

American Democracy Project



Civic Learning: A National Imperative

**Central States Communications
Association (CSCA) Conference**

16 April 2010



“The trouble...is that we have taken our democracy for granted; we have thought and acted as if our forefathers had founded it once and for all. We have forgotten that it has to be enacted anew in every generation.”

John Dewey

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So How Are We Doing?

“Our civic health shows steep declines over the past 30 years.”

Civic Health Index September 2006

In 2007....no recovery... in fact, there is evidence of further decline in some indicators, such as trust in other people and levels of charitable contributions.

Civic Health Index September 2007

Crisis in America

The fraying fabric of our democracy:

“Without strong habits of social and political participation, (America is) at risk of losing the very norms, networks, and institutions of civic life that have made us the most emulated and respected nation in history.”

Saguaro Seminar 2000

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Exhibit A: The health care debate



Where Did WE Go?

Thomas Friedman

***New York Times* September 29, 2009**

**The system, Friedman said,
"makes me wonder whether we can
seriously discuss serious issues any
longer and make decisions on the basis
of the national interest."**

The background of the slide is a stylized, semi-transparent American flag. The stars and stripes are visible but faded, creating a patriotic backdrop for the text.

Given our recent experience with health care, how do we solve some of our other problems...

- **Climate change**
- **Poverty**
- **Energy**
- **Federal deficit and debt**
- **Governance**
- **Hunger**
- **Pandemics**
- **International relations**

Recent Threats to American Democracy

- Decline in social capital
- Increasing inequality
- Atomization of interests, news sources, and the pervasive focus on entertainment
- The role of money in politics
- Increasing partisanship
- Inability to solve our most intractable problems
- Increasing diversity

As well as...

- Lack of civic understanding and civics education in K-12 and college
- Decline in political participation, especially among the youngest adults

A Decline in Social Capital

Declining Social Capital: Trends over the last 25 years

Attending Club Meetings	↓ Down by 58%
Family dinners	↓ Down by 33%
Having friends over	↓ Down by 45%

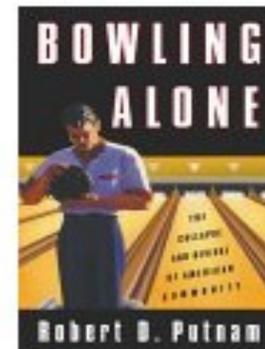
Factors Contributing to Declining Social Capital

Commuting (Each 10 minutes = 10% reduced participation)
Television
Two parents working

**Less Social Capital (esp. bridging social capital) =
Less Democracy**

Studies in the United States and Italy

Robert Putnam. Bowling Alone. 2000.



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Increasing Inequality

- Disparities of income, wealth, and access to opportunity are growing more sharply in the U. S. than in many other nations.
- People with wealth are “roaring with a clarity and consistency that public officials readily hear and routinely follow.” Citizens “with lower or moderate incomes are speaking with a whisper.”
- Progress toward American ideals of democracy may have **stalled**, and in some arenas **reversed**.

American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality.
Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy.
American Political Science Association. 2004

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Between 1968 and 2000

Productivity grew by 74%, but hourly wages fell by 3%.

If wages had kept pace with productivity, average hourly wage in 2000 would be \$ 24.56; instead, it's \$ 13.74

Holly Sklar, Laryssa Mykyta, Susan Wefald. Raise the Floor. South End Press. 2002

February 1, 2008. News Report

“Exxon-Mobil reports highest earnings in U.S. corporate history (\$ 40 billion)”

”Unemployment surges to 5%, lowest job growth in 7 years.”

ABC Nightly News, February 1, 2008

Average CEO Compensation, U.S., top 100 CEOs

- 30 years ago: 30 times the pay of average workers
- Today: 1,000 times the pay of average workers

The Economist, December 2004

CEO Total Compensation 2007

Blackstone Group	\$ 350 million
Station Casinos	\$ 146 million
Alltel	\$ 141 million
Oracle	\$ 84 million
Merrill Lynch	\$ 83 million
American Express	\$ 50 million
Occidental Petroleum	\$ 33 million
Walt Disney	\$ 31 million
Hewlett Packard	\$ 26 million
News Corp	\$ 24 million

The New York Times, Apr 6, 2008; Washington Post Dec 21, 2008

Hedge Fund CEOs Earnings for 2007*

1. John Paulson	\$ 3.7 billion
2. George Soros	2.9 billion
3. James Simons	2.8 billion
4. Philip Falcone	1.7 billion
5. Kenneth Griffin	1.5 billion
6. Steven Cohen	900 million
7. Timothy Barakett	750 million
8. Stephen Mandel	710 million
9. John Griffin	625 million
10. O. Andreas Halvorsen	520 million

Alpha Magazine, reprinted in the
Washington Post, April 17, 2008

- Earnings for these individuals are taxed at 15%, instead of the normal top income rate of 35%

School Systems: Increasingly stratified by social class in which poor children attend school with fewer resources.

The Economist, December 2004

6 states have funding gaps between the lowest and highest poverty districts that exceed \$1,000 per child

12 states have funding gaps between highest and lowest minority districts that exceed \$1,000 per child

Funding Gaps 2006. Education Trust

Universities: Increasingly reinforcing rather than reducing educational inequalities.

The Economist, December 2004

Percentage of student receiving Pell grants:

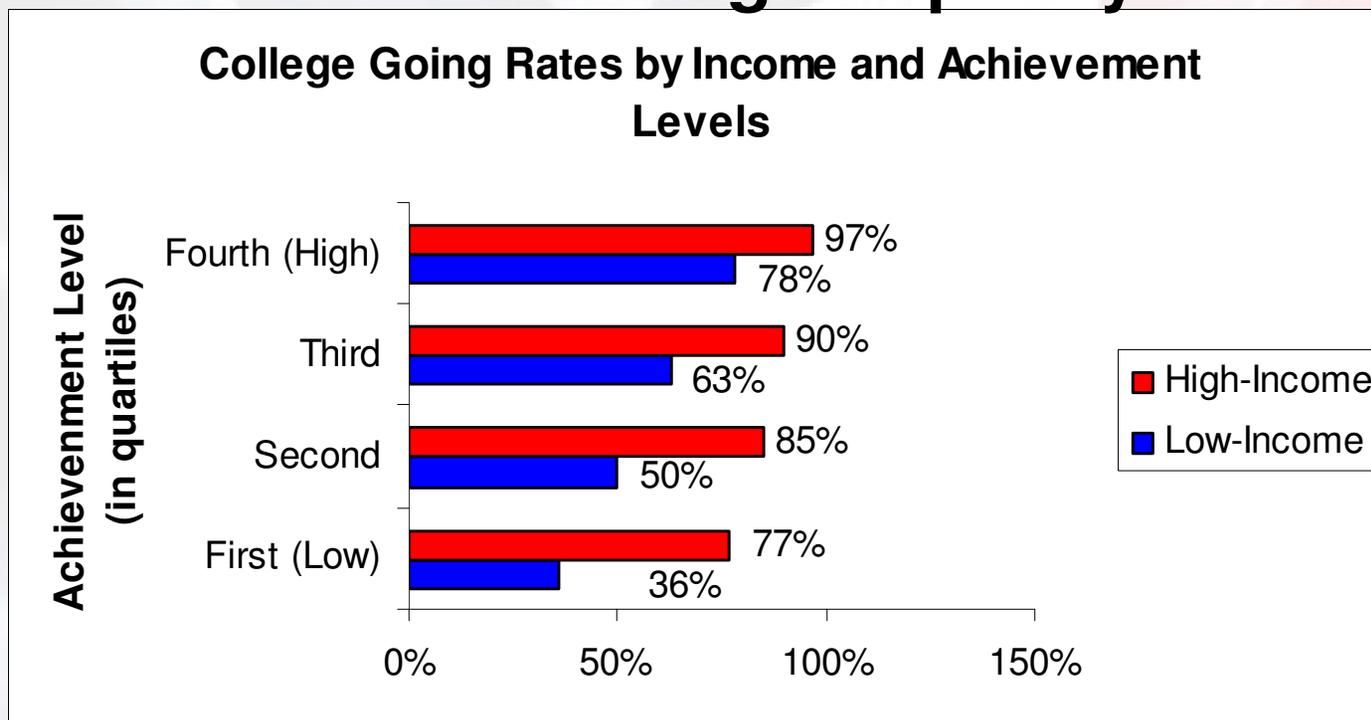
At all colleges and universities, 35%

At the 39 wealthiest public universities, 18%

At the 75 wealthiest private universities, 13%

Chronicle of Higher Education. April 24, 2008

Reinforcing Inequality



52% of federal aid, \$ 45 billion, not based on need. 34% of federal tuition and fee deductions go to families with incomes above \$100,000.

