



# ADP NEWS

## The need continues to be evident

The American Democracy Project was originally announced as a three-year project. That was clearly a shortsighted view. AASCU recognizes that more time is needed and has decided to continue the American Democracy Project as long as there is both interest and need. The need continues to be evident. I hope your interest and commitment remain as well.

This is how I announced the extension of ADP at the national meeting in Portland:

*... I realized that my simplistic notion of a project, a little three-year effort to transform the face of American higher education, was not too ambitious ... but it was unrealistic, in terms of time. It took a long time for higher education to turn its attention away from civic engagement issues, and it will take a long time to get it refocused on civic issues. Three years was a beginning, not a conclusion. So I'd like to go back and rethink that*

*proposition. Indeed, I'd like to declare Phase One of the project to be over, a smashing success after only two years ... now I want to move into Phase Two, and this time, I won't put a time limit on it ... indeed, here's my commitment to you. As long as you want to work on this issue, and as long as you have the energy and commitment to make civic engagement a focus of your work, we'll continue to support you. ...*

The conference in Portland was truly energizing ... so I'm ready for the work ahead. I'm particularly excited about our seven new initiatives, the Civic Engagement in Action series, and the many projects, programs, courses and ideas that will flow from them. There are also other exciting possibilities that we're currently exploring.

Over the past three months, I have made a number of trips related to the American Democracy Project ... to ADP campuses, to

statewide meetings, to conferences, and to other gatherings. I feel privileged to have been invited to such a wide range of institutions and states, and to be involved in so many different activities related to the ADP. I have learned an enormous amount from these visits, both about shining successes and continuing struggles. The trips have helped me become more effective in representing all of you, and I am grateful for the time and energy that all of my hosts expended to make the visits so rewarding.

What most impressed me was the sense of commitment, the passion, and the excitement about this civic engagement undertaking. I am enormously inspired by the progress being made at American Democracy Project campuses across the country.

I continue to look forward to our work together. ♦

—George Mehaffy

# Campus Reports . . .

## Getting America's Attention

Article reprinted from the September 16, 2005 issue of Indiana University Home Pages, written by Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, Indiana University Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Bloomington Chancellor with James Perry, Chancellor's Professor of Public and Environmental Affairs and Director, Indiana University American Democracy Project

The tragedy of 9/11 got America's attention. The devastation from hurricane Katrina has America's attention. Last December, Senator Robert C. Byrd, a West Virginia Democrat, in an absence of crisis, acted to focus America's attention on a situation he perceives as more threatening than a major natural disaster or terrorist attack.

Senator Byrd sponsored legislation, subsequently passed by Congress, that requires all educational institutions that receive federal funds to implement educational programs relating to the United States Constitution on September 17<sup>th</sup> of each year. September 17<sup>th</sup> was selected as the date for celebration because on September 17, 1787 the delegates to the Constitutional Convention met for the last time to sign the United States Constitution and presented it to the American public.

Some people may see Byrd's initiative as a nuisance without much consequence and others may see it as wrong-headed Congressional meddling in the educational enterprise. We see it as an opportunity to renew our students' appreciation for American history, their awareness of important human values, and their understanding of perhaps America's most important institution.

Senator Byrd's concerns about our dwindling attention to

our Constitution are not without merit. They are grounded in some startling realities about Americans' Constitutional literacy:

A 2004 survey of high school students sponsored by the Knight Foundation found that nearly three fourths express little appreciation for the First Amendment and they are less likely than adults to think that people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions or newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories;

A 2005 American Bar Association poll shows that barely half of all Americans can identify the three branches of government; and

Only 25 percent of students responding to a National Constitution Center survey knew that the Fifth Amendment protects against double jeopardy and self incrimination.

Constitution Day is not a solution to civic illiteracy, but it is a step in the right direction. Indiana University campuses will be celebrating Constitution Day in a variety of ways. Many of our students will receive free copies of pocket guides to the Constitution. Some campuses will host speakers. Others will convene open forums, and yet others will stage debates about timely Constitutional issues. We encourage everyone in the Indiana University community to participate—to pay attention—to these observances.

The *Indiana Daily Student* suggested a novel approach to celebrate Constitution Day in its August 31<sup>st</sup> edition by proposing to suspend the Constitution for a day. We know of no campus that will pursue this pedagogical strategy, but the proposal strikes us as an intriguing way to get

everyone's attention. "Suspending the Constitution for a day sounds radical, even a bit foolish. But the hands-on experience of living in a society without the freedoms guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution would make a more emphatic statement." Ironically, the chaos that emerged in New Orleans after Katrina is a reminder of what life might be like without the Constitution.

In their book, *The Good Society*, noted sociologist Robert Bellah and his colleagues observe that democracy means "paying attention"—and that's precisely what Senator Byrd had in mind when he offered his legislation. "One will not protect what one does not value. And one cannot value what one does not understand," Byrd said when he introduced his legislation. We think Senator Byrd has a point, one to which we should all pay attention.

