

ISSN (Online) 2162-9161



# EJOURNAL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1

## **All Voices Count - Advancing Democratic Engagement | Intro Essay**

**Felice Nudelman**  
AASCU

**Cathy Copeland**  
AASCU

“All Voices Count” was an issue in progress before the COVID-19 pandemic hit America, but the value of this issue increases as our country grapples with a fundamental shift in our perspective. Our world reflects voter participation & engagement in every enforced state and federal policy; whether discussing the economy or climate change, it is critical that community members engage in respective and responsive democratic discourse. Civic responsibility fosters strong community participation which, in turn, protects the health and wellbeing of others; AASCU’s American Democracy Project (ADP) collaborates with many campuses, some of which are featured in this issue, to prepare students to be informed and engaged citizens and to foster civic responsibility. This issue illustrates multiple ways for how educational institutions can support our communities in this time of desperate need.

Colleagues Romy Hübler and David Hoffman, University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Craig Berger, Kent State University; Jennifer Domagal-Goldman from All-In Campus Democracy; and Stephanie King from NASPA join their voices to discuss the term “democratic engagement” as they explore how faculty and student affairs educators can use the CLDE Theory of Change to envision new approaches to pedagogy and institutional change. Operationalizing reflection within democratic engagement, for these authors, resulted in creating a Civic Autobiography Tool, a Civic Courage Reflection Tool, and a Meaningful Work Tool, which they describe in this essay. The authors hope that these tools can serve a wider purpose as they encourage other educators to reframe and reinterpret all forms of information.

East Carolina University colleagues Dennis McCunney, Jeremy Tuchmayer, Tara Kermiet, Chris Stansbury, and Erik Kneubuehl present a focused case-study demonstrating how to actively engage students with civil discourse, voter mobilization, and democratic educational initiatives. Their article explores how focused goals, harnessed emotions, consistent programs, an inclusive campus culture, a connection to campus strategic commitments, and a desire to promote safety can result in strong civic and political engagement, opportunities for strategic coalitions, and a broad sense of civic responsibility in higher education.

Western Kentucky University’s Molly Kerby grapples with how institutions can maintain a focus on creating democratically engaged citizens, especially when impacted by state and federal budget cuts. Especially relevant because of our current pandemic climate, she delves into social change theory to show how public problem-solving and project-based learning experiences can result in systemic change.

In response to AASCU’s call that institutes of higher education (IHEs) act as “stewards of place,” Sam Houston State University colleagues Lee M. Miller and Magdalena A. Denham explain how IHEs can partner with state and federal emergency management initiatives to improve community disaster response and recovery action. They note that students gain experience within their field of study and that IHEs themselves are viewed as a positive, contributing actor within the community. During our own present emergency, this article provides many ideas of how IHEs can bolster our community.

Our tribute to Barbara Burch, written by George Mehaffy, David Lee, Molly Kerby, and Paul Markham, explains Burch's unique ability to inspire and invigorate democratic engagement. Barbara was a true champion of democracy and was one of the founding thinkers in the design of ADP; this tribute stands as a testament to her legacy and the deep respect and love the ADP community has for her.

Our last section demonstrates work done by Dr. Danica Schieber's students at Sam Houston State University. These focused student papers, written by Taylor Swearingen, Briana Guerrero, and Michael Way, demonstrate an active commitment to community participation and provides a hopeful vision of the kindness that abounds in our communities.

When all voices count, our communities are stronger, healthier, and better positioned to encounter challenges that lie ahead. We hope this issue offers solutions and ideas as we move forward. For more discussions on civic learning and democratic engagement, please register for the [Virtual CLDE Meeting](#) on June 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, July 24<sup>th</sup>, and September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,

Felice Nudelman and Cathy Copeland

### Authors



In January of 2019, **Felice Nudelman** became the new Executive Director of the American Democracy Project (ADP) at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU). In 2003, Nudelman had partnered with George Mehaffy and a group of AASCU provosts to create ADP and had remained a thought partner and collaborator as the program grew and developed. Felice has spent the majority of her career in education, both on college campuses and for 12 years with *The New York Times Company*, where she served as Executive Director of Education. She spent nearly a decade in academic affairs at Bloomfield College, where she served in several capacities including associate dean of academic affairs. She has served as executive director for Pace University's School of Education, and, from 2011 to 2016, she was Chancellor of Antioch University in Yellow Springs, OH, and then subsequently served Antioch as chief global officer for innovation & partnerships. Prior to assuming her role at AASCU, Nudelman was the Executive Vice President of the Weiss Institute/ Say Yes to Education.



**Catherine Copeland** has taught for 10 years within the Writing, Rhetoric, and Technical Communication (WRTC) department at James Madison University. As well as developing and mobilizing “Democracy Counts” as an initiative of JMU President Alger to encourage participation for the 2020 Census, she also teaches interdisciplinary courses for students to apply design thinking to solve complex problems. She co-edits *The International Journal of Responsibility* and serves as a Faculty Fellow for the Madison Center for Civic Engagement and on the faculty cohort for “Debate Across the Curriculum.”



# EJOURNAL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1

## **Tools for Living Democracy: Putting the CLDE Theory of Change into Practice**

**Romy Hübler**

University of Maryland, Baltimore County

**David Hoffman**

University of Maryland, Baltimore County

**Craig Berger**

Kent State University

**Jennifer M. Domagal-Goldman**

Civic Nation

**Stephanie King**

Civic Nation

## Introduction

*A Crucible Moment*, the influential report from the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012), served as both a clarion call and a marker of progress for higher education's civic engagement movement. After decades of productive experimentation with strategies for fostering civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions in students and setting up mutual and reciprocal relationships between higher education institutions and community partners (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011, 2017), the report's authors could credibly call to move civic learning and democratic engagement from the margins to the core of higher education's concerns. The phrase "democratic engagement," meaning nonpartisan engagement in the political process, reflected the report's emphasis on engaging students in civic inquiry, deliberation, and collective action, not just episodic service or the performance of civic duties such as voting. The authors identified numerous promising examples of institutions demonstrating and cultivating civic-mindedness.

We want to amplify *A Crucible Moment's* call to action and channel its spirit to challenge some timeworn higher education practices relating to democracy, citizenship, students, and their learning processes. These common practices include orienting students to roles as informed consumers of democracy understood to consist primarily of government and elections, and drawing conceptual lines between service (understood to be altruistic and uncompensated) and engagement in the institutional settings (including workplaces) in which many of us spend most of our waking lives (Boyte, 2015). Faculty and student affairs educators enacting these practices may help students navigate certain public life settings without fully enabling them to envision and create a truly thriving democracy, one in which they have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to build healthy communities and tackle challenges together.

The Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change (Hoffman, Domagal-Goldman, King, & Robinson, 2018), which we will refer to as CLDE Theory of Change, revisits these common practices and proposes alternatives that can provide a basis for new approaches to pedagogy and institutional change. These alternative practices are anchored in educational philosopher John Dewey's idea that democracy should be understood as not merely a form of government but a way of life expressed in "the living relations of person to person in all social forms and institutions" (1937, p. 473-474). They challenge the ideas that students are mere spectators and consumers of public life and that institutions are static. Instead, these alternative practices prepare students to be empowered contributors in all of their communities, including their higher education institutions, neighborhoods, and places of work.

In this article, we explore the thinking behind the CLDE Theory of Change, describe civic tools we developed to support student learning aligned with its insights, and explain the tools' uses. As will become clear, one of the CLDE Theory of Change's central themes is that educating for a thriving democracy entails taking care to foster democracy in everyday settings within all of our institutions. Especially in contexts in which it is common to enact taken-for-granted power differentials and adhere to conventions that keep the participants separated by roles, we have opportunities to orient students to their power to shape their common future by naming, challenging, and altering those conventions. We can foster democracy by making our relationships and interactions more personal and humane. The five of us writing this article together want to do that now by sharing our collaborative approach to developing the CLDE Theory of Change.

### CLDE Theory of Change: A Brief History

In June 2015, NASPA, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' (AASCU) American Democracy Project (ADP), and The Democracy Commitment (which would become a Campus Compact initiative in 2018) hosted their first annual, national Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting in New Orleans. Two of this article's co-authors, Stephanie and Jennifer (representing NASPA and the American Democracy Project, respectively), were among the principal planners of that gathering. For Stephanie and Jennifer, the meeting and their associations' new partnership allowed building on the momentum generated by the publication of *A Crucible Moment* in 2012. One of *A Crucible Moment*'s crucial contributions had been to provide a philosophical and strategic rationale for removing the silos that seemed ubiquitous in higher education, separating student affairs from academic affairs. Fulfilling *A Crucible Moment*'s holistic vision for student learning would entail not just refocusing institutions on civic learning and democratic engagement but also fostering new collaborations among members of their networks.

Jennifer was presiding when the American Democracy Project hosted a lunch meeting for its members on the New Orleans gathering's first day. She invited American Democracy Project co-founder George Mehaffy, then AASCU's Vice President for Academic Leadership and Change, to reflect on the state of the network. Mehaffy repeated an observation he had made at previous American Democracy Project meetings: that too many of the campus initiatives inspired by ADP in its early years (from its launch in 2003) had been "marginal, episodic, and celebratory." Sitting in the audience, two of this article's other coauthors, Craig and David, who were members of the American Democracy Project Steering Committee, nodded along in agreement. Mehaffy's remarks were aligned in spirit with both *A Crucible Moment* and insights from scholars of higher education and democracy who had observed that colleges and universities were preparing students to participate in civic rituals without empowering them to create a healthy and just society (Boyte & Hollander, 1998; Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009; Sturm, Eatman, Saltmarsh, & Bush, 2011).

Along with coauthor Romy, Craig and David had been working for years to incubate an approach to civic learning and democratic engagement at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) that would fulfill *A Crucible Moment*'s holistic aspirations. Their work involved supporting and deepening a rich, humane culture of engagement through careful organizing, curricular and co-curricular experimentation, and storytelling. This approach had emerged in part from their personal experiences and research projects: Craig had a traditional student affairs background but had bristled at contradictions he had perceived between the profession's civic ideals and many of its common practices. David had been a community organizer before working in higher education, and his doctoral research had explored undergraduate students' development of civic agency: the capacity to transcend the synthetic and scripted aspects of everyday life, forge mutually empowering relationships, and take meaningful, collective action (Hoffman, 2013). Romy had studied social movements around the world, and her doctoral research had explored graduate students' frustrations with the dehumanizing and isolating aspects of their academic experiences (Huebler, 2015). With support from UMBC's senior administrative leadership, the three of them had worked with students, faculty, and staff colleagues to develop and lead BreakingGround, an initiative that used grants funded by the Provost's Office to support the creation of innovative courses and community programs. The philosophy of civic engagement

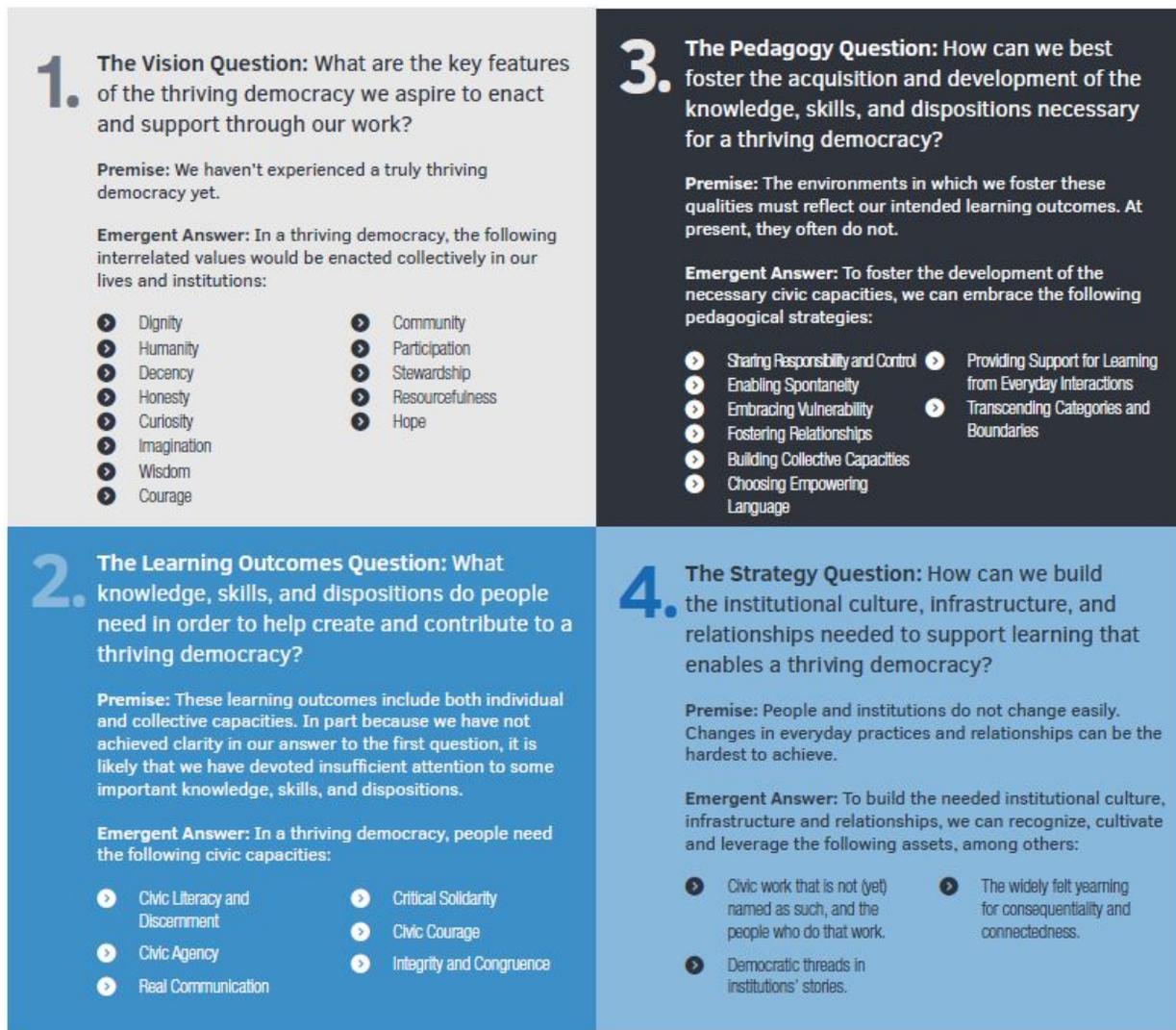
embodied in this approach located democracy and community in everyday settings, not only in government, elections, and off-campus service projects.

After Mehaffy's remarks, Jennifer asked for reactions from the audience. When nobody volunteered immediately, Jennifer squinted into the spotlights aimed at the stage and asked David to share whatever was on his mind. David was thinking about two questions begged by Mehaffy's observation, and he shared one of them: if "marginal, episodic, and celebratory" were features of too-shallow civic initiatives in higher education, what words would describe the kinds of initiatives higher education should be launching? In the weeks following the meeting, David proposed a tentative answer to that question, with Jennifer's help: the richest, deepest civic learning and democratic engagement efforts would be "integral, relational, organic, and generative" (Hoffman, 2015).

Yet it was the question David did not articulate that wound up becoming the glue that has bound this article's coauthors together in the years following that meeting: How could we organize conversations across higher education that would deepen and transform civic practices across our institutions? What David imagined was a civic organizing process like the one at UMBC, but on a national scale. One of the central virtues of that process was that it helped translate philosophical commitments into concrete actions and practices. How could such a process work among people separated by geography, roles, institution types, and other divides? How could the annual CLDE meetings be structured to support the process?

The five of us in various combinations brainstormed about these topics during 2015-2016, even as tensions in the U.S. body politic seemed to create an opening for fresh thinking about higher education's role in supporting civic life. At the 2016 Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting in Indianapolis, David gave an opening plenary session talk reflecting our thinking to that point. His talk was unusual in that he addressed it not to the 2016 CLDE meeting but to the 2046 CLDE meeting, which participants in the 2016 meeting were invited to join by stretching their imaginations forward through time. Entitled "A Brief History of U.S. Democracy, 2016-2046," the talk described a series of international conflicts and environmental disasters in the early years of those three decades, followed by a civic awakening seeded through the efforts of colleges and universities. By 2046, according to David's retrospective account, ordinary people had discovered and developed their power to shape the world together, so that civic agency had become "a cornerstone of our national culture ... [enacted in relationships] among faculty colleagues, between faculty and students, and more broadly in our workplaces, our congregations, and our neighborhoods. We cultivate democracy in each other." David described how higher education

innovations, including new thinking about both student learning and the organization of national conferences, had helped to inspire and produce these changes.



That talk helped to scaffold conversations during 2016-2017 with leaders in our networks about how to fulfill its most hopeful predictions. We worked with the 2017 CLDE Meeting planning committee to develop the structure for an inclusive, national conversation about higher education's civic purposes and practices, built around a framework of four questions (see Figure 1). The meeting's call for proposals asked prospective presenters to submit sessions that could help participants answer one or more of the questions. At one of the 2017 CLDE Meeting's plenary sessions in Baltimore, participants tackled the first question (the Vision Question) together: What are the key features of the thriving democracy we aspire to enact and support through our work? The ideas generated in that conversation became the basis for a publication (Hoffman et al., 2018) proposing an emergent CLDE Theory of Change in language that might resonate with the people in higher education who would have to enact it.

The planning committee for the 2018 CLDE Meeting in Anaheim also organized that meeting around the four question framework. Every conference participant received a copy of the CLDE Theory of Change publication and an injunction to dive in, question its contents and

assumptions, and provide feedback. The five of us engaged in countless conversations with participants. We also shared examples of what we envisioned as products for the next phase of the work: civic tools that higher education professionals and students could use to implement the CLDE Theory of Change's commitments and ideas in specific contexts. We invited conference participants to join us in imagining and forging these civic tools.

By the time of the 2019 CLDE Meeting in Fort Lauderdale, we had developed a small suite of tools that could be used to enact the CLDE Theory of Change. These early tools were worksheets to be completed by participants during or following facilitated workshops. Some supported instructors or facilitators in working with students. Others offered guidance to faculty, staff, and student leaders seeking to deepen their institutions' commitments to civic learning and democratic engagement. Bringing Theory to Practice had awarded a Multi-Institutional Innovation Grant to support Romy, David, Craig, and a colleague, Melissa Baker-Boosamra, at Grand Valley State University in developing tools to foster "civic courage," one of the learning outcomes identified in the CLDE Theory of Change. In addition to demonstrating and sharing some of these tools at the 2019 CLDE Meeting, the authors continued to solicit feedback on the CLDE Theory of Change's vision and strategies.

They also asked workshop participants to complete evaluation forms. The participants' feedback indicated that the tools, small-group conversations, and large-group debriefings could help reorient them to everyday situations and interactions, as well as to their purposes and choices. Participants reported that they saw new possibilities for themselves as shapers of their environments, contributors to collective decision-making and action, and agents of positive change in a variety of settings. Beyond their effect on individual users, the workshops showed promise as incubators of democratic cultures within institutions. They helped position the facilitators as resources and partners to people in various roles linked by a desire to live with purpose and contribute to creating thriving communities. Workshop participants, including student leaders and colleagues in student affairs and academic affairs, reached out to the facilitators for help identifying ways to enact the principles behind the workshops in their campus settings, and developed new programs that do so.

In addition, the feedback made clear that the various workshop components were inseparable and mutually reinforcing. The worksheets, small group conversations, and large group reflections that were components of every workshop positioned the participants to learn from each other's experiences, build stronger connections with each other and gain renewed strength to continue their change efforts. Romy, David, Craig, and Melissa realized that the "tools" they were developing were not the worksheets alone. Each of the workshop components, including the facilitation guide, constituted "tools" as well. When used together, these tools help people develop the capacity and disposition for living democracy in the way John Dewey envisioned: not just through participation in government, but in their relationships and institutions.

They also realized that it would be useful to develop three different kinds of tools: reflection tools, research tools, and roadmap tools. Reflection tools help people gain insights by thinking anew about their civic experiences and aspirations. Research tools help people take a fresh look at their institutions and recognize opportunities and challenges relating to civic learning and democratic engagement. Roadmap tools help people conceptualize and plan institutional change efforts to support civic learning and democratic engagement.

This process has deepened our sense of hope and clarity in connection with the CLDE Theory of Change. The insights that have emerged respond to some of the most profound challenges facing our society and reveal new possibilities for higher education's contributions. The work of articulating and enacting answers to the four questions at the heart of the CLDE Theory of Change is far from finished, and we hope you will join us in this effort.