Education Trust. August 2006

Dumb rich kids go to college at the same rate as smart poor kids

Atomization of Interests and News Sources; Pervasive Focus on Entertainment

- Lobbyists: The # registered lobbyists in Washington has more than doubled since 2000 from 16,342 to 34,750.
- News Sources: More television channels (100 channels per household), more talk radio (repeal of FCC fairness doctrine in 1987), internet, 60 million blogs, etc.
- Newspaper readers: 58% in 1994, 42% today. Nightly network news watchers: 18 yr olds 18%; over 65 yrs old 56%.
- Entertainment: 40 million watched American Idol finale; 37 million watched 2nd Bush/Gore debate.

Money and Politics

Presidential elections

2000 Total = \$ 327 million

2004 Total = \$ 545 million

60 % increase in 4 years

2008 Total = \$ 1 billion + (estimated)

.09 % of population gives at least \$ 1,000 to political campaigns,
55% of funds raised

1/4 of Congress are millionaires; 1% of U.S.

*“The sad thing is that in America today if it’s going to take
\$2 million to win, then normal people can’t run anymore. You either
have to be very, very wealthy or very, very bought.”*

Janice Bowling, Republican Nominee from Tennessee

Partisanship

Most Believable News Sources*

<i>Republicans</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Independents</i>	<i>%</i>
Fox News.....	29	CNN.....	45	60 Minutes.....	29
CNN.....	26	60 Minutes.....	42	CNN.....	28
60 Minutes.....	25	C-Span.....	36	C-Span.....	26
Wall St Jrnl.....	23	ABC News.....	34	U.S. News.....	26
C-Span.....	22	CBS News.....	34	NBC News.....	24
Local News.....	21	NPR.....	33	NewsHour.....	24
Assoctd Press.....	12	Assoctd Press.....	29		
NY Times.....	14	NY Times.....	31		
Time.....	15	Time.....	30		
USA Today.....	14	USA Today.....	25		

* Percentage who believe all or most of what the organization reports. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press: “News Audiences Increasingly Politicized” 2004

According to a new study...

5 states spend more on prisons than higher education; more are close.

1 in every 100 Americans is behind bars, the highest rate of incarceration in the world, both in percentage and absolute terms.

Between 1987 and 2008, state spending on prisons grew by 127%, while spending for higher education grew by 21%

1 in 100: Behind Bars in 2008.
Pew Charitable Trusts, 2008

Putnam's New Study

Increased Diversity = Lower trust, fewer friendships, less altruism, less confidence

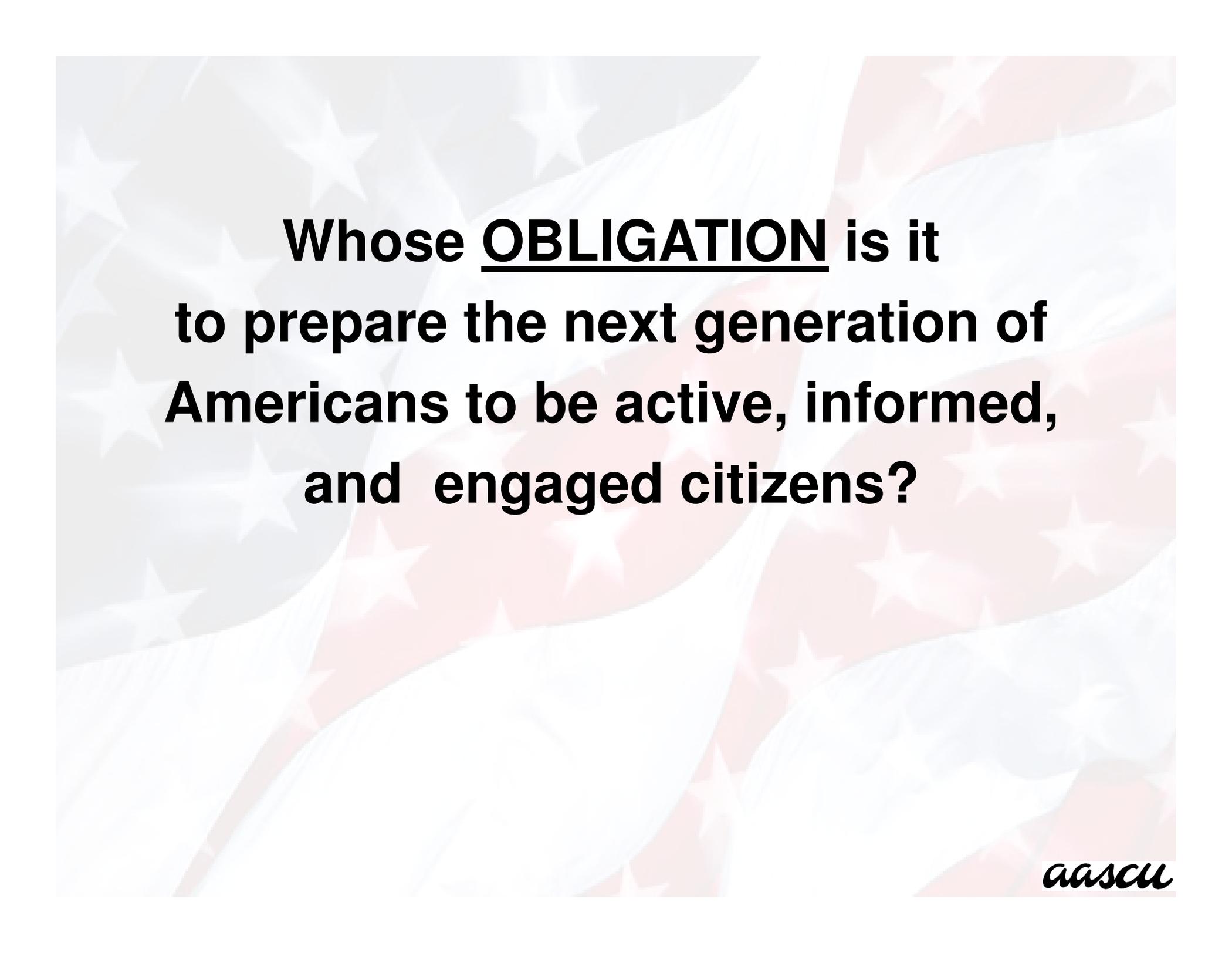
41 sites throughout the United States; 30,000 individuals in the study

- **In Los Angeles, San Francisco, 30% say they trust neighbors a lot**
- **In rural communities in the Dakotas, 70 – 80%**

Diversity creates isolation and withdrawal; reduces participation and engagement

Robert Putnam. *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century*. Scandinavian Political Studies, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2007.

Conclusion: We must work even harder to make our democracy successful.

The background of the slide is a stylized, semi-transparent American flag with stars and stripes. The text is centered over this background.