## Constitution Day and Constitution websites:

- [justicelearning.org/](http://justicelearning.org/)  
a collaboration of NPR's Justice Learning and *The New York Times* Learning Network.
- [constitutioncenter.org/](http://constitutioncenter.org/)  
National Constitution Center.
- [naspa.org/policy/guide.pdf](http://naspa.org/policy/guide.pdf)  
Constitution Day Implementation Guide, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA)
- <http://memory.loc.gov/amem/bdsds/bdsdhome.html>  
Library of Congress Documents from the Constitutional Convention.
- [archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution/constitution-day.html](http://archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution/constitution-day.html)  
National Archives

## **Sam Houston State University, Texas**

The university is in the beginning stages of establishing a Center for Community Partnerships (housed under Student Services) and a Center for Academic Excellence (under Academic Affairs). The university plans for Constitution Day include Town Criers, in costume, who will walk about campus ringing bells to announce the beginning of the various session/presentations; a week-long event in November called Celebrating Democracy: Liberty, Equality, and Justice including speakers, essay contest, film festival; and a week-long event in February focused on volunteering. The campus will host the November meeting of AASCU universities working on the First Year Experience. Before that meeting, Sam Houston State University will invite Texas universities who are interested in beginning an annual STATE ADP meeting.

## **Western Carolina University, North Carolina**

Two hundred and twenty youth from across North Carolina attended the Annual American Youth Congress for high school and university students to propose, pass and debate legislation. The event was organized by the Western Carolina University Public Policy Institute and held in Asheville, North Carolina. Over 400 students, faculty, citizens and civic leaders attended a summit on “Restoring the American Community through Citizen Participation and Civic Engagement” held at Western Carolina University. Karen Miller, president of the National Association of Counties from Boone, North Carolina keynoted the summit.

## **Georgia College & State University**

The University held two Times Talks with an average of 30 participants. A discussion about Peter Applebome’s commentary was powerful and resulted in the

participants agreeing to join others at Georgia College and State University (GC&SU) in an effort to support Red Cross relief efforts. The faculty are clamoring for a facilitating role once the spring semester begins.

The ADP-Alliance of Universities for Democracy (AUDEM) collaboration is also taking shape as a GC&SU Environmental Science professor holding Russian and American citizenship plans to attend the AUDEM Yalta Conference in October. The professor will meet his counterpart from Immanuel Kant State University in Kaliningrad, Russia. One suggestion for the conference involves creating an interdisciplinary course called Environmental Engagement to involve science, political science, and other disciplines and have students address water quality issues in the Baltic Sea and the Oconee River in the respective regions. This would include a web-based chat room to discuss issues of mutual interest. ♦

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## **FYI . . .**

### **The Story of the American Democracy Project**

The September–October 2005 issue of *Change Magazine*, contains an article entitled “The Story of the American Democracy Project” written by George Mehaffy, AASCU’s ADP Director (pp 68–74).

### **Civic Engagement in Action initiatives**

Five of the seven were launched this summer, including:

**Foundations of Democracy: The First Year of College**—this project has almost 30 campuses involved in planning civic en-

agement activities for the First Year of College. A special meeting of this group is planned for November at Sam Houston State University in Texas. Partners in this effort are the University of South Carolina and John Gardner’s Policy Center in North Carolina.

**Fostering Civic Engagement in Other Lands**—sixteen ADP institutions have or are forming partnerships with universities in eastern Europe. Those partnerships will offer opportunities for student and faculty exchange. The eastern European colleagues

will be able to see civic engagement activities played out across the campus, and understand this emerging role of the university in preparing citizens. AASCU’s partner in this effort is the Alliance of Universities for Democracy (AUDEM). Some of the partners are planning to attend the AUDEM conference in late October in Yalta, Ukraine.

**Participatory Citizenship: American Democracy and the Jury System**—fourteen campuses have signed up for this project so far, and a wonderful variety of projects are being de-

veloped since the initial meeting in Portland in June. AASCU's partners in this initiative are the National Center for State Courts, the American Judicature Society, and the Council for Court Excellence.

**Electoral Voice: Organizing for Voting**—has 12 campuses participating. The core idea is to gather best practices for voter registration, education and participation so that in subsequent election years there will be a handbook of ideas, and campuses won't have to start from scratch. The group has developed a questionnaire that will go out to all campuses in September.

**Stewardship of Public Lands**—nineteen campuses are involved in this initiative, which held two meetings this summer at Yellowstone National Park with the Yellowstone Association. Twenty-six faculty met for close to a week to conduct an case study of wolf reintroduction into Yellowstone for the second meeting. A number of very interesting projects are now starting to emerge as campuses consider local issues of stewardship.

