

The Civic Responsibility of Higher Education: Linking Legal Studies and Civic Engagement

by Elizabeth Hollander, John Saltmarsh, and Edward Zlotkowski

"We believe that the challenge of the next millennium is the renewal of our own democratic life and reassertion of social stewardship. In celebrating the birth of our democracy, we can think of no nobler task than committing ourselves to helping catalyze and lead a national movement to reinvigorate the public purposes and civic mission of higher education. We believe that now and through the next century our institutions must be vital agents and architects of a flourishing democracy. We urge all of higher education to join us."
(Campus Compact Presidents' Fourth of July Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education, 1999)

In putting forward a "declaration on the civic responsibility of higher education," college and university presidents are asking the question: How relevant is higher education in meeting the major challenges of post-Cold War twenty-first century America? Since the presidents signed the declaration, the events of September 11, 2001, have underscored the importance of developing what faculty members at the University of Utah have identified as "socially respon-

Elizabeth Hollander is the Executive Director of Campus Compact; John Saltmarsh is the Project Director of Integrating Service with Academic Study at Campus Compact; and Edward Zlotkowski is Senior Faculty Fellow at Campus Compact, Senior Associate at the American Association for Higher Education, and Professor of English at Bentley College. They recently co-authored "Indicators of Engagement," in L. A. Simon et al. (eds.), Learning to Serve: Promoting Civil Society Through Service Learning (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001).

sive knowledge." It is such knowledge that Wendell Berry, following 9/11, referenced in his "Thought in the Presence of Fear" when he said that "we need to change our present concept of education. Education is not properly an industry, and its proper use is not to serve industries, either by job training or by industry-subsidized research. Its proper use is to enable citizens to live lives that are economically, politically, socially, and culturally responsible."

Never before has it been more important for higher education to claim its public purpose in preparing students for active participation in local, national, and global citizenship. Indeed, as John Dewey once said, "democracy needs to be reborn in each generation, and education is its midwife." Today, higher education has a particular opportunity to educate students in their democratic rights and responsibilities. The presidential declaration makes it clear that this does not mean educating students to wax nostalgic about America's democratic past. Instead, students need to be educated to participate in the

diverse democracy of the present, thoroughly understanding what it takes to make democracy work in a multicultural world.

It is also helpful to recall Dewey's reminder that democracy is a learned behavior, and that it is learned best in the associational life of a community. Serious attention to democratic education suggests that "engagement"—a word that has been much overused in recent years—means more than a collection of active learning strategies, more than another name for experiential education, and something different again from engagement with a text assigned in a course, more than an indication of personal interest. Engagement, with its democratic connotations, implies a kind of public problem solving that not only generates new knowledge and higher order cognitive outcomes but also develops in all stakeholders the civic skills of critical thinking, democratic deliberation, collective action, and social ethics. It implies, and requires, direct participation in

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Raising (Red) Flags: Promoting Civic Engagement Across the Campus

by Richard M. Battistoni

In the world I inhabit, “civic engagement” is the term that currently governs campus discourse. Civic engagement is certainly one of the most often-mentioned outcomes for service learning. It figures prominently in all of the literature of the Corporation for National and Community Service, the government unit that runs AmeriCorps and will run the newly proposed USA Freedom Corps. A number of large foundations are giving a significant amount of money to “civic engagement” initiatives.

Campus Compact is the higher education organization most associated with advocacy of civic engagement. The college and university presidents who are members of Campus Compact have committed themselves to “lead a national movement to reinvigorate the public purposes and civic mission of higher education” (Campus Compact, 1999: 3–4). But in the last decade, not only Campus Compact but also the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the American Association for Higher Education, the American Council on Education, Council of Independent Colleges, the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, and most of the other higher education organizations have endorsed civic engagement as one of the most important outcomes for higher education.

The approach to civic engagement these organizations are taking goes well beyond teaching courses in politics and other social science disciplines. Higher education is currently talking about the “engaged campus” and is looking at all areas to accomplish the goal of civic engagement. The call to create a civically engaged student body and campus is one that increasingly touches all departments and disciplines at the institution. In this regard, a comparison can be made to previ-

ous efforts to do “writing across the curriculum.” The movement for writing across the curriculum was based upon an understanding that, whatever a student’s major or future aspiration, he or she needed to be proficient at written communication to be effective. This meant that every discipline or department at the university should concern itself with producing students who were “good writers.” In a similar vein, the current movement toward “civic engagement” assumes that just as we want students to be good writers, we want them to be good citizens. Whatever the student’s major, career, or life goals, she or he will be a member of some community, and, for our democracy to be maintained and to flourish, we need people who will effectively exercise their civic rights and responsibilities. All faculty need to be enlisted in this effort to improve civic education.

This raises the question, what do we mean by “civic engagement”? What constitutes an effective education for citizenship? We must ask these questions if we are to be deliberate and intentional in seeking goals of civic learning for our students. However, while we might like to draw a parallel between civic engagement across the curriculum and writing across the curriculum, there is an immediate difference. Those in higher education who advocate civic engagement across the curriculum face a disadvantage not faced by their counterparts who launched writing across the curriculum. While there may be some disagreements, especially around the margins (no pun intended), about quality writing, there seems to be basic consensus around the question, “what is good writing?” The question of what constitutes “good citizenship,” however, is highly controversial and contested. And the controversy surrounding definitions of good citizenship in part stems from the way the language of citizenship is used in our educational institutions. I can think of three contemporary areas where citizenship language actually serves as a barrier to positive conversations in the academy about education for civic engagement. First, citizenship is a legal status, a status

not shared by all. This exclusivity extends to the academic unit, where admonitions to faculty to be good “departmental citizens” overlook the different status between “senior” and “junior,” full- and part-time faculty members.

A second barrier to using the language of citizenship is ideological. Faculty on the left complain that citizenship education tends to convey images of patriotic flag waving. More conservative faculty see civic engagement masking a leftist, activist agenda. Either way, the goal of civic engagement seems to lack objectivity and academic substance.