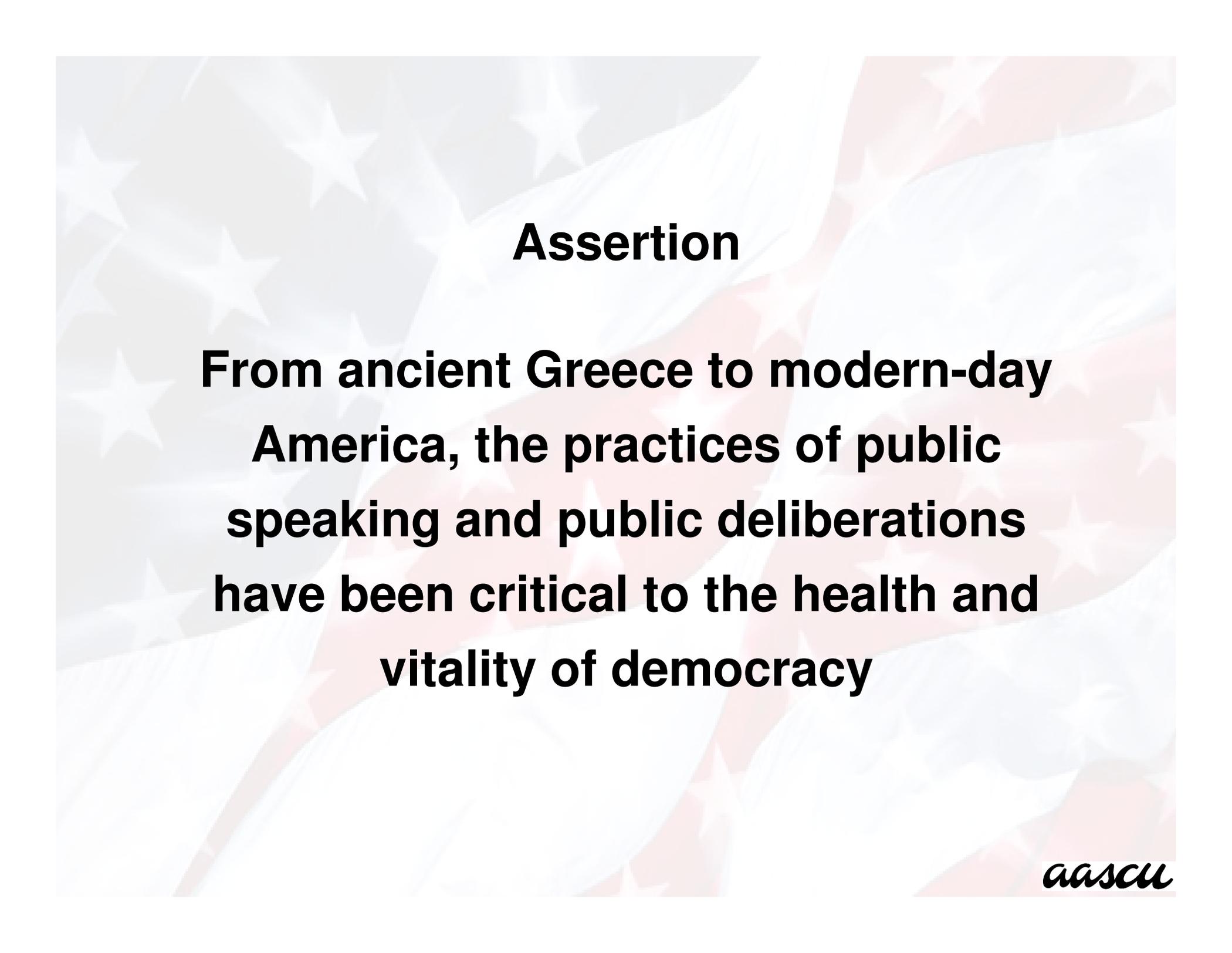
**Whose OBLIGATION is it
to prepare the next generation of
Americans to be active, informed,
and engaged citizens?**



The background of the slide is a stylized, semi-transparent American flag with stars and stripes. The text is centered over this background.

Where is the OPPORTUNITY?

**I would argue that
EACH OF YOU
has an incredible opportunity to
affect the future of our democracy**

The background of the slide is a stylized, semi-transparent American flag. The stars and stripes are visible but faded, creating a subtle pattern behind the text.

Assertion

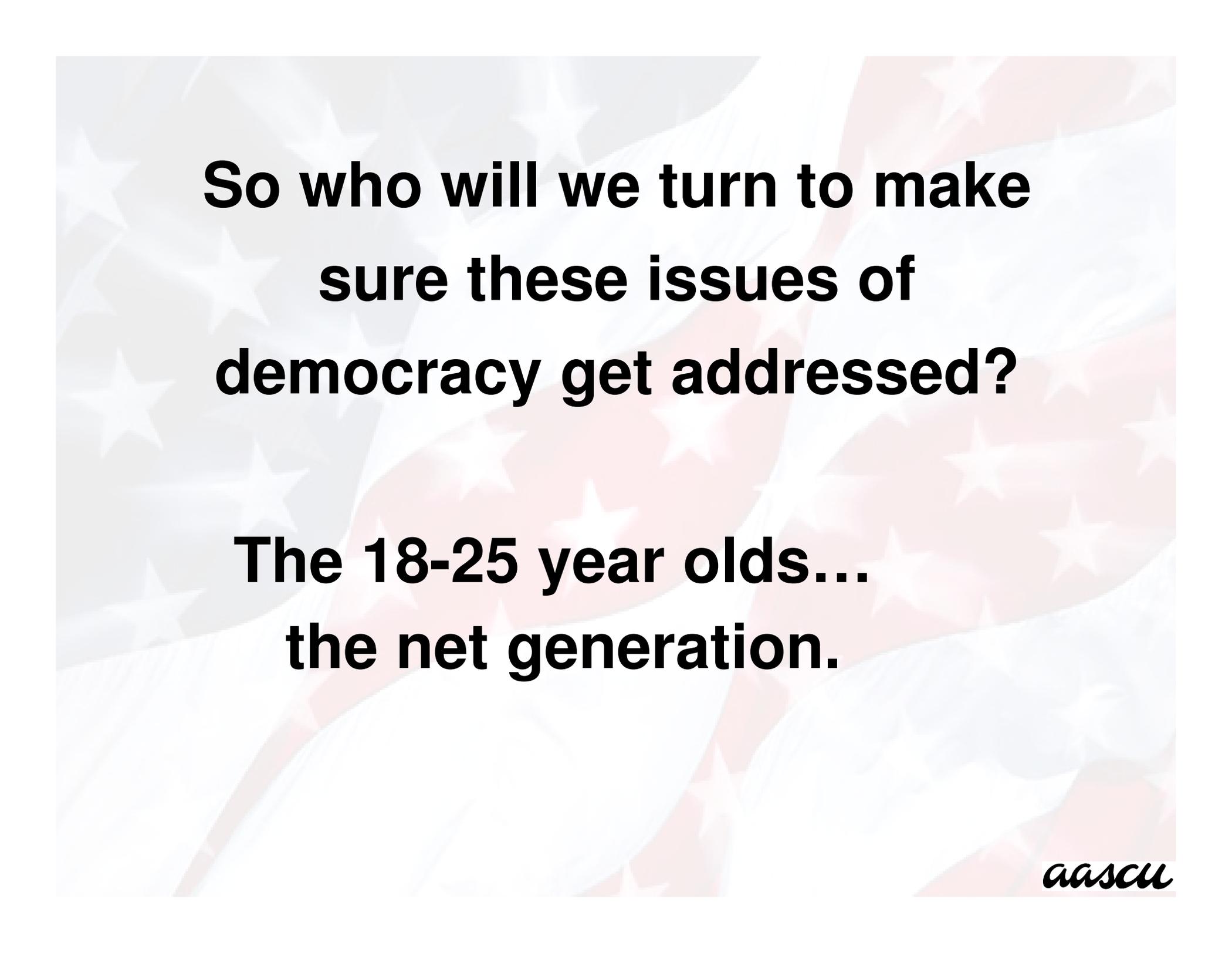
From ancient Greece to modern-day America, the practices of public speaking and public deliberations have been critical to the health and vitality of democracy

The background of the slide is a stylized, semi-transparent American flag. The stars are white and the stripes are a light red and white. The flag is draped across the frame, creating a sense of movement and depth.

