

# American Democracy Project

**aascu**



**The New York Times**

January 2004 Newsletter

## Participating Institutions

The interest in the project continues to grow. We now have **176** institutions involved, representing nearly **1.7 million students**. The complete list of institutions is on the AASCU website at [aascu.org/programs/adp](http://aascu.org/programs/adp)

## American Democracy Week

Ann Blakeslee and her colleagues at Eastern Michigan University propose that the week prior to the national elections next year be declared American Democracy Week. Below are the ideas that Ann and her colleagues have developed for Eastern Michigan. Ann welcomes suggestions and ideas from everyone about other activities that might occur as part of the run up to or during American Democracy Week. She also welcomes suggestions and ideas about collaborative projects linked to other campuses. I think this is a terrific idea, and encourage other campuses to adopt this concept. We will be happy to link campuses and share additional ideas.

American Democracy Week  
Ideas for the Eastern Michigan campus

- The week would be that which leads up to the November national election – Tuesday October 26, 2004 to Tuesday November 2, 2004.
- We would announce the event and issue a call for involvement and participation in January 2004.
- We would also develop a web site where we would feature all of the activities that relate to this event – these would occur throughout the year and the actual American Democracy Week would represent a culmination of all of these activities.
- We envision classes getting involved with initiatives; individuals; student groups; community members and organizations; elementary, middle and secondary schools; community colleges, etc.
- In fact, the involvement of the community and area schools and community colleges would be an important aspect of this week.
- We would seek to get as much of the campus participating as possible.
- We would also make connections to International Week, which occurs at roughly the same time.

## National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement

In 2003, Harvard University's Institute of Politics established the National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement to respond to the growing number of college students who have become disengaged from the political process. The Institute is currently working with 12 colleges and universities across the country, dedicated to the mission of developing civic-minded and politically engaged students. The project is focused on three key areas: A relationship with electoral politics; a focus on career development; and a foundation in civic education.

See their website for examples of project ideas.

<http://www.iop.harvard.edu/programs/natlcampaign.html>

## American Democracy Week (cont.)

### Support and Possible Activities

The key here is that we would plan to do a wide variety of activities and make all of them identifiable with the logo from the program.

- Reading of a common book.
- Mock debates, for both the primaries and the actual election.
- Voter registration drives.
- Presentations within departments/majors focused on why this election matters to their discipline or field (e.g., a presentation in art focusing on the implications of the election for the arts, one in economics, one in the sciences focused on the environment, one in communications focused on the media). The idea here is to help students and faculty better understand how the election impacts them and the things in which they're invested or interested.
- Numerous presentations occurring across disciplines, with some even being interdisciplinary.
- A summer teaching workshop focused on civic engagement and education.
- A significant keynote event for the actual week in late October. Here we were thinking that if other campuses were to do something similar there could even be a telecast of a major speaker for all of the campuses. Individual campuses could then invite their own speakers to respond, etc.
- One idea we had for a speaker was the president of Michigan State University who spent some time in Iraq this past summer working on economic development. We talked as well about involving politicians and activists like Lynn Rivers, John Hansen, and Lana Pollock.
- A colloquium series – something twice a month (brownbag format) with speakers from both within and outside of the university.
- Workshops focused on topics like working on election campaigns – workshops that would essentially help students and faculty become more involved and active. Another example is a workshop focused on examining the electoral college.

### Other Possible Initiatives

- Roadshow on American Democracy
- Reading and/or study groups
- Discussion groups – maybe even departmental
- Activities that involve students

## Meetings and Events

**January 23, 2004**

Nebraska. P-16 statewide meeting

**February 8-10, 2004,**

Tampa, AASCU Academic Affairs Winter Meeting  
[aascu.org/meetings/aa\\_winter04/default.htm](http://aascu.org/meetings/aa_winter04/default.htm)

**February 13, 2004**

SUNY Brockport, ADP Campus Meeting

**February 19, 2004**

William Patterson University, ADP Campus Meeting

**February 20, 2004**

*The New York Times*.  
Student editors meeting

**April 6-7, 2004**

St. Cloud State University, MN.  
Five state regional meeting in conjunction with Campus Compact

## American Democracy Week (cont.)

### Other Possible Initiatives (cont.)

- A teach-in about the budgeting process in Michigan
- A campus-wide mock election
- Student-based initiatives such as having students involved in driving individuals to polling places on election day

### Other Programs/Groups to Work With (idea of students/faculty going out and doing something together)

- Student groups
- Get out the vote initiative
- MLK day
- CloseUp Theater Troupe
- United Way Day of Caring
- Community Plunge

For more information, please contact:

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## Another Proposal for Creating Informed Voters

A variation on the Eastern Michigan University idea was recently proposed by two scholars about President's Day.

