

American Democracy Project

aascu



The New York Times

Participating Institutions

The interest in the project continues to grow. We now have 167 institutions involved, representing nearly 1.6 million students. The complete list of institutions is on the AASCU website at aascu.org/programs/adp

Materials

Example of a Campus Conversation

William Lowe from Metropolitan State University recently sent me a copy of the minutes from an American Democracy Project meeting on his campus. I thought it captured a number of ideas and issues that others might find interesting, so I've attached it if you'd like to take a look.

A Timeline for the Project

I have had several requests for a timeline for the project. I had thought that our general outline--the first year for the campus conversation and the next two years for projects--was the timeline. But as I reflect on the issue a bit more, I realize that the concept of timeline may be a source of confusion.

For me, the only timeline that matters is the one on each of the 167 participating campuses. This reflects my view that this is not as much one national project as it is 167 projects linked together nationally. Each campus will participate differently in terms of areas of focus, sequence, and timing. Each campus also has different circumstances, different opportunities, and different constraints. In addition, each campus will start at a different place. Indeed, some campuses are just now joining the project.

The goal of the project is not, at the end of three years, to declare victory and go home. The three-year period is a beginning, and that beginning will have many different expressions on many different campuses. As I see it, our job at AASCU, at *The New York Times*, or as any of our project friends, is to support the campus efforts. I am not concerned with some artificial standard a campus must meet, some specific national goal to be realized. The most important issue, in my mind, is that campuses seriously consider and make progress on the core focus of this project: What is higher education's role in the preparation of citizens?

Imagining America Holds Third Annual Conference

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

The American Democracy Project and NSSE have created a consortium of 26 participating institutions to develop a set of civic engagement questions. These will be included in the Spring 2004 NSSE survey that will be administered to consortium members only. The results will be used to develop an instrument that can be used by all participants in the American Democracy Project in future years. The final version of the questions is attached to this newsletter for those of you who are interested.

Colleges and universities are best conceived as occupying a boundary crossing space, argued Nancy Cantor, Chancellor of the University of Illinois, in her keynote address to the *Imagining America* conference held on November 9 and 10th in Champaign Urbana. They are “off to the side,” animated by principles of reflection, experimentation, even playfulness with unorthodox ideas not subject to immediate instrumental use. But if they are to realize their democratic potential, institutions of higher education must also be deeply involved in and connected to the public life of their communities, the broader society and the world. “A great university cannot be an ivory tower set apart from society,” as she put it. “Instead we arise out of and must exist within a public sphere of responsibility.”

Cantor spoke at the third annual conference of *Imagining America*, a consortium of colleges and universities dedicated to promoting public cultural work in the arts and humanities. *Imagining America* has grown rapidly since it’s founding in 2000. Its conference reflected the animus of a fledgling movement. “We’re now getting a lot more energy in than we’re giving out,” said Julie Ellison, IA director. More than 150 people participated in the conference; 43 schools have joined, ranging from the Community College of Rhode Island to Columbia, Duke, the University of Chicago, and many public universities. Minnesota joined this year.

Cantor made a powerful case that humanities and arts work have potential to create more permeable, open, porous boundaries, partnerships, and interactions between higher education institutions and communities and institutions outside. Arts and cultural work articulate particular views and vantages, while also expressing broad, cross cultural themes of the human condition. Cultural work expresses particular contexts and identities, while it also invites and challenges people to suspend normal judgments, to put aside stereotypes, and to engage in imagining new ways of thinking and acting.

Thus, cultural work, Cantor argued, holds potential to connect people across bitter lines of division. This is especially the case when their forms and processes and scholarship invite publics to be involved as participators and co-creators. Cantor detailed one example from the U of Illinois campus, where two women undertook a cultural project that has created new connections between sharply polarized Jewish and Palestinian students.

Meetings and Events

December 5, 2003

The University of Central Oklahoma and *The New York Times*

Webcast: A Southern Town

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

February 13, 2004

SUNY Brockport.
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

Imagining America, cont.

The Imagining American conference combined descriptions of bridge-building public cultural work with sensible lessons from partnerships. David Scobey, director of the Arts of Citizenship at Michigan, described their partnerships as in some ways “oppositional spaces,” countering norms of detachment, but also increasingly “embedded spaces,” connecting to the self-interests of everyday, mainstream faculty in the arts and humanities.

Nathaniel Banks, Director of the African American Cultures Program at Illinois, described rich and powerful experiences working with jazz musicians in Champaign Urbana and Illinois in a project called Jazz Threads. Jazz Threads has had an historical research dimension, uncovering a legacy of racism and discrimination. It has also had strong cultural impact on music programs at Illinois, bringing community musicians and university faculty and scholars together in new ways. Finally, Jazz Threads has raised many important conceptual and practical questions about the nature of performer-audience interaction, and the diverse venues for musical production.