### **The Pedagogy Question**

The third of the four questions addressed by the CLDE Theory of Change is the Pedagogy Question: How can we best foster the acquisition and development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for a thriving democracy? The CLDE Theory of Change addresses this question by proposing that faculty and student affairs educators model and enact democratic values in every aspect of their interactions with students by “planting more seeds and imposing less structure” (Hoffman et al., 2018, p. 13), in alignment with Paolo Freire's (1970, 1973) ideas about critical pedagogy and consciousness, Maxine Greene's (2000) on imagination, and Marcia Boyte Magolda's (2001, 2008) on self-authorship. This seed-planting would involve educators:

- sharing responsibility and control with students;
- creating space for spontaneity in their courses and programs;
- embracing interpersonal vulnerability;
- fostering authentic, mutual, and reciprocal relationships with and between students;
- building students' collective civic capacities;
- choosing empowering language;
- providing support for learning from everyday interactions without diminishing the organic character of those interactions; and
- transcending categories and boundaries that isolate civic learning within a few institutional settings.

We have begun to operationalize these broad injunctions in the Tools for Living Democracy workshops we have developed, including the Civic Autobiography Workshop, Civic Courage Reflection Workshop, and Meaningful Careers Workshop. All three workshops are reflection tools. They provide users an opportunity to conceptualize their experiences or analyze their environments or communities in the context of civic learning and democratic engagement. This process allows users to liberate the knowledge already inside of them. Each workshop has a facilitation guide establishing a structure and providing facilitation tips. A workshop begins with a facilitator welcoming participants, framing the purpose of the workshop, then distributing a worksheet to each participant. Each worksheet includes prompts, sample responses, and often new or altered definitions of terms. Facilitators explain the worksheets and the terms by sharing personal examples of how the concepts have been relevant in their own lives. Participants complete a worksheet by reflecting on and writing about their experiences, priorities, environments, and communities. The facilitator invites participants to share their responses in small group conversations, followed by a large group debriefing.

This workshop structure and process enact the CLDE Theory of Change's injunctions about liberating pedagogy by engaging participants in personal reflection, storytelling, and collaborative work to make meaning from personal experiences. The worksheets provide a general

guide, but it is the participants' own stories and interpretive processes that drive their conversations. The facilitators set a tone that embraces vulnerability and encourages frankness, in part by modeling these qualities as they lead participants through the worksheets. The effect is to encourage a sense of collectivity and to illuminate how everyday life, even outside of settings conventionally understood as "civic," can be a source of vital insight about how we can build thriving communities together.

We illustrate these workshops and their uses below with fictionalized stories - complete with fictional campus and stakeholder names - drawn from our experiences and describe how each workshop helps enact the CLDE Theory of Change.

### **Civic Autobiography Workshop**

It is the spring semester and recruiting season for residential assistants (RAs) is in high gear. Mareike is an international student and has struggled to find university staff members who can relate to her experience. She wants to be a mentor and guide for other international and immigrant students so they feel more welcome and supported in their higher education journeys. She applies for an RA position and navigates several rounds of interviews with staff who represent many student affairs departments. Mareike shares her story repeatedly and her interviewers are impressed with her answers and her presence. As they hire her, they express to Mareike that she will make an excellent RA. Mareike is thrilled and begins her RA experience with plenty of enthusiasm. However, after her first month or two in the position, Mareike realizes that no one asks about her story anymore. The menial tasks her community director assigns her are not linked to the passions and strengths she articulated during her interviews, and Mareike rarely sees the staff members who were most prominent in her hiring process. Mareike soon becomes disillusioned and views herself as a mere cog in the machine.

Mareike's sense of alienation is anathema to the thriving democracy we seek to create. Yet our experiences suggest that there are many students in her shoes: eager to fill workplace roles as co-creators with unique experiences, motivations, perspectives, and gifts to contribute, but worn down by processes and protocols that do not welcome or incorporate their humanity, knowledge, passions, and talents. The CLDE Theory of Change envisions higher education adopting practices that would allow Mareike and her peers to thrive, turning experiences like being an RA into opportunities to make and learn from meaningful, personal, civic contributions. However, this would require a cultural shift away from the assumptions that work and civic life are distinct spheres of activity, and that the delivery of campus services by people like RAs is simply a matter of deploying human resources efficiently, consistently, and effectively.

We developed the Civic Autobiography Workshop to help students like Mareike, educators who work with them, and others in higher education to tease out and embrace the potentially hidden civic dimensions of their roles. The Civic Autobiography Worksheet (see Appendix A) defines as "civic" aspects of people's experiences outside of traditional civic activities like voting or providing voluntary service. Responding to the questions in the Worksheet and engaging in small and large group conversations about them helps people surface their unique motivations, experiences, and preferred environments, and legacies. Based on our observations and participants' workshop evaluations, we know that the combination of individual reflection, small group conversations, and large group discussion not only allows individuals to recognize the civic aspects of their own stories and experiences but encourages them to see each other's humanity and

civic dispositions across role boundaries and to identify how their common worldviews could lead to collaborative work.

If Mareike or her community director were to facilitate a Civic Autobiography Workshop with the RAs working in her facility, they could call to consciousness the RAs' original motivations for working in that role, reflect on the disempowering aspects of their student experiences, and identify ways of working with students and staff that supported their individual and collective agency. In addition, Mareike might connect with others around their similar hopes and frustrations, and so create a basis for working together to create more space for vulnerability, humanity, and collaboration within their institution.

We have facilitated the Civic Autobiography Workshop with several different kinds of groups in higher education, and found it useful in every setting, both with established networks and among people just forming new relationships. For example, we facilitated workshops with 200 new students at an honors orientation, a group of Student Government Association leaders, cohorts of student affairs leaders from various institutions in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic, and participants in the 2018 CLDE Meeting. Participants in all of these settings have reported that the workshop helped make visible and call into question assumptions about their experiences that they had, or would have, taken for granted. Honors students shared that they had not considered how their university could be a forum in which they could enact their civic purposes; they had been ready to show up as consumers of knowledge and accommodate themselves to the campus community as they found it. Participants in other Civic Autobiography Workshops have shared that the reflective questions asked in the worksheet have helped to remind them of their initial motivations for taking on leadership roles or pursuing their professions. Many have realized that they had gotten into the habit of going through the motions, always thinking about how to tackle the next challenge or complete the next task but not always remembering to connect their actions with their sense of purpose, their own 'why.' They also have found the worksheet's invitation to imagine the civic legacy they want to leave a welcome departure from the day-to-day thought processes in which questions of legacy are understood to be fanciful or abstract rather than essential guideposts. Our experience also suggests that Civic Autobiography Workshops can be especially useful during the beginning stages of team building, whether as part of a new professional staff retreat, a student organization's first meeting of the year, or during an orientation program.

### **Civic Courage Reflection Workshop**

Central University has a long, storied history of student activism. However, the cultural legacy of this activism has been mixed. Most current students are aware that their predecessors protested the Vietnam War and won concessions from university administrators. But their awareness of their predecessors' actions is limited to their most dramatic tactics. The details of previous activists' strategic choices, relationships with campus officials, and behind-the-scenes maneuvers have receded into history. When students aspire to make a difference within the campus community, protest and confrontation are often among the first approaches that come to mind.

In recent years, many students have been disappointed by the slow pace of change and the limited gains they have been able to achieve through protest and confrontation. While they relish the chance to express themselves and demonstrate their opposition to aspects of the status quo, students also feel a sense of futility in connection with campus problems and have resorted to complaining on social media rather than attempting to get organized.

We developed the Civic Courage Reflection Workshop with students like those at Central University in mind. The Civic Courage Reflection Worksheet (see Appendix B) provides users with an opportunity to envision and reflect on the behind the scenes work that is often necessary for a social movement to succeed. In addition, the worksheet explicitly links the idea of courage with the value of taking responsibility for the strategic soundness and foreseeable consequences of one's actions. According to the Civic Courage Reflection Worksheet, courage is not merely the willingness to take risks and make sacrifices for a cause but also encompasses a willingness to take principled, thoughtful action even in the face of temptations to take the easy path or sacrifice potential long-term gains in favor of short-term ego gratification. Users consider situations from their own experiences in which they either did or could have practiced civic courage, defined as the intersection of congruence, collaboration, foresight, strategic patience, systemic responsibility, and respect.

We have led Civic Courage Reflection Workshops with groups of students and staff at three institutions. Participants have reported that the worksheet has helped them to achieve greater clarity about their values and how to translate them into action in everyday settings, especially in contexts in which the questions "what are your long-term objectives, and how does your intended action align with those objectives?" are unlikely to be asked. They also have shared that the worksheet and conversations with other participants have helped them to recognize choices they could have made in the past that did not occur to them, steeped as they have been in cultures in which the most attention-getting examples of activism are often dramatic, without necessarily being effective. The workshop does not steer users away from confrontation when confrontation is necessary or strategically sound. But it does orient them to proactive ways of thinking about their contributions that go beyond making a splash in the moment. Our experiences with the workshop to date suggest that these new insights can be both sobering and deeply empowering for users.

After one recent Civic Courage Workshop, a student leader approached the facilitators and asked whether the workshop represented an ideology that rejects deviations from prevailing social norms. Were the facilitators saying that students should always behave politely, even in the face of injustice? What would Martin Luther King, Jr. have said about such a workshop? It was an important question that the facilitators were glad to answer by sharing some of the careful, strategic work King and his organization engaged in behind the scenes during the Civil Rights Movement. The student was surprised. He had heard only about the protests. He and the facilitators agreed to keep talking about how his leadership positions could be platforms for pursuing the vision of social justice to which he is deeply devoted, using approaches that allow him to recognize, embrace, and enact the full range of his commitments to his values and the long-term health of his communities.

### **Meaningful Careers Workshop**

Samuel is a sophomore at the University of the Great Lakes. He excelled academically in his freshman year and is intent on continuing to do well in his courses while finding joy in extracurricular activities. He has plotted his path to graduation and feels confident in his ability to reach his educational goals.

This semester, Samuel is enrolled in a class focused on people's participation in civic life. The instructors introduce the idea that, in addition to voting and volunteering, work also can be a space for contributing to civic life. Samuel's interest is piqued. While he had planned his

educational pathway, he had given less thought to his aspirations beyond college, other than his desire to work in business.

His instructors facilitate a Meaningful Careers Workshop in one of the class sessions. The Meaningful Careers Visioning Worksheet (see Appendix C) participants complete as part of the workshop helps them think about connections between their passions and potential career choices. Thinking about answers to questions about his motivations, hopes, and fears concerning his career, Samuel realizes that his aspiration to work in business is connected to his hope of providing access to much-needed services and safe community gathering spaces that do not now exist in the working-class neighborhood in which he grew up. When asked about skills that he needs to develop to make a difference through his career, he realizes that the classes he has been taking have provided him with great insights into corporate practices, but that he needs to supplement that learning with other experiences that will prepare him to head a successful enterprise while also contributing to community empowerment and growth in his neighborhood.

In the small-group conversations and the larger-group debrief, Samuel hears many of his peers express similar realizations: They, too, want to contribute meaningfully to their communities but are not clear about what additional skills and knowledge they need, or how to acquire them. Samuel's instructors share some opportunities in class and offer to talk with individual students about their aspirations outside of class. Samuel and several of his peers take the instructors up on that offer. Some of the students elect additional majors or minors, choose new extracurricular and applied learning opportunities, or switch majors as a result of these conversations.

We developed the Meaningful Careers Workshop with students like Samuel in mind. We knew from countless interactions with students that many were choosing their majors because of anticipated financial rewards, a sense of obligation to family, or a desire for societal approval without reflecting deeply on what drove them personally or how their values aligned with their career aspirations.

At UMBC, David and Romy have facilitated the Meaningful Careers Workshop in several settings, including at a multi-departmental program featuring public work philosophy scholar Harry Boyte, in Honors College classes, and with students in UMBC's public affairs scholars program. Students have welcomed the invitation to think about the impact they want to have after graduation. They often share that they feel well-prepared in terms of disciplinary knowledge but wished that there were more opportunities both in their academic programs and in co-curricular offerings to help them come to clarity about, and prepare themselves for, professional roles in which they can make meaningful contributions in the workspace and to society at large. For many, the workshop has helped them become conscious of and name those missing pieces, and begin to seek opportunities to develop their whole selves.

### **Conclusion**

Colleges and universities have made considerable progress in recent years at fulfilling the aspirations expressed in *A Crucible Moment*: of preparing students to participate in politics as well as service, and of bringing new institutional resources to bear on civic learning and democratic engagement. With the CLDE Theory of Change, we have proposed that they go further yet. With the introduction of Tools for Living Democracy, we have begun to put the CLDE Theory of Change into practice.

All of the Tools for Living Democracy Workshops we have discussed in this article are both instruments for accomplishing particular purposes and sources of support for a broader cultural shift from an understanding of democracy as located in government, elections, and voluntary service to a new understanding that empowers people to work collectively and build thriving communities in many settings. The Civic Autobiography Workshop helps participants recognize the civic dimensions of their experiences and aspirations concerning student organizations, classrooms, research labs, and other forums. The Civic Courage Workshop helps participants recognize their capacity to make strategic and sustained contributions to long-term change efforts. The Meaningful Careers Workshop helps participants identify their civic aspirations and envision enacting them in the context of professional roles. Each of these workshops and the practices they encourage create space for conversation and relationship-building that can empower the participants and make our institutions more humane and inclusive. Each can help to plant the seeds of the vibrant democracy we believe higher education can help to foster.

Like the CLDE Theory of Change itself, Tools for Living Democracy Workshops are works in progress. Each is an experiment from which we are learning a great deal. If you are interested in working with these tools and learning more about other CLDE Theory of Change Tools for Living Democracy, we invite you to contact us at [CLDEtheory@UMBC.edu](mailto:CLDEtheory@UMBC.edu).

## References

- Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2001). *Making their own way: Narratives for transforming higher education to promote self-development*. Sterling: Stylus.
- Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2008). Three elements of self-authorship. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(4), 269-284.
- Boyte, H. (2015). Reinventing citizenship as public work. In Boyte, H. (Ed.), *Democracy's education: Public work, citizenship, and the future of colleges and universities* (pp. 1-33). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Boyte, H., & Hollander, E. (1998). *Wingspread declaration on the civic responsibilities of research universities*. <https://compact.org/wingspread-declaration-on-the-civic-responsibilities-of-research-universities/>
- Dewey, J. (1937). Education and social change. *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, 23(6), 472-4.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum.
- Greene, M. (2000). *Releasing the imagination*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Hoffman, D. (2015). Describing transformative civic learning and democratic engagement practices [Blog]. *American Democracy Project*. <https://adpaascu.wordpress.com/2015/07/01/describing-transformative-civic-learning-and-democratic-engagement-practices/>
- Hoffman, D., Domagal-Goldman, J., King, S., & Robinson, V. (2018). *Higher education's role in enacting a thriving democracy: Civic learning and democratic engagement theory of change*. Washington: NASPA.
- Hoffman, D. B. (2013). *Becoming real: Undergraduates' civic agency journeys* (Publication No. 3609901) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, Baltimore County]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Huebler, R. (2015). *From isolation to participation: Engaged graduate education* (Publication No. 3707281) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, Baltimore County]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012). *A crucible moment: College learning and democracy's future*. Washington: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Saltmarsh, J., Hartley, M., & Clayton, P. (2009). Democratic engagement white paper. *New*

*England Resource Center for Higher Education.*

[http://repository.upenn.edu/gse\\_pubs/274](http://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/274)

Saltmarsh, J. A. & Hartley, M. (Eds.). (2011). *“To serve a larger purpose”: Engagement for democracy and the transformation of higher education*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Saltmarsh, J., & Hartley, M. (2017). A brief history of the civic engagement movement in American higher education. In Dolgon, C., Mitchell, T. D., & Eatman, T. K. (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of service-learning and community engagement* (pp. 112-124). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sturm, S., Eatman, T., Saltmarsh, J., & Bush, A. (2011). Full participation: Building the architecture for diversity and community engagement in higher education. *Imagining America*, 17.

## Appendix

Tools for Living Democracy

### CIVIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY WORKSHEET



---

*This worksheet helps users tease out and embrace the potentially hidden civic dimensions of their work.*

---

**CIVIC MOTIVATIONS:** *intentions and aspirations related to improving people's lives, solving public problems, or creating new resources for the common good.*

What were your **civic motivations** in choosing your discipline, profession, major, or degree?

**Examples:**

*I chose to become an engineer because there were so few women in the profession, and I wanted to help blaze a trail for other women.*

*I hope to become a doctor because I really like helping and supporting people at moments when they're feeling overwhelmed.*

**CIVIC INCLUSION:** *the intentional development of relationships that mitigate power imbalances and inspire a sense that you are a full participant (not merely an employee, apprentice, or customer).*

How have you experienced and/or practiced **civic inclusion** in your discipline, profession, institution, or community?

**Examples:**

*I didn't really start to feel included at my institution until I discovered and joined an informal network of LGBTQ faculty and staff. Some of the senior staff have become my mentors, and we're working to make our institution's culture more supportive.*

*Through student government I served on a campus committee that reviewed our dining services contract. The faculty and staff on the committee actually listened to me!*

Tools for Living Democracy  
**CIVIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY WORKSHEET**



**CIVIC HAVENS:** settings in which people can connect authentically around shared values, interests, and experiences.

When and where have you experienced **civic havens** within your discipline, profession, institution, or community?

**Examples:**

*I have served frequently as a faculty mentor for service trips. Every time I do it, I'm blown away by the opportunities to share stories and really connect with everyone involved.*

*As a returning student and woman of color, I felt marginalized in many campus settings. But the Women's Center has become my home, and the people who spend time there have become my people.*

A large, empty rounded rectangle with a thick black border, intended for the student to write their response to the question about civic havens.

**CIVIC AGENCY:** the capacity to imagine an alternative future, coupled with the sense that you can create that future through collective work.

When and where have you experienced **civic agency**?

**Examples:**

*My neighborhood association worked for years to advocate for the creation of a playground on public land near my home. I was part of the key meeting with the City Manager. Our success made me feel like the world was opening up for me.*

*At a student leadership retreat, I was invited to develop my own vision for positive change on campus. That was amazing; nobody had ever asked me to think that way before, or taken my ideas so seriously.*

A large, empty rounded rectangle with a thick black border, intended for the student to write their response to the question about civic agency.

Tools for Living Democracy  
**CIVIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY WORKSHEET**



**CIVIC LEGACY:** *the lasting consequences of your contributions.*

What do you want your **civic legacy** in your department, institution, discipline, profession, neighborhood, city, or nation to be?

**Examples:**

*I want my colleagues to be as committed to caring, humane teaching practices as I am.*

*I want to raise awareness of mental health issues so nobody has to deal with the stigma I experienced when I first shared that I was anxious and depressed.*

A large, empty rounded rectangle with a thick black border, intended for the user to write their response to the question about their civic legacy.

Tools for Living Democracy

## CIVIC COURAGE REFLECTION WORKSHEET



*This worksheet helps users think about how they can practice civic courage as they pursue social change and contribute to their communities.*

**CIVIC COURAGE** = Congruence + Collaboration + Foresight + Strategic Patience + Systemic Responsibility + Respect

**CONGRUENCE:** *choosing to adhere to your core values and beliefs even when doing so may be inconvenient or risky.*

I have practiced **congruence** by...

I could do/could have done more to practice **congruence** by...

**COLLABORATION:** *choosing to include the full range of people with a stake in an issue in your decision-making and action, even when their perspectives are in tension with your own.*

I have practiced **collaboration** by...

I could do/could have done more to practice **collaboration** by...

DEVELOPED BY:



Community Engaged Learning  
University College



Tools for Living Democracy

## CIVIC COURAGE REFLECTION WORKSHEET



**FORESIGHT:** *choosing to consider and take responsibility for all of the likely consequences of your actions, even when it would be easier to ignore them.*

I have practiced **foresight** by...

I could do/could have done more to practice **foresight** by...

**STRATEGIC PATIENCE:** *choosing actions that are most likely to contribute to long-term progress, even when other approaches would be easier or more immediately satisfying.*

I have practiced **strategic patience** by...

I could do/could have done more to practice **strategic patience** by...

DEVELOPED  
BY:



Community Engaged  
Learning  
University College



Tools for Living Democracy

## CIVIC COURAGE REFLECTION WORKSHEET



**SYSTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY:** *choosing to consider the long-term civic health of the whole community in every decision about strategy, tactics, and personal conduct, even when doing so may delay progress relating to an issue you care about.*

I have practiced **systemic responsibility** by...

I could do/could have done more to practice **systemic responsibility** by...

**RESPECT:** *choosing to recognize people's humanity, listen to their stories, and avoid writing them off based on their having perspectives in tension with your own.*

I have practiced **respect** by...

I could do/could have done more to practice **respect** by...

DEVELOPED  
BY:



Community Engaged  
Learning  
University College



---

*This worksheet helps users think about connections between their passions and potential career choices.*

---

Why did you choose your major and/or career objective? What difference do you hope to make?

**Examples:**

*I chose to become an engineer because I enjoy solving problems and making things.*

*I hope to become a doctor because I really like helping and supporting people at moments when they're feeling overwhelmed.*

When you think about trying to make a difference through your career, what questions, concerns, or fears do you have?

