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PREPARING STUDENTS FOR DEMOCRATIC LIFE

The Rediscovery of Education's Civic Purpose



Keith Melville, John Dedrick, and Elizabeth Gish

ABSTRACT

This essay explores why, despite repeated affirmations of the importance of civic education in undergraduate education, preparing students to understand and play an active role in democratic life is, for the most part, a marginal and episodic part of the undergraduate experience. After describing various factors that have contributed to its marginal status, we examine emerging understandings of how civic education can be done effectively. In the essay's final section, we describe the main features of the civic curriculum we are developing and how it can be used to develop the ideals and practices of education for democratic life.

If you look at the mission statement of your college or university, you will likely find that, like most institutions of higher education, it expresses a commitment to prepare students for their role as citizens. The assertion that America's colleges and universities exist in part to serve a public purpose has long been a widely shared expectation. Ever since Harvard College was founded in 1636, one of the most frequently stated missions of higher education has been to prepare students to be well-informed and actively engaged citizens in the nation's democratic life.¹ The Founders agreed that responsible participation on the part of citizens is an indispensable ingredient in a well-functioning democracy and that higher education is one of the main vehicles for achieving this goal.

Given the fact that higher education's civic purpose has been recognized for so long, it is remarkable that it still needs to be justified. Yet, at a time of ever-stronger pressures for America's colleges and universities to focus mainly on the practical purpose of preparing students for careers, clarifying the importance of colleges and universities in preparing the next generation for its place in civic life is more important than ever.²

In the late 1990s, in response to what was widely regarded as an era of civic neglect on the part of higher education, a series of reports and initiatives had the common purpose of recommitting America's colleges and universities to their civic mission. In a widely noted effort, more than three hundred higher education leaders and scholars signed the 1999 "Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education," which challenged educators to take their civic mission seriously.³ This report followed on the heels of a task force on civic education convened by the American Political Science Association,⁴ which asserted that the level of political engagement was "so low as to threaten the vitality and stability of democratic politics in the United States."⁵ Those efforts and others affirmed and emphasized higher education's civic role. In the words of the "Presidents' Declaration": "Our institutions must be vital agents and architects of a flourishing democracy."⁶

Since then, a series of publications (for example, *What Is College For? The Public Purpose of Higher Education*) and reports (including the recent publication *A Crucible Moment*) have made the case for higher education's role in reinvigorating democratic life.⁷ The premise of these reports and commission proceedings is that higher education must recognize its public purpose by offering a new kind of civic education for the twenty-first century.⁸

An assessment of higher education's role in preparing the next generation of democratic citizens needs to recognize the variety and creativity of civic engagement efforts that have been undertaken over the past decade, which we review in the following section. It also needs to recognize what has *not* yet happened on most campuses and why the appeal to America's colleges and universities that they should recognize their role as "vital agents and architects for a flourishing democracy" is still, for the most part, an unfulfilled promise.⁹ In the words of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' George Mehaffy, who took the lead in assembling the American Democracy Project,¹⁰ a nationwide network of universities committed to reinvigorating higher education's civic mission, civic education remains a "marginal and episodic" feature on most campuses.¹¹ Further, as Senator Bob Graham recently commented, "What little civics teaching is left only allows students to become better informed spectators—learning names, dates, the three branches of government, and the language of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution. While this knowledge is

fundamental, it isn't enough. The burden of rescuing democracy rests primarily on the American educational system."¹²

A Decade of Civic Initiatives

Even a brief inventory of what has been done to promote civic engagement over the past ten to fifteen years provides impressive evidence of a wide range of initiatives:

- Three major associations of colleges and universities—the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU),¹³ the Association of American Colleges and Universities,¹⁴ and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities¹⁵—have taken leading roles in various initiatives. In 2003, the AASCU, working in partnership with the *New York Times*,¹⁶ launched the American Democracy Project, which now consists of about 250 participating institutions whose purpose is to prepare the next generation of engaged citizens. Its work and reach have recently been expanded with the formation of the Democracy Commitment,¹⁷ a growing consortium of two-year colleges.
- Campus Compact, formed in 1985, has expanded impressively.¹⁸ It now consists of a nationwide coalition of almost twelve hundred college presidents, representing some six million students on campuses where local chapters engage in a wide variety of civic engagement efforts.
- In 2006, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching funded the creation of its new elective classification for community engagement,¹⁹ which recognizes the importance of civic efforts on campus. Some regional accreditation bodies, such as the North Central Association,²⁰ now require evidence of civic engagement as a criterion for accreditation.
- Support for civic education has also taken the form of significant financial backing. Jonathan Tisch made a \$40 million gift to Tufts University to fund its College of Citizenship and Public Service.²¹ The Duke Endowment and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided \$30 million for an undergraduate civic engagement program at Duke,²² and a grant from the Argosy Foundation supports the Center for Community Engagement at Amherst College.²³
- During this same period, new or expanded research centers have provided a wide range of resources for understanding the civic engagement of college youths. Among them are the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement,²⁴ the Democracy Imperative,²⁵ and the Kettering Foundation's *Higher Education Exchange*.²⁶

- At the center of this activity are initiatives taken directly by colleges and universities, including the Sustained Dialogue Campus Network,²⁷ Public Achievement initiatives,²⁸ and centers for civic life.²⁹ Many institutions now recognize faculty involvement in public engagement as an important and legitimate part of the faculty role.³⁰ Perhaps the most impressive development has been the rapid growth of community service and service learning as a prominent part of the undergraduate experience.³¹

In all, the past ten to fifteen years have seen the development of wide-ranging efforts within higher education to take its civic mission seriously. As two recent commentators note: “After a longish lull, citizenship is back on the higher education agenda, and a large and diverse group of educators have signed on.”³²

What is Missing

Democratic citizenship, as we understand it, makes four demands. It involves *knowing* certain things about public life, specific issues, and how the institutions of government work. It involves *caring* as well, not only habits of the mind but habits of the heart, and a commitment to collective well-being. It also involves *choosing* courses of public action through the democratic process of public deliberation, in local communities and in the nation as a whole. Finally, citizenship involves *doing*—engagement that takes various forms, including voting and volunteering but not limited to those activities.

It is widely agreed that civic literacy needs to be learned. As Frances Moore Lappé writes, “Human beings skilled in ‘doing democracy’ aren’t born that way. . . . Effective democracy-making is an art that must be learned, just as one would learn to play the piano, dribble a basketball, or read.”³³ Political scientist Benjamin Barber spelled out some of what this term implies when he wrote that “the literacy required to live in civil society, the competence to participate in democratic communities, the ability to think critically and act deliberately in a pluralistic world, the empathy that permits us to hear and accommodate others, all involve skills that need to be acquired.”³⁴

What is striking to us is the lack of clarity about what is needed to prepare young people for responsible participation in democratic life and the mismatch between what the college curriculum offers regarding civic education and what the goal of achieving civic literacy implies. As Anne Colby points out, despite the recent emphasis on community service, preparing college students for responsible participation in democratic life is “not addressed in a direct and systematic way.”³⁵

Despite the repeated affirmation that preparing students for democratic life is an important part of higher education's mission, there is little evidence that the college curriculum accomplishes this goal. An American government course, for example, is in part a civics lesson, and so, too, are courses in communications and media studies whose purpose is to prepare students to take part in the democratic conversation. As valuable as these courses and experiences are, they are not sufficient as pathways to civic literacy for several reasons. Many college students do not take these courses. Even when they do, many faculty members who teach them do not understand it to be their role to support students as they develop the skills and dispositions required to be engaged citizens in a democracy.

The goal of achieving civic literacy, as we understand it, does not consist mainly of learning about the three branches of government or understanding how a bill becomes a law. A key task of civic education is to cultivate the habits and skills of democratic citizenship, including the ability to listen to others' ideas, assess alternative public actions, formulate well-founded opinions, and productively engage in the life of the community and the nation as a whole. These goals are not often met in courses that focus mainly on the formal institutions of government.