Finally, the language of citizenship and civic engagement conjures up a childhood memory that many would just as soon forget, or at least would not endorse as characteristic of a vibrant democratic life in a diverse society. Some of us remember our

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Focus on Law Studies (circulation: 5,415), a twice-annual publication of the American Bar Association Division for Public Education, examines the intersection of law and the liberal arts. Through the essays, dialogues, debates, and book reviews published in *Focus*, scholars and teachers explore such subjects as law and the family, human rights, law and religion, and constitutional interpretation, as well as such legal policy controversies as civil rights, federalism, privacy, capital punishment, affirmative action, and immigration. By examining the law from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary viewpoints, *Focus* seeks both to document and nourish the community of law and liberal arts faculty who teach about law, the legal system, and the role of law in society at the undergraduate collegiate level. The views expressed herein have not been approved by the ABA House of Delegates or the Board of Governors and, accordingly, should not be construed as representing the policy of the American Bar Association.

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Richard M. Battistoni is Professor of Political Science at Providence College, Providence, RI 02918, and Director of Project 540, a national high school civic engagement initiative. He is the author of Civic Engagement Across the Curriculum (Campus Compact, 2002).

grade school “civics” courses as pedestrian exercises. For me, growing up in California, public schools gave “citizenship” grades, based on a student’s silence in the classroom, neatness, politeness, and passive obedience to school rules. Therefore, when citizenship is tied to exclusive legal identities, ideologically charged language and symbols, or conformity to institutional norms, it is bound to raise suspicions.

Yet even those who have challenged our country’s ideals and institutions have found power in the language of democratic citizenship. For example, during the civil rights movement, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s first program was called “the crusade for Citizenship,” focused on establishing “Citizenship Schools” in communities across the South. The primary purpose of the Citizenship Schools was to teach African Americans to read and write, in order to pass literacy tests that had been devised to disenfranchise low-income people, particularly black citizens. But these schools went beyond instruction in literacy and voting rights to “talk about the meaning of American citizenship in ways that would inspire ordinary citizens” (Boyte, 1989: 67). With all of its negative baggage, then, the language of citizenship still offers great hope in our efforts to overcome political apathy.

While continuing to use the language of citizenship and civic education, we should feel free to challenge our conventional definitions of civic engagement. After all, citizenship is not a monolithic idea, to be defined narrowly or exclusively, forcing all

members of an institution to conform to a single standard. (I have used an exercise titled “How Do You Define Citizenship?” that effectively makes this very point about contested definitions of citizenship; see Battistoni, 2002: Appendix A.) There are multiple pathways to civic engagement. If we wish to encourage citizenship throughout the university and across the curriculum, we need to leave room for multiple perspectives, even as we attempt to be deliberate in our efforts.

One way to approach civic engagement is to encourage academic units to begin with conceptual frameworks that tie into their particular disciplinary tradition. Concepts like “social capital,” “public work,” “social justice/responsibility,” “civic professionalism,” “connected knowing,” or the “public intellectual” may have great pur-

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chase in certain fields, and they can be an effective way to make connections between a particular curriculum or career and active participation in public life. In other disciplinary areas, it may be more effective to discuss the concrete skills that students need to become accomplished professionals, artists, or graduates and effective citizens. Faculty in a wide range of disciplines have had great success connecting the development of skills considered essential to their field, such as critical thinking, communication, public problem solving, organizational analysis, or coalition building, to concrete civic applications. Finally, higher education can approach the question of civic engagement by listening to college students and how *they* frame the question, building upon current student definitions to create civic learning goals. One good recent source for student perspectives on civic engagement is *The New Student Politics* (Campus Compact, 2002), a document developed from a series of conversations among college juniors and seniors at Wingspread in 2001. I develop each of these strategies in much greater detail in *Civic*

Engagement Across the Curriculum (see Resource sidebar).

In addition to general strategies for cross-disciplinary civic engagement, a number of specific vehicles exist for promoting civic engagement across the campus. Where service learning or other experiential pedagogies are being used in the curriculum, simple classroom assignments and activities that connect to civic learning outcomes can be offered (see Battistoni, 2002). Beyond the formal curriculum, the Raise Your Voice campaign, organized by Campus Compact and funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, seeks to get students involved in dialogues and activities that address public issues crucial to our democracy. (See www.actionforchange.org for further details on this initiative.)

The most important part of thinking about civic engagement across the campus is to keep in mind that it does not happen automatically with any educational intervention. If we truly care about democratic civic outcomes for our students, there is no other way to get there but to intentionally rearrange our practices with these outcomes fully in mind. There are a variety of valid approaches and curricular vehicles to civic engagement, but only if we consciously construct our educational environments with the education of democratic citizens in mind can we reinvigorate our deteriorating public life.

Resource

Civic Engagement Across the Curriculum (Campus Compact, 2002), from which this essay has been adapted, offers faculty in all disciplines rationales and resources for connecting their service-learning efforts to the broader goals of civic engagement. It distills a wide range of disciplinary perspectives on civic engagement into usable conceptual frameworks and provides concrete examples of course materials, exercises, and assignments that can be used in courses to develop students’ civic capacities, regardless of disciplinary area. The publication is available through Campus Compact at www.compact.org/publication/.

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Civic Responsibility

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the associational life of a community; it requires engagement with community.

Students who undertake pre-law studies at the undergraduate level can be provided with an opportunity to develop what William Sullivan in his book *Work and Integrity* (HarperCollins, 1995) calls “civic professionalism.” The attorney as a civic professional must possess not only technical legal competence but also an understanding of the civic dimensions of professional practice. As Sullivan puts it, “civic professionalism” recognizes “that

The engaged campus reorients its core missions around community building.

there is finally no successful separation between the skills of problem solving and those of deliberation and judgment, no viable pursuit of technical excellence without participation in those civic enterprises through which expertise discovers its human meaning.”

