

American Democracy Project



Spring Meeting
SUNY College at Brockport
February 13, 2004

John W. Gardner described democracy in
nine short words:

Freedom and Responsibility

Liberty and Duty

That's the deal

Dewey reminded us...

The trouble...is that we have taken our democracy for granted; we have thought and acted as if our forefathers had founded it once and for all. We have forgotten that it has to be enacted anew in every generation.

John Dewey



Putnam's definition of the Problem

Democracy works best with what Putnam calls rich "social capital"

Social capital is created by interaction with others

Social capital makes trust possible, and provides the

"grease" for social and business transactions

Social capital increases our sense of linkage to one another

Social capital allows citizens to resolve collective problems

more easily

Social capital is created by engagement (volunteering, working with others, participating).....

But engagement is declining

Why this project...Why now?

- Decline in civics education in K-12 grades
- Increase in sense of personal entitlement
- Decrease in support for higher education
- Increase in the politics of polarization
- Decline in political participation
- Increasing interest in democracy abroad

The Core Question in the American Democracy Project

What Kind of Society Do We
Want?

"A vivid way to imagine the alternatives is to look beyond America's borders to Norway, where 65% of people say they trust their fellow citizens, and to Brazil, where 3% do. Climate aside, most people would prefer the orderly, egalitarian society to the crime-racked and corrupt nation of well-protected rich and restless poor."

Jedediah Purdy. "Suspicious Minds." *The Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2003.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2003/01/purdy.htm>

...do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

The kind of society we want is reflected in our history

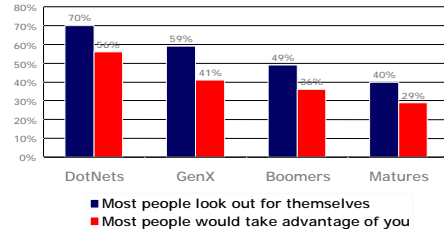
The Declaration of Independence

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain **unalienable rights**, that among these are **life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness** -- that to secure these rights, **governments are instituted among men**, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed (emphasis added).



Why focus on students?

The youngest generation of voters has the greatest distrust of others



Source: The Civic and Political Health of the Nation, A Generational Portrait, 2002.

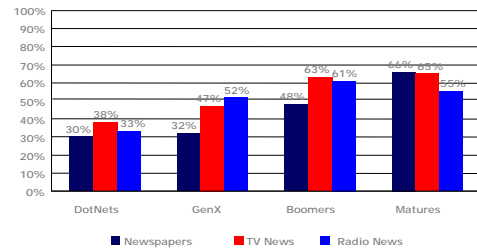
And in the government we created



We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, *establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity...*

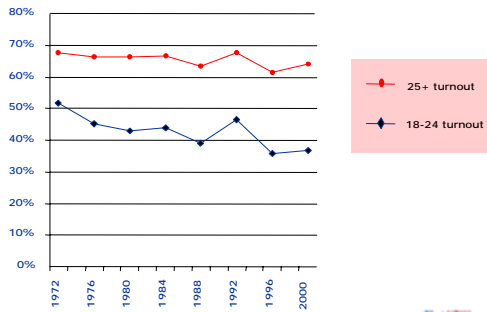
Regular Newspaper, TV News, and Radio News Exposure

The youngest adults have the least access to current information and events



Source: The Civic and Political Health of the Nation, A Generational Portrait, 2002.

The youngest voters have the lowest participation in presidential elections



Source: Current Population Survey (CPS), November Supplement, calculated using CIRCLE method.

The key question for us:

What is the role of higher education in the development of citizens?

Definition of Civic Engagement

“Working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference”

“Promoting” the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes

Thomas Ehrlich, Ed. Civic Responsibility and Higher Education 2000

How can 178 institutions...

joined together with...

- ✓ a higher ed association
- ✓ a national newspaper
- ✓ a foundation focused on teaching
- ✓ and many, many friends

contribute to the development of a new generation of citizens?

The American Democracy Project seeks to:

- ★ increase understanding of democracy’s conceptual and historical roots
- ★ create understanding of contemporary issues and events
- ★ provide opportunities to learn and experience core processes of civic engagement
- ★ develop a commitment to act, to become involved in the life of the community

Project Design

- ★ Three (3) year initiative started in late July 2003. That will be enough time to begin the work. No campuses early or late
- ★ 178 Colleges and Universities, 1.6+ million students
- ★ Year One: campus conversations, some projects
- ★ Years Two and Three: multiple activities
- ★ Project is campus-specific, recognizing the unique circumstances of individual campuses
- ★ AASCU and *The New York Times*, and all our friends are connectors, facilitators, supporters

What is our focus?