While educators frequently point to research indicating that college graduates have higher rates of civic participation, there is reason to conclude that the education offered to most undergraduates does not lead to the kind of civic literacy that a democratic nation needs.³⁶ As things stand, most of today's college students do not come to higher education with the expectation that civic knowledge will be an important outcome. Most do not gain much political knowledge in the course of their undergraduate studies. And most students, when they reflect on what they learned in college, do not feel that they acquired substantial civic skills or became strongly committed to active engagement as a citizen. As reminders of the gap between what is promised and what higher education delivers, it is worth noting some of the evidence for these assertions:

- In 2004, when a study for the American Association of Colleges and Universities asked college-bound high school students and college juniors to identify the most and least important learning outcomes, civic engagement was chosen as one of the least important objectives.³⁷ College is regarded by most undergraduates as a time to prepare for "real-world" tasks, in particular, preparing for their careers.
- In a summary of research on the civic knowledge of college students, Delli Carpini and Keeter found that during the second half of the twentieth

century—a period that saw the percentage of college graduates double—levels of political knowledge did not increase.³⁸

- A survey of some 24,000 students on American campuses revealed that only one-third of them said they felt strongly that their college experience helped them learn civic skills or that as a result they felt a stronger commitment to become actively engaged citizens.³⁹

Why the Gap?

Why is there still a large gap between what higher education promises regarding preparation for democratic life and what it delivers? It can be largely explained, we believe, by six factors.

I. Practical Obstacles to Bolstering Civic Education

Several practical obstacles to devoting time or additional efforts to civic education are variations on a familiar theme. At a time of tight budgetary constraints in higher education and growing faculty loads, educators have their hands full. There is no place in a crowded curriculum to add new courses, especially those that are not perceived as adding to the market value of a college degree or for which there is no vocal constituency. As tuition rises and the job market for graduates tightens, there is increasing pressure for colleges and universities to orient their offerings to career preparation. Civic education is not generally perceived as a way to strengthen a marketable résumé.

A related impediment to expanding civic education is that it is inherently multidisciplinary. While there is widespread agreement that education for public participation should take place across the curriculum, adding a course that spans disciplines or requires faculty from different departments to offer joint courses is often difficult to do.

2. Key Terms Regarding the Civic Mission are Vague or Ambiguous

As various commentators have noted, another impediment to delivering on the promise of higher education's civic mission is that key terms in the field, especially the phrase "civic engagement," permit such different interpretations that there is little agreement about how they might be achieved. When the term *civic engagement* is used, there is little clarity about what it means and how it relates to service learning or the topics addressed in American government courses about

electoral politics and the formal institutions of government. In the absence of a commonly shared understanding of what this term implies regarding learning objectives, a wide range of activities can be justified.

Take, for example, community service and service learning, which represent the most impressive success in injecting civic initiatives into the college curriculum over the past generation, and the claims made for what they accomplish. Both at the secondary school level and in higher education, a majority of students participate in community service. Whether community service involves assisting the homeless, working in soup kitchens, or getting involved in environmental protection, volunteer work often enhances students' awareness of unmet needs and offers a reminder of what individuals can do. Advocates of community service make the claim, amply documented, that it teaches a sense of responsibility to the local community, which is an important aspect of civic literacy.⁴⁰

It is important to acknowledge what community service adds to the undergraduate experience, and it is equally important to note what it does not accomplish. While it often enhances a sense of responsibility to the local community, the service experience does not generally teach students much about the political dimension of public problems. Nor does it contribute much to the development of skills needed to function in the political realm. Only rarely does community service, or the learning associated with it, enable students to acquire skills needed to engage effectively in public problem-solving, such as becoming comfortable with political disagreements, learning to manage the complexity and ambiguity of public issues, or gaining a sense of personal efficacy in the political realm.⁴¹

Students whose undergraduate experience is shaped by the service component emerge from college with a clearer sense of community needs and greater sensitivity to local problems. But they are not, for the most part, prepared with skills that enable them to link the personal and the political. Nonetheless, because there is little clarity about what students should learn in the civic realm, college presidents and provosts often point to community service as evidence that their institutions take their civic mission seriously, without recognizing what is missing.