We have seen a remarkable growth in programs designed to facilitate a shift from the mere accumulation of knowledge to what the poet Shelley might have called an imaginative appropriation and utilization of what we know. We have seen the founding and flourishing of the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Community Outreach and Partnership Center (of the Department of Housing and Urban Development). We have seen the phenomenal growth of Campus Compact from a few hundred members to nearly 900 institutions. We have seen the American Association for Higher Education’s publication of a 20-volume series on service learning and the academic disciplines, a series that has helped prepare the way for many similar kinds of publications. We have seen the disciplinary associations begin to take on the work of engagement, from major initiatives at the National Communication Association to significant developments in

the sciences and the humanities. Higher education associations such as the American Association of Community Colleges, the Council of Independent Colleges, the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, and the private Historically Black Colleges and Universities working through the United Negro College Fund have mounted engagement efforts designed to redefine higher education in a post-Cold War world.

Success in addressing cold war needs has resulted in college and university programs not necessarily suited to meeting the challenge of transforming our civic life. The ethos of professionalism and expertise that defined higher education’s response to the cold war challenge now contribute to public disillusionment with institutions that often seem oblivious to our most pressing national social needs. For this reason, many higher education institutions, in their struggle to meet our need for civic renewal, have found themselves returning to the public purposes encoded in their founding missions. At the same

time, they looked to pedagogies such as service learning not only to more effectively teach course content but also to prepare students with the knowledge and skills needed for democratic citizenship. Indeed, service learning not only transforms teaching and learning but also has the potential to reveal a broader vision of the engaged campus. Such a campus, centrally committed to the life of the local community, reorients its core missions—teaching, scholarship, and service—around community building and neighborhood resource development.

One striking example of a law-related service-learning opportunity can be found at Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts, where students in several liberal arts and business courses (e.g., Legal Environment of Business, Alternative Dispute Resolution, State and Local Government) can participate in the Bentley Consumer Action Line (BCAL) for additional course credit. BCAL is conducted under the auspices of the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office (Consumer Protec-

Campus Compact

Campus Compact is a national membership organization of nearly 900 college and university presidents who are committed to fostering the development of civic participation, engaged citizenship, and community involvement through public service on their campuses and among their students. To support this civic mission, Campus Compact promotes community service that develops students’ citizenship skills and values, encourages partnerships between campuses and communities, and assists faculty who seek to integrate public and community engagement into their teaching and research.

Campus Compact’s rapidly expanding membership extends to all sectors: from two-year to four-year campuses, public and private institutions, small colleges to large universities, urban to rural. It has members in 46 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Campus Compact consists of a national office in Providence, Rhode Island, a network of 28 affiliated but autonomous State Network Offices, and the National Center for Community Colleges. Our Network Offices support and serve the Compact’s member schools in their state or geographic region by providing resources, training, and advocacy on a local level. Our members work together as a coalition to actively engage presidents, faculty, staff, and students on campuses and in communities across the nation to promote a renewed vision for higher education, which supports not only the civic development of students but also the campus as an engaged and participatory member of the community in which it is located.

Presidents’ Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education. More than 450 college and university presidents have signed the Fourth of July Declaration (see www.compact.org/presidential/plc/declaration.html), drafted at a 1999 leadership colloquium sponsored by Campus Compact. The Declaration grew out of a movement in higher education organized in recent years around the issue of civic responsibility.

More information about service learning is available through a free brochure, the Essential Service-Learning Resources Guide, that includes a compilation of service-learning resources, Web sites, statistics, and FAQs. For information about Campus Compact, the Presidents’ Declaration, and the Guide, see www.compact.org.

tion Division), the Law Department, and the Bentley Service-Learning Center; it is the only consumer office in the state staffed by students. BCAL students are required to commit 20 hours per semester to the project, participate in an orientation and multiple reflection sessions, and keep a reflection journal. Through reflection, they explore the connections between their community activity and the course content, gaining a broader appreciation of the public purposes of their discipline and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. At the same time, the students help distressed consumers mediate and resolve complaints against merchants by under-

taking telephone mediation, drafting letters, researching data and statutes, and completing report forms for the Attorney General's Office. Their participation in the project provides a real-world foundation for understanding the social context of classroom-based knowledge. Through service-learning experiences of this kind, students learn to appreciate the connections between the legal system and the common good, understand the impact of the legal system on public policy, and engage in public discourse related to legal remedies and civil litigation.

As institutions of higher education are challenged to reshape themselves to meet

the needs of civic renewal, they must do so in deep conversation and consultation with their faculty, staff, students, and community partners. The entire campus—from the president on down—needs to become engaged in a serious conversation about what citizenship means and what skills and abilities all stakeholders need to develop. In fact, the conversation itself can be a model for democratic decision making. It is only in acting together that the campus can add the civic dimension to the educational enterprise in ways that will, in the words of Marian Wright Edelman, “educate students not just to make a living, but to make a life.”

What's Happening on College Campuses Around the Country? A Sampling of Civic Engagement Programs

Georgetown University/Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching & Service.

The Center seeks to integrate student service projects, curricular offerings on campus, and community-based research projects. More than 20 student-run service programs serve the greater D.C. area, including ones that use students to teach English to immigrant students and literacy programs for children in the early elementary grades. Students also engage in international service projects, and faculty members participate in international social justice events. See the Web site at socialjustice.georgetown.edu/.

Providence College/Project 540: Students Turn for a Change.

Project 540, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, is a national high school civic engagement initiative. Providence College is working with 250 high schools across the country to engage students in a democratic dialogue. More than 100,000 students will discuss what issues they care about and what opportunities and obstacles they face in addressing these issues. They will work with teachers, administrators, parents and community leaders to draft plans for acting on young people's concerns and using their ideas to make their schools and communities stronger. Through this effort, Project 540 hopes to develop national strategies for encouraging greater civic involvement among high school students. See www.project540.org.

Rutgers University/Walt Whitman Center for the Culture and Politics of Democracy.