**In other words, your
discipline**

Communications

**is the core foundation of
democracy**

The background of the slide is a stylized, semi-transparent American flag with stars and stripes. The text is centered and reads:

**So who will we turn to make
sure these issues of
democracy get addressed?**

**The 18-25 year olds...
the net generation.**

Lack of Civic Knowledge

“Young Americans are strikingly uninformed or misinformed about important aspects of politics and current events.”

Newsletter, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. Vol. 4, October 2006

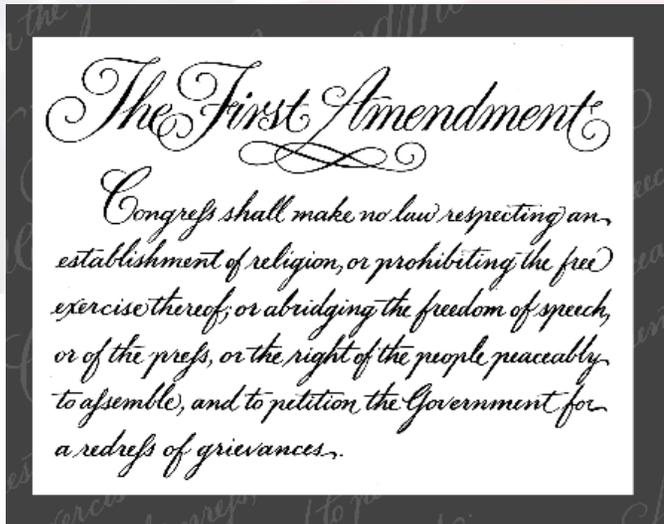
In 1998, 23% of 4th graders, 23% of 8th graders, and 26% of 12th graders scored at or above proficient; in 2006, only 4th graders showed any improvement (not much).

NAEP 1998 and 2006 Civics

Lack of Civic Understanding

Survey 112,003 high school students

- **36% believe that newspapers should get “government approval” of stories before publishing.**



**Future of the First Amendment.
University of Connecticut,
commissioned by the
John S. and James L. Knight
Foundation. 2006.**

<http://firstamendment.jideas.org/about/about.php>

National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL)

Fewer than half of persons 15-26 years old think that communicating with elected officials, volunteering, or donating money to help others are qualities of a good citizen.

Citizenship: A Challenge for All Generations, NCSL, 2003

Lack of Civic Skills

National Geographic: 2006 Survey
18-24 year olds

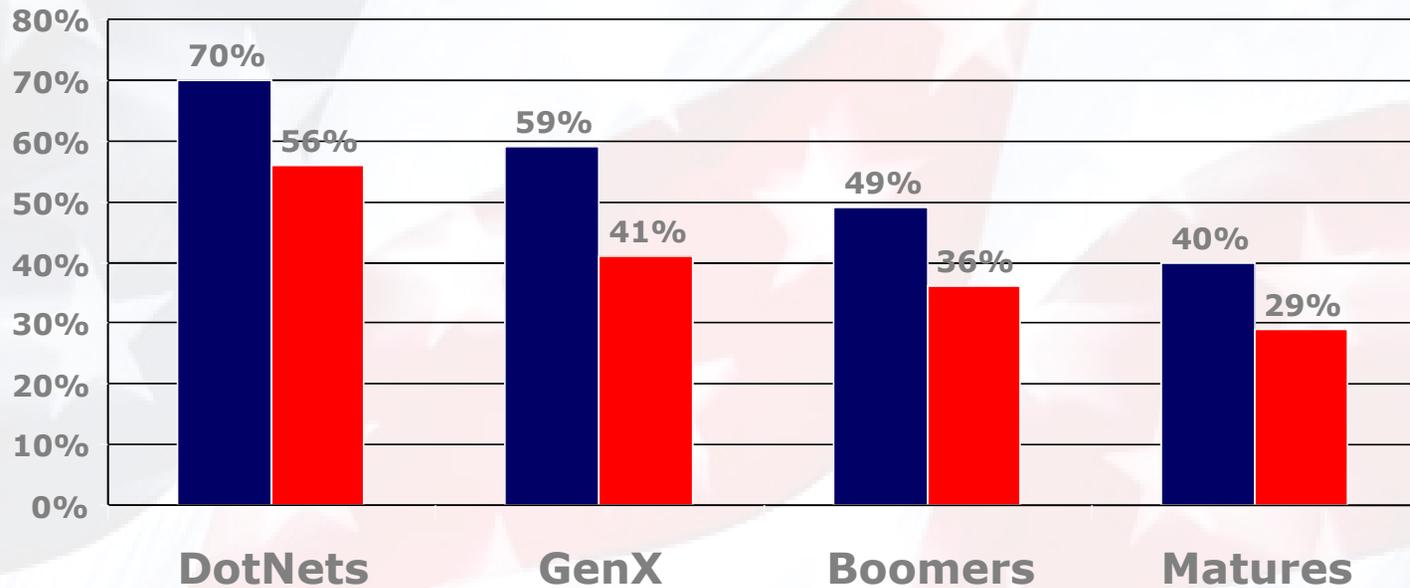
- 60% could not find Iraq on a map
- 88% could not find Afghanistan
- 70% could not find North Korea
- 33% could not locate Louisiana



National Geographic-Roper Public Affairs 2006
Geographic Literacy Study

Decline in Trust

The youngest generation of voters has the greatest distrust of others



- Most people look out for themselves
- Most people would take advantage of you

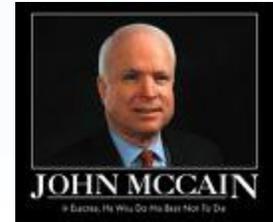
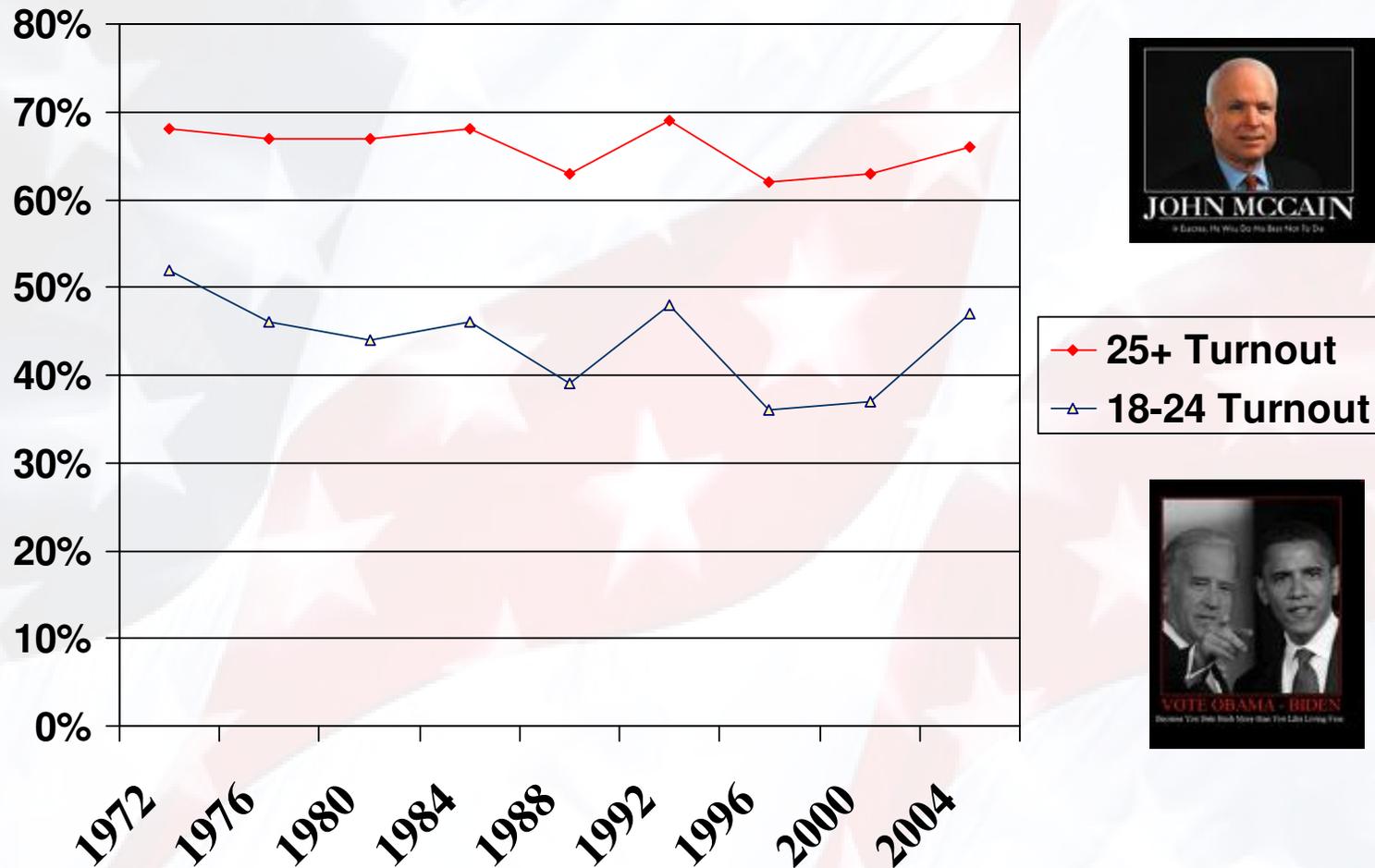
The Civic and Political Health of the Nation
A Generational Portrait, 2002



