

8-5-2015

## Enhancing the Civic Value of a College Degree: Thoughts on Deepening Practices in Community Engagement

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### Recommended Citation

Battistoni, Rick, "Enhancing the Civic Value of a College Degree: Thoughts on Deepening Practices in Community Engagement" (2015). *Maine's Metropolitan University*. 23.  
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# ENHANCING THE CIVIC VALUE OF A COLLEGE DEGREE

Thoughts on Deepening  
Practices in Community Engagement


# Civic Engagement “Story”

- Maine Campus Compact—and national—history → 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary next yr.
- Community service → service learning → civic engagement + great expansion and reach → campus/community partnerships
- National calls at turn of the century for increased attention to civic education and engagement
- Responses from higher education
- Frustrations and promising practices moving forward

# Why Civic Engagement?


**Sense of “Moral  
Panic” over  
youth civic  
disengagement**






**“In everything I have to do in a school day, the last thing I’m going to care about is politics. That’s just the way I am. I mean, I’d rather go and help a kid read than see what’s going on.”**

--College Student, quoted in Millennials Talk Politics (2007)



**“Doing service as a college student was such a meaningful experience for me. I hope that my children have the opportunity to work in homeless shelters.”**

College senior, quoted in Bernadette Chi, “What is Wrong with This Picture?” (1993)



**“Communities have problems;  
Universities have departments”**

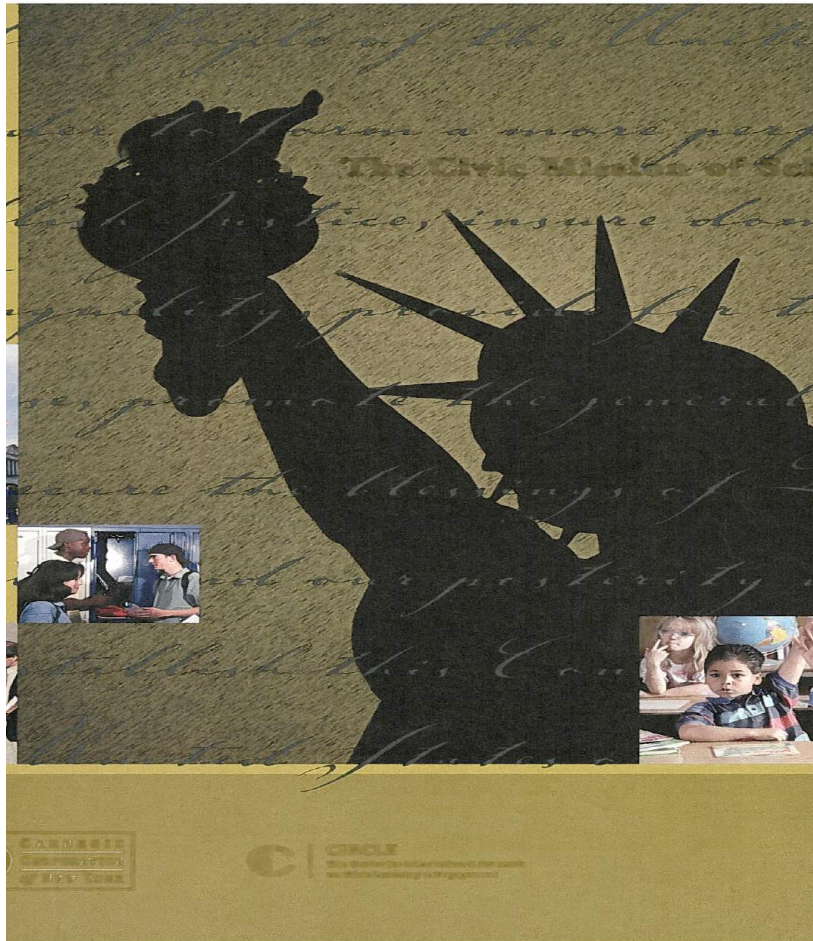
--Derek Bok, *Universities in the Marketplace*, 2003

# President's Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education (1999)

- “[We] commit ourselves...to renew our role as agents of our democracy, [to] catalyze and lead a national movement to reinvigorate the public purposes and civic mission of higher education”
- “[T]his service is not leading students to embrace the duties of active citizenship and civic participation.”