The Center analyzes democratic politics in the United States. Its current projects focus in the areas of democratic public space, technology and democracy, service learning and civic education, and global civil society. See the Center's Web site at fas-polisci.rutgers.edu/wwc/index2.htm.

University of Michigan/Edward Ginsberg Center for Community Service and Learning.

The Center houses a variety of student programs, including America Reads, AmeriCorps, Project Serve, and the Michigan Community Service Corps. The Center also facilitates university-community partnerships and academic service learning, and publishes the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. See www.umich.edu/~mserve/index.html.

University of Minnesota/Center for Democracy and Citizenship.

Located within the Humphrey Institute, the Center for Democracy and Citizenship conducts a variety of programs and curricular materials designed to enrich the theory of public-work politics. Current programs include a community-based learning center with Hmong and Latino immigrants in St. Paul and a civic mission project that examines ways to renew the public service and land grant missions of the University of Minnesota. See www.publicwork.org/home.html.

University of Southern Mississippi/Center for Community and Civic Engagement.

The Center administers the Lighthouse Partnerships program, funded through the “Learn and Serve America” initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service. This program unites a college or university, a K–12 school, and a community-based organization to provide after-school programs for youth and service learning opportunities for college students. See www.ccce.usm.edu/CCCE_Programs.htm.

University of Washington/Center for Communication and Civic Engagement.

The Center seeks to understand and facilitate the uses of media systems so as to promote citizen engagement in local, national, and global affairs. One of 22 sites for the “Student Voices Project,” funded by the Annenberg Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Center worked with schools to help young people become involved in the 2001 Seattle mayoral election through the Internet, classroom visits and forums, and partnerships with local media. See the Web site at depts.washington.edu/ccce/CivicEngagement/StudentVoices.htm.

See also, elsewhere in this issue, discussions of civic engagement programs at **Bentley College** (p. 4), **Portland State University** (pp. 6–7), **Sweet Briar College** (pp. 11, 13), and the **University of Pennsylvania Law School** (pp. 12–13).

Editor

Civic Engagement on Campus: A President's Perspective

An Interview with Daniel O. Bernstine

EDITOR: Why is civic engagement important to your institution's mission?

BERNSTINE: Portland State University's motto, *Let Knowledge Serve the City*, guides faculty, staff, administrators, students, and local and international community partners in all that we do. Community-based learning, and associated practices such as community-based research, are effective practices that not only lead to augmented cognitive learning but also can significantly enhance other learning outcomes such as communication skills, teamwork, public problem solving, personal and leadership development, and moral reasoning. Community-based learning pedagogies help Portland State University realize its commitment to educating the whole student. Structured community experiences provide meaningful opportunities for students to practice addressing complex issues in a diverse world.

Renewing higher education's civic commitment is important not only for Portland State University, but for all of higher education. In 1999, 51 college and university presidents challenged the nation's academic leaders to take action against a rising tide of civic disengagement. In a Presidents' Fourth of July Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education (see www.compact.org/presidential/plc/declaration.html), the presidents addressed a growing concern that cynicism and a lack of trust toward the political process are leading citizens—particularly those of college age—to disengage from civic affairs and abandon the responsibilities of citizenship. The presidents also challenged higher education to become engaged with its communities through actions and teaching.

Since that time, I and almost 500 other college and university presidents have signed the Declaration in the belief that “the challenge of the next millennium is the renewal of our own democratic life and reassertion of social stewardship.” We who have signed the Declaration state that “we can think of no nobler task than committing ourselves to helping catalyze and

lead a national movement to reinvigorate the public purposes and civic mission of higher education.”

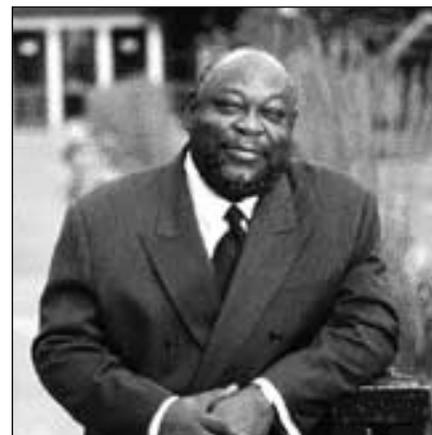
Community-based learning and research strategies connect Portland State University to Portland and to communities worldwide. Portland State University is recognized as a national leader in the renewal of higher education, and we continue to experiment creatively and to guide scores of institutions across the world in this transformative work.

EDITOR: Do students come to Portland State University expecting a strong culture of public and community service?

BERNSTINE: Portland State University's community-oriented reputation is well known in the Portland metropolitan area. More than 500 of the 6,000+ PSU students who annually participate in course-connected community engagement activities serve in the Portland public school system. This activity raises awareness in the schools and positively impacts young students in our region. PSU is very connected to the public school system, particularly through our Graduate School of Education, as well through our Center for Academic Excellence. These active collaborations enhance our ability to raise broad awareness about the importance of public problem solving and a life of engaged citizenship. Finally, our recent very high rankings in three student learning-related categories in the *U.S. News and World Report*, 2003 Edition of “America's Best Colleges” (including fourth nationally in the Academic Service-Learning category), has helped us raise awareness of our unique approaches to community, teaching, and learning at Portland State University.

EDITOR: How have you been able to draw upon your own professional background (as a law school professor and dean) in guiding—and contributing to—the culture of civic engagement on campus?

BERNSTINE: For a number of years, clinical training has been a part of legal education. Combining practical experi-



Daniel O. Bernstine has served as President of Portland State University since 1997. Previously, he was Dean of the University of Wisconsin Law School and General Counsel and Professor of Law at Howard University.

ence with traditional coursework has been a useful pedagogy for the legal profession, as it is for many other professions. Therefore, as a former law school dean and current president of a large urban university, I find it a natural fit to lead my institution in the exploration of civic engagement.

EDITOR: Could you briefly discuss some of the initiatives that your campus has undertaken to promote civic engagement among students?

