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INCORPORATING DEMOCRATIC PEDAGOGY INTO A TRADITIONAL
CLASSROOM AND THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE: BENEFITTING THE
COMMUNITY AND THE COUNTRY

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

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2015

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the importance of civic engagement in higher education and democratic pedagogy, in order to help students become active citizens, who know their rights as well as responsibilities, which ultimately benefits both the community and this nation. In addition, it also looks at a set of skills, called 21st century skills, which are necessary for students to excel in the modern professional world, and which coincide with being an active citizen. This paper first looks into leading scholars' views on the civic engagement in higher education, the current situation, and what the future holds. This paper then looks at some of the programs and curricular efforts currently at Western Kentucky University that focus on civically engaged education and democratic pedagogy. Afterwards, it looks into leading programs across the country to see what type of programs they have. It concludes with why this is all beneficial for both the community and the country.

Keywords: civic engagement, citizenship, democracy, democratic pedagogy, collaboration, community

Dedicated to my friends and family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As the United States progresses in the twenty-first century, it is becoming clear that there is a growing need to either change or update the current public higher education system. Peter Levine, a Research Professor in Philosophy, the Lincoln Filene Professor of Citizenship & Public Affairs, and the Director of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) states, “Strong, just, robust democracies require the skillful and committed participation of their citizens.”¹ Therefore, it is essential that the United States put an emphasis on civic education in the college system.² In addition to concerns with democracy, employers believe that a high percentage of recent graduates have inadequate skills to efficiently handle their workload.³ The skills that they need do not come from specialization or majors, but rather are very similar skills that students develop when they learn how to become strong citizens.⁴ The debate

¹ Peter Levine, *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens* (Medford, MA: Tufts University Press, 2007), XIII.

² It is also, of course, important for this to take place in a K-12 context, but this thesis is about the importance of higher education in plays in shaping citizens. For more information on the K-12 issue of civic education, see the research from CIRCLE: www.civicyouth.org/ResearchTopics/research-topics/k-12-civic-education/

³ Robert Sternberg, "Giving Employers What They Don't Really Want," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 17, 2013, <http://chronicle.com/article/Giving-Employers-What-They/139877/>.

⁴ The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*. Washington, DC: Association of

continues to this day on how to address the situation, but no matter how it should be addressed, there is little evidence to suggest an enough change has taken place.

In this study, I start with a review of some of the important writing on civic engagement, democracy, and higher education. I look into the current state of civic engagement in the country, some of the teaching methods, and current trends in the youth today, suggesting the need for more engagement to become better citizens. In chapter three, I ask how Western Kentucky University is attempting to put civic learning and engagement into the classroom, and into life outside the classroom. While looking at the programs at WKU, I also conducted a survey of the class, Citizen and Self, which focuses on increasing civic engagement. This survey helped provide me with insight on how the students feel the class is developing currently, and what they are gaining from it, which shows us if we are achieving our goal in the eyes of the students. I hope that other universities may benefit from learning about the efforts, and lessons, of Western Kentucky University. In chapter four, based on field research and interviews, I also look into what some other colleges and universities are doing to help students become more active and informed citizens. It was very important to me in this section to look at programs from varying locations and sizes. Different locations and different sizes of the universities definitely become variables in how to approach increasing civic engagement, and provides a fuller scope of the process. As in the case that other universities might learn from Western Kentucky University, I hope that other universities including Western Kentucky University can learn from the highlighted programs at these progressive

American Colleges and Universities, 2012,
www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/crucible/Crucible_508F.pdf
www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/crucible/Crucible_508F.pdf.

universities in the field of civic engagement, which makes the size differences very important, so not just large universities can gain knowledge, but universities of all sizes. In the final chapter, chapter 5, I summarize my findings, and discuss ways that colleges and universities can strengthen civic education even more.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Often very complicated problems where there is not one obvious way to solve them and “expert solutions” are not enough, are wicked problems.⁵ In his article “Tackling Wicked Problems through Deliberative Engagement,” Martín Carcasson notes:

Wicked problems have no technical solutions, primarily because they involve competing underlying values and paradoxes that require either tough choices between opposing goods or innovative ideas that can transcend the inherent tensions. Addressing them well also often requires adaptive change — changes in behavior or culture from a broad range of potential actors — that neither expert nor adversarial processes tend to support. Wicked problems cannot be solved through research, particularly research that attempts to divide them into manageable, disciplinary parts.⁶

The issue of how to improve democracy and educate and engage citizens is a wicked problem, so there is not just one solution or one way to make it better. But, at least one way forward, which will also strengthen democracy as a whole in the United States, is putting an increased emphasis on civic engagement throughout colleges and

⁵ See, for instance, Horst Rittel, and Melvin Webber. "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," *Policy Sciences*, Vol. 4, Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, Inc., Amsterdam, 1973: 155–169; Richard Lazarus, "Super Wicked Problems and Climate Change: Restraining the Present to Liberate the Future," *Cornell Law Review* 94 (2009): 1220.

⁶ Martin Carcasson, "Tackling Wicked Problems through Deliberative Engagement," *Colorado Municipalities*, October 2013, 9. <https://web.libarts.colostate.edu/cpd/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/01/tackling-wicked-problems-through-deliberative-engagement.pdf>.

universities nationwide, particularly public colleges and universities. Thomas Ehrlich, in his book, *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, defines civic engagement like this:

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 nonpolitical processes.⁷

While a concept like this appears concrete, the tangibility of civic engagement can be difficult to decipher. Even though civic engagement is not something that is always completely easy to define, Peter Levine points out in one of his blog posts that civic engagement can be defined in a lot of different ways and that it is good the term remains “contested because it relates to basic questions about what constitutes a good society and a good human life.”⁸ So even in using the term, it is important to focus on the ways that it is still something people are working out as they do it. Even if the definition is still very fluid, it is necessary for the future development and subsequent stability for the United States.

Public engagement is necessary in a democratic society, but where is the place to learn it? Although there is an emphasis on K-12 democratic pedagogy, which is nevertheless important for student development, this paper focuses on higher education in providing the sufficient environment for teaching future citizens about not only their rights in society, but also their duties for both the country and the community. The foundation of public universities in the United States began with the mission to benefit the public good, so it seems naturally fitting that civic engagement should be a strong

⁷ Thomas Ehrlich, *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education* (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 2000), vi.

⁸ Peter Levine, "What is the Definition of Civic Engagement?" A Blog for Civic Renewal, December 11, 2012, <http://peterlevine.ws/?p=10357>.

focus.⁹ So why higher education? Although not limited to solely public universities, the original mission for state universities was to teach citizens for the greater public good.¹⁰ With an emphasis on original public good, it is surprising then to see that there has been a considerable drift from this focus in the 20th century, spilling into this century.¹¹ According to Anne Colby and her co-authors, in “Preparing America’s Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility,” scholars began to notice this waning and attempted to address the problem as early as 1987.¹² The first major call for restoring the focus on public good in a university via civic education occurred in December 1998 at the Wingspread Conference.¹³

At this conference, comprised of many notable university presidents, provosts, and others, Harry Boyte and Elizabeth Hollander gave a speech, referred to as the Wingspread Declaration, entitled “Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University.”¹⁴ In this speech, the authors focused on this lack of civic

⁹ Nancy Cantor and Peter Englot, "Civic Renewal of Higher Education through Renewed Commitment to the Public Good," in *Civic Engagement, Civic Development, and Higher Education*, ed. Jill N. Reich and Barry Checkoway, The Civic Series (Washington D.C.: Bringing Theory to Practice, 2009), 4.

¹⁰ Ellen Condliffe Lagemann and Harry Lewis. *What is College For? The Public Purposes of Higher Education* (New York City: Teacher College Press, 2011).

¹¹ Anne Colby et al., *Educating Citizens: Preparing America’s Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 7; Margaret Adamek, Nicholas Jordan, Scott Peters, Theodore Alter, *Engaging Campus and Community: The Practice of Public Scholarship in the State and Land-Grant University System* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press, 2005).

¹² Colby et al., *Educating Citizens: Preparing America’s*, 6.

¹³ Harry Boyte and Elizabeth Hollander, "Wingspread Declaration on the Civic Responsibilities of Research Universities," *The Wingspread Conference*, 1999, 7

¹⁴ *Ibid* 6.

engagement at universities at the time and called for a renewed focus on civic engagement in all aspects of a student's life.¹⁵ In their speech, the authors state,

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 with 'education for democracy' and 'knowledge for society,' today's institutions have often drifted away from their civic mission."¹⁶

However, they are quite clear in their point that it is not simply service that universities must incorporate in their curriculum.¹⁷ They argue that it is important that students work together in groups, to engage in both critical thinking and collaborative dialogue, and to encourage students to expand their knowledge in the classroom to extra-curricular activities on campus.¹⁸ Additionally, the keynote speakers spend a lot of time talking about faculty and how it should be their goal to "help create, participate in, and take responsibility for a vibrant public culture at their institutions."¹⁹ Furthermore, they argue that because of the university being a pivotal part in any community, it should be assumed that it also would play a large role in the community and the renewed emphasis will help kick start this process.²⁰ The Wingspread Declaration was in 1998, over ten

¹⁵ Ibid 7.

¹⁶ Ibid 7.

¹⁷ Ibid, 9. For more on the challenges of service-learning as the main way to teach citizenship, see Johnny Goldfinger and John Presley, eds. *Educating Students for Political Engagement*, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C. 2010, especially 6-7; and Tobi Walker, "The Service/Politics Split: Rethinking Service to Teach Political Engagement," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33, no. 2, September 2000, 647-49.

¹⁸ Ibid, 10.

¹⁹ Ibid, 10.

²⁰ Ibid, 14.

years ago. However, even with the signatures of many esteemed colleagues in the academic world, little has changed in the civic commitment for universities.²¹

It is, of course, easy to call out others for not fulfilling their duties, but more importantly, one must address how they themselves should go about the task. In 2003, Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich Elizabeth Beaumont, and Jason Stephens collaborated on a book entitled, *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*.²² Although the authors acknowledge that more effort must be put into the process of incorporating civic education in higher education institutions, they state that numerous schools have already begun the process and are having good success. Some of these schools include California State University, Duke University, Portland State University, the United States Air Force Academy and Notre Dame University.²³ In order to create these programs successfully, the authors argue that schools needs to pinpoint their values, for it is impossible to be value neutral, and the schools should play to their strengths.²⁴ Additionally, Colby and her co-authors distinguish between political engagement and civic engagement, although there is considerable overlap.²⁵ For instance, both have roots that tie back to solving community issues and raising public awareness, but the difference lies in the motives and goals of the

²¹ See, as one example, Keith Melville, John Dedrick, and Elizabeth Gish, "Preparing Students for Democratic Life: The Rediscovery of Education's Civic Purpose," *The Journal of General Education* 62, no. 4 (2013): 261.

²² Anne Colby et al., *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

²³ *Ibid*, 9.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 11.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 11.

individuals.²⁶ Politically, a majority of people are volunteering based on the promotion of their own goals and views, while civic engagement has a more altruistic nature, focusing on not only what is good for the individual, but also more about what is good for the group, being the community.²⁷ Finally, in order for any school and student to progress in civic engagement, they must learn “civic competencies.” Examples of these competencies are

Self-understanding or self-knowledge, understanding the relationship between the self and the community, awareness of and willingness to take responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions, informed and responsible involvement with relevant communities and the appreciation of global dimensions of many issues.²⁸

However, for the most part, many schools have yet to implement civic engagement programs into their curriculum successfully.²⁹

In 2011, the Association of American State Colleges and Universities (AASC&U) submitted a report to the Department of Education, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*, emphasizing the need for more civic engagement in colleges and universities.³⁰ Building on the Wingspread Declaration, this report compiled a significant amount of empirical data in order to support their argument for more democratic pedagogy in their institutions. For example, some of the key data they provide includes, for instance that college seniors scored only 54% correct answers on a test measuring civic knowledge, only about one third college faculty surveyed in 2007

²⁶ Ibid, 11-12.

²⁷ Ibid, 19.

²⁸ Ibid, 53.

²⁹ Ibid, 276.

³⁰ *Crucible Moment*, 2.

strongly agreed that their campus actively promotes awareness of U.S. or global social, political, and economic issues, and only 35.8% of college students surveyed strongly agreed that faculty publicly advocate the need for students to become active and involved citizens.³¹ Without a doubt, even ten years after the Wingspread Declaration, there is still a monumental amount of work left in order to implement positive civic education change in universities.

In their article entitled, “Preparing Students for Democratic Life: The Rediscovery of Education’s Civic Purpose,” the authors point out that students are expected to learn about how the government works, but there is not enough education about what citizens can do to be involved in making the kind of world that they want and the kind of society we all need.³² It seems that students think that all you can do is protest, or write a letter to your congressperson, or vote. Therefore, it appears that there is a current emphasis on traditional and low-investment political involvement, while the other aspects of civic engagement and learning are forgotten. While classes learning about the functions of government and importance of voting are important, the authors agree with much current thinking on current college and university teaching that students are not given enough to bring them to a workable level of civic literacy.³³ They state, “A key task of civic education is to cultivate the habits and skills of democratic citizenship,

³¹ *Crucible Moment*, 6-7.

