

American Democracy Project



March 2007

ADP NEWS

“Arriving at one goal is the starting point to another.”

—John Dewey

A MORE PERFECT UNION: REFLECTIONS ON DEMOCRACY

Every generation of Americans is called upon to respond to the challenge given us by the founders of our country, the challenge found in the preamble to the Constitution:

“We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Every generation of Americans has heeded the call “to form a more perfect union,” and our country today is better for their accomplishments. From the narrowness of vision that privileged only white male landowners, generations have fought to make sure that the right to vote is available to all Americans, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or social status. That widening set of opportunities—the inclusion of more and more Americans with the privilege of voting—is symbolic of America’s greatness, not only in its original breathtakingly-bold design, but

in the possibilities of continuing re-interpretation of core beliefs that have, over the years, provided an ever-widening set of rights and privileges to more and more Americans. America has redefined and expanded, over and over again, what it means to “form a more perfect union,” what it means “to establish justice,” and what it means “to promote the general welfare.”

Now a new generation faces those challenges. This new generation will be called upon to define anew what is meant by “a more perfect union.” Will they be ready? Will they be able to say that they continued to expand the American dream? Will they be able to use the tools and the circumstances of the 21st Century to extend the brave hopes of our 18th century founders “to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity?”

If America is going to continue to be a shining beacon of hope for people everywhere, this new generation of Americans must be ready. They must become informed, engaged citizens of our great democracy. And we in America’s colleges and universities must help them prepare for that great work.

—George L. Mehaffy

The William M. Plater Award for Leadership In Civic Engagement

AASCU will be sending out information about how to nominate individuals for the William M. Plater Award, given annually to an AASCU provost or chief academic officer, in recognition of exemplary leadership in advancing the civic learning of undergraduates. Nominations are due by May 1, 2007.

The Plater Award is designed to recognize the critical role of the chief academic officer in advancing the civic mission of the campus through curricular reform, public advocacy, accountability for institutional citizenship, faculty development and recruitment, and partnerships with community organizations. The award was created to acknowledge the critical leadership role that chief academic officers play in serving as the vital link between the academic community (principally the faculty, staff, and students) and the more externally oriented leadership of presidents, chancellors, and trustees in helping make an institution intentional about its role in citizenship preparation.

The Plater Award was first created in 2006 in honor of its first recipient, William Plater, the long-serving provost at Indiana University-Purdue University indianapolis (IUPUI). The award is funded through a generous gift from IUPUI. For more information contact George Mehaffy at mehaffy@aascu.org.

American Humanics Collegiate Dialogue

Last year the American Democracy Project (ADP) formed a partnership with American Humanics, an organization that prepares leaders for the nonprofit sector. Each year, American Humanics sponsors the National Collegiate Dialogue program, offering students an opportunity to explore significant public policy issues that impact their communities and the nation, as well as meet with nonprofit and legislative leaders in the policy area they are considering. Students are able to consider and address ways in which public policy decisions might best reflect the changing needs and concerns of society.



On January 4, 2007, ADP co-sponsored the American Humanics' National Collegiate Dialogue in Washington, D.C. The Dialogue focused on immigration reform and the crafting of public policy at the national level. The one-day event engaged 180 students. Students who were interested in immigration policy and reform signed up for this event and they were sent materials and suggested activities to do in their own communities as preparation for the Dialogue. Once they arrived in D.C., students were given a brief overview of the current state of immigration policy within the United States. They split into small groups and then met with various stakeholders (policy think tanks, advocacy groups, Congressional staff, etc.) to discuss the work of policy formation, reform, and advocacy. The students reconvened late in the afternoon and debated the issues in a mock congressional session that culminated with a draft bill for a revision to immigration law.

Here are some quotes from students who participated in the event, taken from the evaluations:

"Playing the role of an ideological group much different than me was an eye-opening experience that allowed me to realize what I really feel on the issue."

"I learned so much—seriously I am motivated to vote and advocate more about these issues on a local level in my community."

"It makes me rethink stereotypes and how nonprofits can actually change policy and how policy really is supposed to be enforced by the nonprofits."

"The experience helped me realize that I have generally discounted or disregarded different opinions. I now understand it is important to hear other and opposing views as part of the decision making process."

"This opportunity will affect how I view other people and cultures and has influenced my college major."

"I can understand other's views now as well as more comprehensively understand my own. This experience has increased my value of patience and understanding of others. I will

be more collaborative with many different persons in a group setting.”

As is evidenced by these excerpts from the student evaluations, the dialogue and debate that were fostered, as well as the site visits, proved to be very important educational opportunities for the students involved.

Yet the positive evaluations are a cause of concern for George Mehaffy: “These quotes haunt me. While I was pleased to see the impact that this event appeared to have had on students who participated, it

was, after all, only a one-day event. I wondered what is happening on their campuses. Are these students not having opportunities to hear opposing views, or engage in debate over critical national issues? Are they not asked to form well thought out positions on significant national issues, based on research and investigation?”

For more information about upcoming Dialogues visit humanics.org.