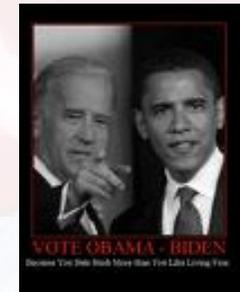
CIRCLE
The Center for Information & Research
on Civic Learning & Engagement

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The youngest voters have the lowest participation in presidential elections



◆ 25+ Turnout
▲ 18-24 Turnout



Current Population Survey (CPS), November Supplement calculated using CIRCLE method.



Civic Capacity of College Students

More than 50% of students at 4 year colleges do not score at the “proficient level of literacy.”

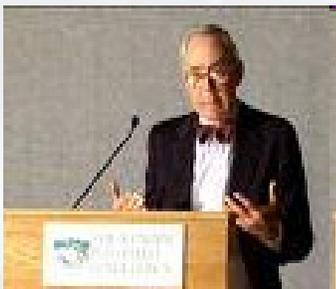
That means that they cannot compare credit card offers with different interest rates or summarize the arguments in newspaper editorials.

AIR/PEW Study, January 2006

Meanwhile, results of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), although much debated, suggest that the abilities of the nation's college graduates have slipped during the (past decade).

**Peter Ewell. *Grading Learning: Progress and Prospects.*
Commentary that accompanies Measuring Up 2006**

(from 40 to 31 % deemed proficient).



Ehrlich: Civic Engagement

Working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities...

Developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference.

Promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.

Thomas Ehrlich, Ed. Civic Responsibility and Higher Education. 2000

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Delli Carpini: Civic Engagement



- **Individual / collective actions**
- **Identify / address issues of public concern**
- **Many forms: voluntarism, organizations, electoral**
- **Directly address an issue**
- **Work with others to solve a problem**
- **Interact with govt institutions**

Activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association, writing a letter to an elected official or voting.

An engaged citizen should have the ability, agency and opportunity to move comfortably among these various types of civic acts.

**Michael Delli Carpini, Director, Public Policy
The Pew Charitable Trusts**

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Raill and Hollander: Civic Engagement

"Engagement is more than just volunteering—although volunteering can be engagement. Engagement is more than just voting—although voting can be engagement. Engagement is a combination of voice, action, and reflection.

Engagement:

Individuals recognize that they have responsibilities not only to themselves and their families, but also to their communities—local, national, and global

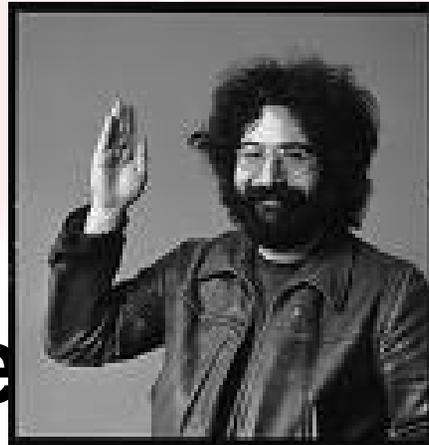
— and that the health and well-being of those communities are essential to their own health and well-being.

They act in order to fulfill those responsibilities and try to affect those communities for the better.

Those actions, in turn, give them an even deeper understanding of their interdependence with communities.”

Raill, S.; Hollander, E. "How Campuses Can Create Engaged Citizens: The Student View." J. College Charac., 7, 2006.

**Someone has to do something,
and it's just incredibly pathetic
that it has to be us.**



Je ia



How Do We Prepare the Next Generation of Americans to Be Informed, Engaged Citizens?



What we have on many campuses today is a crisis of purpose.“

Ernest Boyer. Scholarship Reconsidered. 1990.

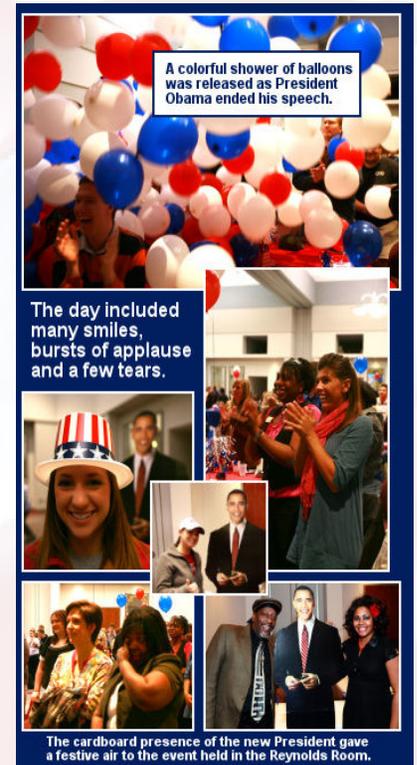
In the century ahead, higher education in this country has an urgent obligation to become more vigorously engaged in the issues of our day.

Ernest Boyer. *The Scholarship of Engagement*.
Journal of Public Outreach, 1996.

For too many institutions, the purpose (mission statement) ... is a laundry list of goals that lacks coherence and functionality.

The most effective human organizations have individual roles and responsibilities...but shared, articulated, well understood common goals.

The most important public purpose of colleges and universities is to prepare the next generation of active, engaged citizens for our democracy



American Democracy Project at Montclair State University

Montclair State University is one of the 200 American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASC&U) members participating in this nation-wide initiative seeking to create an intellectual and experiential understanding of civic engagement among undergraduate students. The project is jointly sponsored through AASC&U and the New York Times.

* Campus Representative: Dr. Richard A. Lynde, Provost/VPA

Attention Faculty
National ADP
MSU ADP
Events
News
Resources
Final Report

Today's Students are Tomorrow's Democracy

Check it out!
Current Issues
Internships
Vote

...cultivate the ability to think critically, to act ethically, and to become informed citizen participants prepared to assume leadership roles in democracy."
MSU Mission

A Focus on Institutional Intentionality

How Does an Institution Organize and Align the Campus and its Resources to Achieve Specific Institutional Outcomes?