³² Melville, Dedrick, Gish, "Preparing Students."

³³ *Ibid*, 262. See also *Crucible Moment*, 6-8; “Failing our Students, Failing America: Holding Colleges Accountable for Teaching America's History and Institutions,” A Report by Intercollegiate Studies Institute’s National Civic Literacy Board, 2007-2008. www.americancivilliteracy.org/2007/summary_summary.html; or Martha Kanter and Carol Geary Schneider, "Civic Learning and Engagement," *Change Magazine*, January-February 2013, www.changemag.org/Archives/Back%20Issues/2013/January-February%202013/civic-learning-and-engagement-full.html.

including the ability to listen to others' ideas, assess alternative public actions, formulate well-founded opinions, and productively engage in the life of the community and the nation as a whole."³⁴

The idea of habits is essential. It is simply not memorizing how to become a good citizen, but instead working habitually to learn these skills like muscle memory. As the authors state, traditional lectures are not enough, there must be a practical emphasis on a hands-on approach in the community, where students work *with* and not for community members to address the public issues.³⁵ Without a doubt, there is a push for more and more civic engagement in the classroom, yet it is still a slow work-in-process.

Although there has been a push to increase civic education in universities nationwide, an important broader question is why. What and who benefits from this style of learning? In their book, *What is College For? The Public Purpose of Higher Education*, Ellen Condliffe Lagemann and Harry Lewis attempt to answer this question. The authors believe that, "Colleges and universities should be forums for invention and social innovation that benefit *all* of us."³⁶ However, due to the massive increase of funding in the sciences during the 20th century, most public universities now focus primarily on research because it is the most lucrative for their school.³⁷ The authors acknowledge the importance of research, but counter with the argument that civic

³⁴ Ibid, 262.

³⁵ Ibid, 267.

³⁶ Condliffe Lagemann and Lewis, *What is College For*, 9. For more on this see Harry Boyte, ed. *Democracy's Education: Public Work, Citizenship, and the Future of Colleges and Universities* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014).

³⁷ Ibid, 18. For more on the commercialization of higher education, see Derek Bok, *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialization of Higher Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

learning benefits every single member in society, while research cannot encompass such a broad scope.³⁸ Therefore, they believe that finding a way to add civic engagement to all curriculums will achieve the best of both worlds and make even researchers informed, active citizens, who are thinking about the public consequences of their choices.³⁹

Ronald Terchek, in his article *Teaching Democracy, a Survey of Course in Democratic Theory*, addresses how to teach civic engagement and what styles of courses would be ideal for its implementation.⁴⁰ Terchek believes that the ideal way to understand democracy is not to take it for granted as a stationary figure, seeing it instead as fluid and susceptible to change.⁴¹ With this assertion, instructors can allow students to create their own definition of democracy, in conversation with experiences and text, which enables them ultimately to defend it from scrutiny.⁴² In addition, he thinks that professors should push back against the students' seemingly natural tendency for individualism, and emphasize the reality of this world of both interdependence and working together.⁴³

A critical aspect of this style of learning is involvement in the community. It is extremely hard to teach students about the importance of working in the community without encouraging them to become part of the community in order to learn. In their work, *Educating for Democracy: Preparing Undergraduates for Responsible Political Engagement*, Anne Colby, Elizabeth Beaumont, Thomas Ehrlich, and Josh Corngold

³⁸ Ibid, 41.

³⁹ Ibid, 42.

⁴⁰ Ronald Terchek, "Teaching Democracy: A Survey of Courses in Democratic Theory," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 1 (March 2003).

⁴¹ Ibid, 149.

⁴² Ibid, 149.

⁴³ Ibid, 150.

provide numerous examples of ways that students can get involved in their respective communities while learning about civic engagement in class, but also without doing what is sometime called “hit and run service” where service is done “to” a community without collaboration or mutuality. The authors devised a study called the Political Engagement Project (PEP) to “understand what kinds of learning experiences and educational practices may best promote key aspects of high-quality political engagement.”⁴⁴ Granted, political engagement is slightly different from civic engagement as noted before, yet nevertheless, both have a key point in that the community is essential. Their link to any engagement is that, “The idea of *responsible* citizenship also conveys the sense that we consider questions of a greater or common good, consider the importance of values or long-term goals beyond our own narrow self-interest, and take personal responsibility for our commitment and actions.”⁴⁵

Having addressed the importance of civic engagement and why it is essential, one must look at some of the tangible skills that students are learning, and need to be learning, besides the need to be involved in a community. Researchers are calling them 21st century skills, and many agree that they are what are separating recent graduates from others in the increasingly competitive professional job market. In their book, *21st Century Skills; Learning for Life in our Times*, Bernie Trilling and Charles Fadel lay out what they believe these skills are.⁴⁶ They are, “Critical thinking and problem solving (expert thinking), communication and collaboration (complex communicating), and

⁴⁴ Anne Colby et al., *Educating for Democracy: Preparing Undergraduates for Responsible Political Engagement* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 28.

⁴⁶ Bernie Trilling and Charles Fadal, *21st Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Times* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 49.

creativity and innovation (applied imagination and invention).”⁴⁷ *The Crucible Moment* also addresses 21st century skills, with a high emphasis on critical thinking and effective communication.⁴⁸ With this set of skills, the authors believe that students will be able to accurately and consistently reason effectively, use systems thinking, make judgments and decisions, and solve problems.⁴⁹ In addition, they believe that because of learning these skills, students will also become much more flexible and adaptable to change.⁵⁰ It is obvious that these skills are interdisciplinary, yet nevertheless are very important in the professional world where a vast majority of college graduates is aspiring. One of the important ideas of 21st Century Skills is that they help students learn to be better citizens, but it also helps them to be stronger professionals. As the authors of the *Crucible Moment* point out, it does not need to be *either* training students professionally *or* teaching them to be good citizens.⁵¹ These efforts overlap.

Besides student learning these skills, how do professors implement them in the classroom? In their work, *Academically Adrift, Limited learning on College Campuses*, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa attempt to define ways in which teachers can most efficiently teach them.⁵² They state, “Teaching students to think critically and communicate effectively are espoused as the principal goals of higher education.”⁵³ Of

⁴⁷ Ibid, 49.

⁴⁸ *Crucible Moment*, 11.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 52.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 77.

⁵¹ *Crucible Moment*, 9-12.

⁵² Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago, IL: Oxford of Chicago, 2010).

⁵³ Ibid, 35.

course, teaching students how to think critically and talk to others is much easier said than done, “However, commitment to these skills appears more a matter of principle than practice.”⁵⁴ To combat this lack of commitment, the authors proclaim, “One way that students can potentially be affected by the colleges they attend is through direct, positive interactions with their professors both within and outside of the classroom.”⁵⁵ That is, even some effort by professors to have strong relationships with students and engage, and create engaging classrooms, them rather than just get them to memorize information for a test can go a long way.

In their work, *Educating Citizens; Preparing America’s Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*, Anne Colby et al. also look into how teachers can effectively incorporate civic engagement and subsequently 21st century skills into the classroom using numerous pedagogical strategies. They note that in order to teach students these skills, they need to be able to emphasize the emotional side of learning on top of intellectual, which promotes and stimulates critical thinking, by bringing it on a personal level.⁵⁶ They also argue for a push away from pure memorization that can often be overbearing to the students, forcing them to neglect the skills needed for the professional world, like effective communication, for instance.⁵⁷ Therefore, they offer suggestions to incorporate these skills in the form of problem-based learning and

⁵⁴ Ibid, 35.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 62. The 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index Inaugural National Report, <http://products.gallup.com/168857/gallup-purdue-index-inaugural-national-report.aspx>, also supports this claim.

⁵⁶ Colby et al., *Educating Citizens: Preparing America’s*, 132.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 133.

collaborative learning, which forces to students to not only think critically about different problems, but working together and talking to each other to solve them.⁵⁸

However, there are some critics on the emphasis of 21st century skills. In her work, *Measuring Skills for 21st Century Learning*, Elena Silva notes that critics believe that these are not new skills, but have always been there, and emphasizing them “weakens teaching” and that there is no reliable, consistent way to measure them.⁵⁹

Although there are critics for the urging of these skills, they all believe that the skills are still very important presently, so debating if the skills are new or not is not necessarily relevant to this research. It is however, important to at least state that they are being discussed and debated.

Numerous scholars suggest that the skills that teachers need to be incorporating into their classrooms are exactly what employers are looking for in these new members of the workforce. In his piece, *Giving Employers What They Don't Want*, Robert Sternberg believes that although many of these new graduates are qualified for positions, employers are putting a heightened emphasis on communication skills, working together, and critical thinking in regards to the hiring process.⁶⁰ He states, “They want a student who has learned how to learn and how to adapt flexibly to rapidly changing demands. They're not all that concerned about specific majors or things like what gets academic credit and what does not.”⁶¹ Anna Rosefsky Saavedra and Darleen Opfer agree in their piece

⁵⁸ Ibid, 137.

⁵⁹ Elena Silva, "Measuring Skills for 21st-Century Learning," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 90, no. 9 (May 2009): 630.

⁶⁰ Sternberg, "Giving Employers."

⁶¹ Ibid, 3.

entitled, *Learning 21st Century Skills Requires 21st Century Teaching*.⁶² These authors provide simple guidelines to help teachers incorporate 21st century skills. They say that the key is to make the skills relevant, which should be very applicable to almost any subject.⁶³ Therefore, it is critical to implement these 21st century skills into the agenda, for the exact major you have is not nearly as pivotal as it once was.

Besides helping new college graduates in the workforce, an emphasis on civic education and 21st century skills will benefit society, as a whole, with the maturing of the millennial generation. In *The Crucible Moment* the authors argue that an effective worker and an active citizen are both essential components, and are both needed, instead of one or the other, they are symbiotic.⁶⁴ The baby boomer generation continues to age and retire and thus generation x and the millennial generation are increasingly active and pivotal in civil society and political life. While the burden does also fall upon the shoulders of Generation X, this paper focuses on the current generation entering higher education, being the millennials, so the question becomes, is this generation ready for the challenge? There is wide debate on this topic.

Jean Twenge, in her work, *Generation Me: Why's Today's Young Americans are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than ever Before*, is very wary about the youth controlling the future of this country.⁶⁵ She believes that the youth today have too much self-esteem and are not ready to cope with the failures of the real world

⁶² Anna Rosefsky Saavedra and V. Darleen Opfer, "Learning 21st-Century Skills Requires 21st-Century Teaching," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 94, no. 2 (October 2012).

⁶³ Ibid, 9.

⁶⁴ *Crucible Moment*, 10.

⁶⁵ Jean Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2006), 213.

after they leave college and enter the professional world.⁶⁶ She argues that a direct consequence will be depression and apathy to the world around them, leading to the problems festering and metastasizing with little to no leadership.⁶⁷ Granted, this is an extremely negative and foreboding view, yet most researchers are a little less dire, if not the complete opposite of Dr. Twenge. For example, in her article, "Every Every Every Generation Has Been the Me Me Me Generation," Elspeth Reeve argues that *all* young people are narcissistic and only think about themselves, growing out of this attitude later in life.⁶⁸ Therefore, while of course millennials have some issues, like all generations, Dr. Twenge's extreme ideas seem to be in the minority.

In their work, *Millennial Makeover; MySpace, YouTube, & the Future of American Politics*, Morley Winograd and Michael Hais believe that America's youth are on average very optimistic and ready to take on the difficulties in society, to sharply contrast with *Generation Me*. They state, "Millennials are more positive than older generations, both about the present and future state of their own lives and about the future of their country."⁶⁹ In addition, they actually openly contradict Twenge's work by saying, "...virtually all available survey data contradict her conclusions. Millennials, unlike her own Generation X, are much more likely to feel empathy for others in their group and to

⁶⁶ Ibid, 213.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 214.

⁶⁸ Elspeth Reeves, "Every Every Every Generation Has Been the Me Me Me Generation," *The Wire*, May 9, 2013, 1, www.thewire.com/national/2013/05/me-generation-time/65054/.

⁶⁹ Morley Winograd and Michael D. Hais, *Millennial Momentum: How a New Generation Is Remaking America* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 2.

see to understand each person's perspective.⁷⁰ Overall, the authors believe that, "...the Millennials are an exceptionally accomplished, positive, upbeat and optimistic generation."⁷¹ Furthermore, citing a PBS study, found that 80 percent of them, "...participated in some type of community or societal improvement program during the previous year."⁷² This bodes well for higher education, for students already have a taste of some form of civic engagement, and may be more open to continuing this work in college.