**Examples:**

*How do I identify places to work that will nurture my soul and not just my skills? I'm afraid of losing myself in my work and burning out before I can make a difference.*

*How can you make a difference when you're in your first few years on the job and don't have much influence?*

What skills would it be helpful to develop while you're at UMBC, so you can overcome challenges to making a meaningful difference through your work?

**Examples:**

*I'd like to know how to stay focused on my goals when my employer is paying me to pursue its goals and not mine.*

*I'd like to know how to make positive, humanizing change in my workplace in constructive ways, not just fit in.*

## Authors



**Romy Hübler** is Assistant Director of the Center for Democracy and Civic Life and an Honors College Faculty Fellow at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). Romy works with students, staff, and faculty to develop the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to build thriving communities. She serves as co-principal investigator for the [PLACE Collaboratory](#), a project that uses community organizing and humanities methods to address community-identified issues. Romy also serves as co-principal investigator for a [Multi-Institutional Innovation Grant](#) from Bringing Theory to Practice to develop and share tools for students' civic empowerment.

Romy is UMBC's institutional representative for the [NASPA LEAD Initiative](#) and campus liaison for the [American Democracy Project](#), and a member of the [2020 Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting](#) planning committee. She earned her B.A. in Modern Languages and Linguistics, M.A. in Intercultural Communication, and Ph.D. in Language, Literacy, and Culture at UMBC.



**David Hoffman** is Director of the Center for Democracy and Civic Life at UMBC and a Faculty Fellow in UMBC's Honors College, helping students develop the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and relationships needed to help their communities thrive. He serves as Chair-Elect of AASCU's [American Democracy Project](#) Steering Committee and as a member of [Imagining America's](#) National Advisory Board. As one of the American Democracy Project's inaugural Civic Fellows, he led the development of the [Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change](#). He serves as co-principal investigator for a Bringing Theory to Practice [Multi-Institutional Innovation](#)

[Grant](#) to develop and share tools for students' civic empowerment. David's research and publications explore civic agency, civic pedagogy, democratic communication techniques, and culture change within institutions. He earned his B.A. in Economics from UCLA; M.P.P. and J.D. from Harvard; and Ph.D. in Language, Literacy, and Culture from UMBC.



**Craig Berger** is Assistant Director of [Community Engaged Learning at Kent State University](#). Craig works with faculty, staff, students, and community partners to design, facilitate, and capture the impact of learning experiences that strengthen the Kent region and foster students' civic agency. Craig also serves as Kent State's [NASPA LEAD](#) institutional representative. Prior to Kent State, Craig worked as Coordinator of Student Life for Campus and Civic Engagement at UMBC, developing cross-campus relationships and experimenting with democratic pedagogies in courses and programs. Craig

received his M.S. in Student Affairs in Higher Education from Miami University and his B.A. in Political Science from Allegheny College. Craig served as Chair of the [American Democracy Project](#) Steering Committee during the 2016-2017 academic year, was a member of the 2019 Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting planning committee and has contributed to discussions that formed the basis of the CLDE Theory of Change.



**Jennifer M. Domagal-Goldman** is the executive director of the [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#) at Civic Nation. Prior to joining the Challenge, Jen directed AASCU's American Democracy Project. Jen serves on the editorial board of the *eJournal of Public Affairs*. She has contributed to a number of civic engagement publications, including co-authoring chapters in *Reimagining Democratic Societies: A New Era of Personal and Social Responsibility* (2013) and *Student Civic Outcomes in Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Methods* (2017). She also contributed to *Becoming a Steward of Place: Four Areas of Institutional Focus* (2014) and *Higher Education's Role in Enacting a Thriving Democracy: Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change* (2018). Jen earned her PhD in higher education from Penn State. She received her MA in higher education and student affairs administration from the University of Vermont and her BA from the University of Rochester.



**Stephanie King** is the director of strategic initiatives for the [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#). She previously held the role of director for civic engagement and knowledge community initiatives at NASPA where she directed the NASPA LEAD Initiative and co-managed/co-created the Voter Friendly Campus program. Stephanie has worked in higher education since 2009 in the areas of student activities, orientation, residence life, and civic learning and democratic engagement. She earned her MA in psychology at Chatham University and her BS in biology from Walsh University. She has contributed to a few publications including *Effective Strategies for Supporting Student Civic Engagement* (May 2018) and *Higher Education's Role in Enacting a Thriving Democracy: Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change* (June 2018).



# EJOURNAL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1

## **Managing “Send Her Back”: Civil Discourse and Educating for Democracy as Campus Culture**

**Dennis McCunney, Ph.D**  
East Carolina University

**Jeremy B. Tuchmayer, Ph.D**  
East Carolina University

**Tara Kermiet**  
East Carolina University

**Chris Stansbury**  
East Carolina University

**Erik Kneubuehl, Ed.D**  
East Carolina University

### **Abstract**

Until recently, East Carolina University (ECU) had a small culture of marches, protests, and other free speech actions. However, police-involved shootings in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, followed by the 2016 summer of violence with the mass shooting in Orlando and more police-involved shootings in New York, Chicago, Minnesota, and Texas, dramatically changed the culture at ECU. During the 2016-17 academic year, ECU student organizations hosted more than 25 campus protests and demonstrations—relatively few compared to other institutions, but a large increase for our campus community. Even with wide-ranging topics -- from Black Lives Matter to Turning Point USA speakers and rallies from Donald Trump and Bill Clinton -- ECU experienced virtually no disruptions in service. Indeed, when the infamous “send her back” chant directed at Rep. Ilhan Omar emerged at a Trump rally on ECU’s campus, our institution found ways to quickly manage the fallout and move forward. Why? Civil discourse.

Through the combination of activities, events, and programmatic efforts, ECU has built a culture that actively engages students in conversations around difficult topics, building an inclusive climate with an eye toward institutionalization. This focused case-study explores how one campus devised comprehensive strategies to address student engagement and direct that interest into the college, community, civic, and public arenas. Specifically, this manuscript will address three broad campus-level efforts around civil discourse, voter mobilization, and democratic educational initiatives.

This three-part model includes both short-term student programs and long-term best practices. Our civil discourse efforts illustrate that teaching students within collegiate settings to deliberate and debate important societal issues assists them in their identity development as well as connects them to their civic responsibilities. Civil dialogues teach our students how to constructively disagree, but also encourage valuable skill development such as listening, counterpoint development, and compromise.

### Why Civil Discourse Matters

In the summer of 2019, the president of the United States intensified his political rhetoric on four minority female members of Congress by suggesting they “go back and help fix the totally broken and crime-infested places from which they came” instead of “loudly and viciously telling the people of the United States” how to run the government (Rogers & Fandos, 2019, A1). Three days later, as the president addressed a crowd of supporters on the campus of East Carolina University, in Greenville, NC, chants of “send her back” erupted throughout the stadium, making national headlines the following morning. As the president’s motorcade departed for the airport, the city of Greenville, and particularly the campus of East Carolina University were left with a community deeply hurt, disappointed, and angry at the level of the rhetoric and what long-term effects it might have as students returned to campus in the fall.

Free speech is a right guaranteed to all Americans. It is protected and cherished, defended, and challenged every day across the United States. Free speech can present itself in many ways, in vocal and non-vocal displays. Over the last decade on higher education campuses, free speech has presented as marches, protests, walk-outs, sit-ins, and kneel-downs.

Civil discourse is closely aligned with free speech, with a significant difference: Free speech is a constitutional hallmark; civil discourse is an opportunity to create and/or enhance understanding. Due to the legal requirements of one and the mere suggestion of the other, it would be easy to create separation between free speech and civil discourse. This would be a mistake. Free speech activities, with the absence of civil discourse, can easily transition to police actions often called civil unrest, disturbances, or disorder. Civil discourse is an opportunity, but it can also be part of the solution to ease hostilities, soften emotions, and provide perspective before and/or during free speech activities.

Why do these efforts matter? A recent study supported by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation reported that engaged students continued as engaged young adults as far as 10 years from their graduation (Karriger et al, 2016). The study specifically cited high-impact practices that serve to train and sustain civic engagement. Ultimately, this paper highlights an evolving model of practice from one institution—rooted in these high-impact practices—from which higher education professionals can borrow and apply within their campus context.

Students are often the center for free speech activities, and they can and should also be the focal point for civil discourse. Civil discourse, when done effectively, can enhance understanding or more clearly deliver the intended message. The latter is often lost during broad, large-scale, and many times, disruptive activities. It is only when conversation takes place that hostilities can lessen and listening and empathy can occur.

Historically, over the last decade, civil discourse movements across higher education have increased. *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*, published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in 2012, represents the work of the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. The report encouraged a “Call to Action” that stressed higher education’s responsibility, in collaboration with our communities, to ensure that students have the skills and knowledge they need to become informed, civically engaged citizens. That engagement includes civil discourse and the need for colleges and universities to support, and most importantly, educate students on how to safely participate and professionally lead change. The report showed more than two-thirds of over 2,400 student

respondents reported that they felt better prepared to have difficult political and social conversations because of their engagement in college.

The U.S. Census reports that less than 20% of 18- to 29-year-olds turn out to vote in national elections (File, 2017). This means higher education must start the conversations about civil discourse and engagement to empower students while on campus and beyond graduation. By offering an assortment of programs and initiatives centered on student mobilization, ECU has seen an increase in voter registration and engagement in national elections (35% increase in the 2016 presidential election over the 2012 election) and student government voter turnout (155% increase), as well as the development of a branded campaign, whose student-created video had more than 18,000 hits in the first three months.

Dating back to 1921, John Dewey (1981) stated that the development of citizens occurred through “doing” rather than simply “knowing,” which has served as a guiding principle for theorists of participatory democracy. In 2006, British researchers Gary Biesta and Robert Lawry argued in the *Cambridge Journal of Education* that educational institutions need to increase their efforts to understand and ultimately impact how young adults “learn democratic citizenship” (p. 64).

Teaching students within collegiate settings to deliberate and sometimes debate important societal issues assists them in their identity development as well as connects them to their civic responsibilities. Civil dialogues teach college students how to constructively disagree, but also encourage valuable skill development such as listening, counterpoint development, and compromise. Martha Nussbaum, of the University of Chicago, stated in her 2010 book *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* that educational institutions are vital in the preparation of students as “complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person’s sufferings and achievements” (p. 2).

Higher education must also understand the evolution of our students and their natural connection with digital and electronic communication. *Civil Discourse in the Age of Social Media*, written by educational researchers Reynol Junco and Arthur Chickering in 2010, argued that with the popularity of newer, faster, and easier methods of online communication, all constituencies on college campuses, including students, will need to know how to engage one another “in constructive dialogue around different religious, political, racial/ethnic, and cultural issues” (p. x). If higher education chooses not to foster civil discourse or open difficult dialogue with college students, it is absurd to assume the conversations won’t be held. Social media is littered with uneducated rants, severe bias, and anonymous posts that can be better addressed if college campuses take the lead rather than sit back and deal with the fallout.

Higher education has a long-standing tradition of taking the lead on these calls to action. In Andrea Leskes’ 2013 *A Plea for Civil Discourse: Needed, the Academy’s Leadership*, she highlighted several best practices occurring around the United States:

- Public dialogue and deliberation is an important part of Franklin Pierce University’s first-year seminar course, required for all incoming students, focusing on civil discourse engagement and ground rule development.
- Emory University developed a series of faculty development programs on civil discourse, fostering dialogue across curriculums and disciplines.

- The Society of Civil Discourse at Loyola University New Orleans created the *Journal of Civil Discourse*, which publishes articles from students, faculty, alumni, and outside professionals. Recently, Loyola added a civil discourse class that also contributes to the journal.

In 2014, SUNY–Albany began experimenting with open dialogue sessions at student and faculty events to encourage and guide conversations rather than presentations or lectures. This structure became so popular that Albany has begun to utilize this approach in their student conferences and has also spread to the State University of New York Student Assembly (statewide student government association) programs.

These types of civility programs and conversations are occurring at many colleges and universities around the world. Recent research demonstrates a direct connection between civil discourse and student learning. In 2005, the *Review of Higher Education* published a study from Robert Rhoads, Victor Saenz, and Rozana Carducci examined how building strong coalitions at the University of Michigan directly correlated with student learning. The study reported that change occurred at a greater level when the community partnered rather than worked in silos. In the 2014 *New Directions for Higher Education: Radical Academia*, Adrianna Kezar and Dan Maxey discussed their research on characteristics of successful institutions that support learning and civil discourse. One of the key practices they found was that formal and informal mission, goals, and curriculum are blended with the campus’ culture of social action and civil discourse. Studies such as these illustrate the importance of the connection between student learning and civil discourse.

### **Facilitating Civil Discourse**

Until recently, East Carolina University had a small culture of marches, protests, and other free speech actions. However, police-involved shootings in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland, followed by the 2016 summer of violence with the mass shooting in Orlando and more police officer-involved shootings in New York, Chicago, Minnesota, Texas, and Louisiana dramatically changed the culture at East Carolina University (ECU). During the 2016-17 academic year, ECU students and student organizations hosted more than 25 campus protests and demonstrations—few compared to many other institutions, but a large increase for our community. Despite the range of topics from Black Lives Matter to campus speakers, ECU experienced virtually no disruption to service or the protest, march, public speech, or activity itself, and no police intervention was required. Why? Civil discourse.

At the start of the 2016 spring semester, ECU students and organizations began to develop a new culture around campus protests and related activity but seemed to lack the fundamentals involved. At the same time, ECU student affairs educators recognized the culture shift occurring and began to develop a parallel culture centered on civil discourse. Student affairs leadership understood their role wasn’t to prevent disagreement but to empower students’ voices. ECU’s focus wasn’t to create division or control a situation, but rather to build coalitions that enable and equip students with the necessary resources to discuss opposing or controversial viewpoints through civil discourse.

At ECU, the aforementioned efforts led to the development of best practices that guided a community focused on civil discourse. Based on our institution’s definition of leadership—“A relational process of inspiring, empowering, and influencing positive change”—ECU student affairs educators successfully engaged and educated students on how civil discourse supports free

speech through speakers, conferences, town halls, policies, and programs (Komives, Lucas, McMahon, 2009, p. 74). This type of practice and engagement within educational research is frequently entitled “civic identity.” Dewey (1981) defined civic identity development as requiring active reflection and participation in what he termed “moral rehearsals.”

As is true across higher education, these “moral rehearsals” at ECU have involved speakers and programs that discuss topics such as religion, culture, socioeconomic status, the environment, gender equity, race relations, and the LGBTQ+ community. Since 2012, the university has welcomed a diverse group of high-interest guest speakers, programs, town halls, and other activities that allow students and community members to share personal and professional perspectives on leadership, service, business, politics, social action, social justice, and literary works. These experiences are presented in many different styles and formats from lectures to presentations and discussions to debates. During the last five years, more than 25,000 students have participated in over 200 student-focused programs. When emotion is harnessed it moves students and communities to overcome fear and address the real issues in hopes of finding solutions.

There are many factors that East Carolina University expects both student affairs areas as well as student organizations to consider during the development and creation of these events. First and foremost is to keep the goal or desired outcome at the focus of the program/expressive activity. Additionally, emotion can serve as both a strength and a hindrance to civil discourse. When emotion is harnessed it moves students and communities to overcome fear and address the real issues in hopes of finding solutions. When that same emotion is uncontrolled, it can blind others with anger and vengeance, which seldom leads to long-term solutions. Much like free speech, procedures, policies, and programs must be consistent and support each other, ensuring that the entire community both understands and appreciates the importance of civil discourse.

The East Carolina department of Student Involvement & Leadership (that includes Greek Life, Student Activities & Organizations, and the Center for Leadership & Civic Engagement, Intercultural Affairs, Student Centers, Student Government Association, and Student Activities Board) in the Division of Student Affairs, requires organizations and departments to complete detailed pre-approval and risk management forms before organizing an event or signing a contract with a speaker. These forms outline costs, marketing plans, and attendance estimates, as well as identify potential safety risks. As a start to building a culture of civil discourse, ECU began to modify these policies and practices to include risk management questions around protests and demonstrations. It now requires the organizers, organizations, and departments to connect their program goals to both the university’s three strategic commitments (public service, student success, and regional transformation) and to our student affairs values (student-centered, inclusion, integrity, respect, service, and excellence). This manner of advance preparatory effort also allows for students and student organizations to work with, not against, campus police to ensure the safest environment possible.

Political scientist Harry Boyte (2012) wrote in a blog post for the *HuffPost* that it is vital for colleges to be “part of communities, not simply ‘partners with’ communities, overcoming the culture of detachment” that too often characterizes colleges and their locales. Continuing our development of a community that values civil discourse, the division has begun to create programming in support of this culture. These types of community-based civil discourse programs have been a priority for the Division of Student Affairs for the past year. Our belief, as supported across the higher education community, is that students and their organizations are modeling the

behavior found at the national level, which is anything but civil. Our goal was to create new programs that would model civil discourse and would supplement the growing activity found within our student community. These programs encourage students to challenge each other, listen intently to differing perspectives, and focus on the goals of suspending judgment, building coalitions, and searching for solutions. Further, these conversations introduce a concept that today’s college students don’t seem to grasp well. Listen to a conflicting opinion, challenge that opinion respectfully, and if disagreement remains, walk away.

The NC Civility Summit developed from conversations among major student organizations (Student Government Association, the Black Student Union, and Student Activities Board) and student affairs staff. ECU students wanted to engage each other and the greater university and Greenville communities in open dialogue on issues from human trafficking to trans rights. The division built a program to both engage in these discussions and illustrate the importance of doing so civilly. This program invites students, faculty, staff, and guests from other institutions and communities to join ECU students in civil discourse focused on expanding dialogue and building solutions. Our job is to create a platform, empower students, and then get out of the way and let them lead.

The same can be said for our Cupola Conversations program, which proactively sets up topical panel discussions with students and community members on issues that are living in the current moment. The program was organized to start a dialogue around the 2016 summer of violence in Orlando, Paris, Chicago, and other places and to make sure students were aware of resources that were available on campus and in the community. As with the NC Civility Summit, Cupola Conversations has two goals: The first is to engage in discussions around important issues, and the second is to demonstrate and model how to engage in civil discourse. Cupola Conversations schedules six conversations that occur throughout the academic year with one each semester occurring over Facebook Live to include the larger global community of students, alumni, and campus community, yet remains flexible enough to also respond to emerging issues.

Indeed, within a matter of days of the president’s rally, ECU student affairs staff began discussing how the first Cupola Conversation for fall semester 2019 would address free speech, the university’s obligations as a state institution, and the importance of civil discourse to tamp down divisive rhetoric and foster constructive dialogue. On the second day of fall classes, just one month after “send her back” chants shook the campus, region, and nation, a Cupola Conversation was held featuring a panel comprised of the Interim Chancellor, a divisional vice-chancellor, an academic dean, and the Student Government Association president. As a result of ECU’s intentional efforts to promote civil discourse, administrators had a ready-built framework and forum designed to address the situation; allow students, faculty, and staff to express themselves freely and openly; and provided an inclusive space for cross-community dialogue. Embedding events such as these into the fabric of university programming allows the university to intentionally and authentically lead the way in promoting civil discourse centered around contemporary issues, while simultaneously being nimble enough to react and respond to emerging hot topics that could otherwise erupt and inflame the community with discord and incivility.

Our culture has changed and both programs have received local and state attention and have resulted in East Carolina University and the city of Greenville being identified as leaders in student empowerment, community involvement, and civil discourse. These programs and policy additions, centered on civil discourse, have led to an increase in voter engagement in national elections, student government participation, and student-led dialogue initiatives in partnership with

senior administrators. Continued plans to grow our culture of civil discourse include student organization training sessions on conducting successful protests and demonstrations, a civil speaker series, and annual Play for Peace Concert.

These coalitions are built not on issues but rights because student organizations are talking and listening to each other to enact positive change as it states in East Carolina’s leadership definition. Franklin McCain, a member of the Greensboro Four who staged the sit-in protest in February 1960, spoke at ECU in 2013 about how civil discourse can create positive change in society. His death in 2014 didn’t mean the conversation ended. The people delivering the messages may change, but the topics, and now most importantly these types of civil conversations, will continue, and higher education and student affairs must play an active role in ensuring, teaching, and preserving civil discourse.

### **Voter Mobilization**

Up until 2015, ECU offered very few formal programming opportunities for students centered around voter engagement activities. While ECU actively promoted the value of participating in local, regional, and federal elections, we put few resources toward this effort. Either because of concern about a “slippery slope” approach to voter engagement—where we might tread into politically difficult territory as a public institution—or other resources and activities taking priority, this had simply not been an area of emphasis for our student affairs professionals.