BERNSTINE: In the mid-1990s, PSU created a centralized faculty development center, which included the new position of Director for Community-University Partnerships. This coordinating office has been instrumental in creating campus coherency and a sense of larger community with respect to civic engagement, especially among our faculty and staff. This office also provides critical training for our faculty, since many are less familiar with the active pedagogies required to implement civic engagement strategies in and throughout their curricula.

Our general education program, University Studies, is one of the only university-wide programs nationally that re-

quires students to engage with the community. Our students serve specific community-based organizations and businesses in interdisciplinary teams during their Senior Capstone experience.

PSU offers students and faculty many opportunities to engage with communities. Our Center for Academic Excellence is currently sponsoring an “Engaged Department Initiative.” This effort endeavors to transform traditional and more privatized modes of faculty work into a more collective and applied approach, focusing at the departmental level. We currently have 12 departments involved in this promising initiative. For our students, we offer diverse community service and leadership opportunities. Our Student Ambassador, University Studies mentoring, and Student Leaders for Service programs are exemplars.

Finally, each spring we hold a “Civic Engagement Awards” ceremony. During this university-wide gathering, we celebrate both exceptional faculty work in the area of community engagement and exemplary departmental-level efforts. We also provide an award to one of our community partners who has shown long-term commitment to working with PSU as co-educators of our students (see sidebar).

EDITOR: How have these initiatives impacted the curriculum and student learning in the classroom?

BERNSTINE: At Portland State University we have several hundred courses annually that include an active community engagement element; here, we call this “community-based learning.” Curricula, overall, have changed noticeably over the years, including the integration of discussion formats; regular reflection sessions; and the addition of questions and themes focusing on civic capacity, responsibility, and engagement.

EDITOR: Have the initiatives been successful? Any formal assessments?

BERNSTINE: Since 1995, we have consistently assessed community-based learning; we have focused our efforts on community, faculty, and student concerns with three separate instruments. Additionally, we assess our Senior Capstone courses, paying particular attention to the views of our community partners. Finally, our Center for Academic Excellence leads a campus-wide assessment initiative, which

folds all departmental activity into a coherent whole. We have found particular power in the alignment of our assessment efforts with other major initiatives on campus, such as community-based learning and civic engagement efforts.

EDITOR: How can a university administration encourage individual departments and faculty on campus to take civic engagement seriously?

BERNSTINE: Perhaps one of the best and most fundamental ways to encourage faculty teaching and research interest in civic engagement efforts is to formally embed rewards for these activities in the campus promotion and tenure guidelines. At Portland State University, we underwent a campus-wide dialogue in 1996 that resulted in revised guidelines. I encourage you

*One of the best ways
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promotion and tenure.*

to visit our Office of Academic Affairs Web site (see oaa.pdx.edu/FrontPage) to view our new guidelines that formally reward “expanded forms of scholarship.”

EDITOR: Compared with a generation ago, do you think college students today are more—or less—engaged in the communities around them?

BERNSTINE: Recent research has clearly demonstrated that community service in high schools is on the rise nationally. Locally, the Portland public school system recently adopted three new strategic objectives for their 2005 strategic plan; the third objective states that “100 percent of our students will willingly and regularly contribute to the community.” These types of systemic initiatives point to a reawakening among the American people concerning the public purposes of education, as well as the need for a more engaged citizenry.

Many of our faculty members were in college a generation ago. In the late 1960s there was a groundswell of community and political engagement, due in part to

increased awareness about civil rights issues and the U.S. entanglement in the Vietnam War. These types of community experiences continue to influence our faculty today. This, in part, has led to the strong support that PSU faculty show toward our institutional commitment to the civic purposes of higher education.

EDITOR: Do you have any final thoughts?

BERNSTINE: I do wonder about a few current trends in higher education. For example, what will it take for community-based research to reach the same level of legitimacy that traditional research currently enjoys? I would ask professionals to consider how we engage with school-aged children and college students. To what extent do we, as professionals, make our particular expertise available to students who are considering lives of public service? To what extent do we make ourselves available, beyond traditional concepts of pro bono work, to envision ourselves as co-educators of the public servants of tomorrow? I know that there are already many in our profession who give often and much of their time, and this is fantastic. So I wonder to what extent we might be able to do more, to give more.

Civic Engagement at Portland State University

PSU was awarded the 2002 Heshburgh Award Certificate of Excellence for the Community-University Partnership Program. Also, PSU recognizes exemplary civic engagement activities by its faculty, students, and community partners. Examples of 2002 award winners include the City of Estacada for its partnership for student learning, in which PSU students participated in a downtown revitalization survey and recycling programs. PSU students also tutored migrant students in the K–12 schools. A team of business students worked with a local business to revamp its accounting and human resource policies. And PSU students designed and implemented science education programs for local middle and high schools.

Editor

Bringing Government Back into Civic Engagement: Considering the Role of Public Policy

by Suzanne Mettler

Amid contemporary debates about the causes, manifestations and possible cures for America's fraying civic life, one factor is typically conspicuous by its absence: government itself. The predominant discourse portrays citizenship as a commodity generated solely and voluntarily by society, as a function of associational activity and collective values. This is illustrated by the work of Robert Putnam, who explores why Americans are receding from civic activity by probing societal factors such as mobility and suburbanization, the changing role of women, the rise of divorce, and television viewing.¹ Such analyses contain only brief references to government action and depict it merely as a remote and eventual target of civic involvement; the functions that law and public policy might themselves play in affecting the vibrancy of citizens' involvement remain unexplored.

Conversely, others place the blame for the demise of civic life squarely at the feet of government. They argue that public programs—especially social policies—have undermined civil society by presumably displacing voluntary forms of activity. On an individual level, they assert, the bestowal of social rights is itself responsible for making citizens lose awareness of their civic obligations.² Hence, these critics depict welfare state development as a force antithetical to civic engagement as they criticize social policies for fostering depen-

dency on the state and undermining participation.³ Such claims are generally presented, however, in the absence of empirical inquiry.