### RIGHTING THE SHIP OF DEMOCRACY

Presenting Deliberation Day: A radical proposal to help voters make better decisions.

By Bruce Ackerman & James Fishkin

“In our soon-to-be-released book, we offer a new way of thinking about democratic reform, proposing a new national holiday—Deliberation Day. It would replace Presidents' Day, which does no service to the memories of Washington and Lincoln, and would be held two weeks before major national elections.”

For the full article, see Legal Affairs January/February 2004  
[http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/January-February-2004/feature\\_ackerman\\_janfeb04.html](http://www.legalaffairs.org/issues/January-February-2004/feature_ackerman_janfeb04.html)

## Check these sites out...

### **AOL Election Guide 2004**

website is up and running! It is designed especially for the newest generation of voters  
<http://www.electionguide04.com/>

See **MTV's Choose or Lose** campaign website. They are planning a national kick-off in early February.

<http://www.mtv.com/news/chooseorlose/>

If you are interested in health care, see the website from Rock the Vote and New Hampshire for Health Care, **New Hampshire for Health Care** (a nonpartisan organization).

<http://www.nhforhealthcare.com>

## Quote of the Month

"We don't see this (the American Democracy Project) as something that is going to end in three years but something that will be embedded in the institution, that will become part of the fabric of the campus"

Esther Letven, Associate Vice Chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Parkside

Seen in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 6, 2004, page 5B

## Interesting Concepts of Civic Engagement

From Tim Hynes at the State University of West Georgia:

I thought you would appreciate this civic engagement statement from a student in our campus culture class, which has a community service component.

" Along with the employees, there were some other people doing some community service. But I would not call their community service purely academic. Every single person there was court ordered, except for me. I kind of got jaded by people continuously asking me what crime I committed, who was my judge, or did I have to pay fines. In one instance, a man asked how many hours I was serving. I replied, 'I am only doing ten hours,' and he said, 'You must have a great lawyer.' Apparently, I was the first person to do community service that was not court ordered."

## Talk-Radio & Elections

The influence of talk radio on elections was the subject of a debate between Vance Opperman and Tom Ostrom on the Winona campus on Oct. 31, 2003 in the Kryzsko Commons East Hall.

Opperman, a self-described liberal Democrat, and Ostrom, a self-described conservative Republican, debated and talked about how radio media can sway the election process and the voters. Rick Krueger, former Minnesota State Representative and a 1971 graduate of Winona State, served as moderator.

Opperman is President and CEO of Key Investment, Inc., and is the former President of West Publishing Company. The National Law Journal included him in the "100 Most Influential Lawyers in America" in 1991; Minnesota Lawyer named him one of the top twenty-five winningest litigators in 1991, and one of the nation's top litigators in 1992. He served on President Clinton's National Information Infrastructure Advisory Council from 1994-96.

Ostrom is a popular conservative voice in southeastern Minnesota. He is a periodic columnist for the Rochester Post-Bulletin and political commentator on "The Tracy McCray Show" on KROC-AM in Rochester, Minn. He is a retired secondary school social sciences teacher and college instructor who spent the balance of his teaching career at Rochester Community College.

For further Info: Wayne Wicka  
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## Inside The Times

February 20, 2004, 10am-4pm

### Program Description

*The New York Times* will host a full-day symposium for college newspaper editors to explore the role of the press in a democratic society. The symposium is an exclusive opportunity for AASCU institutions that are partners in the American Democracy Project (ADP) program.