Instead of purely speculating on the future of the adolescents in the country, Christian Smith with Kari Christoffersen, Hilary Davidson, and Patricia Snell Herzog conducted a very detailed, wide-ranging survey with participants between the ages 18 and 23 and published their results in their book, *Lost in Transition; The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*.⁷³ The authors found that young adults, today, face five major issues: adhering to morality, hyper-consumerism, alcohol abuse, difficulties in dealing with intimacy and sex, and most importantly for this paper, civic disengagement.⁷⁴ Although they do acknowledge the extremely high voter turnout from the youth in the presidential election of 2008, for the most part, emerging adults are far less politically active and less involved in the community than the past generations.⁷⁵ According to their surveys, although these adults are not apathetic to civic engagement, they simply do not

⁷⁰ Ibid, 5.

⁷¹ Ibid, 81.

⁷² Ibid, 84.

⁷³ Christian Smith et al., *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁷⁴ Ibid, 9-10.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 195.

have the time or money to get involved.⁷⁶ In addition, emerging adults are only “modestly hopeful,” and do not believe that they can a positive impact.⁷⁷ The authors’ explanations for this phenomenon that adolescents feel alienated from the rest of society and tend to remain in their private worlds where the only form of civic information they receive is from television and the news, which often fails to describe the issue at hand accurately.⁷⁸ Therefore, they argue that a significant part of the problem is not only to be able to inform youth efficiently about the issues, but to also provide them the tools to overcome their feeling of alienation.

Therefore, although the problem with the youth is not nearly as drastic as some claim, there is and will always be room for improvement in regards to civic participation. In his work, *We are the Ones we Have Been Waiting For*, Peter Levine notes that there is potential for the millennials and that higher education is the key to unlocking this potential, because of its public nature and resources available.⁷⁹ With such a high influx of students now attending universities, a place has a great chance to instill civic values in a large population of future citizens.⁸⁰ In addition, Levine notes that higher education is an ideal place to change the perception of service learning and instead focus on deliberative pedagogy and civic engagement.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Ibid, 210.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 211.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 213.

⁷⁹ Peter Levine, *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: The Promise of Civic Renewal in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 138.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 139.

⁸¹ Ibid, 139.

As all of this literature suggests, there needs to be an increased focus on civic engagement in this country in order to teach people to become better, active citizens, and prepare them with the correct skills for the modern professional world. One place where this can happen is at universities. Granted, there is no blueprint or set of programs from every location that will always work. The only way to find out what works is through a trial and error system, which must be flexible and adaptable to change to the needs of the community. Consequently, there is a plethora of programs across the nation that is focusing on democratic pedagogy. For example, here at Western Kentucky University, there are numerous programs currently that emphasis the importance of civic engagement with students.

CHAPTER 3

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AT WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

As with other schools attempting to implement the programs deemed necessary by both the *Wingspread Declaration* and the *Crucible Moment* report, Western Kentucky University currently has numerous efforts with the goal to advance civic engagement. Additionally, mixed into these courses are the essential twenty-first century skills like reading comprehension, critical thinking, teamwork, and communication. I discuss three areas where WKU is doing exciting work in this area, although there are many departments and programs doing great work that I was not able to cover. I start with the required Honors College course titled Citizen and Self, move onto the work of the Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility (ICSR) which is both curricular and co-curricular, and then the creative ways that socially aware research about history, my major, relates to current issues that the University and City of Bowling Green face.⁸²

Citizen and Self at Western Kentucky University Honors College

Because of my many years of work with Citizen and Self, a course in the Honors College at Western Kentucky University, I focus on that as a particular example of the

⁸² Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility Homepage, www.wku.edu/icsr/index.php. Some of the course the Institute offers can be seen on the page where they describe their minor: <https://www.wku.edu/icsr/minor/index.php>.

ways that civic engagement can be integrated into a curriculum. Citizen and Self is a mandatory class for all incoming students in the Honors College. The Honors College consists of around 800 students, therefore, Citizen and Self has a broad reach to students across the university.

The course began in the fall semester of 2011 and continues today.⁸³ It is a collaboratively taught by a team of professors, who most often play the role facilitator for conversations and learning, and the developments of skills. Although the size varies on the semester, with the fall semester generally having more students than the spring, the class ranges from between 100-180 students. These students are for the most part, first year students and new to campus, although there are always a few sophomores, juniors and seniors. A vital advantage to this system is that not only can this class encourage civic engagement, but also become a great tool to introduce students to a style of learning that the Honors College emphasizes, which is engaged learning that involves a lot of reading, writing, critical thinking, and non-traditional approaches to course work that is not very dependent on memorizing information and more focused on talking, learning, and creative engaged learning. There is an emphasis on research, collaboration and teamwork, and community-based learning.

In their work, “Living Well Together: Citizenship, Education, and Moral Formation,” Elizabeth Gish and Paul Markham, one current and one former Citizen and Self professor, outline the basic principles of the class.

⁸³ I was a student in Citizen and Self in the Spring of 2012. After that, I was a peer mentor and teaching assistant in the course for five semesters. Thus, much of the information in this section comes from my experience with the course, as well as informal discussions and interactions with the professors who have taught the course: Dr. Elizabeth Gish, Dr. Justin Litke, and Dr. Alexander Olson. Dr. Leila Watkins is also a current professor, but I have not had the opportunity to work closely with her.

We argue that the growing interdisciplinary field of civic studies has the potential to provide a useful framework for a more nuanced story about the current generation of young people and the role they can play in shaping our world.”⁸⁴

Professors who teach the class all have different disciplinary specialties, all in the humanities, yet all familiar with and grounded in civic studies too. It introduces students to a range of disciplinary approaches to thinking and learning about the nature of the self and how that relates to community and humanity.⁸⁵ Another positive of the course is that the students come from all academic backgrounds. While this is a challenge for some students, this make-up has a lot of diversity in the classroom and allows the maximum possible of views to saturate the class discussion. Students get used to talking to people different from them about hard topics, which is an important part of a successful democracy.

⁸⁴ Elizabeth Gish and Paul Markham, "Living Well Together: Citizenship, Education, and Moral Formation," *The Good Society* 22, no. 2 (2013): 152.

⁸⁵ These are the learning objectives for the course, from in-progress Fall 2015 syllabus:

1. Students will learn how to identify and critically engage with issues of democracy and citizenship through the methods, concepts, and vocabulary of the public humanities.
2. Students will gain confidence in their ability to take on leadership roles in addressing major challenges to democratic life, including issues related to gender, race, religion, ethnicity, and national identity.
3. Students will learn how to incorporate a range of sources and texts into their research.
4. In the context of the citizen professional framework—a central element of public humanities scholarship—students will be able to articulate the ways that their intended careers can serve a public purpose.
5. Students will demonstrate competency in, and be able to explain the value of, the following skills: interacting with the community beyond the classroom; writing clearly and convincingly for both academic and public audiences; working in a team; taking part in and facilitating deliberations about complex political and social issues; identifying common ground in the midst of conflict and competing interest; interpreting creative expression from a public perspective; conducting archival, library, internet, and community-based research.

The structure of the course is often new and challenging to the first year students compared to their prior high schools classes. There are no tests, and the instructors do not simply spit out information and request the students to memorize and replicate the information. Instead, the class truly focuses on helping students “practice” how to become citizens.⁸⁶ Although Gish and Markham see the importance in this style of teaching and learning – students do of course need to know important information - they instead prefer democratic pedagogy. Their reasoning is that, “we think it is odd to expect young people to learn how to be creative, active, engaged citizens primarily through reading assignments and classroom lectures.”⁸⁷ To further justify the different style of teaching, you can ask: where in the community is a person going to have to memorize and recite the information in a real life setting? Of course that is one skill students need, but in order to be successful in a job and as a citizen there is so much more when dealing with the challenges of community and democracy, and this class attempts to provide a way for students to get practice with dealing with problems, to help give insight to the real world and provide practice to become better.

Another difference about this class is the distinguishing between civic and political engagement. Granted, both are necessary and complement each other to create an active, well-rounded citizen, however, presently, many students have the chance to learn about traditional political engagement. While yes, voting and writing to a representative are essential parts for a democracy to work, this class also strives to discuss the other responsibilities of being a citizen, which sometimes is forgotten. Dr.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 153.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Gish and Dr. Markham state that these sole political responsibilities, "...cannot cultivate the civic imagination required for a vibrant democratic life."⁸⁸

The other side of becoming an active citizen is first of all, learning who you are, and then learning what you can do yourself, instead of what others can do for you. A common obstacle from this is either students are a little over ambitious believing they can single-handedly change the world, or that they are apathetic and discouraged and therefore make little to no change. For instance, Dr. Gish and Dr. Markham state, "Our students are flummoxed by our focus on public problems that do not have easy solutions, and community engagement that often complicates their view of the world."⁸⁹ Therefore, a large portion of the class is to find a balance between the apathy and ambition, to help students figure out themselves how to do their part, no matter the size, to help carve out their more perfect society.

Delving into the tangible portions of the class, there are two parts of the class. The first being a lecture that all of the students attend together, where they initially learn about the core principles and key teachings of the class. This section meets once a week and often covers readings in a creative way, with the professors taking turns speaking, incorporating animated presentations, YouTube videos, and guest speakers. After the common session, twice a week, the class breaks up into much smaller sections of around 20 students, led by an professor where the students have the opportunity to discuss and dissect these the readings, key issues, fueling conversations among themselves. This is where of the facilitator comes into effect. The instructor is more so there to guide the

⁸⁸ Ibid, 153.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 156.

students in discussion, but allows them to shape it themselves, and learn from each other. The students learn about and practice what democratic deliberation is.

In addition to the reading and discussion, there is a big research component to Citizen and Self. It originated with a lot more work in the community and attempting to develop projects with organizations in the community, but when that was tried, the professor and students found that with 180 students a semester trying to communicate and collaborate with community leaders, community people were bogged down and unable to do their real jobs instead of simply try to work with students. Therefore, the class focus went much more into the research aspect, where students eventually develop a project proposal that they *may* carry out on their own (and some do) but they are not required to. The structure of the course and major group project is research project on an issue in Bowling Green. This project has evolved over the semesters, but there is always a key section that deals with what is going on in Bowling Green and students do have casual conversations with people in the community about this, as well as use newspaper articles and archival data to get a picture of what is happening with their topic in Bowling Green.

The students are also required to look at the “Big Picture” nationally, so that they can put what is happening in Bowling Green in context. They are required to use peer-reviewed journal articles and books for this research. Moving forward from the “Big Picture” section, the third section is “Promising Practices.” In this section, the group members delve into communities who faced a similar problem to the one they isolated and took steps to solve the problem. Ideally, these examples will help the students as they develop a proposal for addressing the problem in Bowling Green. Finally there is a

section where students create a proposal on an issue in the community of Bowling Green. The proposal must involve collaboration, incorporate the lessons learned in the class, and take into account the “big picture” and Bowling Green research on the topic, as well as the research on promising practices. Some groups actually carry out this project, but the point is to help students see that they *could* do something to address a problem and do not always have to rely on someone else to fix problems. They, as active citizens, can create change themselves.

An additional goal of the class is to help introduce students to new twenty-first century skills, which a majority of have no exposure to from high school. Dr. Gish and Dr. Markham highlight a few skills that they try to incorporate into the class.

“...relationship building, group facilitation, problem-solving, evaluation, and effective communication.”⁹⁰ Add this to the rigorous research structure to the class, and students get a good taste of professional skills that they will need in any career. No matter the students’ interest, these tangible skills will still benefit them not only in their future college endeavors, but the professional field is demanding new employees to be proficient in problem-solving, critical thinking, and many other skills. Even if a student does not “buy” into the core principles of the class, they can still take away these skills regardless.

A key element of this class is its fluidity. The instructors allow the students a lot of power to guide their class and shape it into what interests them. The class has been around for four years now, and every semester, the instructors alter readings and assignments based on student feedback to find a better balance for the students.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 156.

Following their footsteps, I decided to create a survey to look into this fluid change and to see what the students were getting out of the class. I opened up my survey for students from all years to get as comprehensive of a view as possible. My initial findings show that just over half of the students who were a part of my sample liked the class, which, on the surface, may be slightly disheartening.⁹¹ However, looking at the other questions, I read a student's initial dislike of the class to see that they still learned numerous important skills. This points out that just because someone in college does not "like" something, the point is often that they learn and sometimes that is uncomfortable and difficult and not what they "like." For instance, well over half of the participants answered that they now think of citizenship differently.⁹² As mentioned earlier, this was a key goal of the instructors, who created this class, to look beyond voting as the only way to participate civically, but to see citizenship more broadly.