3. Civics and Civic Education Are Not Taken Seriously by the Scholarly Disciplines

Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, civic education was recognized as a major responsibility of formal education in public schools at the elementary and secondary levels and in higher education.

When public schools were established in the nineteenth century, their directive was to teach not just the “3 R’s”—reading, writing, and arithmetic—but also a fourth R, promoting responsible citizenship.⁴² In their early years, scholarly disciplines such as political science and sociology were also devoted to civic ends. The American Political Science Association, for example, when it was founded in 1903, started with an explicit civic purpose. Likewise, at about the same time, the new discipline of academic sociology was devoted to public problem-solving. But as these scholarly disciplines matured and as American culture evolved, civics fell into disrepute.⁴³ By the 1960s, as David Scobey comments, “civics had become a disreputable curricular category, redolent of patriotic boosterism or stale models of character-building.”⁴⁴

At every level and in every academic discipline, preparing students for responsible citizenship has taken a backseat. At the secondary school level, the time devoted to civic education in the schools has been scaled back.⁴⁵ Teachers offer mainly a factual introduction to political institutions and processes. At the university level, the earlier emphasis on character-building gave way to what is considered more academically respectable and scholarly. The American government course, a staple of undergraduate education, has for decades emphasized the formal institutions of government. None of the scholarly disciplines is oriented to civic education, nor are many graduate students prepared to teach it. As a result, civic literacy is not clearly defined, and none of the established disciplines claim responsibility for it.⁴⁶

As mentioned above, democratic citizenship makes four demands: *knowing* certain things about public life; *caring* for the collective well-being; *choosing* courses of public action; and *doing*, which includes, but is not limited to, voting and volunteering. This definition of civic literacy bears only a slight resemblance to what is taught, for example, in the American government course, which typically reflects a top-down emphasis on the formal institutions of politics. Students come away with a better understanding of the “they” part of democracy, which features elected officials and their actions. However, these courses typically have little to say about the “we” part of the democratic equation: what citizens are expected to do and the ways in which democracy functions at the community level.

Most academics do not understand it to be their role to contribute to building a foundation that enables students to be effective, engaged citizens. One precondition for reinventing the civic curriculum for the twenty-first century is that incentives and occasions need to be provided for faculty development that differ from what they (and we) experienced as graduate students.

4. Learning About Key Public Issues

Democratic citizens need to know enough about key issues to be able to engage in productive, reasonably well-informed discussion about them. This is particularly important at a time when prominent issues, such as same-sex marriage, immigration policy, public entitlements, and the role and cost of federal government, are sharply contested. The debate over government's role is about more than the federal budget. It is about the size and obligations of government—which is to say, it is about America's social contract and the kind of future Americans envision. This discussion should involve not just Washington insiders but the public as a whole. Because it has so many implications for the college students who will live with the consequences of public choices about these matters for the rest of their lives, it is a discussion in which they, along with citizens of all ages, should be active participants.

Prominent academics, including political scientists Joseph Nye, Stephen Walt, and Robert Putnam, and the scholars who contributed to *Democracy at Risk* have made the case for “real-world relevance” in college-level courses about public life, pointing in particular to the importance of introducing students to leading public issues.⁴⁷ Some campuses have hosted forums on a variety of public issues, drawing on materials prepared by various groups, including the National Issues Forums, a nonpartisan nationwide network with which the authors of this essay have long been associated.⁴⁸ For the most part, however, what the authors of one study concluded several years ago, that “serious discussion of political issues—a critical ingredient of a civic education—is conspicuously missing in today's university curricula,” is still true.⁴⁹

Much of the reluctance to engage students in leading issues stems from a concern that such discussions are likely to be biased or that they provide an occasion for ideological indoctrination. This assertion has been made especially by conservatives who are concerned about the apparent liberal bias of college faculty, leading to what one critic calls a “one-party classroom.”⁵⁰ While it is essential to protect the intellectual integrity and respect for different points of view that are two of the central values of academic life, this concern has been overstated. Several studies have concluded that there is little evidence that the political convictions of faculty affect the political orientation of their students.⁵¹ That research, as well as our experience helping to prepare issue guides for the National Issues Forums and talking with colleagues who have moderated forums on campus and in classrooms, convinces us that issues—even volatile topics such as abortion—can be framed and addressed in ways that invite discussion that fairly represents and respects various points of view.⁵²