Thomas Darwin of the University of Texas outlined several practical lessons from the school’s Professional Development and Community Engagement program:

- “Show more than tell” with students - examples and involvement in real work is often far more effective than instruction
- Resist the grammar of professionalization
- Develop capacities to listen to and tell real stories
- Create real things of value
- Focus on building relationships and overcoming isolation of the academic culture.

Next year the conference will be at the University of Pennsylvania.

From Civic Engagement News, an electronic newsletter of the Council on Public Engagement (COPE) at the University of Minnesota. It is sent free of charge to colleagues in Minnesota and elsewhere interested in civic engagement ideas and developments, especially in higher education. If you would like us to take your name off the list or add others to it, please notify Harry Boyte, hboyte@hhh.umn.edu. COPE is a University-wide body charged by Provost Christine Maziar with strengthening the University’s public mission and practice across the full range of University activities. It defines civic engagement as “the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public, civic, and private sectors to enrich scholarship and research; enhance curricular content and process; prepare effective, productive citizens; address critical societal issues and solve public problems; and in general contribute to a democratic way of life.” See [.umn.edu/civic](http://umn.edu/civic) for updates and news.

New ADP Friends



DECLARE YOURSELF is a national nonpartisan, nonprofit campaign to energize and empower a new movement of young voters to participate in the 2004 presidential election. declareyourself.com



DEMOCRACY MATTERS works with college students to involve them in deepening democracy in the United States. Students involved in Democracy Matters form chapters/clubs on their campuses and create projects to educate and involve others in pro-democracy reforms. We especially concentrate on the importance of changing the funding of elections to get big money out and people back in. Chapters engage in a range of successful organizing actions to promote democracy – from media campaigns to public theater, teach-ins, and petition drives. They often involve faculty and community members as well, for example going into local high schools and civic organizations to talk about the importance of democratic change. Information: 315 824-4306 email joanm@democracymatters.org or see www.democracymatters.org

Essay on Government

Enclosed is the URL for an editorial by Dan Evans, former governor and senator from the state of Washington, in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. It's focused on the University of Washington instead of a broader (and in my mind, more appropriate) focus on higher education, but seen in a larger frame, asks core questions about how government should invest for the future and the role of government in society.

“I guess I am a contrarian. I think government works pretty well. It won the Cold War and put men on the moon. We built the world's best transportation arteries. They are sometimes clogged but they are there. I am old enough to remember no freeways and a six-hour drive from Seattle to Portland. Government delivers water, takes away garbage and sewage, fights fires and provides police protection. It preserves our environmental legacy, ensures clear water and clean air. Government provides a vast safety net through Social Security and Medicare and is the last resort for housing, food and medicine for those too poor to provide for themselves....”

To read the entire article, see seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/147214_focus09.html

Practical Politics

Having already quoted from Harry Boyte's newsletter, and at the risk of having you think this is an outlet for Harry Boyte and his ideas, a second note about Harry. *The New York Times* publishes a series of reflection essays on its website. A recent addition was a very stimulating essay by Harry on what he calls Practical Politics. For someone like me who lives in the caustic world of polarizing politics within the beltway, the image of politics as finding common ground and accomplishing public good is enormously appealing. I urge you to look at his essay, and others on *The New York Times* website.

nytimes.com/college/collegespecial2/

World Wide Web

AASCU

aascu.org/programs/adp/default.htm

The New York Times

nytimes.com/college/collegespecial2/

Examples of ADP Campus Sites

Western Kentucky University

wku.edu/Dept/Support/AcadAffairs/adp.htm

University of Central Oklahoma

bronze.ucok.edu/AmericanDemocracyProject/

University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire

uwec.edu/provost/adp/index.htm

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Great Quote

A faculty member wrote to Ron Satz, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire, about a student of hers.

Sent: Friday, October 10, 2003

To: Satz, Ronald N.

Subject: American Democracy Project

Ron-- I just wanted to pass on a conversation I had with a student today. She is a new freshman honors student. When I spoke with her in September she indicated that she was considering Journalism or Elementary Education. Today she came in and after much serious thought and research, is now leaning toward a double major in Political Science and Organizational Communication with a goal of either working in government or a non-profit agency. The reason I am writing to you is that she in part attributed her switch to reading the New York Times and realizing how much she liked discussing political issues with other students.

I just thought you'd like to hear a real life example of how this project can have an impact.

New Report Released

From a new report "Citizenship: A Challenge for All Generations" published by the Representative Democracy in America Project about the 18-26 year old generation.

- Only 66 percent of members of this younger generation believe it's necessary to vote in order to be a good citizen, compared with 83 percent of Americans over age 26.
- Half of those 18 to 26 claim to have voted in the last election, compared with three-fourths of those over 26. (In actuality, only half of the total population is registered to vote, and only half of those vote.)
- Half of those 26 or younger regularly or sometimes follow government news, and believe you should, in order to be a good citizen, compared with three-fourths of those over 26.
- Eighty percent of those 26 or younger know Ruben Studdard won the last American Idol competition. But fewer than half of the members of the younger generation know the party of their state's governor.

For the complete report, see

ncsl.org/programs/press/2003/pr030917.htm