

CIVIC LEARNING AND EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY

NATIONAL AND GLOBAL

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Rationale for Liberal Learning and Civic Engagement

From the outset, Jesuit universities have sought to produce graduates who are “fully humanized,” connected to communities, and devoted to the common good. More recently, Jesuits have set forth the standard of educating students of solidarity for the world. Solidarity is learned through contact, especially with the disadvantaged and the oppressed. As it looks to the future, Santa Clara is asking the question: How can we thoroughly infuse pedagogy of engagement into our core curriculum and residential learning communities so that students can truly integrate theoretical reflection and sustained experience of direct contact with the community?

Part of Santa Clara University’s mission is to provide students with what they need to become effective and ethical leaders and citizens. Current thinking in higher education refers to this important mission as education for civic engagement. This term is used, for example, by the American Association of Colleges and Universities/National Science Foundation’s SENCER Program (Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities), the American Association for Higher Education, Campus Compact (a coalition of college presidents), and several disciplinary associations, such as the American Political Science Association.

Why “civic”? Civil society is a prerequisite for democracy. Citizens need to feel connected to people, institutions and issues beyond their immediate self-interest, families, neighbors and friends. The word “civil” has its origins in cities, where people have to learn how to get along with strangers to conduct trade, discuss differences, and arrive at laws for the common good. Law provides the fundamental structure and language of civic engagement. The ideal is civic discourse, where people listen and compromise in the face of inevitable differences of knowledge and values. Why “engagement”? In a democracy, citizens need to be engaged in larger purposes that run the gamut from reading or participating in civil conversations to learn more about others’ values and opinions, to joining organizations, to voting, to serving as community leaders or in public office. Civic engagement is an antidote to the civic disengagement documented in Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone*. Furthermore, the Jesuit ideal of social justice cannot be pursued without active engagement and hands-on efforts to effect change within institutions and societies.

In an increasingly interdependent world, citizens need to consider universal rights and responsibilities that extend beyond the borders of their nations; this is especially so for American citizens, whose choices will have a disproportionate impact on the world’s politics, economy, and environment. On international tests of student achievement, U.S. students rank near the bottom of all nations in their knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of a citizen. All universities, especially Catholic Jesuit ones, are well positioned to educate for civic engagement from the local to the global levels.

Civic Engagement Goal

Santa Clara graduates will demonstrate the motivation, knowledge, and skills for effective and ethical civic engagement. The University will employ both curricular and extra-curricular means to reach this goal.

I. A Curriculum for Civic Engagement – Develop Designated Courses in Civic Engagement that Meets Five Criteria:

1. **College Level Concepts:** These courses go beyond high school civics injunctions to be good citizens and vote. They include more sophisticated, college-level concepts that citizens will encounter when they read editorial pages, ballot propositions, and policy working papers.
2. **Experience of Deliberation and Dialogue:** Since citizens need to learn to engage people with different points of view, these courses give students practice in participating in reasoned discussion of alternative viewpoints on important topics, and the art of searching for a common good between conflicting views.
3. **Active Learning Components:** Many young adults are just entering the world of civic rights and responsibilities. Research shows that they learn by doing. They find their democratic voices in classroom discussions, simulations, debates, discussions with practitioners from the “outside world,” internships, community-based learning placements with local organizations or government agencies, mentoring from community leaders, and making direct contributions to public life (organizing events, submitting research and comments to the media or government agencies, and so on). The Arrupe Center could work with professors to devise placements that would enable students to engage with a given population facing a given issue over time (for example, PICO, PACT [People Acting in Community Together], PIA [Peninsula Interfaith Action], Silicon Valley Economic Development, and the Mayfair Initiative). Businesses could sponsor pro bono work by students (for example, an accounting firm could sponsor tax help for the poor by accounting majors). International Programs could expand offerings with community based learning components (for example, in San Salvador and London).
4. **An Issue-Based Pedagogy:** Most existing courses illustrate the discipline with important issues; courses in civic engagement use important issues to motivate students to learn more about disciplinary concepts.
5. **Ethical Engagement:** It is not enough for citizens to be engaged; at a Jesuit institution they have to be able to define a code of ethics for their own participation in public life. Students need to become familiar with ethical codes developed by relevant institutions, learn to apply these codes, and critically evaluate their adequacy for advancing the public good.

