapter we will review what is known about student and youth civic engagement, and look at four broad categories of possible outcomes of service – changes in knowledge or skills, in attitudes and beliefs, in service or philanthropic activity, and in electoral participation<sup>48</sup>.

It may be helpful to begin by examining some general patterns of “civic engagement” nationwide. While, as we shall see, there is not much agreement on what works to increase college student engagement, we do have a fair number of measures of the quantity and type of that engagement. Let’s start with the engagement of young people overall:

Within the past 12 months, 40% [of 15-25 year olds] have volunteered for a non-electoral group or organization; 38% have boycotted; 20% say that they generally wear a campaign button, display a yard sign, or post a bumper sticker on their car during election campaigns. But just 6% have done all these things.<sup>49</sup>

In general, those young people who have attended at least some college tend to be more civically engaged on most measures than those who have never attended college. In presidential elections in the last 30 years, voter turnout among young people with at least some college education has been 15 to 20 percentage points higher than that of their peers with no college experience. One study found that in the year preceding the survey, 25.1% of college-goers had been members of political groups and 28.7% were regular voters, compared to 14.9% political group participation among the non-college group, and 17.8% regular voting. The differences are smaller for service-related activities than for political engagement, but still notable: 28% of those with some college had raised money for charity compared with 23.5% of those with no college; and 40.6% of the college-attenders had volunteered, while only 37.6% of young people with no college had.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Perry and Katula (Perry JL, Katula MC. 2001. Does Service Affect Citizenship? *Administration & Society* 33: 330-65) have a similar typology of possible outcomes.

<sup>49</sup> Andolina MW, Jenkins K, Zukin C, Keeter S. 2003. Habits from Home, Lessons from School: Influences on Youth Civic Behavior. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 36.

<sup>50</sup> Lopez, Mark Hugo and Brent A. Elrod. 2005. College Attendance and Civic Engagement Among 18-25 Year Olds. CIRCLE.

We should be careful here of confusing correlation and causation: While much in the college environment can certainly influence the life course, a number of studies<sup>51</sup> have shown that home environment and high school involvement are even more strongly correlated with later civic involvement. Students most likely come to college with some fairly strong pre-existing tendencies towards different levels and types of civic engagement, and it's quite difficult to determine whether what's happening is that college attendance causes greater civic participation, or that those who go to college tend to be those who are more likely to be civically engaged already.

According to a survey done by CIRCLE<sup>52</sup>, only 60% of those born after 1976 and old enough to vote are registered, and only 24% say they "always vote" in presidential elections. Generally, older generations are more likely to display candidate or party preferences or contribute to a campaign, to have contacted public officials, to volunteer regularly, and to report paying attention to politics and regularly using TV, radio and/or newspapers for news. Overall, 57% of Americans ages 15-25 (in 2002), but only 48% of the population as a whole, are categorized by this study as "disengaged" – participating in their communities or in electoral politics very little or not at all – and most of the remainder are engaged in either civic life or electoral politics, but not both<sup>53</sup>. There is a historical pattern of younger generations being significantly less involved by almost all measures than older generations, but current generations are less involved, even at the same ages, than previous generations<sup>54</sup>. College attendance itself is strongly associated with larger participation in many kinds of civic engagement, although it is not necessarily the cause of greater participation<sup>55</sup>. There is still much to be learned, however, about the experiences that produce volunteers, activists, and those who participate not at all.

In an analysis of a number of studies of the effects of community service and service learning, there was mixed-to-positive evidence for an effect of service on knowledge – a number of studies found somewhat positive results, but no study can be taken as truly conclusive.<sup>56</sup> There are also a small number of studies which showed a positive relationship between service and "citizenship skills"<sup>57</sup>. However, a smaller but more qualitative study found no change in specifically political knowledge for students participating in service<sup>58</sup>.

Based on Perry and Katula's review, it seems reasonable to conclude that service does have a positive effect on "citizenship attitudes" in the college setting<sup>59</sup>. Another report

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<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Andolina et al 2003, Keeter et al 2002, Lake Snell Perry & Associates 2002, Sax 2004

<sup>52</sup> Keeter S, Zukin C, Andolina MW, Jenkins K. 2002. *The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait*, CIRCLE: The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement  
<sup>53</sup> *ibid*, p. 25

<sup>54</sup> Putnam RD. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Touchstone

<sup>55</sup> Lopez MH, Elrod BA. 2005. *College Attendance and Civic Engagement Among 18-25 Year Olds*, CIRCLE

<sup>56</sup> Perry and Katula, *op cit*, pages 341 and 354.

<sup>57</sup> Perry and Katula, 356.

<sup>58</sup> Hunter S, Brisbin RA, Jr. 2000. The Impact of Service Learning on Democratic and Civic Values. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 33: 623-6. Page 624.

