Faculty Introduction to Civic Engagement at CSU, Chico:

Enriching Education, Inspiring Public Action
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Chico State Values...

Civic Engagement
A Note from the Director

The first week of spring semester 2015 found me far from the tree lined campus of CSU, Chico, but rather in the heart of all that is civic, in our nation’s capital. I was fortunate to be among a group of faculty and administrators from CSU, Chico who were invited to the annual (in this case Centennial celebration) meeting of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The AAC&U has been a defining force in the movement to include civic engagement as an integral part of higher education, and the gathering offered a chance to meet and speak with a network of influential thinkers. The meeting theme was *Liberal Education, Global Flourishing, and the Equity Imperative.*

As I walked the national mall, the epic nature of civic engagement became more evident. At the heart of a democracy is its citizens, and in every university across the nation emerging students are enrolling and beginning their civic journey with a college education. After attending many sessions and workshops and in conversation with educators from across the nation, I found myself reflecting deeply on the academic and civic missions of public higher education. As director of the office charged with implementing these big ideas at CSU, Chico, it seems the path forward often has more questions than easy answers. What does it mean to provide students with a comprehensive, rigorous and equitable academic opportunity? How do we connect this academic experience with the broader communities where we live, work, and play? How do we tie our academic mission to one that it is civic in nature and also provides clear, reflective opportunities for all of us (students, staff, faculty, and community) to work collaboratively to build our future?

I was inspired by the nature of the conference, as speaker after speaker called for a global and interdisciplinary awareness to pervade our institutions. Presenters gave eloquent examples of scaffolded approaches to student work that infuse a public dimension to coursework and provides rich opportunities for students to reflect and draw connections between their academic work and experiences as they build their identities. Speakers outlined the promise of technology to support faculty and students in their civic work and strengthened my vision for an integrated system that links the University to its community through streamlined communication and collaboration.

Back in Chico, I look forward to unpacking these ideas as I continue to partner with faculty, staff, students and community to consider civic and community engagement on our campus. I know that civic learning is worth our effort, and I have confidence in this community, in the staff, students and faculty of CSU, Chico to take the steps we must to enrich higher education and inspire citizenship.

Have a great semester!

Ellie Clifford Ertle
Overview of Civic Engagement

Mission Statement
The Office of Civic Engagement promotes, strengthens, sustains, and recognizes civic engagement initiatives that are consistent with the strategic priorities of CSU, Chico, based on respectful partnerships with the broader community, and aimed at developing socially and environmentally responsible students, faculty, and staff.

Create the space and allow collaboration to design the purpose.
Faculty members are responsible for opening the classroom to public issues, but it falls on students and the community to create their plans of action. In this way, effective civic engagement involves three basic groups: Faculty and Staff, Students, and the Community. These groups are essential to shaping Civic Engagement that supports a long trajectory of cooperation to meet the needs of our community, to enhance the civic identity and academic performance of students, and yet also fulfill faculty responsibilities. These responsibilities are numerous, and undoubtedly difficult to always reconcile with one another – a fact that is not lost on the OCE and our mission to expand the civic agency of CSU, Chico students.

This is not a simple task, but investing the time and effort into civic engagement and community experience is integral to the civic mission of the University and beyond. The OCE stands ready to collaborate and support your work as you infuse courses at CSU, Chico with civic spirit. Fostering skills, enhancing academic engagement, supporting the development of civic agency, and the initiative to address public problems is our goal. Success has the potential to improve the way our institution performs as a pillar of collaboration and a source of knowledge that benefits the community and empowers our students.

As faculty members you have the integral role of designing and implementing civic engagement in student coursework. And you are not alone. Your desire to integrate civic engagement is echoed throughout the University and multiple convocation speeches, and most especially the OCE. We are here to make your efforts fruitful and meaningful; with our processes and outcomes evolving and improving as new faculty embrace and perpetuate the civic movement.

In the end, higher education should be devoted not just to the spread of knowledge but to the pursuit of virtuous action. It should have an impact on how students make the important choices that shape their lives.
- Thomas Ehrlich, Civic and Moral Learning
Conceptualizing Civic Engagement

The following readings are intended to give a conceptual foundation, and explain the University’s mission to support the integration of civic engagement within all academic disciplines. Essentially these readings underlie both the point and the prospect of civic engagement, and to offer a broad base for how you may envision integration into your courses. These readings are helpful precursors to the type of work that will be done in the Civic Learning Institute (CLI), and ideally in the integration of civic work through the Faculty Learning Community (FLC). More readings and a list of multi-media resources are offered in the appendix of this packet.