However, during summer 2015, the Andrew Goodman Foundation—a nonprofit that promotes increasing youth voter turnout during elections and informed voting—approached our civic engagement office with a grant offer. This grant provided two paid student positions and a small programming budget. A year later, we received an additional grant from the Campus Vote Project through the Fair Elections Center to focus on student voting issues. Through its Democracy Fellowship program, the Campus Vote Project provides funds to student leaders to influence and support democratic engagement work happening on our campus. As a result of receiving these grants and student support, the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement (CLCE) at ECU developed a voter engagement plan centered on a three-tiered approach of voter registration, education, and mobilization. This plan detailed partnerships with governmental relations staff, student government representatives, and civic engagement, leadership, and service educators on campus, to build a coalition to coordinate efforts.

Throughout the summer and fall 2016 semester, CLCE prepared for, developed relationships with, and educated students on the importance of voting and how to vote. This included purchasing TurboVote, an online “one-stop-shop” voter registration, and engagement service. Using TurboVote, students could register to vote, request a mail-in ballot, or update their address. Our promotion and education of this service was critical to the success of registration efforts on campus. The service also provided text message and email reminders for every election, local or national, including polling place, election dates, and form submission deadlines. The focus on the 2016 general election served as a foundation for continuing voter engagement work at East Carolina University. CLCE worked to organize the university’s first voter engagement coalition for students, faculty, and staff in fall 2016. The purpose of the coalition was to create a diverse cross-section of stakeholders at the university to promote voter engagement throughout their networks to advance and increase this work institutionally. Many offices and departments across

campus promoted various voter engagement events, and the coalition aimed to connect and promote these events through weekly updates.

CLCE worked with university transit to establish a partnership focused on voter mobilization. The primary goal was to create a designated bus route to run between a minimum of three polling precincts where students were most likely to vote based on precinct assignments. Secondary goals included the addition of stops to current bus routes at polling locations and the distribution of educational materials regarding where to vote based on address. An additional objective of this partnership was to promote polling precincts on bus routes during election day. Two buses ran between 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. to four polling locations on and off-campus, exceeding our initial goal of three polling locations. Approximately 250 students utilized this service throughout the day. CLCE continued to offer this service for the midterm elections in 2018.

Since 2016, our staff and students have worked closely with the local board of elections through attending monthly meetings, holding individual educational meetings for employees, residence hall address verification, and creating resources for students. This relationship proved beneficial in moving a one-stop early voting polling location to the new student center for the 2019 municipal elections and 2020 primary elections. One-stop voting (commonly known as “early voting”) allows any registered voter to cast an absentee ballot in person on select days before election day and has been an important initiative in North Carolina for several years. In total, 1,763 people voted at the student center site in the 2020 primary, which is 14.1% of all voters in the county. For the 2019 municipal elections, a total of 775 people voted at the same site (18.2% of all voters in the county). According to our 2016 report from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) from the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University, the number of our students who voted early increased by 3.6% between the 2012 and 2016 election. Early voting was the most popular method of voting for our students, accounting for 58.9% of total votes. ECU regularly uses the NSLVE data reports to assess our democratic engagement efforts and helps inform and identify areas for improvement in our democratic engagement initiatives.

ECU is currently prioritizing the work of democratic and voter engagement efforts on campus and has the support of upper administration and national partners such as the Andrew Goodman Foundation, Campus Vote Project, and the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition.

### **Democratic Educational Initiatives**

Institutions of higher education have long committed to preparing students for civic life by being contributing and productive citizens. According to Branson (1998), “there is no more important task than the development of an informed, effective, and responsible citizenry.” It is a shared responsibility among educators to find ways to incorporate civic education into the daily lives of students, both inside and outside the classroom. Educational opportunities can be effective in influencing students’ civic habits and values while they are still relatively young (Sherrod et al., 2002). We have several relevant forms of civic education within our institution, including service-learning, civic action, deliberative dialogue, and courses within the curriculum.

At East Carolina University, the primary responsibility of democratic engagement falls under the responsibilities of the CLCE. While not solely responsible for hosting, promoting, or implementing democratic engagement initiatives, this is the only entity on campus where democratic engagement is included within the mission and vision of the center. Service, leadership, and democratic engagement commitments range from one-time events to weekly,

semester-long opportunities, to intensive immersion experiences. All opportunities are designed with an educational focus to support students as they learn about themselves and their community, take action through leadership and civic engagement, and advocate for lasting positive social change. CLCE works in a non-partisan way to bring programming to students that encourage them to be engaged in our democracy and active responsible citizens. Democratic engagement programs include voter registration events, a trending topic political film series, opportunities for civil dialogue, and a semester-long citizens’ academy. ECU’s citizenship education efforts, including civic leadership programs, speakers, and a semester-long, co-curricular seminar called “Citizen U,” are designed to help students reflect on their role within an engaged democracy. We heed Barber’s (1992) encouragement to educate students in the “arts of democracy” and build on the long tradition of citizenship education so this practice is passed intentionally from one generation to the next.

Citizen U is an innovation in campus-community partnerships that support civic and political engagement. The purpose of Citizen U is to educate students about how to be responsible, engaged citizens, and to inspire them to be involved in their communities and our democracy as change agents. The curriculum includes information about state and local government, how to be civically and democratically engaged, what it means to be a responsible citizen, as well as media and personal financial literacy. Our partners involved in the implementation of Citizen U include representatives from the Political Science department, city officials, local board of elections, university attorney, School of Communication, and local businesses and civic organizations. CLCE identified student learning outcomes and student leadership competencies based on Corey Seemiller’s work (2013), as well as the Social Change Model of Leadership Development.

Citizen U falls under a larger movement at East Carolina University. What started as a grassroots student movement in 2016, ECUUnited has developed to be far more than a simple hashtag. ECUUnited challenges the ECU community to bridge the worlds of ideas and actions. Through its programs, advocacy, and education, the movement works to deepen the understanding of the issues that impact our local and global communities. This movement serves as the home for current and future initiatives that fit within this ideal including the NC Civility Summit and Cupola Conversations. As the ECUUnited campaign grows, additional programs have been created to fit under this common theme -- Netflix & Chat, Cultural Cuisine & Chat, What’s the Tea, Green DOT, and The Conversation.

With an institutional focus on global learning as a key objective across the curriculum in 2017, we provided leadership for both domestic and international service-learning and global learning assessment. This educational approach sits at the intersection of intercultural learning, experiential education, and civic engagement. Sumka, Porter, and Piacitelli (2015) note that “global learning denotes any learning that raises awareness of global connectedness, regardless of boundaries” (p. 301). With this approach in mind, we have offered some training opportunities for faculty to learn more about global service-learning as a teaching methodology. Additionally, we have incorporated the Global Engagement Survey into our domestic and international immersion programming, the ECU Leads leadership certificate (a three-year program that introduces students to both leadership theory and experiential leadership learning), and LeaderShape programs. Our approach to educating students on the value of global connectedness is directly connected to how we educate students to be engaged citizens.

### **Conclusion**

The Division of Student Affairs at East Carolina University is developing and embedding civic learning and democratic engagement on campus through a framework of programming and action that includes an understanding of democratic values, capacities to engage diverse perspectives and people, and commitment to collective civic problem-solving. The call for civic engagement and civil discourse has awakened a renewed interest in promoting institutional citizenship, building new campus-community initiatives, and promoting a broad sense of civic responsibility in higher education. Through the combination of activities, events, and programmatic efforts, East Carolina University has built a culture that actively engages students in conversations around difficult topics, building an inclusive climate with an eye toward institutionalization. Indeed, this institutional effort is one of many reasons why ECU could respond to the “send her back” controversy in a genuine manner that does not feel forced onto students. Cupola Conversations are yet one of many initiatives where students know ECU promotes myriad opportunities for dialogue and disagreement, reducing the likelihood that the campus will erupt in violence or fan the flames of incivility.

These civil discourse efforts illustrate that teaching students within a collegiate setting to deliberate and debate important societal issues assists them in their identity development as well as connects them to their civic responsibilities. Civil dialogues teach our students how to constructively disagree, but also encourage valuable skill development such as listening, counterpoint development, and compromise. Not only does this approach help shape a culture within student affairs and among student affairs educators, but it also forges pathways for partnerships with faculty colleagues. Experiential learning activities can reflexively support opportunities for classroom dialogues, and classroom settings can provide a curricular foundation for applied civic learning. Campuses that engage in dialogue create communities of understanding and informed decision-making, enhance student learning and skill development, and address students’ sense of belonging.

### References

- Barber, B. (1992). *An aristocracy of everyone: The politics of education and the future of America*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Biesta, G., & Lawy, R. (2006). From teaching citizenship to learning democracy: overcoming individualism in research, policy, and practice. *Cambridge Journal of education*, 36(1), 63-79.
- Boyte, H. (2012, September). Hope and higher education - The powers of public narratives. Retrieved from [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/college-community-partnerships\\_b\\_1917951](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/college-community-partnerships_b_1917951).
- Branson, M. S. (1998, September). The role of civic education: A forthcoming education policy task force position paper from the Communitarian Network. Retrieved from [http://www.civiced.org/papers/articles\\_role.html](http://www.civiced.org/papers/articles_role.html).
- Dewey, J. (1981). *The Philosophy of John Dewey* (J. J. McDermott, Ed). University of Chicago Press.
- File, T. (2017). Voting in America: A Look at the 2016 Presidential Election. Census Blogs.
- Junco, R., & Chickering, A. W. (2010). Civil discourse in the age of social media. *About Campus*, 15(4), 12-18.
- Karriger, K., McMillan, J., Buchanan, C., & Gusler, S. (2016). *The Long Term Impact of Learning to Deliberate: A Follow-up Study of Democracy Fellows and a Class Cohort*. Kettering Foundation Press.
- Kezar, A. and Maxey, D. (2014), Collective Action on Campus Toward Student Development and Democratic Engagement. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2014: 31-41.
- Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. (2009). *Exploring leadership: For college students who want to make a difference*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Leskes, A. (2013). A plea for civil discourse: Needed, the academy's leadership. *Liberal Education*, 99(4). American Association of Colleges and Universities: Washington, DC.
- Nash, R. J., Bradley, D. L., & Chickering, A. W. (2008). *How to talk about hot topics on campus: From polarization to moral conversation*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities* (Vol. 2). Princeton, NJ: Princeton university press.

- Rhoads, R. A., Saenz, V., & Carducci, R. (2005). Higher education reform as a social movement: The case of affirmative action. *The Review of Higher Education*, 28(2), 191-220.
- Rogers, K., & Fandos, N. (2019, July 14). Fanning flames, Trump unleashes a taunt: ‘Go Back’. *The New York Times*, p. A1.
- Seemiller, C. (2013). *The student leadership competencies guidebook: Designing intentional leadership learning and development*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Sherrod, L. R., Flanagan, C., & Youniss, J. (2002). Dimensions of citizenship and opportunities for youth development: The what, why, when, where, and who of citizenship development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(4).
- Sumka, S., Porter, M. C., & Piacitelli, J. (2015). *Working side by side: Creating alternative breaks as catalysts for global learning, student leadership, and social change*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

## Authors



**Dennis McCunney, Ph.D.** serves as the Director of Intercultural Affairs and adjunct faculty member of ECU’s Leadership Studies Minor and Master of Public Administration Program. Dr. McCunney earned his PhD in Higher Education Administration from Morgan State University and his dissertation focus was on the formation of student culture around civic engagement, leadership and activism. Dr. McCunney has presented his research in various arenas, including the Global Service-Learning Summit, Leadership Educators Institute, and the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement. Recent publications include articles in AAC&U’s *Diversity & Democracy* (special issue on undergraduate public health), *Metropolitan Universities Journal* and *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*.



**Jeremy B. Tuchmayer, Ph.D.** is senior associate director of Student Affairs Assessment, Research, and Planning at East Carolina University. In his professional capacity, Dr. Tuchmayer primarily studies institutional factors that predict retention, persistence, and degree attainment. His broader research agenda examines the ways in which state and institutional policies and structures facilitate student success, as well as labor market effects, graduate school aspirations, and commitment to civic and community engagement of recent college graduates. Dr. Tuchmayer earned his bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, his master’s degree in Higher Education Administration from Vanderbilt University, and his doctorate degree in Educational Research and Policy Analysis from North Carolina State University.



**Tara Kermiet** is the Associate Director of the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement at East Carolina University. She currently provides leadership, vision, and strategy for leadership development, community engagement and democratic engagement initiatives at ECU. Prior to her time at ECU, Tara served as the Assistant Director of University Commons & Student Involvement at the University of West Florida, a Residential Learning Coordinator at Virginia Tech and as the Director of Student Activities and Service at LaGrange College. She received her M.Ed. in Higher Education Student Affairs from the University of South Carolina and her B.A. in Communication from Virginia Tech. She will begin pursuing her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of North Carolina Wilmington in Fall 2020.



**Chris Stansbury** is in his 14<sup>th</sup> year at East Carolina University. Since 2015, he has been serving as the Associate Vice Chancellor and Senior Operating Officer (Chief of Staff) for the Division of Student Affairs. In addition to his Chief of Staff responsibilities, which includes overseeing University Commencement, Chris supervises the Office of Student Transitions (including new student and transfer orientations, convocation and the first year seminar), ECU Student Media, Technology Support, Student Veteran Services and Divisional Communications. Before returning to his alma mater in 2007, Chris worked for the New Bern Police Department (NC) as the Public Information Officer. Prior to that role, he was an Emmy Award winning television broadcaster in Greenville, NC and Nashville, TN for 11 years.



**Erik Kneubuehl, Ed.D.** currently serves as Associate Vice Chancellor at East Carolina University as well as the institution’s Free Speech Deputy. With over 25 years of experience in Student Affairs, he has held leadership positions at Virginia Tech, Florida Atlantic University, and SUNY Maritime College, and the Fashion Institute of Technology. Outside of his institution, Dr. Kneubuehl is engaged in NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education), local community boards, and presents nationally on civil discourse, conflict resolution, and team cohesion. Originally from the Bronx, Dr. Kneubuehl is the first person in eight generations to earn a college degree with a bachelor’s from Florida Atlantic University, as well as a master’s from the University of South Carolina and a doctorate in organization leadership from Northeastern University.



# EJOURNAL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1

**“Change is the Essential Process of all  
Existence:” Transformation through Civic  
Learning and Democratic Engagement’s Theory**

Molly Kerby  
Western Kentucky University

## Introduction

During the early years of the American Association of State Colleges & Universities' (AASCU) American Democracy Project (ADP), a handful of civic-minded leaders in higher education began to grapple with what it meant to teach students to be engaged citizens. The project began with seven initiatives focusing on efforts such as voting, stewardship of land, political engagement, and citizenship to build a foundation for increasing civic literacy, democratic agency, and community engagement among college students (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2019). Membership and participation in ADP grew quickly and it seemed an organic revolution of sorts was building in higher education. Across the country, centers focusing on engaged democracy gained popularity among public institutions, and efforts to develop programs focusing on community engagement became commonplace.

Historically, higher education has provided students with the skills to successfully engage in philosophical debates, defend democratic values, and gain a *spirit of public mindedness*. These are the foundations that set our institutions apart from vocational training and job-skills instruction. In light of the current climate and relentless attacks on higher education, colleges and universities need to remain steadfast in their common goal of creating democratically engaged citizens who are proficient in the areas of civic dialogue, ethical practices, and moral problem-solving even in work-force development curricula. Unfortunately, college and university administrators find themselves in a quagmire when forced to close liberal arts programs responsible for teaching civic skills due to state and federal budget cuts that have left institutions with little funds to thrive.

As education professionals report, enrollment in traditional higher education institutions has continued to drop over the last six years (Fain, 2017; Green, 2018; Vedder, 2018). While some cite the improved economy and availability of jobs, others argue the price of higher education and the daunting nature student loan debt repayment have deterred enrollment. No matter what experts cite as the main culprit, most agree public opinion and disdain for higher education plays at least a small role in declining numbers of incoming students. There is growing opinion that only STEM+H degrees provide students with the necessary training to do tasks needed for skilled jobs (for example, engineering and nursing). This ideology represents a paradigm or cultural shift in the public's view on the nature and value of post-secondary education and the college degree. Some critics believe colleges harm our country and provide slanted views that disrupt our communities and political system. Unfortunately, this opinion has permeated our national climate and added to the devaluing of educational programming aimed at critical thinking, civic engagement, and diversity.

Higher education is undergoing monumental change. So, what happens to these departments and colleges when budgets get tight and critical decisions to fold academic programs must be made? How do faculty, staff, and students survive when faced with defending their existence and forced to come up with creative ways to maintain resilient departments, programs, and centers focusing on civic engagement, social justice, and diversity? How do we embed our valuable work into changing social expectations of workforce development and education? In short, how do we change effectively and responsibly? Developing theoretical foundations from which to build social action for the next few decades is imperative.

### Origins of Social Change Theory

To fully understand the origin of social change theories, it is necessary to examine the works of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin's and their writings on the nature of evolution. Spencer and Darwin both hypothesized about evolutionary change in nature and the similarities between the biological and social sciences (Freeman, Bajema, Blacking, Carneiro, Cowgill, Genovés, ... & Heyduk, D., 1974). Darwin's most prominent premise, grounded in the natural and biological sciences, was the notion of natural selection. In his seminal works, Darwin noted that a) all organisms display and share diverse yet common traits, b) all organisms change over time, c) all organisms exhibit high growth rates (more than can survive), and d) those organisms with the greatest survival traits will dominate in the next generation (Darwin, 2004/1859). Spencer, while fascinated with Darwin's theories of evolution, saw social evolution as related but unique. Juxtaposed to Darwin, Spencer posits that a) social evolution is the natural tendency of society to create an "ideal state" in which rules and norms control individuals and abate conflict, b) social evolution is functional and, by nature, aides in the development of differentiating subsystems, c) social evolution is marked by an increase of individuals in the workforce and division of labor, and d) most closely related to Darwin, is Spencer's imperative that societies with the most control over resources have the greatest probability of surviving (survival of the fittest) (Perrin, 1976). In short, Darwin and Spencer both reasoned that diversity, evolution, and resilience are the impetus for change in the order of things, whether they are biological or sociological.

While it can be argued that functionalists, like Emile Durkheim, were attempting to move away from evolutionary social change theory, it is clear from his translated work like the *Division of Labor in Society* (Durkheim, 1997) and *Suicide* (Durkheim, 1951) that Durkheim's premises were grounded in the notions of systematic, comprehensive social change (Merton, 1934; Hinkle, 1976). It is apparent in his conception of *sui generis* that he agrees with Spencer's premise of the ideal state. Durkheim's *sui generis* grappled with the origin of ways of thinking and collective thoughts – where they came from, how they changed, and how they were different among societies. In this sense, Durkheim, like Spencer, believed internalized constructs become a part of the public reality and these authenticities vary among subgroups and gradually change over time (Hinke, 1976). Similarly, in his well-known work the Communist Manifesto, Marx encourages minority classes to expose the relationship of power and dominance from the majority and to move toward a balance of power or equilibrium (Chrysochoou & Volpato, 2004). Second, Marx makes it clear that declarations from the minority classes must be cohesive and consistent and create a widely known, distinguishable, and resilient identity (for example, *Black Lives Matter*). Ultimately, Marx's manifesto created a roadmap for the minority class to influence social change.

These are merely a handful of the theorist who believed social change is a natural process with ebbs and flows. Like nature, the constructs of social life are in constant motion, continually moving toward homeostasis. The goal of social homeostasis, then, would be to create the *ideal state* and sustain effective, resilient *subsystems*. In the same sense, this is what all organisms do until met with some sort of "conflict" that disrupts the current environment – the conflict then precipitates movement toward a new state or paradigm. Though the origins of social change have been studied at length, more contemporary theorist built upon the works of these classic theories. Some lean toward a *planned* notion of social change, while others argue that an organic, *emergent* change creates sustainable systems. Either way, theories build from one and another over time

although applications may vary under different circumstances. The current state of higher education and student learning serves as a prime example of complex social change. The external and internal forces pushing for transformation are often in conflict and threaten the survival of traditional institutions and the conventional delivery of education.

### Practical Applications

Each semester, faculty at a public four-year university teach an undergraduate, general education *public problem-solving* course developed from the roots of the American Democracy Project (ADP). For this course, *public problems* refer to a range of multifaceted challenges with shifting conditions and complex interdependencies that integrate the natural and social systems. Students explore ways to include diverse voices in strategic plans, identify important stakeholders when working toward community change, and mediate/moderate risk factors to create community resilience. For example, students wrestle with questions like “How and why do systems change?” “What role does citizenship play in community change?” “How do we create resilient and sustainable change within a system?” “How do we build protective factors in communities to mediate and/or moderate risk and resilience?” And, “Why are effective change agents in systems important?” Armed with the principles of systems theory and a thorough understanding of the conceptions underlying complex civic struggles, students participate in a project-based learning experience designed to reinforce the principles of systematic change.