Taking a risk-averse approach to teaching about politics and public life does not serve students, because it neglects the skills and experiences that prepare college graduates for an active role in self-governance. As President Obama puts it in his book *The Audacity of Hope*, democratic governance is not mainly a fixed set of institutions but, rather, an invitation to a public conversation. “All of the Constitution’s elaborate machinery,” he writes, “is designed to force us into a conversation, a deliberative democracy.”⁵³ Preparing college students to engage in those conversations is a key part of civic education.

5. How Civic Education is Done

Another impediment to effective civic education involves *how* civic education is done. Several years ago, in an initiative called the Political Engagement Project, Anne Colby and her associates at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching examined how college students learn about politics and public life on twenty-one American campuses. The book that resulted from that project, *Educating for Democracy*,⁵⁴ makes the case for active civic pedagogies that involve students on many levels and encourage them to apply what they are learning in various realms of public action. The striking thing about these pedagogical success stories is that teaching and learning take nontraditional forms.

Much of college instruction still takes the form of traditional lectures, and much of the testing of student learning involves recall of factual material. Especially where faculty are expected to teach and test large-enrollment courses, moving from this traditional style of teaching to the active pedagogies described in *Educating for Democracy* is a challenge and a source of resistance to trying new ways to educate college students for democratic life. The implication for college presidents and provosts who want to help faculty move toward different kinds of civic education is that, whenever possible, they should be encouraged to set aside traditional modes of instruction and assessment and experiment with active pedagogies.

6. Civic Instruction with an Emphasis on Democracy

A final impediment to civic education is that teaching and learning about democracy, understood as a set of principles and practices, are conspicuous by their absence in most undergraduate programs. As part of our preparation for a book we are co-authoring, we examined several dozen texts that are currently used in American government courses. In terms of the topics they cover and what they feature in their descriptions of the American political system, these texts are strikingly similar to books used in college classrooms fifty years ago.

They focus on Congress, the executive branch, the court system, and the Constitution, with an emphasis on elective politics and American political history. That is, of course, an essential part of what citizens need to know, but it is only half of the democratic story.

With few exceptions, these texts are Washington-centric and leader-centric. While often featuring titles that sound democratic, such as *We the People*,⁵⁵ they tell a top-down story about government. By focusing attention on elected officials and the formal institutions of government, such courses suggest that democracy is something *they* do—elected officials and civil servants—in institutions and bureaucracies that are distant from what *we* do in our day-to-day lives. What is missing from these texts and many American government courses is serious attention to what self-government implies for the role and obligations of citizens, and the skills citizens need to function effectively in a democracy. Moreover, while most texts mention declining confidence in government, they do little to explore recent civic innovations that promise to turn that trend around.

In *The Next Form of Democracy*, Matt Leighninger observes that “we are leaving the era of expert rule, in which elected representatives and designated experts make decisions and attack problems with limited interference, and entering a period in which the responsibilities of government are more widely shared.”⁵⁶ That is an intriguing observation about how a new generation is doing democracy, with important implications about what citizens need to know and know how to do and the role that higher education should play in preparing the next generation of citizens.

From the beginning of the American experiment, a central question has been what role the public should play in a society that lives up to the promise of democratic self-government. The current crisis of confidence in government stems in part from the realization that government does not function well, and public confidence in government cannot be sustained, when citizens are on the sidelines and their participation is limited to voting and volunteering. The premise of the civic renewal movement is that democracy needs to be reinvigorated by the active engagement of the public in ways that shape public decisions.⁵⁷ Many of the civic innovations of the past few decades, which are typically given short shrift in classroom instruction, are efforts to move toward more broadly shared democratic governance.