# The Civic Mission of Schools (2003)



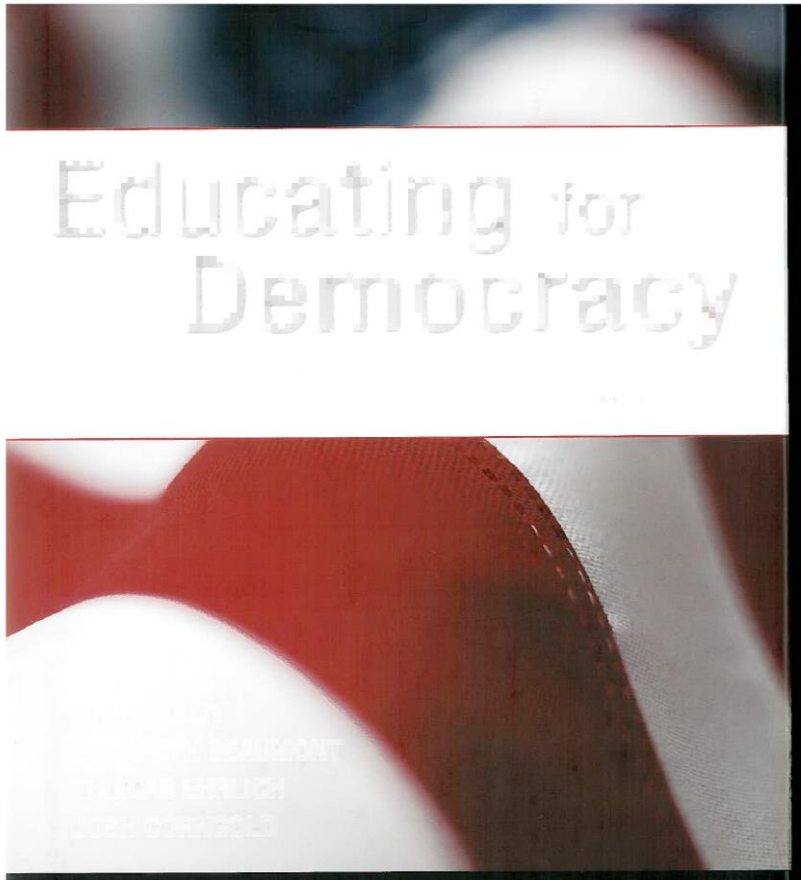
- Young Americans not prepared to participate fully in our democracy
- Strategies and recommendations for strengthening civic education, particularly K-12

# Millennials Talk Politics, 2007



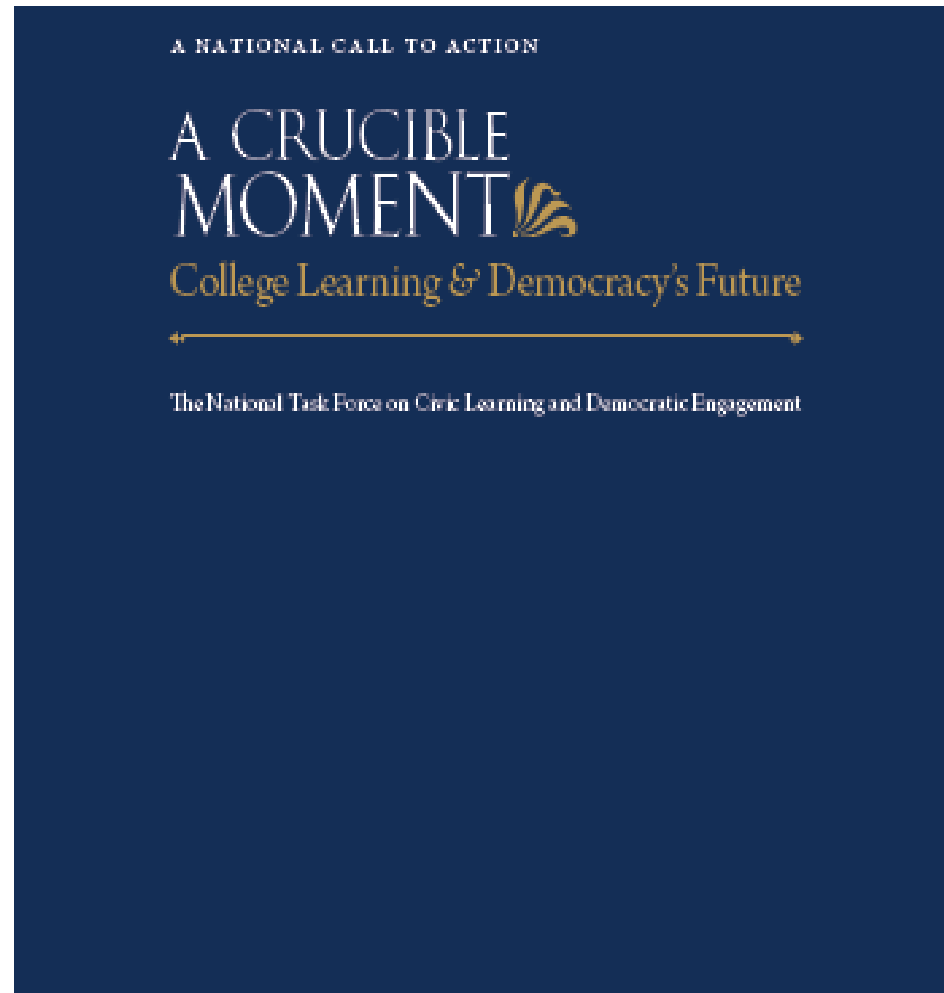
- M's involved locally with others but ambivalent about politics
- Universities providing very unequal levels of opportunity for civic participation and learning