Another key principle in the class is communication and being able to not only talk, but work with someone you might not always agree with. Of course, looking into any average community, there will always be people who disagree with each other, so it is essential for people to know how to get past the differences and work together to find a goal that benefits not a single group, but encompassing everyone. In the survey, right around half of the students agreed that they are better able to express their views to others and changed how people think about others whom disagree with them.⁹³ Additionally, fifty-three percent of the participants answered that this class helped their communication

⁹¹ Phillip Pearson. "Survey on Your Experiences in Honors 251 – Citizen and Self." Survey conducted 4/23/14-5/13/14, electronically distributed to students who had taken HON 251 by the Spring of 2014.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

skills.⁹⁴ Therefore, students are learning to communicate with others after this class, which will benefit them in all future aspects of their lives, not only citizenship.

I also had students highlight twenty-first century skills that the course strengthened. While they might not have known the long-term benefits of these skills initially, reflection on the course nevertheless helped them distinguish which ones they took away from the course. Out of the participants, 79% highlighted that this course helped their teamwork skills, which makes sense due to the strong emphasis on group work in this class.⁹⁵ However, numerous scholars agree that teamwork is essential in the workplace, and undoubtedly, it is necessary in a community setting, for individualism will get a community nowhere fast.⁹⁶ Other skills that around half of the participants believed that the course helped them with were problem solving and research skills, other important twenty-first century skills required in future classes, careers, and communities.⁹⁷

As the class continues to change in its fluid nature for the students, it would be very interesting to see how the students' responses would change. I am extremely confident that their answers would only strengthen, a key result from the changes the instructors implement to benefit the students. In addition, the course was first taught by three professors who had never taught together and they developed the syllabus in a matter of weeks, therefore instantly making the first semester class undoubtedly hard. Based on the survey responses and my own observations as a peer mentor and teaching

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Sternberg, "Giving Employers."

⁹⁷ Pearson, "Survey."

assistant, the course has strengthened, responding to the needs of students and as the teaching team solidified and the focus of the course became clearer. Much like life in community, growth and change take time and in many ways the course is a good example of how people can work together to address a challenge and learn from their experiences, drawing not only on “experts” but also on experience and input from everyday people (students).

I think the key things for people to take away from Citizen and Self, that I have found in my research and experience, is that in order to teach citizenship to students, it is important to give them practice at it, and engage them in their own learning. You cannot just tell them *about* citizenship but you need to involve them in learning, provide input about how they learn, and determine via feedback what is working and not working. This means that professors give up the role of “the main expert” and see themselves as working together with students to create a course and environment where learning and growing can happen. I think it is also important that the professors learned quickly that asking students to do projects in the community could be overwhelming to the community. They left in the part where students talk to people in the community for the research projects, and they added an additional assignment called “Citizens Stories” which allowed students to get to talk to people in the community without doing service “to” the community and stressing the organizations in the community.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ For more on the citizen stories assignment, see Alexander Olson, Elizabeth Gish, and Terry Shoemaker. “Citizen Stories: A New Path to Culture Change,” *Public: A Journal of Imagining America*, forthcoming, 2015.

The Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility

Western Kentucky University has numerous programs that focus on increasing civic engagement on campus and its surrounding community. Besides Citizen and Self, discussed in depth earlier, a major bastion for civic engagement on campus is the Institute of Civic and Social Responsibility (ICSR), which is a part of the Department of Diversity & Community Studies.⁹⁹ Within its office, this program has multiple programs aimed at the advancement of civic engagement. Part of their mission is to, “provide a broad network and community for existing initiatives and a resource for facilitating and developing the civic and political engagement on our campus, in our local communities, and in our region.”¹⁰⁰ In addition, they also focus on creating new initiatives involving civic engagement in the aforementioned places.¹⁰¹ Of course, this mission is similar to the numerous other programs, which I have researched, but a part of the ICSR, which distinguishes itself from others, is the idea of collaboration. ICSR wants to be a location where people can talk as equals and work together for a common goal.¹⁰² One way in which they promote this concept is by welcoming students from every background to come and discuss their past, what is going on with them presently, and what they envision for this community.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the ICSR space is not solely for students in the field, anybody can access the space to hold conversations with their peers, or with

⁹⁹Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility Homepage, www.wku.edu/icsr/index.php.; Department of Diversity and Community Studies, www.wku.edu/dcs/

¹⁰⁰ "Our Mission and History," Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility, www.wku.edu/icsr/about_no_rt_nav.php.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

faculty and staff in the ICSR.¹⁰⁴ Through these efforts, the ICSR makes notable efforts not ostracize anybody and their ideas, and works hard to remain welcoming to all students and their perspectives.

The ICSR has numerous programs besides simply being an open, public space. A major part of the office is the minor program offered which is in Citizenship and Social Justice. The minor focuses on, "...understanding concepts, issues, strategies, and practices of social justice from interdisciplinary and community-based perspectives. Students will engage citizenship and social justice through multiple lenses of critical theory and engagement."¹⁰⁵ A big part of the minor is the public work capstone project, for this allows students to start implementing what they learned in the community, with an emphasis on social justice.¹⁰⁶ Besides the required classes of the minor, one of the important aspects of the minor are the required electives, because of their interdisciplinary nature. The minor allows for a lot of flexibility, with options in twelve different fields of study.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, this minor compliments numerous majors in all types of academic fields, helping students from all areas find ways to make connections between what they study, who they are, and the importance of being citizens in a democracy.

¹⁰⁴ On the importance of public space for civic engagement, see Janis Whitlock, "The Role of Adults, Public Space, and Power in Adolescent Community Connectedness," *The Journal of Community Psychology* 35 no. 4 (May 2007): 499-518. Although the article is about teenagers, the findings about public space matter when considering college students as well.

¹⁰⁵ "ICSR Minor in Citizenship & Social Justice," Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility, www.wku.edu/icsr/minor/index.php.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

With the emphasis on collaboration and talking to one another as peers, one program at the ICSR is T3, or the Third Tuesday Tea.¹⁰⁸ At this monthly event, members from all parts of the Bowling Green society, students, faculty, and community members gather to discuss a predetermined topic. Facilitated by the ICSR, T3 allows people to honestly give their opinions on the issue, listen to their peer's respective opinions, and respond, in a safe environment, with the goal of working together, instead of a confrontational situation. Some example conversations are, "Christianity & LGBTQ Communities: Can We Talk?," "Personal Histories of the Civil Rights Movement," and "Guam: Where American Colonialism Continues." Although there are generally no easy answers to any of these topics, T3 provides the opportunity for people to gather together and talk about the issues, and specifically not be afraid to input their views on the situation, without the fear of ridicule from their peers. It is in these safe spaces where people can work together for that common goal, with varying opinions heard and the chance to deliberate, listen, speak and hopefully be changed and shaped as better citizens.

Another program at the ICSR is the Social Justice Speakers Series. This series allows the opportunity for people to hear from leading thinkers on current topics of the day. Many of the topics involve race, disability and social justice, and listening to others.¹⁰⁹ While the series is not as much about talking to each other, it does allow for members of the community to learn about issues from a diverse selection of people so they can formulate their own opinions. This step is essential before anybody can express their views and work together with others, because information is vital to forming any

¹⁰⁸ "T3 (Third Tuesday Tea)," Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility, www.wku.edu/icsr/programs/t3.php.

¹⁰⁹ "Social Justice Speaker Series," Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility, www.wku.edu/icsr/programs/t3.php.

opinion. Aside from the social justice speaker series, the ICSR also sponsors many different events and speakers on campus that give the University community the chance to learn about and engage on a range of pressing, important topics. Some of the programs they co-sponsored include, "Paying Attention, Digital Media, & Community-based Critical GIS" and "Crip Futures, Future Coalitions: Disability and Social Justice."¹¹⁰

In conjunction with the National Conference on Citizenship and numerous other organizations, the ICSR also helped to create the Kentucky Civic Health Index in 2011, which is a report on the civic health of the state of Kentucky.¹¹¹ Some of the topics addressed in the report were political engagement in the state, social connectedness in the state, and community engagement in the state.¹¹² This comprehensive report lays out a detailed view of where the state of Kentucky was in regards to civic engagement in 2011. By laying these foundations, organizations can see use the current state of affairs to see where to go from there and what initiatives, efforts, and programs to focus on. In addition, this report is public record, so community members can read the report to learn more about civic engagement, which is just as important as the information for organizations.

In conclusion, the ICSR is an important organization on campus that brings people together both in the classroom and outside the classroom to talk about important issues and give students practice at being citizens. For example, another of their programs that just concluded was the Brown Bag informal lectures, in which faculty would bring

¹¹⁰ "Social Justice Speaker Series," Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility, www.wku.edu/icsr/programs/t3.php.

¹¹¹ "Shaping Kentucky's Future Together," Kentucky Civic Health Index 2011, last modified March 1, 2012, <http://ncoc.net/KYCHI>.

¹¹² Ibid.

their lunch and research they were working on and informally present it and talk about it to students who came to eat lunch with them, highlighting the importance of equality between faculty and students and also providing a place outside of the classroom for members of both of these groups to start conversations.¹¹³ Through numerous programs, the ICSR provides a safe location for people from all backgrounds to come and discuss their ideas freely, providing real life practice for students to become better citizens.

Research, Activism, and Student Government

In addition to the Citizen and Self and the ICSR, there are many other places on campus where students are involved in, and professors are working to support, civic literacy and engagement both in and out of the classroom. One more interesting example is some of the research in the history department, and the way that that ties into student engagement efforts outside the classroom. Dr. Patricia Minter is a member of the history faculty and an advisor to the legal studies minor program. A major focus on her work is the past inequalities of the nation, and in particular, Bowling Green.¹¹⁴ Inequality and diversity are issues still plaguing the country today, and Bowling Green is no different, especially with such a diverse population.¹¹⁵ Under her guidance, some of her students worked on important research about inequality and injustice in Bowling Green that still has consequences for today. For instance, George “Trip” Carpenter wrote his Honors

¹¹³ Samantha Wright, "Brown Bag Informal Lectures Conclude," WKU College Heights Herald, April 1, 2015, http://wkuherald.com/life/article_13c3020c-d8ca-11e4-9d4b-4fb0d7200f9a.html.

¹¹⁴ See the Western Kentucky History Department's faculty profiles for a description of Dr. Minter's work: www.wku.edu/history/faculty-staff/patricia_minter.php.

¹¹⁵ See International Center of Kentucky, located in Bowling Green, which shows wide diversity in this city as a refugee center in the United States: <http://icofky.org/about>.

College thesis on the Jonesville, which was a middle class African American community in Bowling Green.¹¹⁶ The community was condemned under the so-called Urban Renewal Commission. They then took the properties and sold the land to Western Kentucky University for a lower price than the University would have had to pay to the owners had they bought the homes directly. This allowed the University to expand, but the practices used to purchase the property and displace the residence were discriminatory and unfair.¹¹⁷ Although the research was archival and historical, it is a good example of the way research can be civically engaged, closely relating to unfair practices and realities that continue today when the University takes property to expand without considering the bigger effects on the community.

Another student, Nick Rabold, looked into the desegregation of schools in Bowling Green after the *Brown v. the Board* decision.¹¹⁸ Through the review and analysis of archival records, news, and legal documents he was able to provide a better understanding of the desegregation of Bowling Green, Kentucky which did not begin to desegregate until 1963. These are just two examples of the way research in college can be tied in with active and meaningful citizenship today. Even when research is historical, it shows that we are still struggling today with similar problems and that there is a long history that has shaped the reality that we face currently. While service learning was, and

¹¹⁶ George Carpenter, "Where's Jonesville? How the Destruction of Jonesville Left a Legacy of Housing Discrimination in Bowling Green, KY" (2014). *Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects*. Paper 443.

http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/443

¹¹⁷ George Carpenter, "Where's Jonesville."

¹¹⁸ Robert Rabold, "Lawrence and Desegregation in Bowling Green" (2014). *Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects*. Paper 487.

http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/487

in some cases still is thought to be essential to “engagement” with community, these projects show many ways to integrate civic learning into the curriculum.¹¹⁹ Insight into the past difficulties in Bowling Green and coping with race and inequality helps provide a basis for where the city is today, compared to the past.

Another form of civic engagement in Bowling Green that is tied to the University is a Renter’s Rights initiative. When people think of inequality, the first examples that come to mind often involve race, gender, or ethnicity, but the relationship between the property owner and the tenant is also very important, especially in a college town like Bowling Green, which has a high percentage of renters. Of course, thinking back to Jonesville and issues of desegregation, the links between housing, race, gender, ethnicity and class are not difficult to see. Bowling Green continues to be a very segregated city, and this impacts the quality and availability of housing.¹²⁰ There is a student group on campus called the Student Coalition for Renter’s Rights.¹²¹ Their primary goal is to pass URLTA or The Uniform Residential Landlord Tenant Act, which is a state bill

¹¹⁹ Colby et al., *Educating for Democracy: Preparing*, 225.