Another initiative on key civic engagement pedagogies was the focus of a special three-hour meeting at the American Political Science Association annual conference in Washington, D.C. in late August. The final initiative on teacher education will be launched this year.

All of these initiatives will have prominent places in the 2006 American Democracy Project meeting in Snowbird, Utah on June 15–17, 2006. AASCU will

provide monographs to be produced next summer to share this work with other ADP schools and many others in higher education.

### **New Survey Finds Working College Students Show Highest Rates of Political Engagement**

Young people who both study and work are busier than students who do not work.

However, student-workers report higher levels of interest in politics, newspaper reading, talking politics with friends, engaging or practicing civic skills, having been asked to vote, making their views known, and political participation. Many student-workers appear to be pursuing bachelor's degrees, but they also are more engaged, more open to politics, and less likely to feel dissuaded by potential barriers to participation than their peers who are attending college full-time. Whether they work or not, students between the ages of 19 and 23 tend to be more politically engaged than their peers who are out of school and college altogether.

For more information visit [civicyouth.org/research/areas/higher\\_ed.htm](http://civicyouth.org/research/areas/higher_ed.htm).

### **Youth Attitudes About the First Amendment**

Suburban high school students are less appreciative of the First Amendment than their counterparts in urban and rural areas, according to recent analysis of a national survey of 112,000 students sponsored by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The study, conducted by the University of Connecticut and released earlier this year, shows that educators are not giving high

school students an appreciation of free speech and free press.

To read more visit <http://firstamendment.jideas.org/latestresearch/index.html>.

### **P.O.V.—AASCU Democracy in Action Partnership 2005**

P.O.V. films afford a unique opportunity to explore social issues from the perspective of real people; those who are often overlooked in mainstream media coverage. The initiative will provide unique opportunities for colleges and universities to further their efforts to engage students through the high profile nature of these telecasts and in collaboration with P.O.V., local public television stations and each other. The overarching goal is to use these films to spur civic and personal engagement on campuses across the country. Please visit the P.O.V. website at <http://www.pov.org/>.

### **Justice Learning—Constitution Day Support**

Justice Learning has been working in partnership with the American Democracy Project to provide higher education institutions with resources to support their efforts in upholding the federal mandate concerning Constitution Day. Justice Learning has launched a website to provide information about broadcasts that are pertinent to Constitution Day, as well as materials for instruction about the Constitution. The "Partners" section of the site includes links to various organizations that are working in conjunction with Justice Learning on this project. The "Classroom" section includes lesson plans and links to provide

teachers with activities and lessons for Constitution Day. The Justice Learning site has set up a Constitution Day information page at <http://justicelearning.org/constitutionday.asp>.

### **New Survey of Colleges and Universities**

The *Washington Monthly*, a harsh critic of *U.S. News & World Report* and other college rankings, released its own report. To view the report visit [washingtonmonthly.com/features/2005/0509.collegeguide.html](http://washingtonmonthly.com/features/2005/0509.collegeguide.html)

The introduction to the magazine's "first annual" ranking suggests that by focusing on (probably flawed) measures of

academic excellence, *U.S. News & World Report* and other entities focus on the wrong things. Institutions should be judged, the monthly argues, by how well they are putting the huge sums of taxpayer funds they receive to good use for society—by being "engines of social mobility," advancing knowledge and economic growth, and encouraging "an ethic of service."

### **Mini-grants available for Securing the Future**

Whether or not global warming may be adding to the intensity of recent environmental disasters is a growing discussion among experts and Americans

for Informed Democracy (AID) wants to bring this discussion to the American public. With this in mind, AID's Securing the Future will bring town hall discussions to 25 universities across America about what the changing global environment means for the future security, health, and well being of the United States. The initiative will give students a historical overview of urbanization and its impact on the global environment, and will allow them to examine the social, economic and political implications of this process.

To find out how to organize a Securing the Future event, visit the online toolkit at [aidemocracy.org/Initiative.cfm?initiative\\_id=072605\\_securethefuture\\_New](http://aidemocracy.org/Initiative.cfm?initiative_id=072605_securethefuture_New). ♦

## **Upcoming Event . . .**

**September 24, 2005**  
**National Public Lands Day**  
Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup> is dedicated as National Public Lands Day. It provides an opportunity for volunteers to roll up their sleeves and build sweat-equity in America's backyard—our public lands. All environmental educators are encouraged to

participate on public lands from the federal level to the state and city level. This annual event builds partnerships between the public sector and the local community based upon mutual interests in the enhancement, improvement and restoration of America's public lands; improves public land for outdoor recreation with volunteers

assisting land managers in hands-on work; and educates Americans about critical environmental and natural resources issues and the need for shared stewardship of these valued, irreplaceable lands.  
To register your site complete the registration form at [publiclandsday.org](http://publiclandsday.org). ♦



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**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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