Institutional Intention Is the Sum of the Intentions of the Individual Members of the Institution.



Defining Civic Engagement

Institutional Engagement?

- Economic Development
- Regional Stewardship

Faculty Engagement?

- Responsive Programs
- Regional Research

Student Engagement?



American Democracy Project
at Montclair State University



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For me, the place to start is with students:

Student Learning Outcomes

I can imagine a college or university focused on civic engagement, or faculty focused on civic engagement...but where nothing changes for students.

However, I cannot imagine a college or university committed to civic outcomes for students that is not also engaged in the community... whose faculty are engaged in the community.

But even focusing on:

Student Learning Outcomes

doesn't provide enough information.

**What kinds of student learning outcomes
are we talking about?**

Civic Engagement

Working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities...

Developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference.

Promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.

Thomas Ehrlich, Ed. Civic Responsibility and Higher Education. 2000

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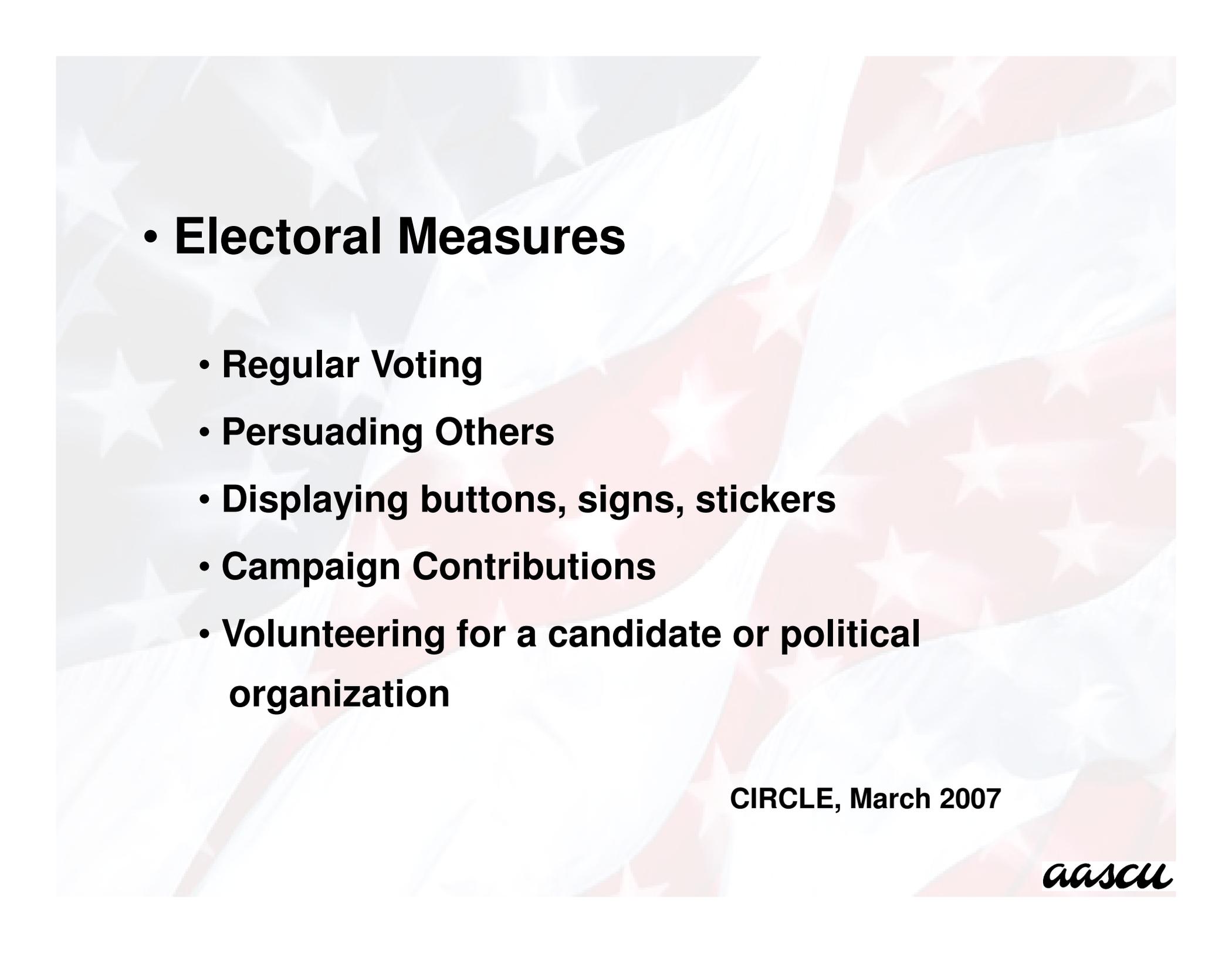
19 Measures of Civic Engagement

- **Civic Measures**

- **Community problem solving**
- **Regular Volunteering**
- **Active Group Membership**
- **Participation in fundraising run/walk/ride**
- **Other fundraising**

CIRCLE, March 2007

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The background of the slide is a stylized, semi-transparent American flag with stars and stripes. The text is overlaid on this background.

- **Electoral Measures**

- **Regular Voting**
- **Persuading Others**
- **Displaying buttons, signs, stickers**
- **Campaign Contributions**
- **Volunteering for a candidate or political organization**

CIRCLE, March 2007

19 Measures of Civic Engagement

Indicators of Political Voice

- **Contacting Officials**
- **Contacting the Print Media**
- **Contacting the Broadcast Media**
- **Protesting**
- **Signed E-mail petitions**
- **Signed Written petitions**
- **Boycotting**
- **Buycotting**
- **Canvassing**

CIRCLE, March 2007

Civic Engagement is a Continuum of Activities

Voluntary

Political

- **Fund-Raising**
- **Volunteering**
- **Community Service**

- **Organizing**
- **Petitions**
- **Protests**

While all student civic learning outcomes are important, I am increasingly interested in

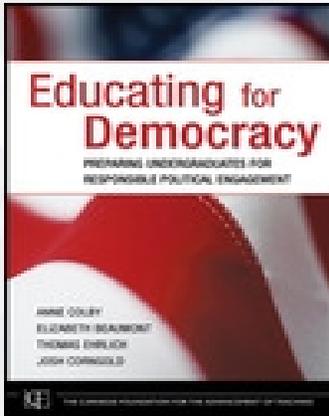
Political Civic Learning Outcomes

Political



- **Voting**
- **Contacting Officials**
- **Campaigning**

- **Organizing**
- **Petitions**
- **Protests**



Educating for Democracy: Preparing Undergraduates for Responsible Political Engagement

**Anne Colby, Elizabeth Beaumont,
Thomas Ehrlich, Josh Corngold**

Jossey-Bass, 2007 (ask for ADP discount)

Teaching political engagement ...

- **Increases political understanding, skill, motivation, and involvement**
- **Does not change political identity**

What does it take to create civically-engaged graduates?