The roots of the public problem-solving course are embedded in the works of Kurt Lewin (1947). Lewin, considered the father of action research, or community-based participatory research, is best known for his development of a planned approach to social change. In addition to field theory and action research, the planned model of organizational change includes steps to “...unfreeze, move, and refreeze” previous conceptions to create positive change at the group, organization, or community level (Burns, 2004, pp. 985 – 986). This concept suggests the process of change begins with someone or something that creates instability (*unfreezes*), motivates a shift toward a new norm through planned behavior modification (*moves*), then establishes a transformed culture or norm (*refreezes*). For example, Figure 1 is an illustration of traditional linear, or event-oriented, thinking. Using Lewin’s logic, the root causes (both A and B) are the current behaviors (*Note: A and B are often in conflict with one another*). The arrows pointing to C represent movement toward a change in behaviors A and B. The path leading from C to D then represents refreezing and D becomes the “new norm.”

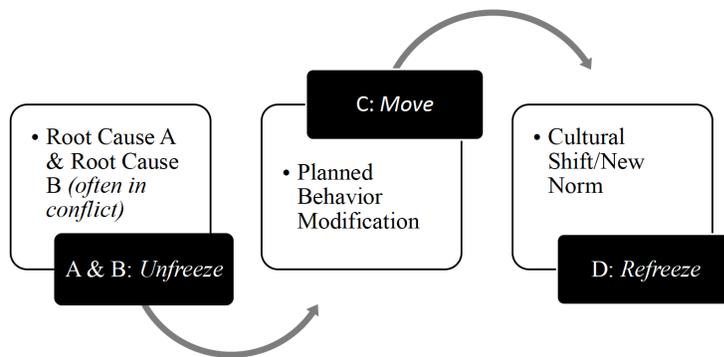


Figure 1. Traditional or Event Oriented Thinking

Many modern scholars, however, criticize the scripted notion of planned change theory and favor fluid, organic change that *emerges* naturally and focuses on continuous transformation. In his influential work, Peter Senge (1990) argues that systems thinking is key to understand why some “fixes” work and others do not or often backfire.

Systems thinking recognizes that all things are interconnected and problems are often extremely complex and not easily solved by linear reasoning. Figure 2 represents a visualization of systems

thinking. In the systems model, root causes do not exist in a vacuum; thus, identifying one single problem is not necessary or even practical. Instead, systems thinking focuses on how components interact and function as a whole with change emerging as a result of complex interactions. Also, the cyclical diagram in Figure 2 indicates that change is also dependent on other forces (E), often unknown, complex, and external to the problem. And, finally, the model in Figure 2 allows for feedback and continual improvement. The question then is what is the most effective way to create change within a complex system; planned, emergent, or, perhaps, both.

While there is historical merit in planned and emergent change, Figure 3 offers a different approach that combines both theories. From the left, the model indicates the need for change, or shifting, is constantly pushed by the national climate, or factors external to institutions, organizations, and communities.

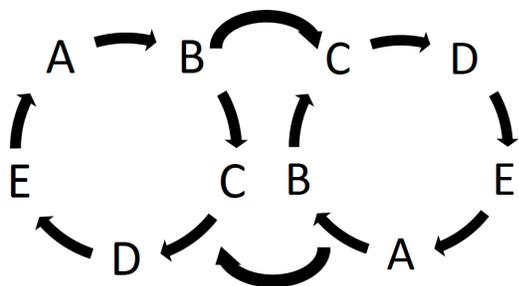


Figure 2. Systems Thinking

that combines both theories. From the left, the model indicates the need for change, or shifting, is constantly pushed by the national climate, or factors external to institutions, organizations, and communities. The national climate, in this case, refers to the social, economic, political, and ecological systems that drive the collective forces in our culture. These influences often impact people differently and challenge social, economic, and ecological equity and directly pressure, in the case of higher education, the internal climate and culture of colleges and universities.

The arrows leading to the outcomes take two paths: risks and/or protective factors.

When external forces begin to shift, the internal culture and climate (emerge), the risks of organizational failure are significant and the probability of collapse is heightened. Strategically adding protective factors, however, can mediate or moderate the risk and increase the chances of resilience. Protective factors in the model create an environment in which *planned* positive changes can occur and mitigate or eliminate a crisis. For example, Vincent Tinto (1975) began using classical theoretical analogies when researching declining retention rates in higher education by drawing parallels between what he called the *dropout process* and Durkheim’s notion of suicide. In other words, Tinto believed dropping out of college was not just something students decide all of a sudden but is a process caused by multiple mitigating factors and circumstances, many of which are external to the institution itself. The challenge then became creating ways (*protective factors*) to mitigate risks beyond grade attainment and evaluation of academic performance. Based on the theoretical work of Tinto and others (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979; Bean, 1985; and Cabrera, Nora, & Castañeda, 1993), researchers began to identify protective factors that led to persistence in higher education; among the most powerful indicators was student engagement.

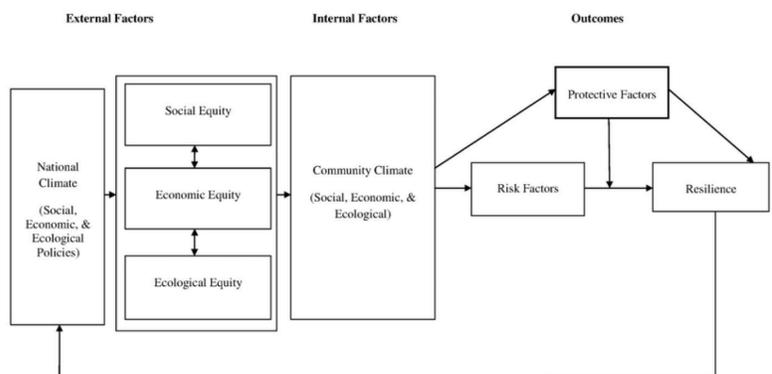


Figure 3. Model of Organizational Resilience (Kerby & Mallinger, 2015)

By the mid to late 1990s, most colleges and universities were concerned more with what students *did* while they were in college than what degrees they sought or where they would work after graduation. Results of national studies and surveys like the National Student Engagement Survey (NSSE) (2018) concluded that for students to persist and thrive in school, they must practice critical thinking, problem-solving, civic communication, and engaged democracy in courses and programs. To achieve these goals, colleges and universities developed programs aimed at creating planned change (Figure 4. Lewin's Model).

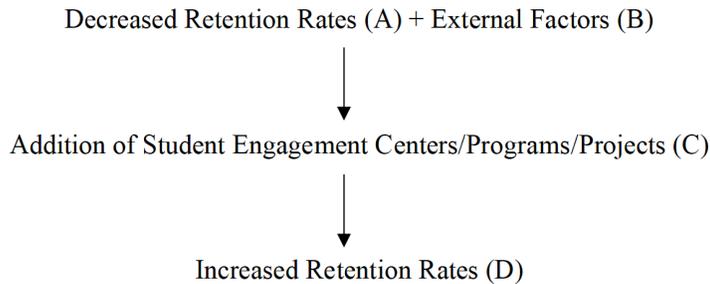


Figure 4. Retention and Lewin's Model

While this is a simple application, it is a good illustration of how quick fixes can work well in the short run but might have trouble standing the test of time. The model in Figure 4 neglects to articulate the wide range of external factors involved (B), the

complexity of solutions necessary for change (C), or the varying degrees of retention, which include transferring to another institution, *stop out* (taking time off), dismissal due to insufficient academic performance (D/F/W rates), and dropout (A & D).

The work done in the last 20 years or so employed the notions of planned change; a) we needed something new to transpire to encourage students to persist (unfreeze), b) we developed centers and programs to increase students engagement (move), and, most importantly, c) we shifted the paradigm of the student college/university experience (refreeze). While *unfreezing* and *moving* are normally introduced through the Theory of Planned Change or Reason Action (Falko, Presseau, & Araújo-Soares, 2014; Fishein & Ajzen, 1975), the aftermath of “refreezing” is where we begin to see Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement’s (CLDE) Theory of Emergent Change blossom (Hoffman, Domagal-Goldman, King, & Robinson, 2018). Hoffman (2015) fashioned four concepts vital to the natural work of civic learning and engaged democracy: a) integral, b) relational, c) organic, and d) generative. According to Hoffman, civic engagement should be fully embedded in our institutional practices, curriculum, and campus culture. Institutions should provide faculty, staff, and students with the opportunities to build relationships that are authentic, flexible, and continually regenerating.

In the example of retention and persistence, higher education administrators, faculty, and student affairs personnel created programs and initiatives that grew through multiple networks. Building on CLDE’s Theory of Emergent Change, civic-minded institutions have shifted and engrained the ideas of visionary work, engaged pedagogy, purposeful learning outcomes, and strategic planning in every fiber of the work they do. Higher education, like many organizations, is both a social and economic institution. On the one hand, colleges and universities exist to serve the public good by educating and preparing students to be engaged citizens who make thoughtful decisions in their communities. On the other hand, colleges and universities must generate revenue to, proverbially, *keep the lights on*. When federal and state higher education funds are plentiful, the latter is less important. In the last several years, however, funding has been slashed at most schools causing some to close their doors and others to consolidate (Educational Dive, 2019). So,

what happens *now*? What do we do when funding runs out for student engagement centers and programs? What makes the CLDE Theory of Emergent Change relevant here?

Going back to the earlier example of the public-problem solving class, many of the answers to our dilemma are products of embedded continuing feedback loops. Emergent change is not a prescribed process like planned change; it is messy and unpredictable. Using this theoretical framework, it is crucial to infuse student and civic engagement throughout the entire curriculum, major fields as well as general education, so the principles survive with or without institutional support of centers, programs, and special initiatives. CLDE's Theory of Emergent Change addresses this in the five concepts of cultivating campus change (Hoffman, Domagal-Goldman, King, & Robinson, 2018):

1. The ideologies of ethical reasoning, moral decision-making, and global and cultural awareness are not, nor should they be, bound by disciplinary structures – they should exist inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary. Also, these principles should be practiced in all interactions and structures within the institution (*Civic Ethos*).
2. All students should be allowed to practice democratic engagement and debate and taught to think critically about current and historical complex issues that have public consequences (*Civic Literacy & Skill Building*).
3. The art of engagement should not be reserved for students who major in certain fields or take the few general education courses where civic inquiry is explored. The ideas of deliberation, historical reasoning, and deliberative dialogue should be included in all general *and* major-specific courses (*Civic Inquiry integrated within the majors and general education*).
4. Through community engagement projects and collaborative projects, students learn to work with diverse groups, promote sustainability, and work toward the public good – again, no matter what field of study (*Civic Action*).
5. And, finally, institutions must imbed educational practices that teach students to work across lines of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender expression, political ideology, income, ability, geography, etc. (*Civic Agency*).

As budget cuts force colleges and universities to cut programs, especially in the humanities and social sciences, it is imperative that the work done in the area of civic and democratic engagement over the past 20+ years take root in the curriculum as a whole – this is the underpinning of the CLDE Theory of Emergent Change. While emergent change seems less forced and flexible, it is important to note that seeds of change are most often planted purposely; hence, planned versus emergent change is, in principle, a false dichotomy. For civic-minded education to grow and flourish organically, the seeds must be planted in the right places, at the right time and given the nourishment needed for growth. In any case, planned and emergent change work better hand in hand rather than in opposition – it's not all or nothing.

The model in Figure 3 acknowledges the influence of the national and state climate on the internal structure of the institution. The national push toward anti-intellectualism, the disdain for liberal arts, and the push for STEM+H degrees and job-readiness programs have affected the way state governments appropriate funds for higher education. Performance-based funding models in many states have altered internal resource allocation and management resulting in smaller operating budgets and cuts to programs deemed unnecessary for workforce development by

governing bodies and state officials. Consequently, the public problem-solving course detailed as an example in this paper was part of a program dog-eared for transformation because the interdisciplinary department in which it was housed dissolved due to financial hardship and reorganization. Fortunately, this course as well as others like it were purposely purposed as general education courses early on and will remain part of that curriculum as long as faculty exist to teach the material. In other words, though the department is gone, the seeds were sown, their roots grew and developed, and the courses will continue to be offered. This example combines the notions of emergent and planned change. While external forces have resulted in emerging changes within internal structures, protective factors, like embedding courses in general education, allow the content of these essential civic engagement programs to continue thriving despite external forces. Students who elect to take these courses and participate in civic engagement programs and initiatives, in turn, are more likely to engage in democratic actions, therefore, impacting organizational and national climates. In this case, the protective factors serve as a planned action that nurtures emergent social change.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Measuring student learning in terms of civic engagement can be a daunting task. Assessment, however, is crucial for determining what programs, initiatives, and projects are successful in affecting change and meeting student learning outcomes. Further investigation and data collection are necessary to determine what pedagogical methods are effective in teaching students to be engaged global citizens. In the age of digital media, part of efficacious democratic citizenship hinges on the consumers' ability to differentiate between fact and fiction in popular media. Teaching students to intellectually discern among reputable news sources is critical in civic education as well. Finally, it is vital for higher education professionals to assess civic programs, projects, and initiatives beyond the scope of mandatory course evaluations and accreditation efforts. Assessment provides information necessary to improve program delivery and determine if student learning outcomes are being achieved, thus creating a culture of on-going civic learning and education.

## References

- American Association of State Colleges and Universities. (2019). About the American Democracy Project. Retrieved from <https://www.aascu.org/programs/ADP/>
- Bean, J.P. (1985). Interaction effects based on class level in an explanatory model of college student dropout syndrome. *American Educational Research Journal*, 22(1), 35-64. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1162986>
- Burnes, B. (2004). Kurt Lewin and the planned approach to change: a re-appraisal. *Journal of Management studies*, 41(6), 977-1002. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2004.00463.x>
- Cabrera, A.F., Nora, A., and Castañeda, M.B. (1993). College persistence: Structural equations modeling test of an integrated model of student retention. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 64(2), 123-139. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2960026>
- Chryssochoou, X., & Volpato, C. (2004). Social influence and the power of minorities: An analysis of the communist manifesto. *Social Justice Research*, 17(4), 357-388.
- Darwin, C. (2004). *On the origin of species, 1859*. Routledge.
- Durkheim, E. (1951). *Suicide: a study in sociology [1897]*. Translated by JA Spaulding and G. Simpson. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1997). *Division of labor in society [1893]*. Translated by W.D. Hall. New York: Free Press.
- Educational Dive. (2019). *A look at trends in college and university consolidation since 2016*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationdive.com/news/how-many-colleges-and-universities-have-closed-since-2016/539379/>
- Fain, P. (2017, December 20). Enrollment slide continues, at slower rate. *Inside Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/12/20/national-enrollments-decline-sixth-straight-year-slower-rate>
- Falko, F. S., Presseau, J., & Araújo-Soares, V. (2014) Time to retire the theory of planned behavior. *Health Psychology Review*, 8(1), 1-7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17437199.2013.869710>
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Freeman, D., Bajema, C. J., Blacking, J., Carneiro, R. L., Cowgill, U. M., Genovés, S., ... & Heyduk, D. (1974). The evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer [and comments and replies]. *Current Anthropology*, 15(3), 211-237.
- Green, D. (Host). (2018, May 25). Morning Edition: Why Is Undergraduate College Enrollment Declining? An interview with Elisa Nadworny [Radio broadcast episode]. <https://www.npr.org/2018/05/25/614315950/why-is-undergraduate-college-enrollment->

declining

Hinkle, R. C. (1976). Durkheim's evolutionary conception of social change. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 17(3), 336-346.

Hoffman, D., Domagal-Goldman, J., King, S., and Robinson, V. (2018). Higher education's role in enacting a thriving democracy: Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change [White Paper]. Retrieved from NASPA.org: <http://apps.naspa.org/files/CLDE-Theory-of-Change.pdf>

Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method, and reality in social science; Social equilibria and social change. *Human Relations*, 1(1), 5 – 41.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001872674700100103>

Merton, R. K. (1934). Durkheim's division of labor in society. *American Journal of Sociology*, 40(3), 319-328.

National Survey of Student Engagement. (2018). *NSSE 2018 overview*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.

Perrin, R. G. (1976). Herbert Spencer's four theories of social evolution. *American Journal of Sociology*, 81(6), 1339-1359. <https://doi.org/10.1086/226226>

Pascarella, E.T., and Terenzini, P.T. (1979). Interaction effects in Spady and Tinto's conceptual models of college. *Sociology of Education*, 52(4), 197-210.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2112401>

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday/Currency.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research* 45(1), 89 – 112. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1170024>

Vedder, R. (2015, July 5). Why enrollment is shrinking at many American colleges. Forbes. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardvedder/2018/07/05/academic-deserted-villages/#f0c19765121b>

CHANGE IS THE ESSENTIAL PROCESS OF ALL EXISTENCE

**Author**



**Molly Kerby** is the Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness at Western Kentucky University. Molly also holds ranks as an Associate Professor of Sociology and publishes on theoretical predictive models of community and organizational change, particularly in areas related to higher education, civic engagement, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Molly serves AASCU's American Democracy Project as a member of the steering committee and Civic Fellow for assessment of democratically engaged learning.



# EJOURNAL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1

## **Role of Institutions of Higher Education in Community-Centric Risk Reduction**

**Lee Miller**

Sam Houston State University

**Dr. Magdalena Denham**

Sam Houston State University

## Introduction

Calls for universities to be good citizens and stewards of place have recently invited them to include commitments to strengthening the communities in which they reside in their mission statements and their program offerings. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) has renewed its call for institutions of higher education (IHEs) to be “stewards of place” (AASCU, 2014). To act as stewards of place universities are encouraged to demonstrate “public engagement” through “place-related,” “interactive,” “mutually beneficial” and “integrated” collaborations with their communities (AASCU, 2002). Universities are reminded that to be publicly engaged they must be “fully committed to direct, two-way interaction with communities and other external constituencies through the development, exchange, and application of knowledge, information, and expertise for mutual benefit” (AASCU, 2002, p. 9).

This paper explores one area in which colleges and universities may make substantial contributions to local communities. As relatively large institutions, often with substantial resources, IHEs can partner with emergency management actors to enhance disaster response and recovery activities. Furthermore, IHEs can multiply education and outreach to help mitigate local hazards and improve general risk reduction and household resilience. Universities also possess local knowledge and connections that allow access to local populations; other organizations working in disaster response often lack this access due to their regional or centralized structures. Universities can partially fulfill their roles as good citizens by actively partnering with local emergency management to support disaster response to improve the safety of people and places.

One illustration of the potential of partnerships with emergency management to support disaster response is Sam Houston State University’s (SHSU) collaboration with the Army National Guard to provide campus facilities to house personnel, equipment, and supplies during Hurricane Harvey in fall 2017. Through interagency cooperation, the campus provided space and logistical support to responders. Previously, the campus has met additional disaster response needs by sheltering students as well as evacuees from other impacted areas. Additionally, the agricultural facilities were opened to house animals, both domestic and livestock, that were evacuated with their owners. Students, faculty, and staff have also consistently been involved in disaster response in many ways ranging from volunteering at evacuation shelters, gathering and donating necessities, and fundraising, to mucking out flooded houses and schools in cleaning and rebuilding efforts.

The first example of citizenship of our university is linked to disaster response and therefore only happens periodically when there is an evident need. The second way campuses can contribute to the safety and wellbeing of their communities is more sustained. As disasters become more frequent and severe, IHEs can increase risk awareness and emergency preparedness through a curriculum that ultimately contributes to community risk reduction. Examples include courses in emergency management, community and public health, community nursing, community leadership, and others that incorporate applied activities to increase community awareness and resilience.

### Disaster-Risk Reduction in Vulnerable Communities

Natural disasters continue to pose significant risks and devastate communities globally (Engel, Harald, McNeil, Shaw, Trainor, & Zannoni, 2010; Traver, 2014). Therefore, mitigation and risk awareness are indispensable concepts of disaster risk reduction (DRR, Holmes, Schwein, & Shadie, 2012). Risk awareness and education are important aspects of mitigation because they allow policymakers to acknowledge risks and implement systematic processes of analyzing hazards in communities to reduce vulnerabilities and minimize impacts [National Research Council (NRC), 1991; United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), 2015].

IHEs, particularly those located in communities characterized by high-risk vulnerabilities such as high poverty rates, low median home values, low educational attainment, or low labor force participation can become meaningful programmatic entry points for successful disaster risk reduction initiatives (Twigg & Bottomly, 2011) and for local disaster resilience strengthening.

Indeed, in Huntsville, Walker County, Texas, with a county poverty rate of 22.7% in 2016 was nearly double the national average of people in poverty of 12.7%, median home values were \$60,000 below the national average, educational attainment remained lower than the national average (e.g., 10% less of Bachelor-level educated adults), and labor force participation lagged national average by 20% (United States Census Bureau, 2016). The local tax base is limited by the large presence of several state agencies with large, tax-exempt land holdings: Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ); SHSU; several state parks; and national forests. Particularly in a socio-economic context like this, institutional citizens, like universities, could lend their abilities and resources to strengthen local resilience.