Surprisingly, scholars have only recently begun to consider the ways that public policies affect the degree and form of civic involvement and the well-being of American democracy generally. Contrary to prevailing assumptions, what we know so far suggests not only that interaction with government makes a difference for civic engagement, but, furthermore, that such

*Public programs
may have vast
implications for
the levels and forms
of civic activity.*

experience almost always prompts citizens to become more engaged in public life! The degree to which beneficiaries obtain a civic boost appears to vary, however, with program type. An authoritative study of voting found that farmers vote with far greater regularity than other citizens, presumably because agricultural subsidies elevate "their sense of the personal relevance of politics."⁴ Participation scholars Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman and Henry Brady discovered that beneficiaries of a wide range of non-means-tested social programs—including veterans' benefits, Social Security, Medicare, and student loans—became active in related political issues, joining organizations, contacting officials, or making contributions to campaigns. Among less-privileged Americans, those who received means-tested benefits—all else being equal—participated at a higher level in politics. Similarly, those with school-age children—presumably mobilized to work for better public schools—became more active than childless members of their cohort group.⁵

How might we explain such effects? As political scientist Theodore Lowi has long

argued, policies—once established—act as institutions: they create a framework in which certain resources, rules and norms are imposed upon citizens.⁶ Hence, policies reshape the political realm itself.

How might the resources conveyed through public programs matter for civic engagement? At the least, they appear to prompt beneficiaries to become more involved in related issues, presumably acting on their self-interest to preserve and extend program benefits, as the studies noted earlier attest. Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen suggest a slightly more complex dynamic: Social Security beneficiaries may become more active inasmuch as their status prompts politicians to treat them as a distinct constituency and to mobilize them in the course of campaigns.⁷ Examining the value of benefits in individuals' lives, Andrea Campbell finds that the higher level of dependence on Social Security among senior citizens with lower incomes prompts them to become especially active politically.⁸ This dynamic counters the usual determinants of political participation, in which privilege—in terms of income, level of education and other factors—typically explains who is most involved. Thus, Social Security enhances American democracy, not only in socio-economic terms—by lifting more than half of the elderly population out of poverty—but also, in political terms, by prompting greater participation among those who are less advantaged in the prerequisites for participation.

The interpretive effects of public programs have been even less well appreciated. Over the past decade and a half, political scientists have begun to recognize that policies offer beneficiaries an "operational definition of citizenship" or "a civic teaching."⁹ Through specific features of program design, as Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider observe, they convey important messages to citizens about "what government is supposed to do, which citizens are deserving or undeserving, and what sorts of participation are appropriate in democratic societies."¹⁰ Investigating such dynamics, Joe Soss found that citizens derive broad lessons from their experiences

*Suzanne Mettler is Alumni Associate Professor of Political Science in the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244. She is the author of *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy* (Cornell, 1998) and winner of the 1999 Kammerer Prize of the American Political Science Association, and she is currently writing a book entitled *Civic Generation: The G.I. Bill in Veterans' Lives*. This paper originally appeared in *Constructing Civic Virtue: A Symposium on the State of American Citizenship*, published by the Campbell Public Affairs Institute in January 2003. It is reprinted in slightly revised form with permission. The book can be downloaded from www.campbellinstitute.org.*

with public agencies, leading them to new understandings of both external political efficacy—meaning governments’ responsiveness to people like them—and internal efficacy, or their own ability to make a difference politically. Though claimants of Social Security Disability Insurance encountered a complex bureaucracy, still they gained responses to their complaints and appeals and from that concluded that the political system generally was open and democratic; welfare beneficiaries, by contrast, faced non-responsive agencies and extrapolated from their experiences that government paid little heed to people like themselves.¹¹ Interestingly, however, despite their negative experiences, public-assistance claimants gained a greater sense of their own political abilities. Similarly, scholars find that African Americans’ negative encounters with the police in traffic incidents contribute to their overall assessment of the justice system as unfair; at the same time, even negative encounters with the police stimulate poor people to become more active politically as they seek to change the system.¹²

Already these examples suggest that public programs—by virtue of their coverage, degree of resources, and treatment of different social groups—may have vast implications for the widely disparate levels and forms of civic activity among American citizens at any given point in time. Citizens included in generous programs in which they are treated with dignity and respect are especially likely to become empowered politically; those relegated to more miserly programs, and handled with scrutiny or surveillance, will lose faith in governments’ responsiveness to them. Given that civic engagement is considered to have varied significantly over time and by generation, we might consider what difference broad patterns of public policy have had historically for civic engagement.

Robert Putnam argues that one of the chief explanations for the decline of civic engagement over recent decades is the gradual disappearance of the “civic generation,” those who were born in the 1920s, grew up during the Depression, served the nation in World War II, and went on to become the active engaged citizens of the twentieth century. His only explanation for their public spiritedness, however, is the bonding experience of the Depression and war. Does it make any difference that this generation of Americans came of age

at a time when the national government was becoming more involved in citizens’ lives than ever before? When I ask my undergraduates to interview their grandparents about public policies that affected their lives, they return with stories of families that could not have survived the hard times of the 1930s without government assistance and of individuals who would never have gone to college had it not been for the G.I. Bill of Rights. Indeed, a host of New Deal and postwar programs combined with technological change and economic growth to make the mid-twentieth century a far more egalitarian period than the earlier decades of the century.¹³ The far-reaching effects of public policy facilitated wage compression and the development of a middle class, thanks to the advances won by labor unions, finally sanc-

*Veterans who used
the G.I. Bill
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political groups.*

tioned by the National Labor Relations Act; the vast social welfare measures included in the Social Security Act; new wage and hour laws assured by the Fair Labor Standards Act; the vocational training and higher education provisions of the G.I. Bill; and the low-interest mortgages backed by the Veterans Administration and Federal Housing Authority loans. Is it not reasonable to assume that such measures and the egalitarianism they wrought would have contributed to citizens’ sense of civic belonging and their sense of obligation to the larger community? Might the record levels of participation by those who grew up witnessing such a clear, visible and positive role of government in their lives be less than a coincidence?