For that to happen, civics needs to be reinvented. Educators at all levels need to play a more active role in helping students understand the principles and practices of democratic self-government, a theme that is notably absent from most of what is done today in the name of civic education. The transition from teaching about public life that emphasizes the formal institutions of government to teaching that emphasizes democratic self-government is more

than a rhetorical shift. It implies a responsibility for civic literacy in its various dimensions, instruction that takes democracy and the ideal of self-government seriously, both as a set of principles that students need to understand and as a set of attitudes and skills that students need to acquire.

Effective participation in democratic life presumes the ability to engage in dialogue and public deliberation about pressing issues, skills in collaborative leadership, and experience in managing a diverse range of conflicting views. As a result of the growth of the deliberative democracy movement over the past several decades, many institutions are now devoted to the practice of public deliberation about shared problems. This is not a partisan movement, which implies a particular political ideology, but, rather, one that is devoted to public deliberation as an important civic practice. Whatever else twenty-first-century civics involves, it should feature the democratic skill of engaging in deliberative dialogues and applying them to public problem-solving.

Taking Civic Literacy Seriously

Achieving civic literacy is a broad, multidimensional task. It is unrealistic to think that it can be fully achieved as a result of undergraduate education. But getting clearer about the learning goals associated with civic literacy—the specific skills, attitudes, and knowledge it presumes—is an important step for college faculty who are committed to taking the civic mission seriously. Over the past two decades, a movement has begun to make civic education an integral part of the work of American colleges and universities. The question now is how to address the substantial gap that remains between what is promised and what higher education delivers, as well as how to deal with the impediments we have reviewed. How, in brief, can America's colleges and universities move beyond the current situation in which civic education is “marginal and episodic,” peripheral to the main emphasis of what higher education offers in its curriculum, classrooms, and campus life?

Several recent reports have featured descriptions of what is being done to address this gap. In addition to the volume produced by Anne Colby and her colleagues, to which we referred earlier, other recent accounts, including an initiative undertaken by the American Association of Colleges and Universities in its “Core Commitments” project,⁵⁸ focus on the development of civic identity as a key outcome of liberal education and explore how the college experience can serve as a catalyst for developing or clarifying a sense of civic identity.

Building on the work described in *Educating Citizens*, a chapter by Stephen Hunt in a recent report from the AASCU, *Educating Students for*

Political Engagement, examines the campus experiences described in the Political Engagement Project to show how various institutions are dealing with the obstacles identified in the previous section. Hunt shows, for example, what some universities have done to recruit and develop faculty who are prepared and committed to civic education, how the interdisciplinary character of education for democracy can be managed, and what is being done to inject civic education into students' first-year experience.⁵⁹

We agree, as Hunt comments, that there is no single "right" way to address civic learning in the curriculum and that it is desirable for civic education to be incorporated in various parts of the undergraduate curriculum. However, as a step toward clarifying civic learning objectives, we think that it is worthwhile to create a curriculum for a college-level course that takes educating for democracy seriously—in effect, a draft version of civics for the twenty-first century.

Accordingly, the three of us have been working on an introduction to democratic governance that differs in important ways from the topics and approach of traditional American government courses. The book we have been writing focuses less on the formal institutions of American government and more on democratic governance. It emphasizes what *we* do as citizens: public choices and the values, visions, and disputes that shape democratic life in the twenty-first century. Our interest, which is shared by an increasing number of educators, extends beyond the formal institutions of government and beyond the civic acts of voting and volunteering. We start where Tocqueville did by understanding democracy first at the level of local associations and community problem-solving. In the course of examining narratives that shape Americans' thinking about public life, we invite students to explore assumptions and values that shape their sense of civic identity, their understanding of politics, and their place in it.