Primary responsibility for Emergency Management (EM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) rests on local governments (United States Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2003; 2011; Rubin, 2012). This *community-centric* rather than *government-centric* disaster management philosophy became the mantra of the overall disaster management discourse since the Department of Homeland Security began. Indeed, despite federal legislation that established national-level organizations (e.g., Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA]) and national preparedness systems, U.S. disaster policies emerged first on the local level (Rubin, 2012; Sylves, 2015). The review of inadequate federal and state actions in response to Hurricane Katrina (Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act [PKEMRA], U.S. Congress, 2006) further underscored that disaster resilience would improve if it evolved from the bottom up. This is best exemplified by the notion of the *Whole Community* approach, under which individuals and families, businesses, faith-based and community organizations, nonprofit groups, schools and academia, media outlets, and all levels of government share responsibility for DRR efforts (DHS, 2011).

Subsequent *Whole Community* themes are anchored in (a) understanding community complexity; (b) recognizing community capabilities and needs; (c) fostering relationships with community leaders, building and maintaining partnerships, empowering local action, and leveraging and strengthening social infrastructure, networks, and assets (DHS, 2011, p. 5). Also, in the risk-reduction arena, federal financial statistics highlight severe under-resourcing of local-level community awareness and preparedness initiatives. Indeed,

community-level support by the DHS and FEMA has been characterized as anemic (Kirk, 2014). Federal assistance such as the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program has administered approximately \$8 billion from 2003 through 2014 to its 64 metropolitan areas (Errett, Bowman, Barnett, Resnick, & Lutkow, Frattaroli, & Rutkow, 2014), but UASI assistance has been largely regionalized to such metropolitan areas and focused on physical protection of assets critical to national security.

Meanwhile, local governments and non-profit organizations, particularly in small towns and rural areas that are often remote or exhibit high social vulnerability characteristics, remain understaffed and have limited resources even as local governments are called upon to play an increasingly important role in service provision and policy making (Lobao, 2016).

This is also true for schools that have been specifically listed under the *Whole Community* approach as “hazards education can play a vital role in increasing a community being ready, willing, and able to do what is necessary to prepare for and respond to disaster” (Ronan & Johnston, 2010, p. 95). Schools nationally have been addressing decreasing budgets; for example, the K-12 education funding was cut in 34 states in 2011 alone (Johnson, Oliff, & Williams, 2011). Short of federal or state mandates to support hazards and risk-reduction education, public schools are unlikely to make it a priority (Hull, 2011). Moreover, rural schools in areas like Huntsville specifically tend to have less access to resources such as DRR grants than urban schools do (Diepenbrock, 2010).

Beyond what has been described as insufficient support of federal monies in remote, rural, and under-resourced communities, national non-profits like the American Red Cross (ARC) have marshaled resources and trained personnel towards DRR; however, they have recently moved to a regional office system covering large and often very diverse geographies, hazards, and communities (Holdeman, 2015). In fact, “the Red Cross has slashed its payroll by more than a third, eliminating thousands of jobs and closing hundreds of local chapters. Many veteran volunteers, who do the vital work of responding to local fires and floods have also left, alienated by what many perceive as an increasingly rigid, centralized management structure” (Elliott, 2015, para. 4). Regionalization of ARC chapters has been reported in many states in the last decade (Holdeman, 2015, 2016; Horsley, 2011; Shauger, 2017). This resulted in challenges in addressing localized and specific community needs (e.g., Baker & Denham, 2019; Denham & Baker, 2019; Elliott, Huseman, & Muldowney, 2017). If all disasters are local, then regional offices are not likely to possess the intimate knowledge necessary to mitigate hazards effectively in every location of their jurisdictions. We propose that one strategy to mitigate issues related to access, regionalization of NGOs, and resource allocation for DRR in under-resourced local schools; it could be through engagement with other, less-traditional, agency partners such as institutions of higher education. We offer a model for a community-centric approach to resilience building through institutional partnerships and specifically through the engagement of college and university students.

### **The Role of Students in Disaster Risk Reduction**

In addition to IHEs possessing logistical support and research acumen to aid communities in which they are anchored, they also house tremendous social capital of students who can be a formidable force-multiplier in local community DRR efforts. Children and youth are among those most disparately affected by disasters (Fothergill &

Peek, 2015; Peek, 2008; Peek & Stough, 2010; Ronoh, Gaillard, & Marlowe, 2015; Terranova, Boxer, & Morris, 2009).

Historically, disaster research has treated school-age children as passive victims (Anderson, 2005; Mitchell, Tanner, & Haynes, 2009) with risk communication predominantly associated with centralized, adult-focused initiatives:

Mainstream approaches and theoretical debates in disaster management tend to ignore the role of children and young people as communicators of risk and as facilitators of disaster risk reduction (DRR). Instead, disaster management is dominated by top-down relief efforts targeted at adults, who are assumed to be attuned to the needs of their families and the wider community and to act harmoniously to protect their immediate and long-term interests (Mitchell, et al., 2009, p. 6).

In recent years, the importance of agency for children and youth in risk-reduction education has been slowly emerging in disaster literature in the United States (e.g., Drabek, 2013; Denham & Khemka, 2017; Denham & Lee, 2019.) Internationally, Child-Centered Disaster Risk Reduction (CC-DRR) scholarship noted a significant spike in publications from 7 in 2004 to more than 50 per year between 2016 and 2017 (Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector [GADRRRES] 2018; Ronan, Petal, & M. Tofa, 2018). Emerging international CC-DRR scholarship, as well as the recent meta-analysis of 35 CC-DRR studies (Johnson, Ronan, & Johnston, 2014), encourages synergized and comprehensive global initiatives in science and technology to translate CC-DRR research into practice and policy.

Our focus on university students and children aligns with developing trends in DRR research that offer positive empirical support both domestically and internationally to propositions that children can be taught self-protective actions, contribute to community-level risk reduction efforts, engage in classroom discussions, youth councils, or act as agents in disseminating risk-reduction knowledge to their guardians; this potentially generates significant changes in their families and communities. Additionally, the *Sendai Framework for DRR* is “a non-binding agreement that recognizes national governments as having the primary role for DRR, but acknowledges that there is much wider stakeholder community (including local government, the private sector, NGOs, and others) that shares the burden” (Haddow et al., 2017, p. 339), recently included children and youth as key stakeholders in DRR efforts (UNDRR, 2019). Specifically, a children and youths engagement guide called “Words into Action: On the Frontline of Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience” (UNDRR, 2019) has been issued as a companion for implementing the *Sendai Framework 2015-2030*. The main propositions of “Words into Action” (UNDRR, 2019) argue that children possess unique capabilities to drive mitigation solutions through (a) awareness-raising; (b) innovations such as crowd-sourced data gathering, creative ways to use new technologies; (c) ability to mobilize from local to global action through communication and leveraging of social media; (d) inclusivity in reaching and including populations most at risk; and (e) effectiveness of child and youth-led peer to peer supports. Our youth-driven research study fulfills both the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* and the call to include children and youth in actions that advance it. Most importantly, including students in DRR efforts through university partnerships with local communities makes this long-ignored population category a significant player in contributions to local disaster resiliency. Students can thereby also

support the stewardship missions of educational institutions in communities where they live and study, which they might ultimately serve and for which they might advocate.

### **Leveraging Academic Community Engagement for Disaster Risk Reduction**

Our university has adopted a campus-wide service-learning methodology called Academic Community Engagement (ACE). ACE-designated courses align learning objectives with community engagement. They typically require a minimum of nine hours of student community engagement, a reflection assignment, and the inclusion of the community engagement activity in the overall course grade (Denham, 2017a). The ACE designation identifies courses whose aim is to further acquisition of academic content and transversal competencies by university students while providing needed services *in situ* to communities the university serves and echoes Boyer's (1996) appeal to institutions of higher education that their resources ought to be connected "to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers" (pp. 19-20).

For Emergency Management education and risk reduction specifically, ACE courses have previously served to strengthen reciprocal relationships of our campus with the community. For example, past ACE projects in DRR included graduate students performing safety and security risk assessment for under-resourced, non-profit educational entities (Denham, Franks, & Hajicek, 2014) and public schools (Franks & Denham, 2015). Students have also integrated into community response networks such as Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT, Denham, 2017a) and leveraged their expertise as disaster risk reduction exercise evaluators for public emergency response entities at a local level (Manousos & Denham, 2015). Scholarly research on ACE DRR education (e.g., fire hazard risk reduction in a community through a partnership with ARC Fire Safety campaign) demonstrates that national-level risk-reduction efforts benefit from partnerships with universities. Students engaged in this smoke- detector installation and risk-education study were a valuable resource in identifying societal vulnerabilities such as linguistic needs, providing access to other university resources such as student organizations, adopting targeted strategies that were more specific-community risk-driven, and outperforming the NGO-led initiative through a more integrative approach to community-resilience building (Denham & Khemka, 2017). Most importantly, students linked an NGO with a previously limited footprint in the community to a network of community resources such as our university. Our current study built on Denham and Khemka's (2017) research by expanding the IHE/Community partnership to include the critical piece in DRR education, mainly by involving a local school and school-age children as potential household agents in DRR. To that end, our work fulfilled two CC DRR efforts as conceptualized by the the *Sendai Framework*; it meshed together the social capital of students and the social capital of school-age children in disaster mitigation efforts in an under-resourced community. Our study was conducted in Spring of 2017 when we approached the local school district as a possible partner for a hazard education initiative. We hoped teaching children about local hazards would equip them with knowledge about risk-reduction that could be relayed further to their households.

### **Methods**

The CC-DRR initiative we adopted for this collaborative hazard education project was '*Pillowcase Project: Learn, Practice, Share*' (ARC, 2015). The overarching purpose was to

involve our graduate students as lead educators, implementers, and evaluators of the ARC initiative and to align our graduate teaching of theories, concepts, and models of community resilience with local elementary school's science curriculum. It is noteworthy that the Pillowcase Project was designed to address "many key elements of the Next Generation Science Standards for grades 3-5, as well as core competencies in the Common Core State Standards for grades 3-5" (ARC, 2015, p. 2). We liaised with the school district, assistant principals, teachers, and public relations personnel to align the Pillowcase Project with appropriate classes/grades and with the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) science elements. In addition to the school district's involvement, the ARC Disaster Program Manager helped onboard and train students remained connected to faculty and curriculum content and participated as an observer of the *Pillowcase Project* delivery. Overall, we scheduled seven concurrent graduate student-led (two graduate students per teaching team) 60- minute presentations to 135 third graders in one low-income elementary school. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol was followed (APA, 2010) to ensure the safeguarding of ethical research principles in child-centered research. Our research question related to graduate student engagement was: Do graduate students in an ACE-designed course support the civic mission of a local institution of higher education in DRR and if so, in what ways?

Students prepared the teaching module based on the local community's primary hazard vulnerability, identified as house fires. It was our goal to assess to what degree school-aged children would convey the importance of proper placement, installation, and maintenance of smoke detectors and to what degree they would be able to influence household adults to make risk reduction adjustments. Thus, our resulting research question was: Do school-aged children engaged in CC DRR education influence the overall household resilience, and if so, in what ways?

While we discuss our pedagogical approach and all data sources involved in this study elsewhere (Denham & Miller, 2019), for this inquiry and to answer the research question: *Do school-aged children engaged in CC DRR education influence the overall household resilience and if so, in what ways?*, we relied on the *Pillowcase Project Survey* instrument (Denham & Miller, 2017). We constructed the survey based on an extensive overview of Pillowcase study materials (i.e., *My Preparedness Workbook* booklet distributed to third graders, *Dear Educator* workbook distributed to teachers, *The Pillowcase Project Presenter Fundamentals* used by graduate students, *Educational Standards Report* overviewing program components that support curricular standards for grades 3-5, [ARC, 2015]). The 15-item survey contained 12 items arranged along a 5-point Likert Scale (from *Strongly Agree* = 5 to *Strongly Disagree* = 1 with *Unsure* as midpoint = 3) as well as three open-ended questions. The survey was designed for representatives of households whose children were part of the third-grade education module and measured their perceptions about hazard adjustments considered as a result of child sharing knowledge gained in the project. The reliability analysis of the *Pillowcase Project Survey* (Denham & Miller, 2017) with the sample population yielded *Cronbach alpha* .85 based on standardized items. Adopting Field's (2009) criteria of .8 as reliable, we considered the instrument appropriate for our study. The 12 items represented the following questions:

- (1) Your household is more likely to take steps to prepare for an emergency or natural disaster.
- (2) Your household is more likely to have an emergency communication plan.

- (3) Your household is more likely to have a meeting point outside the home in case of an emergency.
- (4) Your household has a plan to get out of the house quickly in case of an emergency.
- (5) Your household has a plan to install smoke detectors.
- (6) Your household has a plan to inspect smoke detectors.
- (7) Everyone in your household knows how to dial 9-1-1 in case of an emergency.
- (8) Everyone in your household knows the street address where you live.
- (9) Everyone in your household knows different ways to exit the house in case regular exits are blocked.
- (10) Your household has a list of the most important things to have in an emergency.
- (11) Your household has a plan to practice leaving the house in an emergency.
- (12) Your household has a plan for pets in case of an emergency.

Open-ended questions of the *Pillowcase Project Survey* (Denham & Miller, 2017) asked the guardians about their interest in discussing household preparedness with researchers, discussing school's preparedness education in general as well as suggestions for further hazard education. Surveys were distributed by the teachers, delivered by third graders to their guardians, and returned to the school Principal's office upon completion. Overall, of the 117 students who took part in the project, 42 guardian surveys (34%) were returned. We used SPSS for instrument reliability analysis and inferential statistics (no demographic data were collected). To elicit answers to our research question: *Do graduate students in ACE-designed course contribute to supporting the civic mission of local IHE in DRR and if so, in what ways?*, we used field observations by both researchers as well as ACE course structured end-of-semester *Final Reflections* by seven pairs of graduate students involved ( $N=14$ ).

### Results

In response to the question: *Do school-aged children engaged in CC DRR education influence the overall household resilience and if so, in what ways?* guardian responses to the survey are represented in Table 1. Our analysis revealed that the guardians agreed that children's participation in the Pillowcase Project education motivated adults to adopt preparedness adjustments in their households. Of those, the highest scores were related to the ability of school-children to influence guardians' decisions to install smoke detectors, which has been one of the most successful domestic fire hazard adjustments noted in the literature (Tannous, Whybro, Lewis, Ollerenshaw, Watson, Broomhall, & Agho, 2016; Tannous & Agho, 2017) and in Texas specifically because smoke detectors installed in the state is lower than the national average (Texas Department of Insurance, 2015). Moreover, guardians felt their school-age children's participation in the CC DRR module motivated them to inspect existing smoke detectors, a DRR strategy of equal significance when addressing residential fire hazards.

Looking at our results from a research perspective, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA, 2017) reported that fire departments in the U.S in 2015 responded to 1,345,000 fires, of which 365,000 were in residential homes. Residential home fires

accounted for one-third of the total reported fires, but they resulted in 78% of civilian fire deaths and 71% of civilian injuries.

Cooking was cited as the number one trigger for domestic fires in the U.S. Older adults and children are the most susceptible, followed by those living in poverty, smokers, and those located in rural areas. Moreover, low educational attainment is a predictor of incurring and suffering from residential fire risks (NFPA, 2017). Texas has one of the highest numbers of incidences of annual fires, compared with other states - 261 in Texas in 2011, compared with 234 in California, or 170 in New York state (Texas Department of Insurance, 2015). Fortunately, the presence of smoke and fire alert systems has increased greatly over the past decades from 22% in 1979 to 96% in 2007 (Ahrens, 2015). Although about 95% of residential homes in the U.S have at least one smoke detector, homes lacking them account for three out of every five home fires (NFPA, 2017). Texas residences reported lower than the national average of home smoke detectors at 79% (Texas Department of Insurance, 2015). While an investigation of factors influencing low smoke detector installation rates is beyond the scope of this paper, the importance of functional smoke alarms in homes as a key prevention strategy cannot be overemphasized. Evidence shows that most residential fires and associated injuries are preventable and that the use of functional smoke alarms is a crucial and inexpensive prevention method (Haynes, 2017; Tannous & Agho, 2017). At the practical level, our results indicate that graduate students' education of school-age children brought disaster risk reduction into households, having strong community life-saving potential. Beyond smoke detectors, guardians reported their children transferred and influenced household risk awareness related to fast evacuations, evacuation routes, and the overall importance of family communication plans.

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations of the returned Pillowcase Project Survey (N = 42)*

<i>Survey Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Household more likely to take steps to prepare	4.14	.57

Household more likely to have a communication plan	<i>4.14</i>	<i>.81</i>
Household more likely to have an outside meeting point	<i>4.1</i>	<i>.76</i>
Household more likely to get out of the house quickly	<i>4.3</i>	<i>.64</i>
Household more likely to install smoke detectors	<i>4.6</i>	<i>.5</i>
Household more likely to inspect smoke detectors	<i>4.31</i>	<i>.64</i>
Household more likely to know how to dial 9-1-1	<i>4.14</i>	<i>.93</i>
Household more likely to know the residence address	<i>3.8</i>	<i>1.1</i>
Household more likely to know alternative exits	<i>4.02</i>	<i>.84</i>
Household more likely to have a list of emergency items	<i>3.3</i>	<i>.94</i>
Household more likely to practice evacuations	<i>3.6</i>	<i>1.1</i>
Household has an emergency pet plan	<i>3.2</i>	<i>1.1</i>

Qualitative assessment of open-ended questions of the survey demonstrated that children were concerned about household emergency pet plans and conveyed those concerns to their guardians. This finding is particularly meaningful because the Pillowcase Project does not address strategies for family pet emergency planning. Thus, children and ultimately their guardians' concerns underscore the generative benefits of CC DRR education brings to school-age children. It suggests that children question and seek risk reduction strategies beyond those discussed in educational programs. Importantly, nearly 30% of the responding guardians expressed interest in learning more about household preparedness in the future. This finding is valuable as compared with consistent national studies reporting the public's low interest in disaster preparedness overall at 14% or less (e.g., FEMA, 2019).

In turn, when analyzing data sources related to the question *Do graduate students in ACE- designed course contribute to supporting the civic mission of local IHE in DRR and if so, in what ways?*, we identified several ways in which students in this project contributed to the civic mission of the university. First, the project fulfilled the educational mission of the university by arming the students with knowledge, skills, and experience related to DRR that they will take into their various communities. Second, the graduate students shared their knowledge with local elementary school children and their families to increase risk awareness and household resiliency. Third, graduate students provided detailed feedback and suggestions to the non-profit partner about how to improve the design of their outreach and education program to better correspond to the specific needs of the local community. This potentially strengthens the nonprofit's abilities to improve DRR efforts in additional communities. Most importantly, the main outcome beyond the knowledge gains and preparedness adjustments reported above was the creation of a community network for local DRR initiatives. Building collaborative relationships that ensure effective coordination and mutually beneficial outcomes to multiple partners is labor-intensive. However, we found the investment pays large dividends when elementary school children receive hazards education they would not otherwise have received and their households make adjustments to improve safety and preparedness. Moreover, the ARC plans to incorporate the suggested improvements in future program delivery and will continue to work with the IHE in joint Pillowcase projects in additional schools. Additionally, the university has been approached to institute an ARC Club on campus, extending its presence at the local level.

### **Conclusion**

The results of curricular community engagement linked to emergency management and disaster risk reduction are widespread and positive. Both the institution and the community benefit from these endeavors in multiple ways. Perhaps the most easily identifiable benefits to the university are measured by student gains associated with course learning objectives and acquisition of applied experiences linked to their field of study (Denham & Khemka, 2017; Denham & Miller, 2019). Faculty who integrate community engagement experiences like the ones described in this paper report positive outcomes in terms of student evaluations, connections to community organizations, knowledge of local communities, access to potential research sites, and partners for community-based research endeavors. Additionally, the institution of higher education positions itself as a positive, contributing actor in the community --- an image that all stakeholders applaud. Particularly for AASCU institutions whose funding relies on state and federal funding, public engagement that builds goodwill is helpful when lobbying for legislative support.

Communities also benefit from community engagement directed at disaster risk reduction on many levels. The children in the elementary school classes that are taught by graduate students benefit from increased information about specific hazards and the actions they can take to mitigate them. Research findings are clear that children are more resilient when empowered with knowledge about hazard risk reduction (Back, Cameron, & Tanner, 2009; Mitchell, Haynes, Hall, Choong, & Oven, 2008; Mitchell et al. 2009; Tanner, 2013; Towers, Haynes, Sewell, Bailie, & Cross, 2014). In turn, when children share their knowledge about hazards with their families, entire households can take actions to minimize risk and increase safety (Ronan & Johnston, 2001; 2003; 2010).