¹²⁰ A map can be found at <http://projects.nytimes.com/census/2010/explorer> that provides a visual representation of the segregation in Bowling Green, Kentucky. See also information at the Bowling Green African American Museum, www.aambg.org/about/background/. See also Shannon Shea Peterson, "Under the Cover of Apathy: The Struggle for Equality in Bowling Green, Kentucky," Honors College Capstone Experience/Thesis Projects, 1997, http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/stu_hon_theses/10

¹²¹ "WKU Student Coalition for Renters' Rights," Facebook, www.facebook.com/wkuscrr. See also Jake Boswell, "WKU Students Fighting For Renters' Rights Around Kentucky," WBKO, last modified August 20, 2014. See also James Line, "Students Should Demand Renter’s Rights in Bowling Green," WKU College Heights Herald, last modified November 17, 2014, http://wkuherald.com/opinion/article_19e62320-6ed6-11e4-a2f6-c7c4f906f2eb.html. See also Leah Brown, "WKU Group Advocates for Renters' Rights," WKU College Heights Herald, last modified November 17, 2014, http://wkuherald.com/news/article_33676dc0-6eba-11e4-83a6-07b91858280f.html.

currently.¹²² In addition, this group helps raise awareness to renters in the community about their rights and legal protections from landlords, and one of the leaders in the coalition was just elected as the student body president at WKU.¹²³ This highlights the way that curriculum, community engagement and activism, and traditional institutional structures such a student government can be put together in ways that enrich possibilities for active citizenship and young citizens who get practice engaging with their community to solve problems.

According to Dr. Patricia Minter, faculty advisor to the Student Coalition for Renters' Rights, URLTA is only an opt-in law in Kentucky, where individual communities can choose to pass it and follow its stipulations. Some of the communities that follow URLTA are Louisville, Lexington, and much of Northern Kentucky, near Cincinnati.¹²⁴ All three of these areas are urban in nature, so it is not as surprising to see them follow this law. However, there are multiple other communities across Kentucky that follow ULRTA including Barbourville, which is far smaller than Bowling Green.¹²⁵ It is the hope of the Student Coalition for Renter's Rights that Kentucky will pass

¹²² "WKU Student Coalition for Renters' Rights," Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/wkuscrr>.

¹²³ Herald Staff, SGA Election Results, April 2, 2015 http://wkuherald.com/news/article_07403260-d8f8-11e4-95e0-d32be0d07438.html For more information about Jay Todd Richey, president elect of WKU SGA and Chair of the WKU Student Coalition for Renters' Rights, see "Spirit Masters Staff - Jay Todd Richey," WKU Spirit Masters, <https://www.wku.edu/spiritmasters/staff/index.php?memberid=3723>.

¹²⁴ Patricia Minter. "Informal Conversation." 3/23/2015.

¹²⁵ "WKU Student Coalition for Renters' Rights," Facebook, www.facebook.com/wkuscrr.

ULTRA as statewide law, making all communities follow its stipulations.¹²⁶ This is a truly grassroots movement, in which the students came together and saw an issue that impacts a diverse range of people in Bowling Green, and are working with faculty, and using their available resources to pass this law, which would be beneficial to so many in Bowling Green.

Conclusion to Examples of Active Citizenship Education at Western Kentucky University

As one can see, there is a wide avenue of programs currently at Western Kentucky University that is focusing on increasing civic engagement both inside and outside of the classroom. Through these means, faculty are exposing students to the new skills that are necessary for their successful in both the professional world and their future civic world, as active citizens. However, it is very important to recognize that this is an ongoing process on campus. For example, Citizen and Self is constantly growing and adapting to the needs of the students for the optimum achievement of its goal. This is also the case for the other programs on campus, which must remain fluid as people and ideas change and progress. In addition, we must acknowledge that this is not always enough, for there will always be larger, structural issues going on simultaneously. Civic engagement can only go so far in this realm, because unfortunately, the power will be out of the hands of the citizens at times. This is a main challenge with civic engagement, for there will always be people who have more power and can dictate more directly than attempting to empower citizens. However, in order to combat this dilemma, citizens must be able to adapt and positively respond to these injustices by forming groups the Student

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Coalition for Renter's Rights in order to do all they can as citizens. like the While Western Kentucky has an incredibly solid start for the advancement of civic engagement and democratic pedagogy, there will always be room for improvement and best place to look for this is at other universities, to see what they are doing. By learning from other universities, Western Kentucky University can continue to adapt their programs and see what other programs are working or not working across the country, and see if they would be applicable and beneficial in Bowling Green.

CHAPTER 4

PROMISING PRACTICES

When reflecting on one's own program, it is extremely difficult to assess it without any bias. While professors and students at WKU are undoubtedly proud of their current accomplishments and how far the University has come in civic engagement efforts, there is always room for improvement. Part of my research involved looking and seeing what other collegiate programs are doing in their own prospective programs. As this Citizen and Self and other initiatives on the WKU campus continues in a trial and error to see what the students respond to, other programs are doing the same thing, and we can look at them to see what is working, and equally as important, what is not working. This is a major goal at the American Democracy Project National Meeting,¹²⁷ a project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.¹²⁸ Many of the leading civic engagement programs who are members of the AACSU send faculty, staff, and students to this program so they can present on what they are doing, and how their students are responding. In return, attendees gain a vast knowledge of some innovations to implement in their curricular and co-curricular offerings. We are all trying to improve civic engagement in the country and learning from each other is one of the best ways to accomplish the collective task.

¹²⁷ <http://www.aascu.org/programs/ADP/>.

¹²⁸ <http://www.aascu.org/Default.aspx>.

Therefore, I set out at looking at multiple programs across the country to see what they were doing, which Citizen and Self and other programs at Western Kentucky University could potentially draw from to make the class a better experience for everyone. While doing research, I looked into programs from schools of various sizes, including one of the most well-known efforts the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC). Their program had numerous good ideas I think Citizen and Self, other initiatives at WKU, and other colleges and universities in general might be able to learn from.

Last July, I had the privilege to visit the University of Maryland Baltimore County. UMBC is located just a few miles outside of Baltimore, about 30 miles away from metropolitan Washington D.C. It has a student body of around 11,000 undergraduate students, and the university proudly proclaims itself as an entire honors university.¹²⁹ Within the University is the office of Civic Engagement and Leadership, which is part of the Student Life Association on campus.¹³⁰ During my visit, I had the opportunity to sit down with Dr. David Hoffman, the Assistant Director of Student Life for Civic Agency, and Craig Berger, the Coordinator of Student Life for Campus and Civic Engagement. In this interview, we discussed many of their innovative programs like the Breaking Grounds Initiative, Prove-It, and the numerous challenges they faced.¹³¹ Additionally, I met with multiple student leaders including the student body president of their SGA and talked about these programs and their aspects as students.

¹²⁹ "About UMBC," UMBC, <http://about.umbc.edu/>.

¹³⁰ "Student Life," UMBC, <http://osl.umbc.edu/>.

¹³¹ "What Does Civic Engagement Look like at UMBC?," UMBC, <http://osl.umbc.edu/civic>.

One of the major innovative programs at UBMC is the Breaking Ground Initiative. The Breaking Ground Initiative is a constantly updated webpage, which promotes current programs going on at the campus, throughout all of the disciplines, to give praise to people for their continuation, and to also motivate and challenge others to make it onto the site.¹³² In addition, Breaking Ground also provides some financial support for faculty to revamp their curricula with a more civically engaged emphasis.¹³³ Dr. Hoffman believes that it is the initial change, which makes faculty hesitant to change their curriculums, and by providing some initial financial incentive, they would be more inclined to change.¹³⁴ It was their hope that once the professors adjusted their approach, they would see all of the advantages to it and continue to fine-tune their curriculums to maintain this civic engagement. David Hoffman believes that the primary goal for Breaking Ground is, “To cultivate partnerships between teachers and students, forming a symbiotic relationship.”¹³⁵ Through this approach, they are trying to create a level playing ground, combating against the traditional classroom setting that relies on the banking model of education.¹³⁶ The Breaking Ground Initiative envisions teachers and the students are co-creators, similar to the approach in *Citizen and Self*. Another goal of this program is maintain its subtlety. Dr. Hoffman maintained wholeheartedly that he did not want this to be a controlling program, therefore limiting its encompassing

¹³² David Hoffman and Craig Berger, interview by the author, Baltimore, MD, July 15, 2014.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ For more on the failing model of schools, see Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 137.

capabilities. Instead, the program's goal is to shed light on ongoing projects.¹³⁷ Dr. Hoffman noted that an important aspect of their initiative was that there was no one department, which was responsible for creating these innovative programs, because they did not want to give off the impression of an artificial control. Instead, he said that he wants it, "to be reflected everywhere."¹³⁸

On the surface, this program may not appear to be all that much more than just a social media hub where people can be acknowledged for their work, but both Dr. Hoffman and Mr. Berger told me that this was exactly its goal. Dr. Hoffman said, "Everyone wants to make a difference, and although this will show up in different ways, they still want it to matter. Therefore, this is for the individual, to make their actions more visible for everyone to see and to become more connected."¹³⁹ They associated this process with two analogies. The first one was potential energy. The efforts are already around campus for implementing more civic programs into the classroom, and by making this visible, they encourage others to do the same, with the energy that they already have. The other analogy they used was a virus. By facilitating the website similar to a viral effect, they hope that it would continue to grow on its own as more and more people want to get involved and more importantly in this case, recognized. By staying more hands off, and merely facilitating the conversation, they are creating a natural system where the students have the power to spread their civic interests with their fellow students and staff on campus.

¹³⁷ Hoffman and Berger Interview, 2014.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Breaking Ground also provides an outlet for the faculty on campus to become involved with the students. Dr. Hoffman believes that all faculty want a close connection to the students, and by providing a medium for this to happen, it is only natural for the faculty to embrace this idea, therefore coming together to share stories to generate interest.¹⁴⁰ Dr. Hoffman and Mr. Berger note that there has been widespread success with this program, across all academic fields. In addition, the viral effect mentioned earlier would also apply to the faculty. For one, seeing such positive results from colleagues can inspire faculty members to change their approaches too, and on top of the initial financial incentive, it becomes more compelling and spreads. This sustainability is key for Breaking Grounds.

Another program that Dr. Hoffman and Mr. Berger continue to facilitate and improve is the Student Government Association on campus. Dr. Hoffman notes that on college campuses across the country, the SGA can be a strong weapon as a strong organization with powerful implementation powers, but generally unused or mishandled. For instance, while it is likely that Western Kentucky has a fantastic SGA, students like me do not hear about their impact and reach on campus. Yet, it was very evident on UMBC's campus when talking to numerous faculty and students. Dr. Hoffman believes that SGA is, "The beacon for Breaking Ground."¹⁴¹ Becoming a student facilitator, encouraging other students about the great programs going on like Breaking Ground, they become the best medium for connecting faculty and students not only within the government system, but also across campus. He believes that the emphasis on SGA is

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

that it needs to become partners on a campus, instead of only users.¹⁴² Therefore, when he arrived in 2002, he changed the Student Government system creating an opportunity for empowerment for any student, instilling the belief that the association represented all students as co-creators instead of customers.¹⁴³

Going hand in hand with the reconfiguring of SGA was redoing the Commons Area in their University Center. Originally, The Commons was merely a room with a bunch of tables where students could go, sit, and pass time. Dr. Hoffman challenged his reformed SGA into making it something better. By gauging opinion across campus, SGA decided to open it up for more access to students. They removed all of the long tables and replaced them with chairs and couches, encouraging a more casual room. In addition, SGA changed the focus of the room to turn it into a place where any student or group could come together for the common good, creating an identity of the room. Dr. Hoffman believes one the best parts of the room is that it cannot be reserved at any time, instead it is open for students to spontaneously work together, with the help of the staff of both the Student Government and the Civic Engagement and Leadership offices who are always eager to come out and join in the conversation.¹⁴⁴ Similar to what the ICSR is doing at Western Kentucky University, this area becomes a safe, public space, where people can meet up and start a conversation, potentially working together for positive change at the university and the surrounding community.

Another innovation in UMBC SGA's programs is called Prove-It. Prove-It is a grant system paid for by SGA funds that allows any student to come to the Student

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Government with an innovative idea. Dr. Hoffman believes that competition is what fuels this grant system, promoting more interest across the campus and building its hype. Once all of the grants proposals are in, the deciding committee has equal representation of student leaders and faculty on campus, to involve all aspects of campus. For instance, one particularly successful proposal involved the coffee house in the University Center. Originally, the shop would close at 7 in the evening, to the dismay of students, but the vendor did not want to extend hours in fear of decreasing profits. With the funding from the grant, the shop created a late night menu and opened for extended hours for a year to see if it would be successful and remain profitable. The experiment was extremely successful leading to the vendor extending the hours of the shop.¹⁴⁵

Another example from Prove-It involved the beauty of the campus. According to Dr. Hoffman, there was a consensus that the University needed a little more flair on its grounds for individuality and uniqueness, therefore, Student Government, via Prove-It created a competition.¹⁴⁶ The Universities' mascot is the terrier; therefore, Student Government used the funds provided by the Prove-It grants to create sculptures of their beloved mascot. They opened up the competition to all students in the university to create their own designs for the dog sculptures. Then, the committee assigned with providing the grant money voted on their favorite designs, and created the student-crafted sculptures.