CAMPUS NEWS

■ **Longwood University** and eight other Virginia colleges and universities hosted the conference, *America and the World: Sustaining Democracy in the Global Age*. With support from the Longwood University American Democracy Project, this conference focused on how the principles of democracy have served as models for countries worldwide. The conference took place January 25-27, 2007.

The keynote speech was presented by Richard Holbrooke, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Additional speakers included Thomas D. Boyatt, president of the Foreign Affairs Council and former U.S. Ambassador to Columbia; Lee Hamilton, co-chair of the Iraq Study Group and former member of the federal commission that presented the *9/11 Report*; and Ethan Bronner, deputy foreign editor of *The New York Times*. For more information about similar events visit: jamestown2007.org/se-signature-eventslist.cfm.

■ To further increase the campus wide emphasis placed on civic engagement, **Illinois State University** recently established a civic engagement award for undergraduate students. This award, named the Excellence in Civic Engagement Award, was established in March 2006 to annually recognize one exemplary curricular or co-curricular civic engagement project that has been ongoing for at least two years. The Civic Engagement award includes a \$500 honorarium. The only requirement of the honorarium is that it be put towards a community, civic, and social issue. For more information visit illinoisstate.edu/american-democracy/civic_engagement_award/

■ The School of Social Sciences at **Northwestern State University** (La.), the American Democracy Project at Northwestern State University (NSU), and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Foundation of Louisiana co-sponsored a debate on racial profiling between King Downing of the ACLU and Joe Morris, coordinator of the criminal justice program at NSU on Wednesday, March 7, 2007. The debate moderator was Randy Stelly, publisher of *The Real View*. Downing is the ACLU national coordinator for the Campaign Against Racial Profiling. The Campaign began in 1999 and has worked with other civil rights and community organizations to raise the issue of racial profiling.

Downing monitors and coordinates the efforts of the organization's 53 affiliates and chapters across the country to identify and end racial, ethnic, and religious profiling through litigation, legislation, education, outreach, and media awareness. Morris, a native of Oil City, Pennsylvania, is a veteran of more than 20 years in law enforcement. He has survived numerous armed encounters, allowing him to bring a unique perspective on law enforcement to the classroom. Morris started his career in patrol and transferred to undercover narcotics investigation where he worked for more than four years. He also worked as a criminal investigator on varied cases including burglary, armed robbery, rape, and homicide.

■ **Illinois State University** (ISU) has created a faculty development program called Faculty Opportunities for Creating Civic and Community Understanding Among Students (the FOCUS Initiative). This initiative has been sponsored through

enhancement funds provided by the provost. The Initiative compliments the First Year Experience and General Education. The FOCUS Initiative was designed specifically to support ISU faculty who enrich the college experience of their students with enhanced opportunities for civic and community engagement.

The FOCUS Initiative is multifaceted and features an awards and grants program, support for summer training for first-year seminar instructors, and travel funds to provide assistance to faculty who present at national conferences. The FOCUS Faculty Fellowship Program is also sponsored by the FOCUS Initiative. The purpose of this program is to develop content for online faculty development modules, called the FOCUS Module Series, that aim to support ISU faculty in their efforts to incorporate civic and community engagement into the curriculum. The Series currently consists of three modules: (1) What are civic and community engagement? (2) Why incorporate civic and community engagement into curriculum? and (3) Innovative pedagogy for incorporating civic and community engagement. The series will expand with two additional modules, including one on political engagement addressing innovative partnerships in student learning in the summer of 2007. For more information about the FOCUS Initiative visit focus.ilstu.edu.

■ The **University of Central Oklahoma** recently celebrated its annual “Democracy Day: Creating My Space for Democracy” on March 2, 2007. The day was kicked off with a speech by Provost William J. Radke and the day’s co-organizer, Joanne Necco, professor of professional teacher education. The welcome and opening remarks were followed by two sets of breakout sessions, on issues such as Perspectives on the Post-9/11 World; Servant-Leadership: How to Trust; ADP Stewardship of Public Lands Initiative; and Political Toleration: Is Civility Always Appropriate in Political Discourse. There also was a poster session in which students and faculty were able to showcase the civic-engagement projects that they have been involved with.

The New York Times Knowledge Network was a co-sponsor of the day’s events, and Tom Zeller, Jr., a *New York Times* reporter, gave the keynote address entitled, “Is It Really MySpace If the World is Watching?” The address was an engaging and thought-provoking piece that caused the audience to consider the effects of the increasingly cyber-enhanced culture on daily life. For more information about the day’s events visit ucok.edu/AmericanDemocracyProject/.

NEWS & NOTES

■ **The Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility** states, “I, (student’s name), pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work.” Through this pledge, students define for themselves what it means to be socially and environmentally responsible. Students at more than a hundred colleges and universities are using the pledge at some level. The following ADP schools participate in the Graduation Pledge: Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, California State University Chico, Humboldt State University (Calif.), and Old Dominion University (Va.). Visit the Graduation Pledge website (graduationpledge.org) for more information, including profiles of participating schools and steps on how to become involved.