Schools and nonprofits benefit as well. Schools may not have instructors with expertise in hazards or risk reduction. Additionally, school districts characterized by limited resources may not have instructional staff available to offer specialized instruction in addition to the basic content. Coordination between the school teachers, university faculty, and college students can provide lessons that appeal to the grade school students and reinforce essential concepts they are acquiring in the main content areas. Non-profit organizations, like ARC, expand the reach of their programs through more widespread dissemination and implementation than their resources alone would allow. In the end, the community seems to be strengthened by overall risk reduction.

Finally, all participants in partnerships like the ones described above learn that the local university is an active local entity partnering with multiple stakeholders to develop and share resources that benefit the entire community. One public four-year institution demonstrates the potential of community engagement by actively supporting emergency management activities locally in two main ways: partnering with local and national agencies to provide logistical support to disaster response efforts when disasters occur and contributing to community disaster risk reduction through curricular offerings. Academic community engagement courses can further the role of universities as stewards of place.

## References

- AASCU. (2014). *Becoming a Steward of Place. Lessons from Carnegie Community Engagement Applications*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of State Colleges and Universities.
- AASCU. (2002). *Stepping Forward as Stewards of Place*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of State Colleges and Universities.
- Ahrens, M. (2015). *Smoke alarms in US home fires*. Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association, Fire Analysis and Research Division.
- American Red Cross. (2015). *Pillowcase Project*. <http://www.redcross.org/local/texas/gulf-coast/programs/disaster-preparedness/pillowcase-project>
- Anderson, W. A. (2005). Bringing children into focus on the social science disaster research agenda. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, 23, 159-175.
- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Back, E., Cameron, C., & Tanner, T. (2009). Children and disaster risk reduction: Taking stock and moving forward. Retrieved from [http://toolkit.ineesite.org/resources/ineecms/uploads/1057/Children\\_and\\_Disaster\\_Risk\\_Reduction.pdf](http://toolkit.ineesite.org/resources/ineecms/uploads/1057/Children_and_Disaster_Risk_Reduction.pdf)
- Baker, N., & Denham, M. (2019). For a short time, we were the best version of ourselves: Hurricane Harvey and the ideal of community. *International Journal of Emergency Services*, 3, 1-13. doi 10.1108/IJES-12-2018-0066
- Boyer, E. L. (1996). The scholarship of engagement. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, 1, 11-20.
- Denham, M. A. (2017a). Academic community engagement strategies in Homeland Security and Emergency Management programs at a Texas university. In H. K. Evans (Ed.), *Community engagement best practices across the disciplines: Applying course content to community needs*, (pp. 33-48). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Denham, M. A. (2017b, July). Just keep learning: Schools and education during disasters. Panelist at the 42nd Annual Natural Hazard Research and Applications Workshop, Brookfield, Colorado.
- Denham, M., & Baker, N. (2019). Harvey Unstrapped: Managing Adaptive Tensions on the Edge of Chaos. *WIT Transactions on the Built Environment*, 190, 1-18, WIT Press. Retrieved from <https://www.wessex.ac.uk/1911/ZENS5522A/DMAN19-9781784663537.pdf> ISSN1743- 3509.
- Denham, M. A., Franks, S., & Hajicek, B. (2014, May). Integrating academic community engagement (ACE) into school safety assessment. Presented at the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) annual conference, San Antonio, TX.
- Denham, M. A., & Khemka, A. K. (2018). Reducing Risk through Academic Community Engagement in Homeland Security and Emergency Management. *International Journal of*

- Disaster Response and Emergency Management, 1, 1-21.  
doi:10.4018/IJDREM.2018010101
- Denham, M. A., & Miller, L. (2019). Partnering for Resilience: An Innovative Approach to Hazard Education and Child-Centered Risk Reduction. *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, Special Issue, 37, 101-123.
- Denham, M. A., & Miller, L. (2017). Pillowcase Project Survey [Instrument]. Authors.
- Diepenbrock, R. G. (2010). Safety and security concerns: perceptions of preparedness of a rural school district. [Doctoral Dissertation]. Wichita State University, Kansas.
- Drabek, T. E. (2013). *The Human Side of Disaster*. (2nd ed.). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Elliott, J. (2015). The corporate takeover of the Red Cross. ProPublica. Retrieved from <https://www.propublica.org/article/the-corporate-takeover-of-the-red-cross>
- Elliott, J., Huseman, J., & Muldowney, D. (2017). Texas official after Harvey “The Red Cross was not there”. ProPublica. Retrieved from <https://www.propublica.org/article/texas-official-after-harvey-the-red-cross-was-not-there>
- Engel, K., Harald, J., McNeil, S., Shaw, G., Trainor, J., & Zannoni, M. (2010). Floods and disaster management in the NL: “God Created the world, but the Dutch created the NL”. FEMA. Retrieved September 5, 2019. From <https://training.fema.gov/hiedu/downloads/compemmgmtbookproject/comparative%20em%20book%20chapter%20%20floods%20and%20disaster%20mgmt%20in%20the%20nethe%20rlands.doc>
- Errett, N. A., Bowman, D. J., Resnick, B. A., Frattaroli, S., & Lutkow, L. (2014). Regional collaboration among Urban Area Security Initiative regions: results of the John Hopkins Urban Area Survey. *Biosecurity and Bioterrorism: Biodefense Strategy, Practice, and Science*, 12, 356- 365.doi:10.1089/bsp.2014.0057
- Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fothergill, A. & Peek, L. (2015). *Children of Katrina*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press.
- Franks, S., & Denham, M. A.(2015, May). Fostering relationships: Bridging the gap between the Emergency Management and the Academia. Presented at the Texas Emergency Management Conference, San Antonio, TX.
- Global Alliance on Disaster Risk Reduction & Resilience in the Education Sector [GADRRES]. (2018). Retrieved from <https://gadrrres.net/resources/research-evidence/research-into-action-briefs>
- Haddow, G. D., Bullock, J. A., & Coppola, D. P. (2017). *Introduction to Emergency Management*. (6th edition). Cambridge, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Haynes, H. J. G. (2017). Fire loss in the United States during 2014. National Fire Protection Association. [Report]. Fire Analysis and Research Division.

- Holdeman, E. (2015). Trouble at the American Red Cross. Disaster Zone. Retrieved from <http://www.govtech.com/em/emergency-blogs/disaster-zone/trouble-at-the-american-red-cross.html>
- Holdeman, E. (2016). The Red Cross responds to disasters and the critics. Preparedness and Recovery. Retrieved from <http://www.govtech.com/em/disaster/The-Red-Cross-Responds-to-Disastersand-the-Critics.html>
- Holmes, R., Schwein, N., & Shadie, C. (2012). Flood risk awareness during the 2011 floods in the central United States: Showcasing the importance of hydrologic data and interagency collaboration. American Society of Civil Engineers Library. Retrieved September 26, 2019. Retrieved from <https://ascelibrary.org/doi/full/10.1061/%28ASCE%29LM.1943-5630.0000181>
- Horsley, J. S. (2011). Regionalization will strengthen Alabama Red Cross. Tuscaloosa, AL: ARC.
- Hull, B. (2011). Changing realities in school safety and preparedness. *Journal of Business Continuity and Emergency Planning*, 5, 440-451.
- Johnson, N., Oliff, P., Williams, E. (2011). "An Update on State Budget Cuts." Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/3-13-08sfp.pdf>
- Johnson, V. A., Ronan, K. R., & Johnston, D. M. (2014). Evaluation of disaster education programs for children: A methodological review. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 9, 107-123. doi:10.1016/j.ijdr.2014.04.001
- Kirk, P. M. (2014). Community preparedness: Alternative approaches to citizen engagement and Homeland Security. [Master Thesis]. Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School.
- Lobao, L. (2016). The rising importance of local government in the United States: Recent research and challenges for sociology. *Sociology Compass*, 10, 893-905. doi:10.1111/soc4.12410
- Manousos, C. L., & Denham, M. A. (2015, May). Linking boots and books: Partnering higher education in emergency management. Presented at the Texas Emergency Management Conference, San Antonio, TX.
- Mitchell, T., Haynes, K., Hall, N., Choong, W., & Oven, K. (2008). The roles of children and youth in communicating disaster risk. *Children Youth and Environments*, 18, 254-279.
- Mitchell, T., Tanner, T., & Haynes, K. (2009). Children as agents of change for disaster risk reduction: Lessons from El Salvador and the Philippines. [Report]. Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, University of Sussex, UK. Retrieved from [http://www.undpcc.org/undpcc/files/docs/publications/CCC\\_Working%20Paper\\_Final1\\_Screen.pdf](http://www.undpcc.org/undpcc/files/docs/publications/CCC_Working%20Paper_Final1_Screen.pdf)
- National Fire Protection Association. (2017). Fire statistics and reports. (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Fire-statistics-and-reports>

- National Research Council. (1991). *A safer future: reducing the impacts of natural disasters*. The National Academies Press. Retrieved October 24, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.nap.edu/read/1840/chapter/5>
- Peek, L. (2008). Children and disasters: Understanding vulnerability, developing capacities, and promoting resilience. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 18(1), 1-29.
- Peek, L., & Stough, L. M. (2010). Children with disabilities in the context of disaster: A social vulnerability perspective. *Child Development*, 81, 1260-1270.
- Ronan, K. R., & Johnston, D. M. (2001). Correlates of hazard education programs for youth. *Risk Analysis*, 21, 1055-1063.
- Ronan, K. R., & Johnston, D. M. (2003). Hazards education for youth: A quasi-experimental investigation. *Risk Analysis*, 23, 1009-1020.
- Ronan, K. R., & Johnston, D. M. (2010). *Promoting community resilience in disasters: The role for schools, youth and families*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Ronan, K. R., Petal, M., & Tofa, M. (2018). *Moving from projects to programs: Evidence-based roadmap and whitepaper*. Child-Centered Risk Reduction and School Safety Research.[Webinar]. Retrieved from [https://www.preventionweb.net/files/61553\\_powerpointresearchagendaeng2018.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/61553_powerpointresearchagendaeng2018.pdf)
- Ronoh, S., Gaillard, J. C., & Marlowe, J. (2015). Children with disabilities and disaster preparedness: A case study of Christchurch. *Kötuitui, New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 10(2), 91-102.
- Rubin, C. (2012). *Emergency Management: The American experience 1900-2010*. (2nd ed.). Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Shauger, M. (2017). Red Cross intends to sell Montclair office, not 'not leaving' town. Northjersey. Retrieved from <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/essex/montclair/2017/01/11/red-cross-intends-sell-montclair-office-but-not-leaving-town/96440682/>
- Sylves, R. (2015). *Disaster policy and politics: Emergency Management and Homeland Security*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tanner, T. (2013). Shifting the narrative: Child-led responses to climate change and disasters in El Salvador and the Philippines. *Children and Society*, 4, 339-351. doi:10.1111/j.1099-0860.2010.00816.x
- Tannous, W. K., & Agho, K. (2017). Socio-demographic predictors of residential fire and unwillingness to call the fire service in New South Wales. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 7, 50- 57.
- Tannous, W. K., Whybro, M., Lewis, C., Ollerenshaw, M., Watson, G., Broomhall, S., & Agho, K. E. (2016). Using a cluster randomized controlled trial to determine the effects of intervention of battery and hardwired smoke alarms in New South Wales, Australia: home fire safety checks pilot program. *Journal of Safety Research*, 56, 23-27. doi:10.1016/j.jsr.2015.11.001

- Terranova, A. M., Boxer, P., & Morris, A. S. (2009). Changes in children peer interactions following a natural disaster: How pre-disaster bullying and victimisation rates changed following Hurricane Katrina. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46, 333-347.
- Texas Department of Insurance. (2015, September). Texas Fire Incident Reporting System 2014 Annual Fire Statistics.
- Traver, R. (2014). Flood risk management: Call for a National Strategy. American Society of Civil Engineers. Retrieved from <https://ascelibrary.org/doi/pdf/10.1061/9780784478585>
- Towers, B., Haynes, K., Sewell, F., Bailie, H., & Cross, D. (2014). Child-centered disaster risk reduction in Australia: Progress, gaps, and opportunities. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 29(1), 31-38. Retrieved from [http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/12732/AJEM\\_29\\_ONE.pdf#page=31](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/12732/AJEM_29_ONE.pdf#page=31)
- Twigg, J., & Bottomley, H. (2011). Making local partnerships work for disaster risk reduction. Humanitarian Practice Network. Retrieved from <https://odihpn.org/magazine/making-local-partnerships-work-for-disaster-risk-reduction/>
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2015). Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Making the difference for poverty, health and resilience. Retrieved from <https://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2019). Words into action: On the frontline of disaster risk reduction and resilience: Children and youth engagement guide for implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Retrieved from <https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/67704>
- United States Congress. (2006). S3721 Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/senate-bill/3721>
- United States Department of Homeland Security. (2003). Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5. Retrieved from [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Homeland%20Security%20Presidential%20 Directive%205.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Homeland%20Security%20Presidential%20Directive%205.pdf)
- United States Department of Homeland Security. Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2011). A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, themes, and pathways for action (FDOC 104-008-1). Retrieved from [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1813-25045-0649/whole\\_community\\_dec2011\\_2\\_.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1813-25045-0649/whole_community_dec2011_2_.pdf)
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2016). QuickFacts selected: Walker County, Texas; United States. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/walkercountytexas,US/PST045216>

## Authors



**Lee Miller** is a Professor in the Department of Sociology at Sam Houston State University. She received her B.A. from Smith College and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Yale University. Dr. Miller's research interests include community responses to disasters and risk perception related to natural and technological hazards, particularly in rural contexts. She is also co-Director of the Center for Community Engagement, where she works with faculty and community organizations to design courses and organize projects to meet the needs of community-based organizations and underrepresented communities.

From working on international economic development projects, to measuring risk perception in rural Texas, Dr. Miller helps communities identify needs and seeks ways to help address them through her professional experience, teaching, and research.



**Dr. Magdalena Denham** is an Associate Clinical Professor at the Department of Security Studies, College of Criminal Justice, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in leadership and management, homeland security and emergency management, and intelligence. Her research has been published in the *International Journal of Emergency Services*, *Journal of School Violence*, *International Journal of Disaster Response and Emergency Management*, *International Journal of Safety and Security Engineering*, among others.

Most recently, she was a co-recipient of the National Science Foundation (NSF) grant to study emergent citizen response during the Hurricane Harvey. Prior to her academic career, Magdalena served in federal law enforcement (FBI) and subsequently as law enforcement leadership program developer. Specifically, she spent a decade as the Program Manager at the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) where she developed, implemented, and oversaw among others the Incident Command Simulation and Training (InCoSIT) program, Integrated Response to Imminent Threat Events, as well as the Leadership Inventory for Female Executive (LIFE) program which she continues to facilitate at the Institute to this day. Magdalena's teaching philosophy is grounded in experiential learning and education through community engagement. She is a recipient of the *Service Award* and the *Academic Community Engagement (ACE) Award* at the College of Criminal Justice. She is also involved with graduate student internship program at the College. Beyond work, she is passionate about travelling, gardening, Netflix binging and dachshunds.



# EJOURNAL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1

## **Barbara Burch: Memorial and Tribute**

**George Mehaffy**  
American Democracy Project

**David Lee**  
Western Kentucky University

**Molly Kerby**  
Western Kentucky University

**Paul Markham**  
Western Kentucky University

### **Author Note**

A memorial and tribute to a great leader and friend of the American Democracy Project, Dr. Barbara Burch (August 21, 1938 - January 5, 2020)

## Barbara Burch

A memorial and tribute to a great leader and friend of the American Democracy Project,  
Dr. Barbara Burch (August 21, 1938 - January 5, 2020)

### Introduction

This memorial project, like so many other things, started in an unplanned way. Felice Nudelman and I, mourning the loss of our dear friend Barbara Burch, thought about what we might do to commemorate her life. She asked if I would write something about Barbara and her life of service. Because I wanted to capture memories from those whom she had inspired and helped, I reached out to three friends: David Lee, Molly Kerby, and Paul Markham. All three had or do work at Western Kentucky University; all three had been mentored by Barbara. I felt like their comments would be the truest representation of Barbara's legacy. I would simply add my perspective, sometimes keying off their perspectives.

Of course, Felice was also thinking about others as well. She asked Molly Kerby to include something in a forthcoming issue of the *eJournal of Public Affairs*, a publication that began as a joint project of the American Democracy Project (ADP) and Missouri State University. So I asked Molly if she would be willing to include her very thoughtful piece in this larger collection. I asked David and Paul to join her as other leaders at Western Kentucky who had been enormously influenced by her support. As you can see below, they generously included their thoughts and perspectives. I think this four-part narrative provides a much richer view of Barbara and her contributions than anything done by any one of us. I am indebted for their insights and perceptions which make this a much more encompassing view of our amazing friend Barbara.

### George Mehaffy

Senior Advisor, Sova Solutions, former Vice President, AASCU and co-founder of the American Democracy Project (ADP)

I first met Barbara when she and I were in the California State University System, albeit in different institutions. We met again at my very first AASCU Academic Affairs Meeting in Annapolis in July 1999. Ironically, I had been a provost for 5 years, serving at an AASCU institution but had never attended an AASCU meeting until I was appointed as a vice president at AASCU. Barbara was one of the small but faithful group that came that summer, one of only 38 provosts in attendance. But that gave me the opportunity to get to know her. And immediately, I was struck by her thoughtfulness, as well as her humor. If I were to have described her from that initial impression, the word I would have used was "wise." She was insightful, experienced, and reflective. And she was fun to talk to.

Several years later, I read *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam. He described the decline of all sorts of social groups that created bridging social capital, so vital to the health of a democracy. Felice and I wondered what higher education might do to respond. We started to make a list of provosts whom we wanted to talk with at the AASCU Winter Meeting in February 2002. Barbara was one of the first I thought about. We gathered a group of 15 provosts together at that winter meeting to talk about what we might do to improve civic outcomes for AASCU undergraduates. Over the next year and a half, at both that meeting and two more academic affairs meetings, we met with that group to talk about possible actions we might take. Out of those discussions, the

American Democracy Project was born. Not surprisingly, Barbara was always at the forefront of those conversations, suggesting ways to fit the work into the culture and values of higher education. Many of her ideas became core elements of the project. For example, she talked about how to engage presidents in the project. But most of all, she talked about how to engage other academic leaders and the faculty.

I knew from her work that Western Kentucky University would be a leader in civic engagement. But I was still surprised to watch how engaged and creative the WKU campus became. Many WKU leaders emerged to do local projects on the campus but many others participated in a wide variety of national projects as well. Once Barbara was committed, she was all in. One of the funny stories I remember was about Tom Ehrlich's new book, *Educating Citizens*. Tom had been our keynote speaker in July 2003 when we launched the American Democracy Project at our Snowbird, Utah academic affairs meeting. After the meeting, we made an arrangement with the publisher to sell discounted copies of *Educating Citizens* to AASCU schools. Tom called me one day and reported that WKU had bought 600 copies, the largest by far of any sale to a single university. I called Barbara to ask why they had purchased such a large number of books. She said she gave one to each faculty member at WKU. I remember teasing her, saying I wasn't sure about this notion of provosts giving books to faculty members. Where might that madness end? But it illustrated her commitment to the project.

The first John Saltmarsh Award for Emerging Civic Leaders was given to two faculty members, one of them Paul Markham, a member at that time of the WKU faculty, and someone who viewed Barbara as a mentor. That award to Paul symbolizes one of Barbara's great gifts; she worked to help faculty succeed, in their faculty roles but especially if they wanted to move into administrative roles. If you read the lovely tributes by David Lee, Molly Kerby, and Paul Markham that follow, you will hear of the support that Barbara gave routinely and gladly to others to help them succeed. Barbara was generous with her time and her ideas. She found joy when others succeeded. As Molly notes, ADP named an award in her honor, the Barbara Burch Award for Faculty Leadership in Civic Engagement. That award is emblematic of Barbara, who was deeply committed to faculty and their success.

She was incredibly wise in her counsel. In his memorial, David Lee describes a wonderful moment when he was upset about a mistake a department chair had made and was considering terminating him. Barbara's wise advice, so beautifully illustrative of Barbara's approach to leadership, caused him to reflect.

And that characteristic about helping others was at the heart of her leadership. It was seldom if ever about Barbara. It was always about the work. She helped people succeed for the joy of seeing their growth and success but she also knew that in helping others become better leaders, she was strengthening the institution so it could do the vital work of educating students.

In much of my life, in higher education, in the Coast Guard and other circumstances, the leaders who have made and continue to make a difference are those who are not focused on themselves but others. Barbara exemplified the concept of servant-leader.

Yet that leadership was not all soft power and graciousness. Barbara also had a spine of steel and was quick to react to crazy ideas and distorted values. David provided two glimpses to that in his recollections. He reported that in her long service as provost, she was not always liked, and like most leaders, experienced less support at the end of her term as provost. Yet 4 years later, she ran unopposed as the faculty regent, because faculty knew that she would support them wholeheartedly. It was always about the work, not about Barbara. I remember her calling me to tell me she had been elected as the Faculty Regent. She started the conversation by suggesting

that her election might create a cardiac emergency for the president, as she knew where all the bodies were buried, and she was committed to doing the right things to help WKU succeed. It never was about Barbara; it was always about the work. Paul Markham, in his wonderful recollection about Barbara, underscored her commitment to always do the right thing.