# Carnegie Foundation's Educating for Democracy, 2007 (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, Corngold)



- Inattention to explicitly *political* engagement outcomes
- 21 PEP courses and outcomes studied
- Findings about teaching strategies that foster political development in students

# Education for Democratic Citizenship: A National Call to Action—*A Crucible Moment* (2012)



## *A Crucible Moment: “Stalled Movement” for Civic Engagement in Higher Education*

- “the epistemology of the academy runs counter to the civic engagement agenda”
- “sense of drift and stalled momentum”
- “imprecise and even conflicting language”
- “highly fragmented and compartmentalized” set of networks
- a “remarkably apolitical” civic agenda
- Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Civic Learning

# Back to Campus Compact “Story”

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Community Service →

Service learning (institutionalization) →

Civic (political) Engagement →

Community Engagement (partnerships)

# Do Names, Language Matter?

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- “Service”
- “Engagement”
- “Partner-ship”

# Disappointment with the Field: A mile wide and an inch deep

- **The Problem of Time:** Most higher education “interventions” are one-course, one-semester
- **The Problem of [Democratic] Values:** Most programs are “thin” in their conceptual notions of civic engagement and democracy
- **The Problem of Accountability:** Inadequate attention to what graduates should think & be prepared to do concerning civic action/identity



# Addressing Problems

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□ **The Problem of Time →**

**Sustained, Developmental Programs**

□ **The Problem of [Democratic] Values →**

**Concise Articulation of Core Outcomes**

**(critical reflection, voice, partnerships)**

□ **The Problem of Accountability →**

**Longitudinal studies of alumni/ae, community impact**

# Best Practices in Civic Engagement: Beyond “One and Done” Initiatives

- Sustained, Developmental, Cohort-based Curricular Programs
- “Engaged Departments”
- Student Voice and Leadership: Students as Colleagues

# Sustained, Developmental Civic Engagement Programs

- Public and Community Service Studies major and minor at Providence College
- Other examples (Mitchell, et al., 2011)
- Critical Reflective Practice central to all
  
- Problems: depth, but not breadth; not accessible to many students; market-driven barriers to success, expansion

# The “Engaged Department”

- Connects civic identity to disciplinary or pre-professional identity in a program
- Integration of civic themes, skills, values over time
- Links individual work of faculty to collective work of department
- Problems: fairly thin civic connections or integration developmentally throughout dept. curriculum; critical reflection on civic elements often missing

# Student Voice: Students as Colleagues

- Civic identity and action connected to everyday life on campus, in classroom
- Breadth and Depth: can work across campus, connect to curricular/co-curricular leadership development
- Consistent with history of community engagement movement in higher education (catalyzed by students)
- Problems: curricular connections often weak; resistance; institutionalization puts a “pin on the butterfly”

# Addressing Problems

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## Articulating Civic Learning Outcomes

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**What do we mean by  
"Civic Engagement?"**

**How do (have we) in  
higher education define  
civic engagement?**

# “A Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Civic Learning & Democratic Engagement” (Crucible Moment)

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Values
- Collective Action





# Civic Identity

Civic Identity is

- 1) commitment to “community work”
- 2) an act of “cognitive complexity” requiring more developed thinking
- 3) “a holistic practice which integrates critical thinking and the capacity for empathy,” and
- 4) “a deliberately chosen and repeatedly enacted aspect of the self”
- 5) the key link of **MOTIVATION**, between knowledge, skills, values, and **ACTION**

Source: Knefelkamp (2008)

# Political Identity

- A “sense of oneself as a politically engaged and socially concerned person,” one who “has an overarching commitment to political participation”
- “Values, ideals, and commitments that relate to democratic participation are central to one’s self”
- Political identity “is a key mediator between an individual’s civic or political values and their behavior” (Colby, et al., 2007: 141-142)

# Civic Action/“Active Citizenship” (UK)

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## “Active Citizenship” (UK):

- **Awareness** of public issues
- **Desire** to address issues
- **Ability** to make judgments & decisions
- **Taking** peaceful direct public **action**
- **Combining with others** to address issues
- **Reflecting** upon actions and decisions

# Partnership Rubric (from RICC PFS)

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- Collaborative Relationships
- Mutually Beneficial Outcomes
- Communication & Learning
- Responsiveness to Community Needs
- Improvement of Partnership Practice

# Addressing Problems

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# References

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- UK national curriculum in Active Citizenship: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship>

Thank You!

**Questions?**  
**Comments?**