



**Understanding Engagement in Times of Crisis:
A New American Democracy Project Initiative
in Partnership with Collaboratory**

AASCU's American Democracy Project (ADP) is pleased to invite you to participate in **Understanding Engagement in Times of Crisis**, a new one-year initiative in partnership with [Collaboratory](#).

The past few months have created unprecedented challenges for our students, our institutions, and our democracy. The deep divisions that marked the beginning of the 21st-century have become chasms of almost unimaginable depth. How do we ensure our campuses are being responsive to the needs of our communities and supporting movements that are of greatest importance to both our students and our society? This new landscape requires new strategies and approaches for our students to succeed and new ways of building campus-community partnerships. We need to better understand engagement in this new landscape and define the who, what, where, when and why of strategies, activities, and programming with and for our communities. During times of financial uncertainty and societal unrest, how do we leverage data about our campus-community partnerships to achieve common goals? How do we tell a robust story of engagement?

To support efforts to build this critical knowledge and understanding among our institutions, ADP – a network of 276 public colleges and universities, serving 2.7 million students across 47 states nationwide – and Collaboratory are launching the Understanding Engagement in Times of Crisis initiative, offering institutions the unique opportunity to collaborate and deepen their understanding of community engagement in a time of pandemic. Together, ADP and Collaboratory will provide the tools and resources for institutions to:

- Build a community of practitioners to help define community engagement in the new landscape and share effective strategies and approaches
- Use data to deepen work with community partners and identify the most effective community partnerships and models to address pressing issues in the community
- Better tell their story qualitatively and quantitatively
- Provide individual campus and aggregate evidence of how civic community engagement is operationalized against learning outcomes
- Identify concrete engagement trends and patterns
- Be prepared for accreditation and Carnegie applications
- Have access to centralized engagement data and reports

Call for Participation

ADP seeks a limited number of AASCU institutions to join a one-year pilot initiative to participate in a community of practice that works towards documenting engagement initiatives. The pilot initiative will begin in the Fall of 2020 and any AASCU ADP-member institution may apply to participate.

Support and Resources

Participants will be granted access to Collaboratory for one year free of charge, and will have access to the library of Collaboratory content and to the Collaboratory Education team. Subject matter experts who currently use Collaboratory are serving as ADP Civic Fellows and will help with project planning and support the group as thought-leaders who will advance best practices around assessing community engagement in higher education. Throughout the first year AASCU-ADP and Collaboratory will develop proposals for additional support and sustainability for participating campuses.

Expectations

Each participating institution will be asked to designate a small team of at least two individuals to lead this initiative on their campus. Teams should be composed of individuals from various functional areas across campus (e.g., academic affairs, student affairs, institutional research) that have an interest in leveraging data to better inform institutional- and community-focused initiatives.

Institutions will participate in a community of practice, working together to exchange ideas and develop effective strategies, as well as provide support across institutional roles. Participants will be expected to provide updates and reflections on activities during monthly conference calls with AASCU-ADP and Collaboratory throughout the project and present their work in this project to a wider audience through the 2021 Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement meeting (CLDE21) and through publication opportunities.

The pilot project will launch with a webinar hosted by AASCU-ADP in collaboration with Collaboratory for participating faculty and staff. Following the launch, participants will convene over monthly Zoom sessions to share progress and lessons learned, and to discuss program challenges and opportunities.

Application

Interested AASCU-member institutions should send a statement of interest to Felice Nudelman nudelmanf@aacu.org by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) Thursday, September 17, 2020. Selected institutions will be notified no later than Monday, September 21, 2020. The first team meeting will be scheduled for October 6, 2020 at 3 p.m. eastern.

All statements of interest should include:

- The names, titles, contact information, and department affiliations of the designated participants
- A statement of support from the provost or equivalent

- Brief description of current structures or initiatives to support civic engagement and community service throughout your campus (e.g., centers, offices, networks, fellows)
- Description of current or aspirational tracking efforts related to civic engagement and community service
- A few words about why you are interested in participating
- Rank (1= most interested, 5=least interested) the topic area(s) on which your institution would most like to focus:
 - Arts & Culture
 - Community/Economic Development
 - Education
 - Environmental Sustainability
 - Government/Public Safety
 - Health & Wellness (mental and physical)
 - Housing/Homelessness/Poverty/Food Insecurity
 - Other
- Rank (1= most interested, 5=least interested) the functional area(s) on which your institution would most like to focus:
 - Institutional identity and image
 - Promotion and tenure
 - Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
 - Civic learning
 - Recruitment, retention and student success
 - Government/community relations

We hope you will consider participating in this special initiative.

Sincerely,
Felice Nudelman

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