3 Critical Features:

Institutional Intention

(leadership, culture, policies)

Programs and Activities

(curriculum, co-curriculum)

Measuring Results

(institutional and course/ program results, using NSSE, Carnegie, HERI tools)

Institutional Intentionality

- Leadership: at many different levels
- Culture: reflecting widely-shared beliefs
- Statements: Mission statements
- Accreditation and promotional documents
- Materials, etc.
- Policies
- Administrative structures
- Budget
- Rewards and recognition

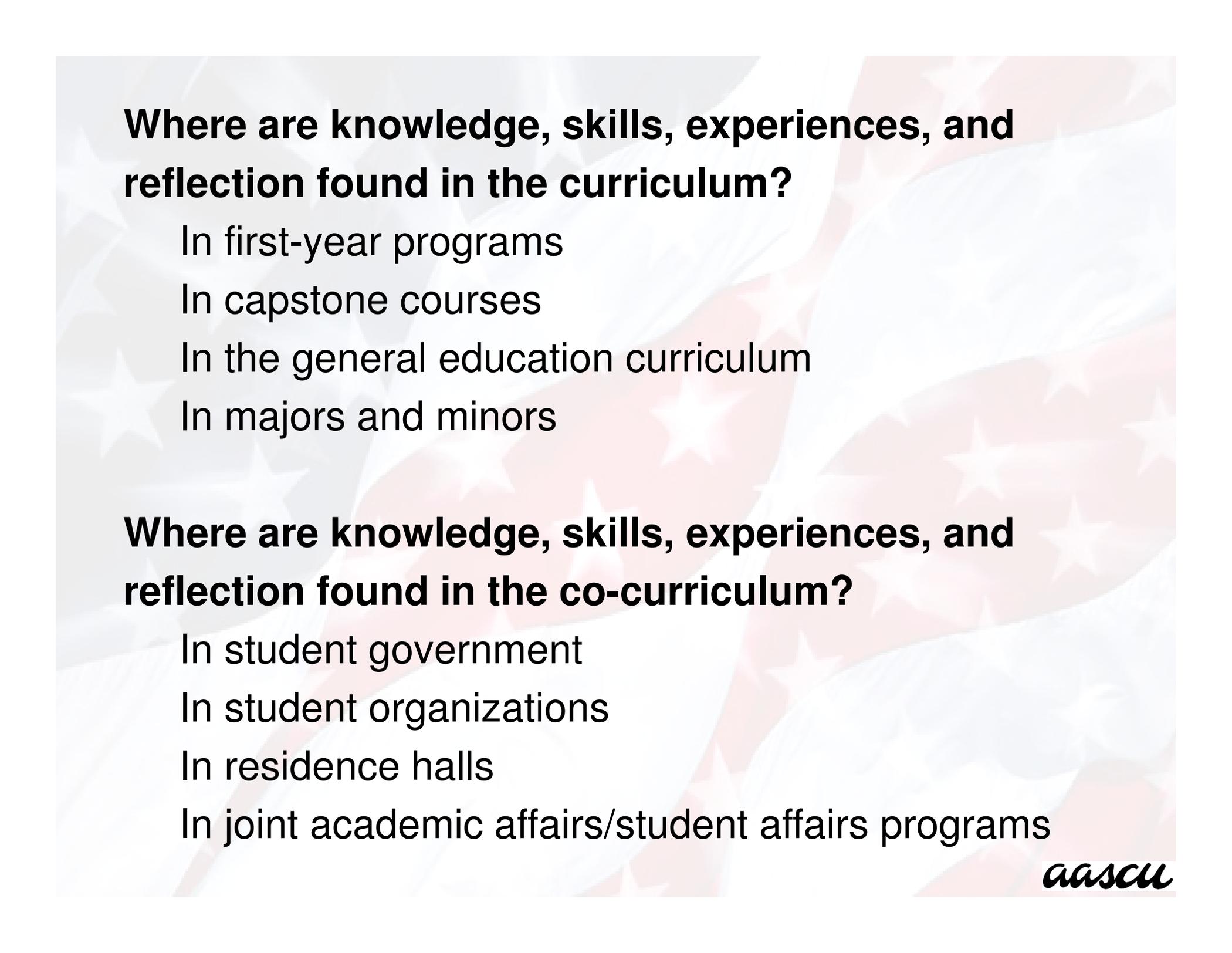
Programs and Activities

Knowledge: Teaching democratic values, traditions, history of democracies, U.S. history.

Skills: Teaching communications, critical thinking, collective decision-making, organizational skills, etc.

Experiences: Designing campus and community experiences for knowledge and application.

Reflection: Creating explicit connections between experiences and civic obligations.



Where are knowledge, skills, experiences, and reflection found in the curriculum?

In first-year programs

In capstone courses

In the general education curriculum

In majors and minors

Where are knowledge, skills, experiences, and reflection found in the co-curriculum?

In student government

In student organizations

In residence halls

In joint academic affairs/student affairs programs

Measuring Results

What are the metrics you would use to assess civic engagement in undergraduates?

At least three sets of measures:

1. Knowledge and understanding
2. Activities and behaviors
3. Attitudes and perceptions

Types of measures:

1. National and local tests
2. Self report data on behaviors
3. Political efficacy scales
4. Other tools

ACCOMPLISHMENTS FIRST FIVE YEARS

American Democracy Project

230 institutions, 1.6+ million students

Meetings

- 7 National meetings
2,000+ participants
- 13 Regional meetings
500 + participants

Conceptual Design Process

- Wingspread Conference
40 participants, publication

Assessment Project

- National Survey of Student Engagement questionnaire
32 institutions, 13,000+ students

Programs

- IUPUI meeting on Civic Engagement
105 participants
- “Inside The Times”
270 participants, 2 years
- Civic Engagement in Action Series launched
- Two monographs published, two forthcoming

Hundreds of Campus Projects

- ✓ Campus audits
- ✓ Campus conversations
- ✓ Voter education/registration projects
- ✓ Curriculum revision projects
- ✓ Library projects
- ✓ First year projects, capstone courses
- ✓ Fine arts projects, graduation pledges
- ✓ Speaker series, democracy day
- ✓ Recognition and award programs

**A recent Google search = 26,000 entries for term
“American Democracy Project”**

Civic Engagement in Action Series

Stewardship of Public Lands

Exploration of controversies about the use of public lands in Yellowstone Ecosystems; 100 participants over 5 yrs representing 54 campuses

7 Revolutions

7 major sets of issues that will reshape the world by 2025; 9 campuses

Political Engagement Project

Comprehensive effort to incorporate the pedagogy of political engagement broadly across an institution, 8 campuses

Deliberative Polling

Use of deliberative polling to encourage discussion and policy formation; 29 campuses

Civic Engagement in Action Series

America's Future

Stimulating a public policy debate about America's national debt and deficit;

9 campuses



eCitizenship

How can the new social networking tools (Facebook, blogs, wikis, etc.) be used to foster greater engagement?

34 campuses

Civic Agency

How can we create undergraduates with a sense of efficacy?

21 campuses



Stewardship of Public Lands

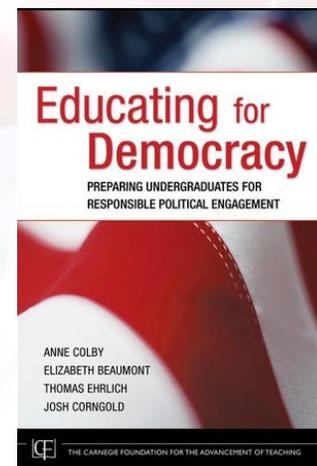
- **Exploration of controversies about the public lands in the Yellowstone Ecosystem**
- **Partnership with the Yellowstone Association**
- **Week-long seminar in Yellowstone.**
- **100+ participants, 54 campuses, over 5 yrs**



msell

Political Engagement Project

- **Comprehensive effort to incorporate political engagement broadly across an entire institution**
- **Partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Tom Ehrlich)**
- **8 campuses participating**
- **Monograph forthcoming**



Deliberative Polling

- **Use of deliberative polling to encourage discussion and policy formation**
- **Partnership with the Center for Deliberative Democracy (Jim Fishkin)**
- **29 campuses over two years – Institutes convened at Stanford University, September 2007 and 2008**



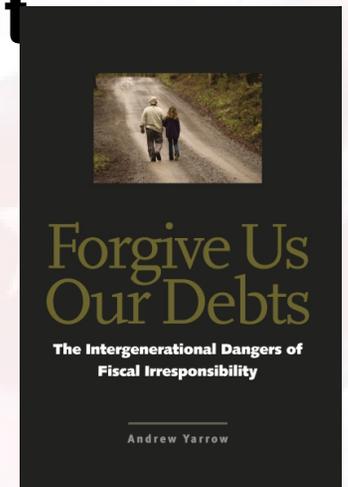
7 Revolutions

- **Creating globally competent citizens by converting policy materials to teaching programs**
- **Partnership with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)**
- **9 campuses participating**
- **Toolkit for Educating Globally Competent Citizens produced; two institutes held**