<sup>59</sup> *Op cit*, 354.

shows that service participation increased students' commitment to activism and to promoting racial understanding, as well as their self-efficacy, leadership, choice of a service career, and plans to participate in service after college, but again provided little information about effects on attitudes towards electoral participation<sup>60</sup>. A smaller study showed similar results in terms of what might be called service-related attitudes, but found a much less positive impact on specifically political attitudes from service than proponents might expect: "a decided majority of students indicated that the service experience did not affect their thinking about democracy or their role as a citizen." There was "no significant difference among students asked if citizens working together can almost always make positive changes in their community"<sup>61</sup>. In essence this (relatively small scale) study indicates that service leads to service-related skills and beliefs, but not necessarily to other kinds of civic engagement.

All the studies reviewed found a strong positive relationship between undergraduate volunteering later philanthropic giving. There is also some relatively good evidence that volunteering in college is correlated with volunteering after college<sup>62</sup>.

One study did find that students who volunteered during college were more likely than those who did not to be politically engaged after college, even after controlling for "background and college characteristics"<sup>63</sup>. But overall there is much less evidence about how college activities do and do not influence political behavior<sup>64</sup>. Perry and Katula conclude that there is strong evidence that service learning has more substantial effects on citizenship than service without a curricular component.

Overall, there is quite a bit of research being done on what promotes civic engagement during and after college, however much of it is focused on the volunteering/service side of civic engagement as both the independent/causal variable and the dependent variable. It seems safe to conclude that volunteering during college, and especially participating in service learning, is likely to have some positive effects on students' later civic engagement, but probably not as much, especially in the political realm, as many proponents would like.

There are other paths to student civic engagement worth pursuing in addition to service-learning curricula: for example, Galston<sup>65</sup> concludes that civic education – teaching about how our democracy actually works, and where citizens can make a difference – can and does raise overall civic and political knowledge, which is strongly correlated with support

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<sup>60</sup> Astin AW, Vogelgesang LJ, Ikeda EK, Yee JA. 2000. *How Service Learning Affects Students*, Higher Education Research Institute. Page ii.

<sup>61</sup> Hunter and Brisbin, op cit, pages 624-5.

<sup>62</sup> Perry and Katula 358. See also Astin et al op cit.

<sup>63</sup> Denson N, Vogelgesang LJ, Saenz V. 2005. Can Service Learning and a College Climate of Service Lead to Increased Political Engagement After College? In *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Montreal, Canada: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA. Pages 22-23

<sup>64</sup> Perry and Katula, op cit, p. 358-9

<sup>65</sup> 2001 – 224, 228

for democratic values and political participation, among other desirable outcomes.<sup>66</sup> Yet few programs dedicated to promoting college students' civic engagement advocate this approach.

There is also some research that shows the type of college environment may be associated with later civic engagement. One study, for example, found that the kind of institution attended had a substantial impact on post-graduate volunteering – Catholic and public university graduates, for example, volunteer less than the overall average, while nonsectarian and “other-religious” four-year institutions graduate alumni who volunteer substantially more than the average, and private university graduates are most likely to discuss politics.<sup>67 68</sup>

There are a number of directions that further research can take to add productively to this growing body of literature. One of the biggest is to investigate the role that various kinds of college experience have on later participation in politics and advocacy. This area is the weaker link among civic engagement initiatives at all levels; evaluation of the programs that do seek specifically to impact political engagement could contribute to increased inclusion of this kind of work in programs that currently focus largely on volunteering or service learning.

Another substantial area for study is the differences in effectiveness of different kinds of programs at achieving their stated goals. This is made somewhat challenging by both the relatively small number of students at any given school participating in any one program, and by the real differences between campus cultures and student bodies. Nonetheless, if we are going to continue using campus resources to promote student civic engagement, it behooves us to continue to work to gain a better understanding of how these programs really impact students.

Finally, there is a need to better theorize and analyze the relationship that different types of civic engagement have with each other in the life experience of individual students and graduates. If many students (and the adults they become) see volunteering as a replacement or more desirable alternative to political engagement (as Nina Eliasoph argues in *Avoiding Politics*), it may be that the significant increase in volunteerism in the college years and beyond is actually a *detriment* to the kind of full civic engagement many believe is necessary for a democratic society.

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<sup>66</sup> See also: Colby et al. 2003; Ehrlich 2000; Callan, *Creating Citizens: Political Education and Liberal Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>67</sup> Vogelgesang LJ, Astin AW. 2005. *Post-College Civic Education Among Graduates*, Higher Education Research Institute. Pages 8-9.