“The concept of civic agency highlights the broader set of capacities and skills required to take confident, skillful, imaginative, collective action in fluid and open environments where there is no script.”

- Harry C. Boyte

Edward Zlotkowski and Dilafruz Williams, AACU: The Faculty Role in Civic Engagement:

**Analysis**

The Faculty Role in Civic Engagement

**Synopsis:**

Faculty members in higher education are in need of a more dynamic approach when considering the way in which they prepare students for their professional and political careers. In this way, the typical co-curricular way that civic interaction is implemented is lacking, and thus the institutional declaration of civic mindedness must become central to curriculum via faculty discussion and curricular integration. Moreover, institutions must also take steps to align rewards and promotional criteria with their civic missions.
Harry C. Boyte: Against the Current: Developing the Civic Agency of Students:

Synopsis:

Boyte is one of several scholars who has been a motivating and defining force in how we conceptualize civic engagement within institutions, specifically universities and higher education. This article in Change articulates the large concept of civic engagement and more specifically how effective engagement is a learning process by which we develop civic agency in an increasingly technocratic world.

Highlights from A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future:

Synopsis 2:

A Crucible Moment identifies the fundamentals of civic engagement, and some significant indications of its importance. This excerpt details the purpose and the problem we face. Included is a helpful table that delineates the difference between civic engagement as a project, and civic engagement as a pervasive, consistent theme in higher education.
Video Supplement:

*Harry C. Boyte* explains his vision of civic agency for the Society for International Development:
- Pushing back against the idea of technocratic rule, Boyte explains the international implications of a civic movement that is analogous to civil rights movements. ~4 min.

*Ben Warner* gives a broad explanation of what Civic Engagement means at TEDx:
- Warner identifies the policy implications when only government and corporate organizations are active in determining community concerns and direction. Entire video is ~15 minutes.

*Peter Levine* on ‘What do College Students Gain from Civic Engagement?’ (Part 1/6):
- Start at 12:00. For Levine’s complete speech, he continues in parts 2 – 4, with a Q & A in parts 5 and 6. Each video ranges 9 to 14 minutes. (Use THIS LINK to access all videos)
Events

Through the application of knowledge and an opportunity to take ownership of large public issues, students become actors in civic engagement. More importantly, through exhibition of informed ideas and opinions, students develop civic agency when they discuss and explain their work in the public sphere. To this end, we are the primary host of two events and a Faculty Learning Community dedicated to civic engagement. The OCE peripherally supports and collaborates with First Year Experience (FYE), Community Action Volunteers in Education (CAVE), and multiple AS programs and academic departments that offer civic-minded projects and coursework. The Town Hall Meeting, the Great Debate, and the Sense of Place Exhibit, are also venues in which students interact with large social issues in the public sphere.

Civic Learning Institute (CLI):

Working through the broad implications and applications of civic engagement, the CLI is a place where faculty can find ways to make civic engagement a natural part of their courses. By working with colleagues and discussing the point and the process of civic engagement as a curricular concept, faculty is well positioned to move forward and consider how to weave civic engagement within their courses. Discovering the multiple approaches that disciplines can take in addressing a single issue can help to clarify the practical application of civic engagement and provide a path toward implementation through the FLC.

Faculty Learning Communities (FLC):

Collaborating with other faculty members who are implementing civically minded coursework, the FLC provides support for the integration of civic engagement into academic coursework. The OCE funds this specialized group to support and guide the integration and implementation of civic engagement in faculty curriculum. Working with others on similarly structured projects and courses ensures that you don’t have to start from scratch – your colleagues are already cooking.

Civic Engagement Forum (CEF):

Developed at the request of a group of faculty in fall 2013, the Civic Engagement Forum is a way to highlight students’ work in grappling with community issues and offer a place for feedback from the community. As civic engagement projects grow, we envision the CEF as a marketplace of ideas for the entire community. Your choice to participate is truly valued, and we are open and encouraging of new ways to display the work, and to include the community in discussing how the student’s work could be realized.
Services

The OCE offers program development and consultation, acts as a community liaison, and can provide some marketing resources. We are here to offer support, guidance, and idea generation. We can direct you to the appropriate department for questions about risk management, or in finding community partners to address specific issues you are interested in. In almost any case we will do whatever we can to support, expand, or refine your vision.