■ **Film Your Issue (FYI)** is designed to engage 30 million young Americans in important domestic and global social issues by asking them to express their issue using digital film. FYI is currently looking for faculty members from institutions across the country to promote the Film Your Issue competition. The competition invites 16–25 year olds to create 30–to–60 second “issue” films on any topic. Entries will be posted on YAHOO!, winners will broadcast on STARZ, and awards will be given at the FYI Awards Ceremony at the United Nations. The winner will receive an internship at Universal Studios. The deadline for film submission is April 15, 2007. For more information about FYI visit filmyourissue.com.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION SERIES: JURY PROJECT

The Jury Project, one of the ADP Civic Engagement in Action Initiatives, encourages institutions to create partnerships with state and federal courts to promote a positive view of jury service as an obligation of citizens in a democracy. The Jury Project also encourages other law-related activities. Recently an electronic query was sent to ADP schools to identify institutions that have been undertaking activities in the Jury Project. What follows are some selected activities that were drawn from this survey:

■ **Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis** (IUPUI) is currently in the process of starting Phase 4 of their Jury Project. The first phase sought to identify causes for the low response rate to jury summons by examining jurors' experiences. Project activities included context inquiry and problem definition. The problem finding activity involved Marion County court room observation. Each student involved in this phase of the project was asked to produce an observation document and a proposal.

In Phase 2, students identified three major problem areas in the jury service system: perception, communication, and pragmatic issues such as parking, daycare, and food. In the spring of 2006, students focused on the issue of peoples' perception of jury duty.

Students worked to create the framework of an online version of the *Council for Court Excellence's Court Observation Handbook* during Phase 3.

Phase 4 will begin this spring when IUPUI students will put the finishing touches on the online *Court Observation Handbook*, and the website will be launched.

- **Western Kentucky University** (WKU)'s faculty and students have been gathering data related to a research project that was started last spring. This research is centered around the topic of student attitudes toward jury service. The preliminary findings of this research will be presented at a conference in March 2007. In April, John Mintor, Kentucky Supreme Court Justice, will address the students at WKU.
- **The State University of New York College of Plattsburgh** is still in the process of developing its activities for the Jury Project. This project will involve students in the Small Group Communication Course. These students will be working with the District Attorney's office and the Commissioner of Jurors on the following subsets of the project: surveying previous jurors, writing a literature review that summarizes what is known about how juries deliberate, examining handbooks for jurors, and making suggestions to the county about how to improve the handbook that is currently being used.

To receive a complete digest of survey responses contact Cecilia Orphan at 202.478.7833 or orphanc@aascu.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- The next national **American Democracy Project Conference** will take place June 7-9, 2007 and will be held in historic Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The program planned for this year's meeting is both exciting and dynamic, with an event at the National Constitution Center, a Friends and Campus Showcase, two Pre-Conference Workshops, six plenaries, 36 concurrent sessions, and eight workshops. To register for the conference visit aascu.org/meetings/07_adp_pa/default.htm.
- Registration is now open for the ADP North Central Regional Conference, **Spaces of Civic Engagement**. The conference will be held at the University of

Wisconsin-River Falls, April 12-14, 2007. There will be conference representatives of fifteen universities and organizations, as well as speeches by Greg Brock, senior editor of *The New York Times*, and Anne Colby, Author of *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*. For full conference details and registration information visit uwrf.edu/adp/conference.

- **The American Democracy Project** is pleased to announce its third summer program in Yellowstone National Park: **Politics and the Yellowstone Ecosystem**, July 30 - August 4, 2007. The

program will explore environmental disputes over bison, wolves, snowmobiles, and grizzly bears. Space is still available for either single campus representatives or members of a campus team (provosts, other administrators, or faculty). For registration information contact George Mehaffy at mehaffyg@aascu.org.

- **Americans for Informed Democracy** is sponsoring a young global leaders summit on Social Entrepreneurship and Global Change. The summit will examine how leaders today are increasingly taking a business approach to make a social impact. The summit will take place on March 24, 2007 at Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. For more information visit aidemocracy.org.

- **Florida Campus Compact** is pleased to announce its seventh International Research Conference on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, October 7-9, 2007 in Tampa, Florida. The theme for this year's conference is Sustainability and Scholarship: Research and the K-20 Continuum.

The goal of this year's conference is to continue to showcase current exemplary research on service-learning and engaged scholarship. Campus Compact wishes to encourage greater involvement of scholars from around the globe, as well as scholars from a variety of disciplines who can contribute diverse disciplinary frameworks and perspectives. The overarching goal of the conference is to convene researchers interested in service-learning and engagement from throughout the world to share research findings, build networks and partnerships, and identify new directions for service-learning research. For more information visit floridacompact.org/irsl/.

The American Democracy Project is a multi-campus initiative that seeks to create an intellectual and experiential understanding of civic engagement for undergraduates enrolled at institutions that are members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

The goal of the project is to produce graduates who understand and are committed to engaging in meaningful actions as citizens in a democracy.

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