Five Possible Curricular Models for Courses in Civic Engagement

Model One: A few general courses in civic engagement, with one or more required. Examples, with illustrations of the five criteria, could be:

- *Economics for Civic Engagement:* College-level concepts (tariffs, protectionism and economic development) Alternative Viewpoints (government regulations and free markets, communism and other historical and international economic models) Active Learning Component (project on fiscal consequences of ballot propositions) Issue-Based Pedagogy (balancing the federal budget) Ethics (zoning for polluting industries in low income neighborhoods, positive and negative externalities, allocation of scarce resources, implications of different tax structures)
- *Politics for Civic Engagement:* College-level concepts (benefit cost analysis in public policies) Alternative Viewpoints (Republican, Democratic, Libertarian and Green parties, comparative political systems, international institutions like the United Nations) Active Learning Component (simulation of Middle East politics, public service learning through Arrupe placements or internships) Issue-Based Pedagogy (U.S. anti-terrorism policy) Ethics (campaign finance reform, ethical dilemmas faced by political officeholders, public safety vs. civil liberties)
- *Science for Civic Engagement:* College-level concepts (uses of nanotechnology) Alternative Viewpoints (purposes of space exploration, debate over stem cell research) Active Learning Component (testing for pollution in local beaches) Issue-Based Pedagogy (global warming policies) Ethics (DNA and capital punishment, ethics of clinical trials and medical testing and experimentation)
- *Communication for Civic Engagement:* College-level concepts (persuasion theory) Alternative Viewpoints (media ownership, bias and regulation, multicultural styles of communication) Active Learning Component (simulated discussion between environmentalists and business owners, writing and submitting letters to the editors of newspapers or magazines) Issue-Based Pedagogy (political uses of the Internet, first amendment rights and the Internet) Ethics (pack journalism)

Model Two: Many such courses in several departments, with one or more required. These courses would have to meet the same five criteria.

Model Three: Some combination of Models One and Two. Perhaps requiring departments to ensure that their sequence of required courses, as a whole, introduce and reinforce these issue areas.

Model Four: At least one required course in every major meets the five criteria, to allow students to see how civic engagement is necessitated by the topic of their chosen major and career.

Model Five: Each department brings together already existing student experiences of the five elements with those that it does not yet offer in the major.

The above examples illustrate the high probability that these courses will touch on the themes of globalism, the environment and ecological sustainability, ethics/justice, and diversity/cultural competence/understanding.

II. Co-Curricular Education for Civic Engagement

- Develop civic engagement programs in the Residential Learning Communities.
- Encourage student participation in the Center for Student Leadership and the Center for Social Justice and Public Service (School of Law).
- Establish an Institute for Civic Education for both students and K-12 teachers. Conduct workshops and special events, and disseminate material to facilitate the teaching of civic education in schools.
- Encourage student participation in the Washington Semester Program and the Panetta Institute.

APPENDIX

Where the University is Now with Respect to Civic Learning and Educating for Democracy

I. Curricular Education for Civic Engagement

The School of Law and many undergraduate majors currently provide an excellent background for the education for civic engagement, especially political science and sociology. However, in every discipline, “learning the discipline” trumps “learning the discipline for purposes of civic education.” Courses are offered to cover the discipline. The reward structure for faculty in the academy is strictly along disciplinary lines. Unless faculty members are recognized as successful scholars or artists in their fields, they will not receive tenure.

The Core curriculum has two requirements whose learning outcomes are similar to those suggested in this document:

- 1) United States Requirement: “Students should attain a level of critical and informed familiarity with American civilization that enables them to function responsibly as informed citizens of the United States.”
- 2) World Cultures Requirement: “Students should attain a level of critical and informed familiarity with a non-European civilization so that they can function responsibly as informed citizens with an international perspective.”

These courses do not contain the additional learning outcomes suggested here: the experience of deliberation and dialogue, active learning components, an issues-based pedagogy, and ethical engagement.

The Department of Political Science has a Public Sector Program to prepare students for careers in the public sector.

II. Co-Curricular Education for Civic Engagement

About twenty students a year participate in the Washington Semester Program, and one is chosen to go to Washington through the Panetta Institute. Many students are involved in Arrupe Center placements, immersion trips, and study abroad.

Reflectors

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