Our work has been informed and influenced by our experience with the National Issues Forums and by research conducted in collaboration with the Kettering Foundation over the past thirty years about civic skills related to community problem-solving.⁶⁰ Our intention is to draw students into discussions about key public issues, debates about major public challenges, and unresolved problems. The text we have created features dialogue and deliberation as core civic skills. As Katie Harriger and Jill McMillan conclude in a study of students at Wake Forest University, when deliberative forums are featured as a key part of the undergraduate experience, it shapes students' sense of themselves as active agents of democracy.⁶¹

Our project, tentatively entitled *The Democracy Project*, is intended both as an introduction to civic literacy and as a catalyst for discussion about what a new civics should look like and what kinds of teaching and learning are well suited

to the task of preparing college students to take an active role in democratic life. Whether this book is used as a text for a semester-long course or adapted for use in various courses—as part of the curriculum in communications, for example, or in sociology courses that focus on social problems—we are interested in sparking a new round of discussion about how to educate undergraduates for participation in democratic life.

Ever since the Founders drafted the Constitution, democracy has been an experiment whose outcome cannot be taken for granted and whose success depends on how well citizens are prepared to assume an active role in self-government. No institution in American society is in a better position to prepare citizens than higher education. In the words of our colleague David Mathews, former secretary of health, education, and welfare and president of the Kettering Foundation, the nation's colleges “are more than knowledge factories. From the American revolution through the civil rights movement, they have been part of the greatest experiment of all, an experiment based on the proposition that we citizens can actually govern ourselves.”⁶² At a time of widespread despair about politics, a time when the nation faces daunting challenges, it is particularly important to close the gap between what higher education promises regarding its civic mission and what it delivers.

NOTES

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3. Thomas Ehrlich and Elizabeth Hollander, “Presidents’ Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education” (Boston: Campus Compact, 1999), <http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/Presidents-Declaration.pdf>.

4. American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., <http://www.apsanet.org>.
5. APSA Task Force on Civic Education in the Twenty-First Century, "Expanded Articulation Statement: A Call for Reactions and Contributions," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31, no. 3 (September 1998): 636–37.
6. Ehrlich and Hollander, "Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education."
7. Ellen Condliffe Lagemann and Harry Lewis, eds., *What Is College For? The Public Purpose of Higher Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2011); National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, *Crucible Moment*.
8. For more on this, see Scott London, "The Civic Mission of Higher Education: From Outreach to Engagement. From the Workshop on Higher Education and Public Life" (Dayton: Kettering Foundation, 2002), <http://www.scottlondon.com/reports/seminar2001.pdf>; Scott London, "Higher Education and Public Life: Restoring the Bond. A Report from the Seminar on Higher Education and Public Life, Washington D.C., June 28–29, 2000" (Dayton: Kettering Foundation, 2001), <http://www.scottlondon.com/reports/seminar2000.pdf>; Scott London, "Higher Education for the Public Good. A Report from the National Leadership Dialogues" (Ann Arbor: National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, 2003), http://www.scottlondon.com/reports/national_forum.pdf.
9. Ehrlich and Hollander, "Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education."
10. American Democracy Project (American Association of State Colleges and Universities), Washington, D.C., <http://www.aascu.org/programs/ADP/>.
11. George Mehaffy, personal communication, July 2013.
12. Bob Graham with Chris Hand, *America: The Owner's Manual. Making Government Work for You* (Thousand Oaks: CQ Press, 2009), 22.
13. American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C., <http://www.aascu.org>.
14. Association of American Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C., <http://www.aacu.org>.
15. Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, Washington, D.C., <http://www.aplu.org>.
16. *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>.
17. Democracy Commitment, Washington, D.C., <http://thedemocracycommitment.org>.
18. Campus Compact, Boston, <http://www.compact.org>.
19. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Stanford, Calif., <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org>.
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27. Sustained Dialogue Campus Network, Washington, D.C., <http://www.sdcampusnetwork.org>.
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- http://www.cpn.org/topics/youth/highered/pdfs/New_Student_Politics.pdf; and the 2007 Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement study “Millennials Talk Politics: A Study of College Student Political Engagement,” <http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/CSTP.pdf>. These reports show that students are explicit about their disenchantment with traditional democratic institutions, politics, and government and that they understand service to provide an *alternative* to engagement with such traditional institutions. Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich, Elizabeth Beaumont, Jason Stephens, and Lee Shulman address this issue at length in *Educating Citizens* (San Francisco: John Wiley, 2003).
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