My research on the effects of the G.I. Bill for civic engagement among World War II veterans suggests that this public policy played a powerful role in stimulating the soaring levels of participation in membership organizations and political activity during the postwar years. Any veteran who had served 90 days and had a discharge other than dishonorable qualified for one year of education or training

paid for at government expense, with an additional month for each additional month of service. The program financed tuition at any college, university or vocational training program that accepted a veteran through normal admissions procedures; in addition, veterans received stipends for themselves, their spouses, and dependent children. Over 50 percent of all veterans—7.8 million individuals—used the educational provisions, with 2.2 million attending colleges and universities and the remainder obtaining vocational, on-the-job or on-the-farm training. Given the well-established relationship between education and civic participation, certainly we would expect that any educational policy would have positive effects on such involvement; the question guiding this study, however, was whether the public program itself—rather than simply the education it facilitated—boosted civic involvement.

I evaluated the effects of these educational provisions for civic engagement through extensive surveys with several hundred veterans nationwide. Regression analysis revealed that veterans who used the G.I. Bill for their education became significantly more active in a wide range of civic organizations and political activities and groups. Comparing two veterans who were identical in overall level of education, standard of living in childhood and adulthood, parents’ educational level, and various other determinants of participation, the one who used the G.I. Bill to finance his education joined 50 percent more civic organizations and engaged in 40 percent more political activities during the 1950–64 period than the non-user.

In-depth interviews with 30 veterans around the country, paired with the survey data, helped me to make sense of this startling finding. Some G.I. Bill users became more active in civic life because they felt grateful for what they perceived as a highly generous and life-transforming benefit, one that changed the subsequent course of their lives. In other words, the resource extended by the program (education or training) was perceived to be highly valuable, and it was clearly traceable to government. A “reciprocity thesis” thus explained why some veterans, especially those who spent the greatest number of years on the G.I. Bill, became more active in public life. Even more powerful were the dynamics of incorporation fostered by

the program among veterans who came from less privileged backgrounds. Use of the G.I. Bill increased participation among these veterans at an especially high and persistent rate. Here the interpretive effects of program rules and administrative arrangements came into play. Through the standardized, routinized procedures used in program delivery, veterans who had grown up in low to moderate socioeconomic backgrounds experienced inclusion in the political community as respected, first-class citizens. Such treatment contrasted sharply with their views of targeted programs for the poor, which many had experienced in childhood and which they understood as bearers of stigma. They responded to G.I. Bill usage by becoming far more active in public life than their demographic profiles would lead us to predict. Like Social Security, therefore, the G.I. Bill mobilized citizens in a manner that in large part countered the usual patterns of reinforcing privilege.¹⁴

The scope of the G.I. Bill's probable effects for civic engagement among the renowned "civic generation" bears mention. Among American men born in the 1920s, 80 percent were military veterans, and about half of them advanced their education through the G.I. Bill. Those born early in the decade served in World War II; those born later were sent to Korea, and when they returned home, over 40 percent took advantage of educational or training provisions through the renewed G.I. Bill. The example of the G.I. Bill suggests that the positive role that government played in the lives of this generation is critical to understanding why its members had such a strong sense of and commitment toward public life.

How might patterns of policymaking in recent decades, in the post-New Deal regime, have affected those of us in subsequent, less civic-minded generations? Over the past 20 years, amid growing inequality of income and wealth, policymakers have scaled back some aspects of the welfare state, while building upon those that are less visible to citizens generally. Indeed, upper-middle-class citizens benefit more than ever from home mortgage interest deductions, child care deductions and a host of other "tax expenditures," but it is unlikely that citizens experience these hand-outs for what they are: generous forms of social provision. Similarly, both student loans and tax breaks on

college tuition obscure the success of public policies in aiding those who pursue higher education. With government's role in promoting social opportunity so well hidden, might we be relinquishing means of conveying to citizens a sense of public life and of our common bonds to one another as citizens?

Increasingly, policymakers seek to shift responsibility for social provision from government to the private sector, denigrating public solutions and opting for market-oriented alternatives to social provision. The failure to enact national health care reform in 1994 left this fundamental aspect of citizens' well-being to the vagaries of market forces and seemingly impenetrable private industries, unaccountable to public control. Thus, for their health care, as well as most retirement savings, middle-class Americans rely primarily on programs that, while regulated by government, are channeled through their employers. Current reform proposals to solve the problem of escalating prescription drug costs for the elderly would grant subsidies to private insurance companies, on the uncertain assumption that they will in turn offer policies. Similarly, reform proposals for Social Security opt to fully or partially privatize the system, and in some cases to develop separate tiers of beneficiaries—those who can afford to invest in the stock market versus those who cannot. Many policymakers favor school choice, introducing marketplace mechanisms into the school system and allowing religious-affiliated and private schools to "compete" with public schools. These market-oriented solutions convey messages that we are separate individuals, workers and competitors in the market, rather than citizens joined through government in a shared project of democracy. While scholars have yet to investigate the effects of such policy approaches, they may well further erode our fragile sense of social trust and fading willingness to engage in civic organizations and political activities.

Policymaking and civic engagement are deeply related, joined through a complex set of mechanisms that emerge through the seemingly arcane minutia of policy design. Public officials must subject any new policy proposals—as well as efforts to replace or alter existing programs—to a vigorous civic assessment. We need to ask such questions as: What will be the impact of a policy choice on citizens' view that the

political system includes and is responsive to them? How will the policy affect citizens' understanding that they have as much a right and obligation to participate as other citizens? Will it convey to them that they are honored and respected members of the polity, equal to others? And will it help foster a sense of political community, or further segregate and stratify the citizenry? In contemporary policymaking, these questions are too often muted by the rhetoric of economic efficiency and effectiveness. We ignore them at our peril; the well-being of democracy itself hangs in the balance.