Program Development

The CLI is a great first step to implementing civic engagement in your courses, and the Faculty Learning Community for civic engagement will give you specific steps for both implementation and evaluation. As you move into the semester following these trainings, the OCE can continue to support your efforts by working with you to develop your goals, metrics, and partnerships. We can also provide third-party evaluation of student’s perceptions of the work, and take steps to evaluate and understand the needs of your community partners.

Community Liaison

The OCE and its partners have a host of community partners who have previously participated in events such as the Town Hall Meeting, and we will do our best to connect you to an individual or organization in the community who is currently involved with an issue you find to be of civic importance. Most issues in the community can be approached from a variety of angles, and through multiple disciplines. We are happy to help you to find a strong, mutually beneficial partnership.

Marketing

The OCE can help you to promote an event through our Facebook, campus announcements, our website, media contacts, or helping you to get a space tabling on campus. Supporting the outreach component of a civic project is a primary way to recognizing the students’ work and in supporting a diversity of civic partnerships that are mutually beneficial to both community and university.

*Help the OCE showcase civic engagement at Chico State*

OCE is here to support any civic work you wish to engage in. In order to elevate the visibility of civic engagement work, we ask that you help us by working to chronicle the experience in videos, testimonials, and pictures. Projects that have been submitted will be compiled into a newsletter to help illustrate the breadth and impact of civic work, and to give you and your students recognition for the challenging but fruitful work.

* If your project is in need of audio-visual support to ensure a quality product, please email the OCE ahead of time!
Useful Definitions of Civic Engagement

Types of Civic engagement:

AAC&U: “Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation.” Creative Representation, as a fourth category is an effort to appreciate artistic forms of civic engagement.

These definitions are not mutually exclusive, and a mixture of the different approaches to civic engagement may be the only way to accomplish advanced criteria (as defined by AAC&U’s value rubric). In evaluating how best to utilize your academic skills set, it may be helpful to conceive of projects as necessarily multidisciplinary, a process supported through the OCE’s Faculty Learning Community.

*Keep in mind: Projects should be student driven. Meaning that students will collaborate to identify project goals, and ultimately determine the course of action to be taken. Civic agency arises when students have the opportunity to exercise their civic identities with the support and guidance of faculty, staff and community members.

1. Organizational Involvement
   i. Community organizations can offer a way to ‘try out’ civic engagement. To support an existing organization, civic engagement means getting involved, understanding their mission as it relates to your interests or academic discipline, and working with others to accomplish established goals. Other methods could include identifying limitations and applying social and knowledge resources to address those limitations, or working to provide possible alternatives.

2. Individual Volunteerism
   i. Hands on application of time and skills in the community itself. Taking action in community locations where there is an identified need, and working to include and utilize public resources in the process. This approach to civic engagement is especially helpful when students and community members take action together.

3. Electoral participation
   i. Advocacy to strengthen the democratic process by clarifying issues, explicating the implications and consequences (biological/ecologic/economic/social) of certain policies or to offer alternatives to current policy, or simply working to register voters and promote electoral participation locally, statewide and nationally.

4. Creative Representation
   i. The performance, illustration, or representation of public issues through an artistic lens, as well as the (sanctioned) improvement or beautification of a public space. This can be in the community, or simply an artistic rendering of public/social issues. Civic art can have political advocacy components or volunteerism through action, but the artistic perspective offers a unique approach to issues that otherwise seem very bureaucratic or scientific. In this way, Creative Representation can fall within more than one of the above criteria.
Ways of Doing Civic Engagement:

AAC&U: “For students this could include community-based learning through service-learning classes, community-based research, or service within the community.”

1. Service-learning classes
   - Service learning is “A teaching method that promotes student learning through active participation in meaningful and planned service experiences in the community that are directly related to course content. Through reflective activities, students enhance their understanding of course content, general knowledge, sense of civic responsibility, self-awareness and commitment to the community” (Best Practices, CSU).
   - “An academic course (in any discipline) that provides students opportunities to participate in organized service activities that meet community needs while providing experiences directly related to course content. This makes service learning a very different experience than community service” (Best Practices, CSU).
   - An established high-impact practice, the integration of civic engagement through service learning enables students to apply their knowledge of a given subject to applicable areas in the community, and thus begin to see how they can be effective agents in their communities.