The meeting will be held in New York at *The New York Times* headquarters (229 W. 43<sup>rd</sup> Street) from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on February 20, 2004

### Participants

Each participating American Democracy Project can send up to two individuals. While we prefer that both be students, one may be a faculty advisor. Space will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no cost to attend, although each participant must pay his or her own travel, hotel and other costs.

### Registration

To register for the symposium, please send your name, university affiliation, name of campus newspaper, address, phone, email and title to Felice Nudelman at [nudelf@nytimes.com](mailto:nudelf@nytimes.com) The deadline for enrolling is February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

For more information, please contact: Felice Nudelman at [nudelf@nytimes.com](mailto:nudelf@nytimes.com) or 212-556-4581

## Democracy Lab

There is still time for you to have your students use **Democracy Lab** for a spring semester class.

In **Democracy Lab** students deliberate in small groups with other students from around the country. Our structured dialogues lead students to identify inquiry questions, conduct research and consider citizen action. See a sample student home page with spring schedule at <http://www.teachingdemocracy.org/DL/Issues/role.asp> See how students benefit from this dialogue experience at [http://www.teachingdemocracy.org/DL/Benefits/sample\\_dialogue.asp](http://www.teachingdemocracy.org/DL/Benefits/sample_dialogue.asp)

### Spring issues

Americans' Role in the World

<http://www.teachingdemocracy.org/DL/Issues/role.asp>

Racial and Ethnic Tensions

<http://www.teachingdemocracy.org/DL/Issues/tensions.asp>

Three American Futures

<http://www.teachingdemocracy.org/DL/Issues/futures.asp>

Please contact me this week if you are interested. Forums begin February 2nd. Students register and arrange payment online. Please share this with colleagues.

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## Voter Registration Idea

From Brian Murphy at San Francisco State University comes this report of campus activities focused on voter registration. As many of you are considering voter registration as part of the American Democracy Project activities on your campus, I thought this might be of special interest.

### Fall Activities: Civic Engagement and Democracy

This Fall semester marked the initiation of a year-long voter education, registration, and "Get-Out-The-Vote" project. This is the first phase of a multi-year civic engagement project which aims to ensure that 80% of eligible San Francisco State University graduates are registered to vote.

## World Wide Web

### AASCU

[aascu.org/programs/adp/default.htm](http://aascu.org/programs/adp/default.htm)

### The New York Times

[nytimes.com/college/collegespecial2/](http://nytimes.com/college/collegespecial2/)

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## Voter Registration Idea, cont.

This Fall was marked by three election “cycles” in San Francisco—the statewide Gubernatorial Recall election; phase I of the San Francisco Mayoral election; the Runoff Mayoral election. This meant that there was heightened political awareness among our students, and the availability of local, state, and national leaders to participate in civic education work on campus.

Using the rubric provided by the American Democracy Project, we can report the following:

- 1 The Voter registration drive succeeded in registering over 1,400 new student voters in just under two weeks. The project involved the training of student registrars, the organizing of registration “sites,” and the design of a classroom-based voter registration system. This system is now in place for the winter and spring time frames, before and after the presidential primaries.
- 2 There were multiple conversations on campus regarding the overall orientation of a new civic engagement project, and the specifics of the voter education project. These included conversations in the President’s Cabinet, the Provost’s Council, the Academic Senate Executive Committee and the Academic Senate as a whole, the Associated Student government leadership, the Faculty Union, and other departmental and college conversations.
- 3 Resources included external speakers (Jesse Jackson, local Supervisors, candidates for Mayor), printed materials and orientation sessions with voter registration organizers, and the university’s website (which had new links to web-based registration options). The project used both e-mail and the internet to communicate with students and faculty (as examples: President Corrigan e-mailed all 30,000 SFSU students about the importance of registering, and where to train to be registrars; Vice President for Academic Affairs Gemello and the Academic Senate Chair jointly e-mailed all faculty to encourage the use of classroom time for voter registration). The San Francisco Urban Institute provided administrative and logistical support for the project.
- 4 The Fall project was initiated as a joint venture between the university academic and administrative leadership and the Associated Students. The students took a leadership role in the recruiting and training of student registrars, and worked collaboratively with the Faculty Union in a Voter registration drive.
- 5 The project was linked to the Office of Elections of San Francisco, both major political parties, and students at San Francisco City College.