A focus on institutional intentionality (the distinction between engaged students and an engaged campus)

- It's about alignment of the campus efforts
- It's about using the ADP construct to link existing activities, align others, and create new projects and programs

A focus on student outcomes

We hope that the projects that emerge from this initiative will be :

- ✓ Tailored to the needs and contexts of individual campuses
- ✓ Non-partisan
- ✓ Collaborative
- ✓ Brilliant
- ✓ Successful

Launch Activities

President's commitment, Vice President's active direction, Campus Coordinator

Reading of *Educating Citizens*, use the study guide, campus discussions

National meetings, regional meetings, dissemination of materials, news

Special support activities, such as websites, national ads, creation of new materials

Development of friends, connections, linkages

Assessment

How can we assess civic engagement?

Project Partner

The New York Times is committed to providing news, analysis, and understanding, as well as multiple perspectives, so critical for an informed citizenry

The New York Times provides national visibility for the project thru full page ads, the campus newspaper program, a web site for project dissemination, a series of special events and activities, including a national meeting for student newspaper editors, support for a Wingspread Conference, national student editorial contest, and a variety of other innovative projects.

Assessment Resources

★ National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
<http://www.indiana.edu/~nsse/>

★ UCLA's Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) <http://www.gseis.ucla/heri/heri.html>

★ Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)
<http://www.civicyouth.org>

Example of Individual Assessment

The 19 Core Indicators of Engagement from CIRCLE

Civic Indicators

1. Community Problem Solving
2. Regular Volunteering, non-electoral organization
3. Active membership in a group or association
4. Participation in fund-raising run/walk/ride
5. Other fund-raising for charity

Electoral Indicators

6. Regular voting
7. Persuading others
8. Displaying buttons, signs and stickers
9. Campaign contributions
10. Volunteering for candidate or political organization

NSSE Survey Questions

2. Below are some activities that you might have done in the past year. Please indicate **if** you did it (left hand column) and **why** you did it (right hand columns). Please check the appropriate box under the reason(s).

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Join a local community group or association | • Organize a petition |
| • Fundraise for a charitable organization | • Display buttons, signs or stickers about an issue |
| • Participate in a fundraising run/walk/ride | • Participate in a boycott, protest or rally about an issue |
| • Volunteer with a local community organization or religious group | • Volunteer to work on a political or issue campaign |
| • Send a letter or email to the media | • Run for an elected leadership position on or off campus |
| • Contact public officials about an issue | • Vote in an election on or off campus |
| • Sign a petition related to a political or community issue | |

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| a) To feel like I was making a difference | d) Religious reasons |
| b) To satisfy a requirement | e) Friends or family are involved |
| c) Inspired by coursework or professor | f) To prepare for employment |
| | g) Other reason |

Example of Individual Assessment, cont'd

Indicators of Political Voice

11. Contacting officials
12. Contacting the print media
13. Contacting the broadcast media
14. Protesting
15. E-mail petitions
16. Written petitions
17. Boycotting
18. Buycotting
19. Canvassing



NSSE Survey Questions

3. **Where** do you generally get most of your information about **each** of the following? (Mark only one)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Local news | 4. Volunteering |
| 2. National news | 5. Voting |
| 3. International news | 6. Being involved in social or political issues |

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a) My institution (classes, etc.) | d) Television |
| b) Family or friends | e) Newspapers or magazines |
| c) Radio | f) Online sources |

NSSE Survey Questions

1. How important to you is each of the following issues or causes? (Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Too Important, Not Important At All)

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Education Issues | • Religious Issues |
| • Environmental Issues | • Safety/security Issues |
| • Healthcare Issues | • Human Rights Issues |
| • Economic Issues | • Civil Rights Issues |
| • Recreational Issues | • International Issues |

Here are the key elements to consider:

Academic

Learning communities
 Service learning
 Democratic pedagogy
 Faculty development
 General education
 Diversity programs
 First Year programs

Extra-curricular

Advising
Student government
Student newspapers
Student organizations
Residence halls

Engaging Others in the Project

1. Linking to those on campus already engaged
2. Involving the president/chancellor, Board, System, etc.
3. Engaging the university community
4. Engaging campuses and the broader local community
5. Creating collaboration with other national groups
6. Creating linkages with other AASCU campuses

Campus Culture

Mission statement
Public utterances
View book and other documents
Ceremonies
Slogans

Assessing the Work

1. Completing the campus audit (ADP)
2. Identifying existing assessment instruments (NSSE, HERI surveys, etc.)
3. Developing new assessment activities appropriate for your campus

Telling the Story

1. Using your campus Communications Office effectively
2. Building a campus website
3. Contributing to the AASCU and New York Times websites
4. Writing articles and news releases
5. Creating awards and recognition programs

National Programs, Projects and Activities

“Inside The Times”

Student newspaper editors on American Democracy Project campuses are invited to *The New York Times* on February 20th to learn about the role of a newspaper in a democracy. More than 150 participants have signed up for this program.