I hope you will take a little more time to read the eloquent and moving tributes from David, Molly, and Paul, three people who knew Barbara best as a mentor, a coach, and a friend. As for me, I mourn her death as the loss of a great friend but even more as a great leader that helped me be better in my job. I always looked forward to some quiet time with Barbara at our academic affairs meetings, to catch up, laugh, reflect on the wicked, and think about the next set of ideas and projects to help students succeed. I will miss her wise counsel and dear friendship. But I will also cherish her role as a remarkable leader who touched the lives of so many. She left an enduring legacy about the importance of being a leader who cared more about others than herself, who cared more about fixing problems than assigning blame, and who cared more about the work than the pettiness that sometimes surrounded it.

### **David Lee**

Faculty Member and Former Provost  
Western Kentucky University

*As a provost who served some years after Barbara left that position, David was in a unique position to understand her work.*

One of the things that always impressed me about Barbara was that her leadership was invariably built on positive assumptions. I've always kept in mind a great piece of management advice she once gave me. I was very unhappy with a mistake a department head had made, and I was seriously considering a leadership change. But Barbara said, "If you are looking for a department head who doesn't make mistakes, you're going to look for a long time. What's more important is what do they do after they make a mistake." The comment was very characteristic of Barbara. She wanted solutions that were positive, not punitive. Whether she was working with a student or a department head or a dean, she was always looking for ways to help people be successful. Part of her strength as a leader was the enormous pleasure that she took in the success of other people.

Barbara's election as Faculty Regent is a great illustration of the confidence the campus had in her ability and her goodwill. Her 14 years as Provost is a remarkably long tenure these days, and her time in the office included all of the tensions, conflicts, and controversies that go with that job. At times, she was very unpopular with the faculty, and the campus was probably ready for a change when she stepped down as Provost in 2010. Yet just four years after she left the Provost's Office, that same faculty elected her to a three-year term as their representative on the university's Board of Regents. She ran unopposed.

I think her election as Faculty Regent reflects a couple of things. First of all, it illustrates her life-long commitment to service. At a stage in her life when she might have been looking for fewer and lighter responsibilities, Barbara was instead looking for more ways to serve. In that sense, her career is very much in the spirit of the American Democracy Project. Secondly, it's a striking thing to move from being the Provost to the elected faculty representative on the university's governing board. Those are very different roles, and it takes a truly remarkable person to succeed in both of them. I think Barbara was able to do it because the campus understood that

in any role she assumed, her deepest commitment was to the betterment of the university community as a whole. Her support for the American Democracy Project reflected the values that shaped her entire career.

### **Molly Kerby**

Faculty Member, ADP Coordinator and Assistant Provost for Institutional Effectiveness  
Western Kentucky University

*Molly had already prepared this remembrance. I asked if we could incorporate it into the four-part tribute.*

We all have personal stories about the loss of people we respect, admire, and aspire to be. These are the leaders who served as our role models and mentors; the ones who helped shape our careers and lives and, without them, we would not be where we are today. Some of them lovingly nurtured us to ensure our growth and maturity. Some of them stood firm with us in solidarity during turbulent times. Some of them were uncompromisingly tough on us because they had faith in our ability to do better. And, some of them were all of these. But, most importantly, they left a lasting legacy that carries on through the work and lives of the individuals they touched. Dr. Barbara Burch, Provost Emeritus at Western Kentucky University, was one of those leaders.

Barbara Burch [née Gagel] was born on August 21, 1938, and was the eldest of five children. In 1956, she married the love of her life, Kenneth Burch, and the couple had two children, Kevin and Kelly. She earned a bachelor's degree in education from Western Kentucky University (WKU) and completed her master's and doctoral degrees at Indiana University. In 1996, Barbara returned to WKU, as the Vice President of Academic Affairs. "Provost" was added to her title in 1998; she held those positions until 2010. After stepping down as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Barbara began to focus much of her energy on the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program at WKU as a faculty member and mentor, as well as serving on the University's Board of Regents. In 2018, she founded the Kelly M. Burch Institute for Transformative Practices in Higher Education named in honor of her late daughter:

"Created to act like a small business incubator for issues that affect higher education, the [Kelly M. Burch] [Institute](#) uses an evidence-based approach to examine what works well and what does not, reimagines policies and practices in cross-disciplinary and outcomes-focused ways, and develops strategies and programs that are scalable from incubation to integration."

Barbara's career at WKU was truly remarkable and she will be remembered as one of the most effective leaders in the university's history. In addition to her incomparable contributions to WKU, Barbara was one of the founding members of AASCU's American Democracy Project (ADP). Her commitment to civic and democratic engagement was unparalleled. She encouraged faculty and staff at WKU to collaboratively work with initiatives and programs designed and created by ADP. In 2014, ADP established The [Barbara Burch Award](#) for Faculty Leadership in Civic Engagement, which is presented annually at the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting to a tenured faculty member who has demonstrated leadership in advancing the civic learning and engagement of undergraduates.

I will always remember Barbara for her encouragement and commitment to faculty and staff interested in pursuing positions of leadership. She never hesitated to provide resources and professional support for those dedicated to civic engagement and initiatives aimed at educating students to be informed stewards of our democracy. Because of her diligence and enthusiasm, WKU became a national leader in efforts to prepare students for civic and democratic engagement. And, in part, ADP would not have been the same without her involvement early on. As I read through the many online [tributes](#) to Barbara, I experienced a host of emotions. I felt great sadness for the loss of my mentor and dear friend, our colleague at WKU, and an unwavering champion for civic engagement and ADP. I felt proud to have been one of the hundreds of lives she touched, believed in, and influenced. I felt angry that she would not be around to see so many of her recent efforts flourish. But most of all, I felt blessed to have simply known her. I will always remember Barbara telling me, and others, “Don’t ever let anyone tell you no or it can’t be done. There is always a way.” She never stopped believing that a few, dedicated people could make a monumental difference - no matter what.

**Paul Markham**

Former Faculty Member and Chair of the Faculty Senate  
Western Kentucky University

*I asked Paul to comment on two parts of her legacy: her personality and character, and her leadership of ADP at WKU.*

***Personality and Character:*** Barbara was a worker. She studied. She thought carefully and she acted with conviction. She didn’t sleep nearly enough, because her mind was always churning with ideas. She was my mentor when I needed to learn how higher education worked and what it takes to make a difference for students. With countless other things on her plate, she made time to meet with me every few weeks to discuss challenges and how to navigate them with integrity. Finally, Barbara was a fighter. When she believed something was right, she wouldn’t stop until it was done – even if it took years to accomplish.

***Leadership:*** Barbara’s leadership can be summed up in a single sentiment she shared with me when I was face-to-face with a tough decision as a young Director. Barbara listened to my situation carefully and said, “When you’re the leader, first ask yourself ‘what is the right thing to do,’ then figure out how to do that.” In this case, and in many more that followed, it would have been convenient to do the *easy* thing or the *safe* thing but to do the *right thing* was true north for Barbara and I’ll take that lesson with me for the rest of my life. This spirit shined through in her leadership at WKU and with ADP. Both are better because of her commitment to doing the right thing.



# EJOURNAL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

VOLUME 9 | ISSUE 1

## **Honors Projects: Sam Houston State University Students | Business Communication**

**Michael Way**

Sam Houston State University

**Danica L. Schieber**

Sam Houston State University

**Brianna Guerrero**

Sam Houston State University

**Taylor Swearingen**

Sam Houston State University

### **Author Note**

The following three pieces are part of Honors projects completed in a Business Communication class at Sam Houston State University. The students in this class completed an ACE project (Academic and Community Engagement) where they worked for a client in the community. This project asked the students to research ways that they could promote new programs being offered at the Boys and Girls Club of Walker County. These Honors students were then asked to write a reflection piece that explored the impact this project (and other ACE projects) had on their community partners, and also on them. As I read the reflections, I was struck by the kindness and dedication that my students put into these projects. I am proud to present these students' work here.

## STUDENT HONORS PROJECTS

The following three pieces are part of Honors projects completed in a Business Communication class at Sam Houston State University. The students in this class completed an ACE project (Academic and Community Engagement) where they worked for a client in the community. This project asked the students to research ways that they could promote new programs being offered at the Boys and Girls Club of Walker County. These Honors students were then asked to write a reflection piece that explored the impact this project (and other ACE projects) had on their community partners, and also on them. As I read the reflections, I was struck by the kindness and dedication that my students put into these projects. I am proud to present these students' work here.

Thank you,

Dr. Danica L. Schieber  
Assistant Professor of Business Communication  
Sam Houston State University

Michael Way

## **H.E.A.R.T.S. Veterans Museum**

### **Introduction**

The H.E.A.R.T.S. Veterans Museum is a staple part of the Huntsville community. The museum is significant because it recognizes veterans who have served our country. The museum recognizes veterans from all military branches and primarily those who are served dating back to the Vietnam War. These veterans provide numerous experiences, wisdom, and advice to young soldiers like me. The museum collects artifacts, showcases exhibits, and hosts events for the Veterans, Sam Houston, and Huntsville community. It was established to commemorate active duty soldiers and current war veterans.

The museum originated as an antique shop highlighting the achievement of a war veteran. The antique shop was owned by Charlotte Oleinik, an active participant in a post-World War II organization. Through its growing attraction, Oleinik, began to showcase her exhibits and transport more displays to locations such as elementary and middle schools, where she could instill the importance of the Armed Forces to adolescents. Military artifacts and old equipment were donated to her exhibit, recognizing Oleinik was impacting the community in a positive light.

Due to the accumulation of multiple items, Oleinik decided to find a stationary location. Oleinik was later assisted by Charles Davis, a former World War II veteran, where he helped showcase her artifacts across the community. Followed by years of success, it became an official museum and open to the community of Huntsville.

### **Goal**

I decided to research the H.E.A.R.T.S Museum and a war veteran. My goal and main focal point of this interview was to understand the impact the Museum has had on the community of Huntsville. By interviewing a veteran, I could grasp the true adoration and appreciation they had towards the museum. I also wanted to learn information about a significant event they have been a part of while serving to let their story be heard. Learning how to conduct primary research was my goal.

### **Planning Process**

Primary research is conducting research directly, whether it is through an interview, surveys, or even questionnaires. I learned many ways to conduct primary research though my Business Communication and Honors "Histories" classes. I decided to research a military veteran and museum, because being enlisted myself, I wanted to use this opportunity to gain advice and wisdom from true heroes.

I began formulating questions, based upon the interviewee whom the museum assigned to me. Due to my interviewee being a veteran, I wanted to make sure the questions were appropriate, respectful, and not crossing any boundaries. I had no information on who I was interviewing, so when formulating my questions, I could not be as specific as I planned.

Knowing I would be interviewing an older gentleman, I also wanted to pay attention to how my questions were being asked and concluded that they needed to be more straightforward, and simple questions. I learned the importance of audience analysis and its significance of how to communicate to others where it was to relay or retrieve information. I wanted to retrieve

information from a historical war veteran, so I essentially had to plan my questions, based off of the criteria on my interviewee, being from an older, more traditional generation.

### **Interview**

I had privilege and honor to meet with Robert W. Hall, a former Naval engineer, now retired. Hall served in the Vietnam War as a naval engineer and electrician. Upon receiving his high school diploma in 1957, Hall enlisted within the Navy. Hall actually wanted to serve, even with rising political tensions and an unstable economy within the United States. Hall received sound advice from his uncle who also served, which fueled his motivation to protect this country. The greatest thing about joining the Navy was “The ability to see world,” Hall said. Soon into his time in service, a significant event in American history marked his introduction into combat. In 1958, he detailed the death of a Marine, which was the “prelude and countdown to the Vietnam War.” Hall never feared combat, which was significant, because he could have lost his life, “countless times” as he stated.

Once he became a part of the war effort, Hall served within one of two squadrons, where they traveled the South China Seas aboard a crew of 300 members. Hall’s motto being a chemical and electrical engineer, was “Have steam, will travel, have no steam, will not travel.” This quote was particularly interesting, because it exemplifies the significance of trusting the equipment that soldiers have to rely on.

He retired the Navy after seven brief, yet significant years. Hall later became a part of the Corps of Engineers, where he has worked under many branches serving on deployments as an engineer and electrician. Hall has served in numerous, with Iraq and Afghanistan to name a few.

Throughout the interview, much to my dismay, Hall frequently asked me questions, that pertained to my time in service so far. It was interesting, because at times, I felt the interview was mainly driven by him and I was being interviewed. Moreover, because of him being intrigued by brief military time, it felt as if we are having more of a conversation, rather than conducting an interview. He allowed me to share my experiences within the Army and related it to the Navy, which led us to have many similar experiences.

Hall now resides in Huntsville, Texas where he can be close to the museum, once again implementing its impact on the community and just close enough to the large Houston metropolitan area.

### **Conclusion**

Hall is now an active member and part time employee at the Veterans Hearts Museum, located in Huntsville, Texas. He enjoys being an active participant, because it is “something we can do to help military.” Veterans who still involved in are significant to those beginning their service, such as I. Hall repeatedly said he would do it again and left some advice to adhere. Noting that “Times are changing,” Hall detailed the importance of brotherhood and its camaraderie. I agreed, that It is very essential to have teamwork and unity in any setting, especially within a war.

I really enjoyed this interview, because Hall illuminated a kindred spirit towards me, the museum, and the military. His character and patriotism exemplified what it means to be a veteran, which is to never forget your contribution to protecting this country and utilizing that knowledge for the betterment of today’s generation, such as myself. I believe the interview went successful and I really enjoyed my time there.

## STUDENT HONORS PROJECTS

Overall, not only did I learn how to conduct an interview, but I learned the importance of teamwork. I treasure the advice and history Hall gave me, because I will soon be in role one day, where I hope to implement his remarkable character traits.



All images were taken by Michael Way

## References

<http://heartsmuseum.com/index.html>

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100345447>

Brianna Guerrero

### **All the Good the SAAFE House does for Huntsville**

Since attending Sam Houston State University in 2017, I have noticed many organizations actively involved in the Huntsville community. One in particular is a non-profit organization known as the SAAFE House. The SAAFE House, which stands for sexual assault and abuse free environment, is a shelter that allows victims of domestic violence to get back on their feet through the different services that they offer. I recently had the opportunity to interview with the volunteer coordinator at the SAAFE House, Kathryn Hays, to gain more information on the services they offer victims, how volunteers for the SAAFE House help them provide these services to victims, and was not only shown how their contributions are positively impacting the Huntsville community, but have also been fortunate enough to see it first hand through actively being involved in my sorority, Alpha Chi Omega.

As stated above, Kathryn Hays is the volunteer coordinator for the SAAFE House here in Huntsville, Texas. She explained that the services offered for victims at the SAAFE House include the basic living necessities such as food, water, clothing, a safe shelter, face to face crisis assistance, legal advocacy along with individual and group advocacy, referrals, and most importantly, different skills and resources to help them live an abuse free life. Hays also went on to explain that since the SAAFE House is a non-profit organization, in order for them to continue to offer these services for victims, they rely heavily on volunteers for funding and to help them carry out some of these services.

The volunteer process for the SAAFE House is lengthy, but is necessary because the information of victims is confidential and this process is put in place to ensure that these victims are kept confidential for their own safety. The process includes the application, interview, references, background check, and orientation. Once these five things have been completed, then an individual can begin their volunteer work at the SAAFE House through either their support services, clerical work, the resale shop, or through direct services. The support services at the SAAFE House includes volunteers organizing their pantry and cleaning/ arranging the play therapy room and other rooms where victims may enter. The clerical work includes volunteers helping administrators file, answer phones, and handle finances and personal records of victims. The resale shop includes volunteers selling different items such as clothes, shoes, toys, living room decor, kitchen utensils, and much more. Lastly, the direct services is a bit more complex because it requires a 40 hour training plus the orientation, whereas the support services, clerical work, and resale shop only require the orientation. The reason for this is because volunteers for this service work directly with the victims. Volunteers for the direct services can be used as forms of transportation for other people, taking care of children while they or their guardians are in sessions, and being advocates for the victims. An example of a volunteer being an advocate for the victims would be a medical support advocate where they meet clients at the ER if they have been sexually assaulted and essentially are their voice and help them understand the system when they may not know. All of these services offered through the SAAFE House are extremely important for the victims, and in order for them to continue to be offered, volunteers truly are needed to allow the SAAFE House to continue to operate.

The SAAFE House is positively impacting the Huntsville Community in more ways than one, but the number one way that they are making a difference in Huntsville is through how much awareness they have brought towards domestic violence that has ultimately allowed other

individuals and organizations to do the same. I have gotten to see this impact first hand through my sorority hosting events for the Huntsville community to come out and make donations pertaining to toiletries, non-perishable items, clothing, etc. for the SAAFE House, and to help raise money for them as well. I also got to see this impact last year through being invited to attend the mayor of Huntsville's proclamation declaring the month of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Without the SAAFE House continuously advocating, educating, and providing services/ resources for victims, there would not be such an outpour of community support from other offices and organizations such as Alpha Chi Omega and the Mayor's office. Since the SAAFE House is persistent in helping victims of domestic violence, it allows others in the Huntsville community to see all the good that they are doing and only leads to them wanting to help as well. Ultimately, with the volunteers and other organizations that help out with funding for the SAAFE House, they are helping them educate the public and shed light on the dark subject that is domestic violence. Through seeing and hearing about the community effort towards the SAAFE House, this will hopefully allow more victims to feel comfortable enough to come forward and seek the support that they deserve and need.

The SAAFE House does so much good for not only the Huntsville community, but especially for the women and families surrounding Huntsville that may need extra help and resources to leave the abusive relationship that they are in. They are continuously working to better their services and facilities to provide these victims with the best experiences possible. Through their volunteers and community support, they are able to make things happen and give everything back to these victims that have already lost so much.

Taylor Swearingen

### **Boys and Girls Club Project Review**

While working with the Boys and Girls Club of Walker County, my team's objective was to find how we could raise and retain the attendance of the free adult education classes. As my team looked over the services provided by the Boys and Girls Club, we saw how useful these free adult education classes could be to the community. We listened to the directors talk about the adult education classes, and their biggest concern was that the classes were not being filled to the capacity that their funding provided for. My team and I knew we wanted to make these classes grow tremendously in attendance, so the Texas Workforce Commission, who provided the funds for these classes, did not feel the need to cut funding from this program. Although some of our recommendations are not possible at the moment, such as transportation options and childcare, we still included them in our report to let the Club know these methods should be something to work on with help from other public services.

When researching Walker County, we found through American Fact finder that roughly 16.4% of Walker County did not have a high school level education. Knowing this we knew these classes were very important to help those few who do not have a high school degree and help them raise their income levels. We believe with our work that we will increase class sizes at the Boys and Girls Club of Walker County by roughly 40%, increasing the class sizes by about 42 people. First, we created a visual aid to promote these classes; this visual aid is eye catching with popping colors to catch the attention of a passerby. It also includes all of the basic information of the classes, so that the reader can understand everything without having to search further (which typically does not happen in busy, adult lives). Next, we discussed options that the Club can include in their program to generate will and drive among the students. These options include encouraging the teachers get greater detail about the students' lives and using those details to build relationships and to set personal goals with the students' help. Setting these goals will help the teacher keep each student accountable and motivate them to reach each goal within a timeline they have set for themselves. Physically writing these goals down will help the students see what they have to do in order to reach the end goal of graduation, promotions, or passing the citizenship test.

Although I have been on several teams, I do not prefer teams in a classroom setting due to the grading scale that is involved. Usually in a classroom team there is one or two people that put in ninety percent of the work, and the other ten is only done with other members when being forced to spend time on the project in class. I was lucky enough to have teammates who felt as passionate about this research project as much as I did. I believe that this also helps with the final outcome of any project due to the energy of the team being focused on the outcome of the project, rather than spending time on being upset at their team members.

Helping the community has always been a regular part of my life. Community service has been required of me from a young age, and I have even used my dancing background to entertain different crowds, such as nursing home residents, as a service of goodwill. When learning further details about the client we would be working with, I was joyful that our research would be put to use in the coming years instead of going to the desk of a teacher and receiving a grade to end the project. My team and I felt a greater connection with this project because of these same reasons and made us put more effort into the project to actually think outside of the box for the best answers. Knowing that what we were doing would physically help the community of Walker County and the surrounding areas made us want to do better for the people who would

## STUDENT HONORS PROJECTS

better their lives through these educational classes. Personally, this project meant a lot to me because I know how many people struggle from not being able to take care of themselves or their families financially, and how a simple high school degree, trade certificate, or citizenship card may change their entire life. Overall, I believe this project should happen in many more classes at SHSU, and I believe that this project shows the many participants the reasons why we are learning certain things in our classes.