Through these innovations, Student Life is using the Student Government as a strong resource to connect all of the university together, granting all a voice, including students and faculty. However, there are and will always be challenges whilst

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

implementing these programs to increase civic engagement on campus. The main problem Dr. Hoffman discussed is what he calls the Trail Blazer Dilemma. He states, “The process of making decisions for cultural change reflects the current culture too. Therefore, we must fight to figure out the process of change in bringing about change.”¹⁴⁷ He believes that is always difficult to implement this type of change, because of the trial and error of what works for their particular university, compared to another university, with completely different variables like size for instance.

Another challenge that they mention is the difficulty of changing a person’s perspective, which is a similar struggle, here at Western Kentucky University.¹⁴⁸ Of course, community service is essential in society, and definitely plays its role, but civic engagement classes in general want to push back against the notion of simple community service, casting a negative light on it. Dr. Hoffman mentions that convincing people of this is extremely difficult, for “charity although virtuous and necessary, is very ingrained in people’s brains.”¹⁴⁹ Therefore, it is a painstaking process to change the view that community service is the sole form of civic engagement, without making people feel threatened. This trend is a theme across the country and something that all institutions, no matter the size, face, which Peter Levine addressed extensively, noted earlier.¹⁵⁰

One final issue they brought up were the “eye rollers,” people who are skeptical and have a cynical attitude about engagement. Similar to the previous challenge, this is a common trend across the country, for it will always be impossible to convince everybody

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Levine, *We Are the Ones*, 139.

into changing the established system, although dated as it is. Dr. Hoffman tries not to worry about this phenomena though, for he believes that their goal is not to convince every single person, but more so “about planting a seed than growing the plant.”¹⁵¹ This approach goes hand in hand with the viral nature of their programs. They laying out the initial goals, it is their hope that the campus community manages to spread their ideas on their own. Therefore, Dr. Hoffman believes that there are merely trying to shine a light on all of the positives going on, to let the community see instead of them simply preaching their goals.

Besides sitting down with the two coordinators of the programs, I also sat down with numerous students to get their views on how effective these programs are and more importantly, what types of skills that these students are learning. After my interviews, I pinpointed four specific skills they all brought up, which included self-reflection, team building, value building and problem solving. The students emphasized that even with disagreements, it was essential to create a systematic plan for all actions, which all of these skills are detrimental. Another aspect that they liked about all of the UMBC programs was the empowerment as leaders, reflecting on the hands-on approach by the student government. With SGA as a medium, the students felt like they actually wielded the power and could instill their voice in both the preparation and implementation stages. Finally, I asked all of them if they describe one phrase to associate their involvement and the programs at UMBC, and they all agreed upon, “Deliberation with Empathy.”¹⁵²

Another leading University in the field is the Jonathon M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University. Tufts University is outside of Boston

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² UMBC Students, Dr., interview by the author, Baltimore, MD, July 15, 2014.

and has an enrollment of around 10,000 students.¹⁵³ A major distinction about Tufts is that there is an implementation of civic education throughout every department on campus, promoting active citizenship throughout every academic field.¹⁵⁴ Through this model, Tisch College demonstrates the possibility that civic engagement can be a part of nearly every department and classroom across the university. One way that they do this is by requiring all incoming freshman to read a book about getting active and meeting new people before they arrive to Tufts. This program is called “Common Book,” and some of its goals include to, “Provide a common source of community-building for all first year students, to educate students about core Tufts values, including active citizenship, and to begin an exploration of interdisciplinary approaches to addressing social and political issues.”¹⁵⁵ With all new students having read this book, they all gain a commonality to begin discussions about not only civic engagement, but also their own personal lives.

Unlike the traditional lecture-based model, Tisch College promotes the idea that the faculty is collaborating with this students to create a better academic environment with more active citizens as a result. Tisch College attempts to create programs for all types of active citizens. For example, within the college, there is the Institute for Political Citizenship, which helps students be engaged in politics, with a focus on looking at the needs of the local community.¹⁵⁶ In addition, there are programs like Jumpstart that focuses on students in the early education fields to help families get involved in their

¹⁵³ "Get to Know Tufts," Tufts University, www.tufts.edu/home/get_to_know_tufts/.

¹⁵⁴ "About Tisch College," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/about/>.

¹⁵⁵ "Common Reading Program," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/students/commonbook/>.

¹⁵⁶ "Institute for Political Citizenship," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/iopc/>.

children's education and a program called Fan the Fire, which sheds lights on the students athlete and their public work efforts.¹⁵⁷

Tufts University has an extremely strong research side to their civic engagement program, which they call CIRCLE: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. CIRCLE "focuses on the political life of young people in the United States, especially those who are marginalized or disadvantaged. CIRCLE's scholarly research informs policy and practice for healthier youth development and a better democracy."¹⁵⁸ A main priority of CIRCLE is to engage the youth across the nation to become more active. In addition, CIRCLE looks at all of the students at Tufts University and helps quantify the impact on how the current civic engagement programs at the university are doing. The research center remains an independent entity, which conducts numerous polls throughout the country to see where the current state of civic engagement in the country is today. For example, they have polls looking into why the youth of the nation consistently votes in a lower percentage compared to the other demographics.¹⁵⁹ According to their accomplishment page, CIRCLE focuses specifically on young voting patterns for the current politicians dropped this demographic in favor for older voters because they vote consistently more. Consequently, CIRCLE attempts to increase young voter's participations, which they will sustain throughout their lives,

¹⁵⁷ "Welcome to Tisch College!," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/welcome/>.

¹⁵⁸ "Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE)," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/research/circle/>.

¹⁵⁹ "The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement," CIRCLE, www.civicyouth.org/.

increasing voting patterns as a whole.¹⁶⁰ By providing numerous tools on their website, CIRCLE attempts to equip the youth with more information to aid in this process.

Another leader in the field of civic engagement is Augsburg College. Located in Minneapolis, Augsburg College has a student population of around 4,000 students.¹⁶¹ Within the school is the Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship.¹⁶² As a private university, one the center's purpose is to "Revitalize the democratic and public purposes of higher education, in a time when strengthening colleges' visible contributions to the common good, not simply to private benefit."¹⁶³ Even privately funded, its purpose is still for the common good of the country, which is an essential function of civic engagement. Their purpose is that people in all types of careers can be "professional citizens" who contribute to bettering their communities.¹⁶⁴ One of their major emphases is on service learning and working hands-on in the community instead of learning about how to work in a community whilst sitting in a classroom. For example, "Students average 25 hours per semester in service-learning experience directly connected to course objectives and learning goals."¹⁶⁵ In addition, before classes begin, all incoming freshman attend a service day, where they go out into the surrounding neighborhoods and work on service

¹⁶⁰ "CIRCLE's Mission," CIRCLE, www.civicyouth.org/about-circle/.

¹⁶¹ "About Augsburg College," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/about/facts/.

¹⁶² "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/.

¹⁶³ "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship: Mission and Purpose," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/about/mission-purpose/.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

projects.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, is the Bonner Leaders Program, which is a work-study focused in the community, but emphasizing the integration of civic engagement.¹⁶⁷ These programs show the unique nature of Augsburg, because all students coming to their school immediately get exposure to civic engagement, no matter the discipline, and continue to learn more about it as their collegiate career continues. With this standard set, the Sabo Center immediately introduces the students this student service approach, and shows that this is not simply an add-on to their education, but is their education instead of a midterm or paper. Additionally, they do not focus solely on service learning and volunteerism, but instead on the civic learning approach, by talking to the community and finding out what benefits the entire community.

Augsburg College has multiple breakthrough programs, all which try to weave the university and surrounding communities together to better each other. One notable program is the Campus Kitchen Initiative.¹⁶⁸ Using surplus food from nearby restaurants and even handcrafted food from the cooking classes on campus, volunteers provide food for the community around the university.¹⁶⁹ While this, on the surface, appears to be like a traditional service method, far more goes into the Campus Kitchen. For instance, the university also has a community garden, which they will give plots to community organizations to grow their own local crops. Any available spots will add to the food

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship: Bonner Leaders Program," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/programs/bonner-leaders/.

¹⁶⁸ "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship: Campus Kitchen," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/programs/campus-kitchen/.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

already established service system.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the university provides access to free classes for members of the community to learn how to cook and garden their own produce, teaching them how to grow for themselves instead of entirely relying on the university for food.¹⁷¹ This provides the students with an accessible way for service, where they can see the good that they are doing in the local communities.

Another program is the Jane Addams School for Democracy.¹⁷² Of course, much of modern civic engagement derived from the Hull House in Chicago where members of the community would come to learn practical skills for free like cooking for example.¹⁷³ The goal for the Jane Addams School for Democracy is to emphasize the importance that immigrants have on shaping and developing civic engagement in the United States. A traditional view of immigration in the United States is that these people should embrace U.S. culture, for they are becoming U.S. citizens. However, at Augsburg, they want immigrants to preserve their own culture and blend it with their new American culture, for they can bring more to the table in regards to bettering the community.¹⁷⁴ It becomes a public place for members of different ethnic communities to share their experiences and triumphs in their own culture and learn from other cultures. In addition, similar to the Hull House, there are not necessarily any teachers, everybody comes to teach and to learn

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship: Jane Addams School," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/programs/jane-addams-school/.

¹⁷³ For more on this, see Nickolas Longo, "Hull House," in *Why Community Matters: Connecting Education With Civic Life* (New York: State of New York Press, 2007).

¹⁷⁴ "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship: Jane Addams School," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/programs/jane-addams-school/.

from each other as equals.¹⁷⁵ With a program like this, the community of Minneapolis, traditionally of multiple different cultures, can come together, embrace each other, and form a collective, diverse community.

One of the larger universities that have a strong emphasis on civic engagement is Syracuse University. Located in New York, with a student population of over 20,000, is the University of Syracuse, which has the Maxwell School.¹⁷⁶ Within the Maxwell school is the Alan K. Campbell Public Affairs Institute. One of their main goals is to increase nonpartisan awareness throughout the communities.¹⁷⁷ A majority of their programs include citizens from the community, along with the students.

One such program is the Campbell Debates. These debates, hosted by the Maxwell School, invite students, faculty, and members of the community to come and watch as two sides debate all types of issues, many of which are local.¹⁷⁸ Some of the past debates included banning smoking on campus, a statewide ban on casinos, and many other issues.¹⁷⁹ By inviting the community, they allow citizens not affiliated with the university to come and have their say during the debates via the question format. The Institute also does a painstaking job to invite experts to the debate some the audience have access to the best information possible, realizing that although expert knowledge is never enough, it is an important part of the mix of citizens being able to make good

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ "SU Facts," Syracuse University, www.syr.edu/about/facts.html. "Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs," Syracuse University, <https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/>.

¹⁷⁷ "Campbell Public Affairs Institute," Maxwell School, https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/about/Alan_K__Scotty_Campbell/.

¹⁷⁸ "Campbell Public Affairs Institute: The Campbell Debates," Maxwell School, https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/programs/The_Campbell_Debates/.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

decisions. A similar program is the CNYSpeaks,¹⁸⁰ which is affiliated with the university as a nonpartisan organization that attempts to start conversations between groups in the community. They set up public forums where members of the community can come and interact with each other on a particular issue.¹⁸¹ When the organization began, they created an initial public forum to allow the citizens attending to create their own rules for the future forums.¹⁸² By allowing citizens to dictate the rules that determine the style of public forum, CNYSpeaks created transparency and took away any bias by giving the people of the community the power, while the organization was simply a facilitator. For example, one rule states that there must be a third party facilitator to, “help maintain balance among speakers, ensure adherence to the agenda, and promote a safe environment for all parties.”¹⁸³ With this friendly environment, members of the community have a safe haven to work out differences and collaborate for the greater good.