National Programs, Projects and Activities

Regional Meetings Spring 2004

- New York (SUNY Brockport)
- New Jersey (William Paterson)
- Minnesota (St. Cloud State)
- Oklahoma (University of Central Oklahoma)
- Michigan (Eastern Michigan)
- Missouri (U of M-St. Louis)

Programs, Projects and Activities

FYI (Film Your Issue) National Student Film Competition

FYI, created by a group of entertainment executives, encourages students to develop 30 second PSA about issues they care about. Campuses will submit finalists for a national competition.

Programs, Projects and Activities

Wingspread Conference June 2004

Supported by the **Johnson Foundation** and **The New York Times**, this conference will develop a guide for presidents/chancellors and other senior university leaders who want to create a civically engaged university.



Programs, Projects and Activities

P.O.V. (Point of View) Democracy in Action Project

Chisholm for President '72: Unbought and Unbossed. In 1972, Shirley Chisholm becomes the first black woman to run for President. Shunned by the political establishment, she's supported by a motley crew, described in this campaign-trail adventure. Her story reminds all Americans that, in Chisholm's words, "the institutions of this country belong to all of the people who inhabit it."

Last Man Standing: A Texas Political Journey. Award-winning filmmaker Paul Stekler takes his camera to Texas for a lively, behind-the-scenes look at a pair of 2002 elections -- one for state representative in a district that includes Lyndon Johnson's home town, and a polarizing race for governor. In the end, *Last Man Standing* shows how politics in Texas have become the blueprint for Washington.

Bill's Run: A Political Journey in Rural America. When documentary filmmaker Richard Kassebaum heard that his younger brother, Bill, a rancher and father of two, had decided to run for the Kansas House of Representatives, he left Los Angeles to spend seven weeks on the campaign trail. The film captures Bill's journey through the primary: a comical and sometimes painful quest of quixotic proportions.

FYI (Film Your Issue) Founder/ Executive Director Cliff Rothman

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Ben Bradlee, Vice President at Large, *Washington Post*
Jean Picker Firstenberg, Director/CEO, *American Film Institute*
Jonathan Alter, Senior Editor, *Newsweek*, Contributing Correspondent, *NBC*
Richard Pena, Program Director, *Film Society of Lincoln Center* and *The New York Film Festival*
Kurt Andersen, Novelist/ Journalist
Joel Hyatt, Entrepreneur/ Lecturer
Robert Rosen, Dean, *UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television*
Bette Gordon, Acting Chair, *Film School at Columbia University*
Christine Choy, Chair, *NYU School of Film and Theatre*
Ken Dozier, Executive Director, *NASA (West)* and *USC Engineering Technology Transfer Center*
Cyrus Krohn, Publisher, *Slate Magazine* on *msn.com*, *The Microsoft Network*
Liz Brody, News Director, *O Oprah Magazine*
Marc Von Arx, *Creative Artists Agency (CAA)*
Diane Meyer Simon, Founder, *Global Green USA*


THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Stephen Nemeth, *Rhino Films* and President of *Amnesty International Films*
 John Solomon, Vice President of Creative Affairs, *Walt Disney Imagineering*
 John Tarnoff, Senior Executive, *Dreamworks* Feature Animation
 Jonathan McHugh, President, *National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS)/ Grammy's*, L.A. Chapter
 Harold Bronson, Co-founder, *Rhino Entertainment*
 Vinay Bhagat, Co-Founder, *Convio.com*
 Mario Velasquez, Founder, *Poder Latinoa*
 Sara Risher, President, *ChickFlicks* at *New Line Cinema*
 Colleen Bickham, President, *The Vision Group*
 Kimberly Shlain Brooks, President, *Lightray Productions*
 Joy Dolce, Talent Executive
 Carol Marshall, *PMK-HBH Public Relations*
 Jonathan Dana, Film Producer/ Producers' Representative
 Jonathan Sachs, Co-Founder, *FreeRangeGraphics.com*
 Adam Safran, Chief Technology Officer, *Lightray Productions*

Friends of the American Democracy Project

- Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
- Campus Compact
- Center for Democracy and Citizenship
- Democracy Matters
- Democracy Lab
- National Constitution Center
- Justice Talking
- FYI (Film Your Issue)
- P.O.V. (Point of View)
- Declaration of Independence Road Trip
- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- Higher Education Research Institute (HERI)
- New Voters Project





Benjamin Franklin, emerging from the Constitutional Convention, was asked what kind of government had been designed:

His reply:

“A republic, if you can keep it!”

National Meeting of ADP

Albuquerque, August 1-2, 2004

- Campus plans will be shared
- Opportunities for campus teams to meet with others, and together as a team
- Presentations on:
 1. Innovative teaching/learning strategies
 2. Model voter education and registration
 3. New national programs
 4. Assessment ideas

John W. Gardener said it best:

Those who have not succumbed to the contemporary disaffection and alienation must speak the word of life to their fellow Americans... We do not want it said that after a couple of great centuries we let the American Experiment disintegrate.