<sup>68</sup> It is also worth considering the fact that increasing numbers of students are spreading their college courses among two or more institutions, often starting in community colleges – so any one institution's programs, culture, and curriculum have only a limited chance to engage students

## Section 5

### Conclusion

Our inquiries have explored a number of ideas about and approaches to civic engagement in American colleges and universities today. We found widespread, but not complete, agreement that institutions of higher education should do more to prepare students for participation in democratic society. We thus found many people and organizations, both within and outside college and university campuses, working to increase student ‘civic engagement’ through a variety of curricular and extra-curricular initiatives.

On balance, civic engagement programs tend to emphasize experiential learning, such as service activities that place students in not-for-profit organizations, providing services that alleviate suffering or address poverty at the individual level. New administrative units have emerged on a number of campuses to facilitate these sorts of activities. Many students find working in these programs rewarding when they feel that their work makes a tangible difference to the lives of those less fortunate than themselves.

This preference for working locally and in ways that assist others directly is for some students an expression of estrangement from politics, borne of the belief that formal political institutions and processes are corrupt and unresponsive. This said, while other students see political activism as important and legitimate pursuits, overt political activity is normally not officially underwritten by formal college and university programs (some of which may benefit from public financing). Moreover, colleges and universities frequently tend to avoid, for reasons of institutional self-interest, political activities that draw unwelcome and critical attention to the institution.

Faculty and discipline-based civic engagement initiatives – the curricular elements one would associate with civic engagement, such as classroom-based reading, discussion and critical reflection and analysis – are not as integrated with other sorts of (generally administration-generated) civic engagement initiatives as they might be. Undoubtedly, this is attributable in part to skepticism on the part of some faculty toward non-classroom based “service” or more broadly “experiential” learning. There is nonetheless potential for faculty and administrators to work together to craft civic engagement initiatives that emphasize the complementarity of curricular and extra-curricular activities. This kind of partnership might be especially fruitful if service activities can be designed to yield—and be recognized as yielding—tangible knowledge on the part of individuals and groups of students, knowledge which might in turn be more fully integrated with classroom learning.

Speaking generally, this is a field where fairly modest levels of support for the efforts of faculty, students and administrators who are concerned about giving greater coherence, depth and direction to civic engagement initiatives might have far-reaching benefit. We propose that the Ford Foundation consider the following programmatic and funding initiatives.



### ***Improving assessment***

Administrators, faculty and program planners lack assessments of the impacts of various kinds of civic engagement initiatives and programs other than those primarily concerned with volunteering and service learning. The Foundation should consider inviting proposals from qualified social science, public policy and higher education research institutions, in support of thorough and in-depth qualitative and quantitative assessments of the many higher education initiatives aimed at promoting civic engagement.

### ***Clarifying the task at hand***

As we have emphasized, and as Appendix 2 further indicates, there has in recent years been a somewhat scattershot profusion of different conceptions of “civic engagement.” At least in part as a result of this, the movement among institutions of higher education to promote civic engagement continues to be plagued by substantial disagreement and confusion regarding its central aims and ambitions. While disagreement may be a sign of vitality, confusion and muddled thinking are not. The Foundation might consider supporting further efforts to achieve greater analytic clarity in this regard, both at the conceptual and the programmatic level, and across different institutional sectors and academic disciplines.

### ***Bridging the gaps***

While not unique to the civic engagement movement, there are significant gaps between faculty-driven and administration-sponsored initiatives, and thus related gaps between curricular and extra-curricular programmatic activities taking place under the broad rubric of civic engagement. The Foundation might consider supporting one or more of three interrelated agendas, in an attempt to help bridge such gaps. First, it might augment its support for, and help draw attention to, colleges and universities (and consortia of colleges and universities) that represent successful innovators in this domain, institutions that are already making inroads in imaginatively and effectively bridging these gaps. Second, it might seek proposals from, and provide support for, individual colleges, universities, and consortia working to better link curricular and extra-curricular initiatives under the rubric of civic engagement. Finally, the Foundation might support more substantial engagement and productive dialogue between innovative faculty members and their counterparts in campus administration, doing so across a range of institutions, and perhaps seeking to underwrite a more sustained national dialogue and debate regarding the promotion of civic engagement and the contemporary transformations of American higher education. One concrete way to do this would be to support initiatives that connect existing faculty interest in disciplinary transformations (and interdisciplinary possibilities) with the variety of civic engagement programs that have sprouted on the other side of campus, thereby seeking to facilitate more integrated forms of administration-sponsored activity and faculty-driven curricular innovation.

## Appendix 1

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## Appendix 2

### Selected Definitions of Civic Engagement

“Essential to a democratic society,” in the words of Boyte and Hollander, civic engagement is closely associated with “participation in public affairs.” It is, according to one attempt at concise definition, “the notion of belonging, the experience of investment, and the position of ownership a citizen feels throughout the local, regional, national, and international political communities to which they belong.”<sup>69</sup> In recent years, the concept of civic engagement has been subject to a profusion of sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing—rarely concise—attempts at greater definition. Let’s consider a few, with particular attention to how it is seen to relate to the goals and purposes of higher education.