Two other programs at Syracuse involve lecture series, which also focus on getting, correct, unbiased information out to the public. One of the series is the State of Democracy. The series focuses on current problems going on in the state and country to help the community form their ideas by presenting them with as much information as possible. For instance, one of the lectures was on “Does citizenship require sacrifice?” It focuses on the responsibility of citizens, which is a major part of civic engagement, and

¹⁸⁰ "Campbell Public Affairs Institute: CNYSpeaks," Maxwell School, <https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/programs/CNYSpeaks/>.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

providing people with this information gets the ball rolling.¹⁸⁴ The other lecture series is the Tanner Lecture Series on Ethics, Citizenship, and Public Responsibility. This series focuses on the ethical responsibilities of citizens, similar to the previous one, but focuses more on engaging and provoking the audience, in addition to simply informing them.¹⁸⁵ Although unsettling at times, the goal for the series is to stress that all citizens are together, and collaboratively, can make a difference.¹⁸⁶

Promising Practices Conclusion

All of these programs both here at Western Kentucky University and at the other universities focus on what it means to be a citizen, to all types of people, whether that be a student, a faculty member, or a member of the community. All of these people have different backgrounds and responsibilities, yet these programs become facilitations to help them figure out exactly what it means to be a citizen for themselves. None of these programs are telling people how they should live or interact with others, but provides the means so people can figure it out themselves, on top of the values and passions that they believe in. Once these people find out what it means to be a citizen, these programs then provide the tools and environment for people to implement and share their newfound ideas with others, growing simultaneously.

A key theme from all of these programs is the environment that they create. All have public places that are safe and welcoming to all ideas, and does not condone ridicule in the slightest, for turning down ideas limits the possibility for the best overall growth

¹⁸⁴ "Campbell Public Affairs Institute: State of Democracy," Maxwell School, www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/programs/State_of_Democracy/.

¹⁸⁵ "Campbell Public Affairs Institute: The Tanner Lecture Series on Ethics, Citizenship, and Public Responsibility," Maxwell School, www.maxwell.syr.edu/tanner/.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

and potential solutions for the community. A component of this is that the teachers are facilitators instead of a traditional lecture style, where the teachers are there to moderate the conversations in order to allow the free flow of ideas for all members. In addition, these facilitators provide the necessary information for these active citizens. A main problem when trying to solve issues is that people simply do not have all of the information available to them, in order to work together and find the best possible solution. Therefore, through these programs, citizens gain the knowledge they need to accurately and thoughtfully generate long term, sustainable solutions for their communities.

Another component of all of these programs is simply, talking. Things will never change in any community with people talking to each other and brainstorming. As mentioned before, the programs are set up to do this in the correct way, via a deliberation. An important aspect of this is that these talks are happening both inside and outside of the classroom. Since this is higher education, there will always be a classroom for the students and the teacher, however, this is not a barrier, but instead one place people can come together and talk. At all of these universities, there are also spaces outside of the classroom where there can be a blend of students and community members, working together, which is the end goal of civic engagement.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

When reflecting on one's own program, it is extremely difficult to assess it without any bias. While professors and students at WKU are undoubtedly proud of their current accomplishments and how far the University has come in civic engagement efforts, there is always room for improvement. Part of my research involved looking and seeing what other collegiate programs are doing in their own prospective programs. As this Citizen and Self and other initiatives on the WKU campus continues in a trial and error to see what the students respond to, other programs are doing the same thing, and we can look at them to see what is working, and equally as important, what is not working. This is a major goal at the American Democracy Project National Meeting,¹⁸⁷ a project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.¹⁸⁸ Many of the leading civic engagement programs who are members of the AACSU send faculty, staff, and students to this program so they can present on what they are doing, and how their students are responding. In return, attendees gain a vast knowledge of some innovations to implement in their curricular and co-curricular offerings. We are all trying to improve civic engagement in the country and learning from each other is one of the best ways to accomplish the collective task.

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.aascu.org/programs/ADP/>.

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.aascu.org/Default.aspx>.

Therefore, I set out at looking at multiple programs across the country to see what they were doing, which Citizen and Self and other programs at Western Kentucky University could potentially draw from to make the class a better experience for everyone. While doing research, I looked into programs from schools of various sizes, including one of the most well-known efforts the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC). Their program had numerous good ideas I think Citizen and Self, other initiatives at WKU, and other colleges and universities in general might be able to learn from.

Last July, I had the privilege to visit the University of Maryland Baltimore County. UMBC is located just a few miles outside of Baltimore, about 30 miles away from metropolitan Washington D.C. It has a student body of around 11,000 undergraduate students, and the university proudly proclaims itself as an entire honors university.¹⁸⁹ Within the University is the office of Civic Engagement and Leadership, which is part of the Student Life Association on campus.¹⁹⁰ During my visit, I had the opportunity to sit down with Dr. David Hoffman, the Assistant Director of Student Life for Civic Agency, and Craig Berger, the Coordinator of Student Life for Campus and Civic Engagement. In this interview, we discussed many of their innovative programs like the Breaking Grounds Initiative, Prove-It, and the numerous challenges they faced.¹⁹¹ Additionally, I met with multiple student leaders including the student body president of their SGA and talked about these programs and their aspects as students.

¹⁸⁹ "About UMBC," UMBC, <http://about.umbc.edu/>.

¹⁹⁰ "Student Life," UMBC, <http://osl.umbc.edu/>.

¹⁹¹ "What Does Civic Engagement Look like at UMBC?," UMBC, <http://osl.umbc.edu/civic>.

One of the major innovative programs at UBMC is the Breaking Ground Initiative. The Breaking Ground Initiative is a constantly updated webpage, which promotes current programs going on at the campus, throughout all of the disciplines, to give praise to people for their continuation, and to also motivate and challenge others to make it onto the site.¹⁹² In addition, Breaking Ground also provides some financial support for faculty to revamp their curricula with a more civically engaged emphasis.¹⁹³ Dr. Hoffman believes that it is the initial change, which makes faculty hesitant to change their curriculums, and by providing some initial financial incentive, they would be more inclined to change.¹⁹⁴ It was their hope that once the professors adjusted their approach, they would see all of the advantages to it and continue to fine-tune their curriculums to maintain this civic engagement. David Hoffman believes that the primary goal for Breaking Ground is, “To cultivate partnerships between teachers and students, forming a symbiotic relationship.”¹⁹⁵ Through this approach, they are trying to create a level playing ground, combating against the traditional classroom setting that relies on the banking model of education.¹⁹⁶ The Breaking Ground Initiative envisions teachers and the students are co-creators, similar to the approach in *Citizen and Self*. Another goal of this program is maintain its subtlety. Dr. Hoffman maintained wholeheartedly that he did not want this to be a controlling program, therefore limiting its encompassing

¹⁹² David Hoffman and Craig Berger, interview by the author, Baltimore, MD, July 15, 2014.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ For more on the failing model of schools, see Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 137.

capabilities. Instead, the program's goal is to shed light on ongoing projects.¹⁹⁷ Dr. Hoffman noted that an important aspect of their initiative was that there was no one department, which was responsible for creating these innovative programs, because they did not want to give off the impression of an artificial control. Instead, he said that he wants it, "to be reflected everywhere."¹⁹⁸

On the surface, this program may not appear to be all that much more than just a social media hub where people can be acknowledged for their work, but both Dr. Hoffman and Mr. Berger told me that this was exactly its goal. Dr. Hoffman said, "Everyone wants to make a difference, and although this will show up in different ways, they still want it to matter. Therefore, this is for the individual, to make their actions more visible for everyone to see and to become more connected."¹⁹⁹ They associated this process with two analogies. The first one was potential energy. The efforts are already around campus for implementing more civic programs into the classroom, and by making this visible, they encourage others to do the same, with the energy that they already have. The other analogy they used was a virus. By facilitating the website similar to a viral effect, they hope that it would continue to grow on its own as more and more people want to get involved and more importantly in this case, recognized. By staying more hands off, and merely facilitating the conversation, they are creating a natural system where the students have the power to spread their civic interests with their fellow students and staff on campus.

¹⁹⁷ Hoffman and Berger Interview, 2014.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Breaking Ground also provides an outlet for the faculty on campus to become involved with the students. Dr. Hoffman believes that all faculty want a close connection to the students, and by providing a medium for this to happen, it is only natural for the faculty to embrace this idea, therefore coming together to share stories to generate interest.²⁰⁰ Dr. Hoffman and Mr. Berger note that there has been widespread success with this program, across all academic fields. In addition, the viral effect mentioned earlier would also apply to the faculty. For one, seeing such positive results from colleagues can inspire faculty members to change their approaches too, and on top of the initial financial incentive, it becomes more compelling and spreads. This sustainability is key for Breaking Grounds.

Another program that Dr. Hoffman and Mr. Berger continue to facilitate and improve is the Student Government Association on campus. Dr. Hoffman notes that on college campuses across the country, the SGA can be a strong weapon as a strong organization with powerful implementation powers, but generally unused or mishandled. For instance, while it is likely that Western Kentucky has a fantastic SGA, students like me do not hear about their impact and reach on campus. Yet, it was very evident on UMBC's campus when talking to numerous faculty and students. Dr. Hoffman believes that SGA is, "The beacon for Breaking Ground."²⁰¹ Becoming a student facilitator, encouraging other students about the great programs going on like Breaking Ground, they become the best medium for connecting faculty and students not only within the government system, but also across campus. He believes that the emphasis on SGA is

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

that it needs to become partners on a campus, instead of only users.²⁰² Therefore, when he arrived in 2002, he changed the Student Government system creating an opportunity for empowerment for any student, instilling the belief that the association represented all students as co-creators instead of customers.²⁰³

Going hand in hand with the reconfiguring of SGA was redoing the Commons Area in their University Center. Originally, The Commons was merely a room with a bunch of tables where students could go, sit, and pass time. Dr. Hoffman challenged his reformed SGA into making it something better. By gauging opinion across campus, SGA decided to open it up for more access to students. They removed all of the long tables and replaced them with chairs and couches, encouraging a more casual room. In addition, SGA changed the focus of the room to turn it into a place where any student or group could come together for the common good, creating an identity of the room. Dr. Hoffman believes one the best parts of the room is that it cannot be reserved at any time, instead it is open for students to spontaneously work together, with the help of the staff of both the Student Government and the Civic Engagement and Leadership offices who are always eager to come out and join in the conversation.²⁰⁴ Similar to what the ICSR is doing at Western Kentucky University, this area becomes a safe, public space, where people can meet up and start a conversation, potentially working together for positive change at the university and the surrounding community.

Another innovation in UMBC SGA's programs is called Prove-It. Prove-It is a grant system paid for by SGA funds that allows any student to come to the Student

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

Government with an innovative idea. Dr. Hoffman believes that competition is what fuels this grant system, promoting more interest across the campus and building its hype. Once all of the grants proposals are in, the deciding committee has equal representation of student leaders and faculty on campus, to involve all aspects of campus. For instance, one particularly successful proposal involved the coffee house in the University Center. Originally, the shop would close at 7 in the evening, to the dismay of students, but the vendor did not want to extend hours in fear of decreasing profits. With the funding from the grant, the shop created a late night menu and opened for extended hours for a year to see if it would be successful and remain profitable. The experiment was extremely successful leading to the vendor extending the hours of the shop.²⁰⁵

Another example from Prove-It involved the beauty of the campus. According to Dr. Hoffman, there was a consensus that the University needed a little more flair on its grounds for individuality and uniqueness, therefore, Student Government, via Prove-It created a competition.²⁰⁶ The Universities' mascot is the terrier; therefore, Student Government used the funds provided by the Prove-It grants to create sculptures of their beloved mascot. They opened up the competition to all students in the university to create their own designs for the dog sculptures. Then, the committee assigned with providing the grant money voted on their favorite designs, and created the student-crafted sculptures.

Through these innovations, Student Life is using the Student Government as a strong resource to connect all of the university together, granting all a voice, including students and faculty. However, there are and will always be challenges whilst

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

implementing these programs to increase civic engagement on campus. The main problem Dr. Hoffman discussed is what he calls the Trail Blazer Dilemma. He states, “The process of making decisions for cultural change reflects the current culture too. Therefore, we must fight to figure out the process of change in bringing about change.”²⁰⁷ He believes that is always difficult to implement this type of change, because of the trial and error of what works for their particular university, compared to another university, with completely different variables like size for instance.

Another challenge that they mention is the difficulty of changing a person’s perspective, which is a similar struggle, here at Western Kentucky University.²⁰⁸ Of course, community service is essential in society, and definitely plays its role, but civic engagement classes in general want to push back against the notion of simple community service, casting a negative light on it. Dr. Hoffman mentions that convincing people of this is extremely difficult, for “charity although virtuous and necessary, is very ingrained in people’s brains.”²⁰⁹ Therefore, it is a painstaking process to change the view that community service is the sole form of civic engagement, without making people feel threatened. This trend is a theme across the country and something that all institutions, no matter the size, face, which Peter Levine addressed extensively, noted earlier.²¹⁰

One final issue they brought up were the “eye rollers,” people who are skeptical and have a cynical attitude about engagement. Similar to the previous challenge, this is a common trend across the country, for it will always be impossible to convince everybody

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Levine, *We Are the Ones*, 139.

into changing the established system, although dated as it is. Dr. Hoffman tries not to worry about this phenomena though, for he believes that their goal is not to convince every single person, but more so “about planting a seed than growing the plant.”²¹¹ This approach goes hand in hand with the viral nature of their programs. They laying out the initial goals, it is their hope that the campus community manages to spread their ideas on their own. Therefore, Dr. Hoffman believes that there are merely trying to shine a light on all of the positives going on, to let the community see instead of them simply preaching their goals.