America's Future

- Engaging undergraduates in study about and a public policy debate about America's debt and deficit
- Partnership with Public Agenda
- 9 campuses, initial conference held in September 2008
- 5 debt awareness on-campus debt weeks



Civic Agency

- **Creating programs that develop a sense of political and civic efficacy**
- **A partnership with the Center for Democracy and Citizenship (Harry Boyte)**
- **21 campuses, 2nd annual conference held on November 5 - 6, 2009**



eCitizenship

- **Focus on how technology, especially new social networking tools, are changing political and civic engagement**
- **A partnership with Wayne State University – Center for the Study of Citizenship**
- **34 campuses, first conference held November 12-13, 2009**



facebook

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Our current partners

- 1. Center for Democracy and Citizenship**
- 2. Public Agenda**
- 3. Yellowstone Association**
- 4. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching**
- 5. Center for Deliberative Democracy**
- 6. Center for the Study of Citizenship**
- 7. Center for Strategic and International Studies**

A Conceptual Model for Civic Engagement for Students

- **Knowledge**

History of the U.S., Concepts of Democracy, etc.

- **Skills**

Articulating a position, working with others, listening, compromising, etc.

- **Experiences**

Service learning, volunteering, campus organizations, etc.

- **Reflection**

Considering what you have learned, building new concepts, etc.

Knowledge: history/government, understanding of democracy, contemporary events, etc.



Examples: facilitating reading of newspapers, blogs, etc.; listening to political debates; general education courses in history/poli sci; capstone courses, etc.

Signature Pedagogies: Times Talk, Thoughts on Democracy



Skills: Expressing a position orally and in written, working with others who are different, listening to those with whom you disagree, organizing to accomplish a goal, social net-working skills for civic engagement

Examples: Writing courses; experiences with people who are different; etc.

**Signature pedagogies:
Café Demos, IUPUI's
Democracy Plaza**



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Experiences: Engage with others, practice civic skills, develop deeper understandings of political and civic processes, etc.

Examples: Civic service learning; internships; volunteer experiences; overseas travel; individually created projects, capstone courses, etc.

Signature pedagogies:
Deliberative Polling,
Deliberative Dialogue,
Naturalization Ceremonies



Reflections: Opportunities to reflect on the civic dimensions of experiences.

Examples: Writing assignment at end of a service learning course, internship; meeting with a professor at the end of an specific activity to discuss the civic aspects of the experience, etc.

**Signature pedagogies:
Dialogue and discussion-based classrooms**



What Can Faculty Do?

1. **Consider the public policy dimensions of Communications. Introduce public policy/contemporary issues in all classes.**

The more courses a student takes in science or engineering, the less they participate politically.

The more courses a student takes in business, the less they engage in community service, vote, or try to influence the political process.

Derek Bok. *Our Underachieving Colleges*, 2006

**Become more knowledgeable about the
connections between
Communications and democracy (hooray for
this conference!)**

**For example, I recently read one of the
Brigance Lectures from Wabash College**

***“Citizens Speaking: Rhetorical Education and Civic
Engagement”***

***Denise M Bostdorff
February 2009***

The Brigance Colloquy on Public Speaking as a Liberal Art

In a thoughtful but hopeful paper, she argues that:

Public speaking has been de-coupled from democracy

Now it's just a skill needed for personal or business success

But Communications professionals can re-claim the historic role of Communications as a vital force for the preservation of our democracy

2. Treat the classroom as a public space.

- **Honor diversity, encourage critical thinking**
- **Discussion-based and deliberative, collaborative**
- **Treat students as active *and vital***
- **Incorporate outside voices and viewpoints**
- **Respectful and inclusive**
- **Provide opportunities for people to form and promote their own decisions / opinions**

Cynthia Gibson. Citizens at the Center: A New Approach to Civic Engagement. CASE Foundation. 2006

3. Be Intentional.

Make the curriculum (of your major, program, college, and institution) intentional about preparing informed, engaged citizens for our democracy.

.... in general education

.... in electives

.... In courses in the major

Ask tacky questions about student outcomes

**For you as Communications professionals,
where in the curriculum might you make a
difference?**

- **Comm 101? In its design,
focus, or purpose?**
- **Communications Across the
Curriculum?**
- **In the Major?**
- **Elsewhere?**

4. Practice a Pedagogy of Engagement.

- **Extensive student discussion and reflection**
- **Interactions with political / community leaders or activists**
- **Politically-related internships**
- **Variations in academic content, learning activities, size, duration, level of intensity, institutional context, student population**

Elizabeth Beaumont and Richard Battistoni. “Beyond Civics 101.” Journal of Political Science Education Vol II, No. 3. 2006.

5. Consider the Campus as Community.

Think of the campus as the first community for students to learn about and practice their civic skills...tolerance, diversity, freedom of expression, engagement, values

Participation in democratically run student organizations...is a more powerful predictor of future political participation than taking courses in American politics or political science.

Derek Bok. Our Underachieving Colleges, 2006

At Colgate, Adam Weinberg observed...

In Student Life:

Meetings poorly organized...

Residence hall staff “fixed” problems...

Organizations reinforced separateness...

Rather than becoming places to meet different students, student organizations became mechanisms for creating comfort zones of sameness.

**Adam Weinberg. Residential Education for Democracy.
ADP 2004**

The background of the slide is a stylized, semi-transparent American flag with stars and stripes. The text is overlaid on this background.

6. Create Campus Public Spaces and Public Dialogues

Times Talks

Café Demos

Speaker Series

Democracy Plaza

Create models, examples, and opportunities to develop “habits of democracy.”

7. Engage Students in the Community Beyond the Campus.

Service-learning projects

Internships

Clinical experiences

Volunteer opportunities

Students who spend time volunteering during college become more convinced that individuals can change society, feel more committed to effecting social change, and develop stronger leadership skills.

Derek Bok. Our Underachieving Colleges, 2006

8. Measure civic engagement outcomes.

What are the metrics you would use to assess civic engagement in undergraduates?

At least three sets of measures:

- 1. Knowledge and understanding**
- 2. Activities and behaviors**
- 3. Attitudes and perceptions**

Types of measures:

- 1. National and local tests**
- 2. Self report data on behaviors**
- 3. Political efficacy scales**
- 4. Other tools**

9. Help Shape Institutional Intentionality.

- **Leadership: at many different levels**
- **Culture: widely-shared beliefs**
- **Mission statement; purpose statements**
- **Promotional materials**
- **Accreditation**
- **Policies**
- **Administrative structures**
- **Budget**
- **Rewards and recognition**

How Can Universities Produce Informed, Engaged Citizens?

- a. Be Intentional
- b. Create Civic Spaces on Campus
- c. Go To Where the Students Are
- d. Use Multiple Frames
- e. Connect Disciplines and Civic Life
- f. Go Local
- g. Emphasize Solidarity
- h. Begin the Civic Work in the First Year
- i. Create Opportunities for Integration
- j. Recognize and Reward
- k. Measure Outcomes

<http://americandemocracyproject.pbwiki.com/>

Professor William Norwood Brigance

Speech: Its Techniques and Disciplines in a Free Society. Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1952.

Students must learn to speak...

“To keep a society free. To settle differences by talk instead of force. To alter and promote thoughts.”

As Ben Franklin left a session of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, a woman stopped him on the street.

“Dr. Franklin” she said. “What sort of government have you created for us?”

His answer: *“A republic, madam, if you can keep it.”*



A row of seven diverse graduates in black caps and gowns, looking forward. The graduates include a woman of Asian descent, a man of African descent with glasses, a woman of European descent with glasses, a woman of African descent, a woman of European descent, a man of Latin American descent, and a man of European descent with curly hair.

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