2. Community-based research
   - Working to understand local issues and how they affect the community through deliberate research is a great start to developing useful, local knowledge. Organizational needs assessments, ecological impact evaluations, economic analyses of proposed policies, or an evaluation of big issues like Net Neutrality or Fracking are all extremely powerful ways to apply knowledge to issues in the surrounding community – local, state and national.
   - Applying university knowledge resources to create a detailed analysis of a subject can be of immense help when educating the public, or supporting an organization – especially nonprofits, local government, and advocacy groups.
   - Environmental and social research in the community can greatly support organizations with limited means, and lead to educated action for community improvement.
   - Efforts also include political research. Why do CSU, Chico students vote – or not vote? What is the best way to give people information about government issues? What are the implications of current or proposed policy? Answering these questions can start a collaborative and productive dialogue between campus and community.
   - Students need to be able to look at big ideas using their academic knowledge, while keeping perspective rooted in their experience. It might not be practical to organize a formal meeting to tell people about an issue – students must be encouraged to reflect on campaigns that DID make an impact, and approach an issue in a similar way.
   - Researching and providing an initiative that clarifies the city and county obligation to mitigating a specific issue (like homelessness or zoning priorities), or simply assisting current organizational efforts.
3. **Service within the community**

- Service is often an initial step into academic civic engagement. Subsequent work provides opportunities for students to directly apply academic knowledge to address systemic concerns in a sustainable way.
- Park clean-ups, classroom assistance, and gathering donations all fall within this category. Organizing canned food drives or collecting supplies to assist local shelters (human or animal) counts as civic engagement because it means that a need in the public community has been identified, and people take action to address that need through collective effort.
- Providing an informal discussion to bring concerned parties together over a divisive issue in order to generate greater understanding and appreciation for contrary views.
- In-person support for local organizations such as the ACLU during specific social events like St. Patrick’s Day, Caesar Chavez, or similar times are potential ways to support civil relationships between the city and the university population, and expand the way students think about their community and its leaders.
- Beautification of public spaces with artistic skills such as sculpture or painting that captures or explains the shared nature of public space or historical events or issues. (Which would include negotiating ideas with local government and appropriation of funds to cover costs = fundraising and advocacy/government petitioning)
- Performance pieces that invite the public to grapple with social ideas and issues can also serve to expand civic engagement through creative means. Using guiding questions to frame the performance and discussion afterward (immediate or slightly delayed) have been shown to increase the impact of civic-spirited performances through reflection.
Appendix

**Exercises for building civic engagement into curriculum**

*From: Battisoni, R. M., 2002. Civic Engagement Across the Curriculum*

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**Value Rubric of Civic Engagement & Best Practices in CSU Service Learning**

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**Readings**

Podcasts

- **Freakonomics** – A good primer on how to look at civic work as interconnected systems at work.
- Harvard Kennedy School **PolicyCast** – Hosts discussions of national and international policies and their implications with current experts in the field.
- Moyers & Company – A website and podcast by the former PBS host and White House Press Secretary with interviews and examples of citizens working to define their democratic role.
  - [itunes](https://www.itunes.com)
  - [feedburner](https://www.feedburner.com)
- Center for Civic Education; **60 second civics** – Concise explanation of civic concepts, includes a single question quiz on that day’s podcast.

Web Resources

- CSU, Chico: [Office of Civic Engagement](https://www.csuchico.edu/office-of-civic-engagement/)
- Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)
- Association of American Colleges and Universities: [Civic Learning](https://www.aacu.org/civic-learning)
- Imagining America, a consortium for civic advancement.
- **Public** – A Journal of Imagining America
- Washington State University: [Center for Civic Engagement](https://www.wsu.edu/center-for-civic-engagement/)
- Weber State University: [Center for Community Engaged Learning](https://www.weber.edu/center-for-community-engaged-learning/)
- CSU Monterey Bay: [Service Learning](https://www.csu.edu/curriculum/service-learning/)
  (similar to civic engagement, more narrow application)

Books

*Books on loan at the OCE’s lending library*

- *The Citizen Solution*, Harry C. Boyte
- *Everyday Politics*, Harry C. Boyte
- *We are the Ones We have been Waiting for*, Peter Levine (from above)
- *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in Challenging Times*, Paul Rogat Loeb