- Thomas Ehrlich, the former president of Indiana University, provost of the University of Pennsylvania, and dean of Stanford Law School, has written:

“Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.”<sup>70</sup>

- According to the University of Minnesota Task Force on Civic Engagement, civic engagement “means an institutional commitment to public purposes and responsibilities intended to strengthen a democratic way of life in the rapidly changing Information Age of the 21st century.”

- According to a working definition offered by the Civic Engagement Coordinating Committee of the University of Southern Maine:

“Civic Engagement refers to a wide range of learning activities within and on the part of the institution, including engaged experiential education, service-learning (curricular and co-curricular), some internships and practica, and action research that engages the institution in partnership with its civic contexts, i.e., the communities in which it is located.”<sup>71</sup>

- Here is the “Working Definition of Civic Engagement” put forward by the Team on Civic Engagement and Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park:

“Civic engagement is a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities that includes a wide range of activities, including developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefiting the common good. Civic

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<sup>69</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic\\_engagement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civic_engagement)

<sup>70</sup> *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, edited by Thomas Ehrlich, Oryx Press, 2000: vi.

<sup>71</sup> [http://www.usm.maine.edu/cft/service/ce\\_sl\\_key\\_definitions.htm](http://www.usm.maine.edu/cft/service/ce_sl_key_definitions.htm)



engagement encompasses the notions of global citizenship and interdependence where individuals—as citizens of their communities, their nations, and the world—are empowered as agents of positive social change for a more democratic world. It involves one or more of the following: 1. Learning from others, self, and environment to develop informed perspectives on social issues; 2. Participating actively in public life, public problem solving, and community service; 3. Assuming leadership and membership roles in organizations; 4. Promoting social justice locally and globally; 5. Developing empathy, values, and sense of social responsibility; 6. Reflecting critically about diversity, commonality, and democracy.”

- In keeping with a definition offered in 1999 by the organization Campus Compact, civic engagement might be taken to refer to “those activities which reinvigorate the public purposes and civic mission of higher education,” including “objectives such as developing civic skills, inspiring engaged citizenship, promoting a civil society, and building the commonwealth.”<sup>72</sup>

- By the lights of the authors of “The New Student Politics: The Wingspread Statement of Student Civic Engagement”:

“The manner in which we engage in our democracy goes beyond, well beyond, the traditional measurements that statisticians like to measure us by, most notably voting. Indeed, student civic engagement has multiple manifestations including: personal reflection/inner development, thinking, reading, silent protest, dialogue and relationship building, sharing knowledge, project management, and formal organization that brings people together. Cultural and spiritual forms of expression are included here, as are other forms of expression through the arts such as guerrilla theater, music, coffee houses, poetry, and alternative newspapers.”<sup>73</sup>

- From the New Student Politics Curriculum Guide:

“By civic engagement we mean exercising personal agency in a public domain; and we assume that becoming civically engaged is a developmental process characterized by growing facility with ideas, situations, skills and awareness.”<sup>74</sup>

- According to the high school student group Project 540, civic engagement means:

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<sup>72</sup> “Mapping Civic Engagement in Higher Education: National Initiatives,” Campus Compact, 1999.

<sup>73</sup> “The New Student Politics: The Wingspread Statement on Student Civic Engagement,” Campus Compact, 2001.

<sup>74</sup> The New Student Politics Curriculum Guide, Campus Compact ([http://www.compact.org/students/curriculum\\_guide.html](http://www.compact.org/students/curriculum_guide.html)).

“Adding one’s voice to community conversations. Advocacy on behalf of others. Participation in public life. Encouraging other people to participate in public life. Joining in common work that promotes the well-being of everyone.”<sup>75</sup>

- As one individual student put it: “Civic Engagement is the intentional action by individuals to participate in democracy. It is the combination of educating oneself on multiple perspectives of an issue and using ones gifts and talents to advocate on behalf of the educated opinion one gains. It is participation in the process of policy making, recognizing the affect policy has on the individual and community. It is actualized in many forms of action along a continuum from one-time volunteering to a lifestyle of advocacy and participation.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Project 540: Students Turn for a Change (<http://www.project540.org/>): “The idea behind the name is that Project 540 is a dynamic, moving initiative. A 540 degree turn is a revolution and a half. During Project 540, students will identify the issues they really care about, look around, and examine the current landscape in their high school for student civic engagement.”

<sup>76</sup> [http://www.actionforchange.org/getinformed/student\\_ink/student\\_ink.html#definitions](http://www.actionforchange.org/getinformed/student_ink/student_ink.html#definitions)