Besides sitting down with the two coordinators of the programs, I also sat down with numerous students to get their views on how effective these programs are and more importantly, what types of skills that these students are learning. After my interviews, I pinpointed four specific skills they all brought up, which included self-reflection, team building, value building and problem solving. The students emphasized that even with disagreements, it was essential to create a systematic plan for all actions, which all of these skills are detrimental. Another aspect that they liked about all of the UMBC programs was the empowerment as leaders, reflecting on the hands-on approach by the student government. With SGA as a medium, the students felt like they actually wielded the power and could instill their voice in both the preparation and implementation stages. Finally, I asked all of them if they describe one phrase to associate their involvement and the programs at UMBC, and they all agreed upon, “Deliberation with Empathy.”²¹²

Another leading University in the field is the Jonathon M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University. Tufts University is outside of Boston

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² UMBC Students, Dr., interview by the author, Baltimore, MD, July 15, 2014.

and has an enrollment of around 10,000 students.²¹³ A major distinction about Tufts is that there is an implementation of civic education throughout every department on campus, promoting active citizenship throughout every academic field.²¹⁴ Through this model, Tisch College demonstrates the possibility that civic engagement can be a part of nearly every department and classroom across the university. One way that they do this is by requiring all incoming freshman to read a book about getting active and meeting new people before they arrive to Tufts. This program is called “Common Book,” and some of its goals include to, “Provide a common source of community-building for all first year students, to educate students about core Tufts values, including active citizenship, and to begin an exploration of interdisciplinary approaches to addressing social and political issues.”²¹⁵ With all new students having read this book, they all gain a commonality to begin discussions about not only civic engagement, but also their own personal lives.

Unlike the traditional lecture-based model, Tisch College promotes the idea that the faculty is collaborating with this students to create a better academic environment with more active citizens as a result. Tisch College attempts to create programs for all types of active citizens. For example, within the college, there is the Institute for Political Citizenship, which helps students be engaged in politics, with a focus on looking at the needs of the local community.²¹⁶ In addition, there are programs like Jumpstart that focuses on students in the early education fields to help families get involved in their

²¹³ "Get to Know Tufts," Tufts University, www.tufts.edu/home/get_to_know_tufts/.

²¹⁴ "About Tisch College," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/about/>.

²¹⁵ "Common Reading Program," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/students/commonbook/>.

²¹⁶ "Institute for Political Citizenship," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/iopc/>.

children's education and a program called Fan the Fire, which sheds lights on the students athlete and their public work efforts.²¹⁷

Tufts University has an extremely strong research side to their civic engagement program, which they call CIRCLE: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. CIRCLE "focuses on the political life of young people in the United States, especially those who are marginalized or disadvantaged. CIRCLE's scholarly research informs policy and practice for healthier youth development and a better democracy."²¹⁸ A main priority of CIRCLE is to engage the youth across the nation to become more active. In addition, CIRCLE looks at all of the students at Tufts University and helps quantify the impact on how the current civic engagement programs at the university are doing. The research center remains an independent entity, which conducts numerous polls throughout the country to see where the current state of civic engagement in the country is today. For example, they have polls looking into why the youth of the nation consistently votes in a lower percentage compared to the other demographics.²¹⁹ According to their accomplishment page, CIRCLE focuses specifically on young voting patterns for the current politicians dropped this demographic in favor for older voters because they vote consistently more. Consequently, CIRCLE attempts to increase young voter's participations, which they will sustain throughout their lives,

²¹⁷ "Welcome to Tisch College!," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/welcome/>.

²¹⁸ "Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE)," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/research/circle/>.

²¹⁹ "The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement," CIRCLE, www.civicyouth.org/.

increasing voting patterns as a whole.²²⁰ By providing numerous tools on their website, CIRCLE attempts to equip the youth with more information to aid in this process.

Another leader in the field of civic engagement is Augsburg College. Located in Minneapolis, Augsburg College has a student population of around 4,000 students.²²¹ Within the school is the Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship.²²² As a private university, one the center's purpose is to "Revitalize the democratic and public purposes of higher education, in a time when strengthening colleges' visible contributions to the common good, not simply to private benefit."²²³ Even privately funded, its purpose is still for the common good of the country, which is an essential function of civic engagement. Their purpose is that people in all types of careers can be "professional citizens" who contribute to bettering their communities.²²⁴ One of their major emphases is on service learning and working hands-on in the community instead of learning about how to work in a community whilst sitting in a classroom. For example, "Students average 25 hours per semester in service-learning experience directly connected to course objectives and learning goals."²²⁵ In addition, before classes begin, all incoming freshman attend a service day, where they go out into the surrounding neighborhoods and work on service

²²⁰ "CIRCLE's Mission," CIRCLE, www.civicyouth.org/about-circle/.

²²¹ "About Augsburg College," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/about/facts/.

²²² "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/.

²²³ "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship: Mission and Purpose," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/about/mission-purpose/.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

projects.²²⁶ Furthermore, is the Bonner Leaders Program, which is a work-study focused in the community, but emphasizing the integration of civic engagement.²²⁷ These programs show the unique nature of Augsburg, because all students coming to their school immediately get exposure to civic engagement, no matter the discipline, and continue to learn more about it as their collegiate career continues. With this standard set, the Sabo Center immediately introduces the students this student service approach, and shows that this is not simply an add-on to their education, but is their education instead of a midterm or paper. Additionally, they do not focus solely on service learning and volunteerism, but instead on the civic learning approach, by talking to the community and finding out what benefits the entire community.

Augsburg College has multiple breakthrough programs, all which try to weave the university and surrounding communities together to better each other. One notable program is the Campus Kitchen Initiative.²²⁸ Using surplus food from nearby restaurants and even handcrafted food from the cooking classes on campus, volunteers provide food for the community around the university.²²⁹ While this, on the surface, appears to be like a traditional service method, far more goes into the Campus Kitchen. For instance, the university also has a community garden, which they will give plots to community organizations to grow their own local crops. Any available spots will add to the food

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship: Bonner Leaders Program," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/programs/bonner-leaders/.

²²⁸ "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship: Campus Kitchen," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/programs/campus-kitchen/.

²²⁹ Ibid.

already established service system.²³⁰ Furthermore, the university provides access to free classes for members of the community to learn how to cook and garden their own produce, teaching them how to grow for themselves instead of entirely relying on the university for food.²³¹ This provides the students with an accessible way for service, where they can see the good that they are doing in the local communities.

Another program is the Jane Addams School for Democracy.²³² Of course, much of modern civic engagement derived from the Hull House in Chicago where members of the community would come to learn practical skills for free like cooking for example.²³³ The goal for the Jane Addams School for Democracy is to emphasize the importance that immigrants have on shaping and developing civic engagement in the United States. A traditional view of immigration in the United States is that these people should embrace U.S. culture, for they are becoming U.S. citizens. However, at Augsburg, they want immigrants to preserve their own culture and blend it with their new American culture, for they can bring more to the table in regards to bettering the community.²³⁴ It becomes a public place for members of different ethnic communities to share their experiences and triumphs in their own culture and learn from other cultures. In addition, similar to the Hull House, there are not necessarily any teachers, everybody comes to teach and to learn

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship: Jane Addams School," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/programs/jane-addams-school/.

²³³ For more on this, see Nickolas Longo, "Hull House," in *Why Community Matters: Connecting Education With Civic Life* (New York: State of New York Press, 2007).

²³⁴ "Sabo Center for Democracy and Citizenship: Jane Addams School," Augsburg College, www.augsburg.edu/sabo/programs/jane-addams-school/.

from each other as equals.²³⁵ With a program like this, the community of Minneapolis, traditionally of multiple different cultures, can come together, embrace each other, and form a collective, diverse community.

One of the larger universities that have a strong emphasis on civic engagement is Syracuse University. Located in New York, with a student population of over 20,000, is the University of Syracuse, which has the Maxwell School.²³⁶ Within the Maxwell school is the Alan K. Campbell Public Affairs Institute. One of their main goals is to increase nonpartisan awareness throughout the communities.²³⁷ A majority of their programs include citizens from the community, along with the students.

One such program is the Campbell Debates. These debates, hosted by the Maxwell School, invite students, faculty, and members of the community to come and watch as two sides debate all types of issues, many of which are local.²³⁸ Some of the past debates included banning smoking on campus, a statewide ban on casinos, and many other issues.²³⁹ By inviting the community, they allow citizens not affiliated with the university to come and have their say during the debates via the question format. The Institute also does a painstaking job to invite experts to the debate some the audience have access to the best information possible, realizing that although expert knowledge is never enough, it is an important part of the mix of citizens being able to make good

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ "SU Facts," Syracuse University, www.syr.edu/about/facts.html. "Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs," Syracuse University, <https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/>.

²³⁷ "Campbell Public Affairs Institute," Maxwell School, https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/about/Alan_K_Scotty_Campbell/.

²³⁸ "Campbell Public Affairs Institute: The Campbell Debates," Maxwell School, https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/programs/The_Campbell_Debates/.

²³⁹ Ibid.

decisions. A similar program is the CNYSpeaks,²⁴⁰ which is affiliated with the university as a nonpartisan organization that attempts to start conversations between groups in the community. They set up public forums where members of the community can come and interact with each other on a particular issue.²⁴¹ When the organization began, they created an initial public forum to allow the citizens attending to create their own rules for the future forums.²⁴² By allowing citizens to dictate the rules that determine the style of public forum, CNYSpeaks created transparency and took away any bias by giving the people of the community the power, while the organization was simply a facilitator. For example, one rule states that there must be a third party facilitator to, “help maintain balance among speakers, ensure adherence to the agenda, and promote a safe environment for all parties.”²⁴³ With this friendly environment, members of the community have a safe haven to work out differences and collaborate for the greater good.

Two other programs at Syracuse involve lecture series, which also focus on getting, correct, unbiased information out to the public. One of the series is the State of Democracy. The series focuses on current problems going on in the state and country to help the community form their ideas by presenting them with as much information as possible. For instance, one of the lectures was on “Does citizenship require sacrifice?” It focuses on the responsibility of citizens, which is a major part of civic engagement, and

²⁴⁰ "Campbell Public Affairs Institute: CNYSpeaks," Maxwell School, <https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/programs/CNYSpeaks/>.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

providing people with this information gets the ball rolling.²⁴⁴ The other lecture series is the Tanner Lecture Series on Ethics, Citizenship, and Public Responsibility. This series focuses on the ethical responsibilities of citizens, similar to the previous one, but focuses more on engaging and provoking the audience, in addition to simply informing them.²⁴⁵ Although unsettling at times, the goal for the series is to stress that all citizens are together, and collaboratively, can make a difference.²⁴⁶

Promising Practices Conclusion

All of these programs both here at Western Kentucky University and at the other universities focus on what it means to be a citizen, to all types of people, whether that be a student, a faculty member, or a member of the community. All of these people have different backgrounds and responsibilities, yet these programs become facilitations to help them figure out exactly what it means to be a citizen for themselves. None of these programs are telling people how they should live or interact with others, but provides the means so people can figure it out themselves, on top of the values and passions that they believe in. Once these people find out what it means to be a citizen, these programs then provide the tools and environment for people to implement and share their newfound ideas with others, growing simultaneously.

A key theme from all of these programs is the environment that they create. All have public places that are safe and welcoming to all ideas, and does not condone ridicule in the slightest, for turning down ideas limits the possibility for the best overall growth

²⁴⁴ "Campbell Public Affairs Institute: State of Democracy," Maxwell School, www.maxwell.syr.edu/campbell/programs/State_of_Democracy/.

²⁴⁵ "Campbell Public Affairs Institute: The Tanner Lecture Series on Ethics, Citizenship, and Public Responsibility," Maxwell School, www.maxwell.syr.edu/tanner/.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

and potential solutions for the community. A component of this is that the teachers are facilitators instead of a traditional lecture style, where the teachers are there to moderate the conversations in order to allow the free flow of ideas for all members. In addition, these facilitators provide the necessary information for these active citizens. A main problem when trying to solve issues is that people simply do not have all of the information available to them, in order to work together and find the best possible solution. Therefore, through these programs, citizens gain the knowledge they need to accurately and thoughtfully generate long term, sustainable solutions for their communities.

Another component of all of these programs is simply, talking. Things will never change in any community with people talking to each other and brainstorming. As mentioned before, the programs are set up to do this in the correct way, via a deliberation. An important aspect of this is that these talks are happening both inside and outside of the classroom. Since this is higher education, there will always be a classroom for the students and the teacher, however, this is not a barrier, but instead one place people can come together and talk. At all of these universities, there are also spaces outside of the classroom where there can be a blend of students and community members, working together, which is the end goal of civic engagement.

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