Endnotes

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- 2 The fullest recent articulation of this view is found in Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). Also see Lawrence Mead, *Beyond Entitlement: The Social Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: The Free Press, 1989).
- 3 Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), pp. 313–14; Mead, *Beyond Entitlement*. Also see essays by William Schambra and Dan Coats and Rick Santorum in *Community Works*, E.J. Dionne, Jr., ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1998).
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- 7 Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 101–17.
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Teaching and Learning for Civic Engagement: The Sweet Briar College Experience

by Barbara A. Perry and Stephen G. Bragaw

Sweet Briar alumna Tia Trout is an exemplar of the College's achievements in civic renewal through a law-related curriculum. A 2002 graduate of Sweet Briar College, Tia compiled a series of law-related internships (including two summers at the U.S. Supreme Court), a record of on-campus leadership, and a Government major and Law & Society minor on her way to earning a national Truman Scholarship for students planning careers in public service. She is spending 2002–03 as a Truman Fellow at the Rural Development Corporation, based in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a perfect match for her Appalachian roots. Tia plans to earn joint degrees in law and public health in preparation to serve as a health-policy advocate for the poor. The Sweet Briar Center for Civic Renewal (CCR), whose mission is to foster the habits of effective citizen engagement by promoting understanding of American society, especially democratic procedures, the rule of law, and civic obligations under the Constitution, could not create from scratch a more perfect illustration of its work.

Founded in 1999, the Center for Civic Renewal embodies Sweet Briar College's response to rampant civic disengagement in the United States. Whether measured by low voter turnout, high levels of distrust in government, deficiencies in civic education, general apathy toward public affairs, or increasing social isolation, this alarming trend threatens the ability of American constitutional democracy to function effectively in the twenty-first century. The Center for Civic Renewal provides guidance for public engagement as it examines the issues facing our country in times of peace as well as crisis.

Barbara A. Perry is Director of the Center for Civic Renewal and Stephen G. Bragaw is Director of the Law & Society Program, both at Sweet Briar College, Sweet Briar, VA 24595.

Civic renewal is the effort to forge or reinvigorate citizen links to public affairs at the local, state, national, and international levels. In turn, this renewed citizen engagement will result in the strengthening of societal, political, and governmental institutions. The civic renewal movement is a major component of both current politics and scholarship. One of the CCR's first projects was to create a Web site (www.civicrenewal.org) that serves as a

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guide to the civic renewal debate and a host of related topics. By the end of 2001, the site was receiving more than 1,200 visits per month from around the world.

To fulfill its mission, the Center for Civic Renewal has woven an interrelated structure of curricula, symposia, scholarships, and internships. The Center's unique curricular foundation consists of an interdisciplinary Law & Society Program, which examines how institutions, organizations, and movements are defined by and, in turn, define the logic, rhetoric, structure, and administration of legal rules in society. To bring legal and political issues alive for our students, faculty, staff, alumnae, and community members, the CCR sponsors symposia on national and international questions that concern the engaged citizen. Public officials, journalists, business leaders, lawyers, and scholars invigorate the Sweet Briar campus with their presentations and debates. The Irene Mitchell Moore Scholarship, first awarded in 2001, supports the studies of Sweet Briar students committed to civic engagement through their courses and co-

curricular activities. Just as the scientist discovers the facts and theories of her subject in lab-based experiments, so, too, the civically engaged Sweet Briar student learns in the "laboratories of democracy." The CCR provides information to students seeking "real-world" experience through internships from the Supreme Court to city hall. Based on such information, one student attended the American Association of Political Consultants meeting at Harvard and then interned for political consultant Frank Luntz and her U.S. senator; she hopes to work in local government after graduating in 2003. An older student worked with her supervisor on campus, the College's vice-president for business affairs, in a legislative lobbying internship involving the Council on Independent Colleges in Virginia and the state legislature.

By offering students the opportunity to understand their civic rights and obligations through knowledge of American constitutional democracy, Sweet Briar College takes its place in the national law and civics movement. The Sweet Briar Law & Society Program studies the influence of participants in the judicial process (courts, judges, lawyers, and clients), as well as the impact of cultural norms, economic relationships, art, literature, media, and social institutions on how law is articulated in society. Based on the Sweet Briar Law & Society Program's profile, the Center for Civic Renewal was asked in 2002 to house the Law- and Civics-Related Education Center for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Part of a nationwide network of law-related education (LRE) centers under the auspices of the U. S. Department of Justice and five private national organizations (the Center for Civic Education, the American Bar Association, the Constitutional Rights Foundation, Street Law, and Phi Alpha Delta), the Virginia Law- and Civics-Related Education Center at Sweet Briar College coordinates law-related education programs and initiatives in

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Public and Community Service in Law School: The University of Pennsylvania Experience

by Susan J. Feathers, with Pam Wölfe

Penn Law School's pioneering Public Service Program is an integral part of the educational experience at Penn. The first law school program to receive the prestigious ABA Pro Bono Publico Award, the Program strives to instill a pro bono ethic in law students while sensitizing them to the needs of the poor. Through the program, 3,000 law students have contributed more than 300,000 hours of law-related public service on behalf of more than 800 public interest lawyers in Philadelphia and nationwide.

More than a decade ago, Penn Law faculty collaborated with community leaders and practicing lawyers in Philadelphia to address the increasing gap between legal needs and community resources. These discussions culminated, in 1989, in the creation of Penn's Public Service Program, in which all students contribute a minimum of 70 hours of law-related public service work as part of their graduation requirement.

To ensure that law students are ready to work in the real, and constantly changing, public service legal world, the program maintains an ample roster of about 800 opportunities from the full spectrum of legal issues, including environmental, health, youth, labor, small business, international human rights and poverty law. In addition, these opportunities enable students to cultivate a broad range of legal skills, including client interviewing, factual investigation, trial and appellate advocacy, and research and writing.

Last year, the program placed nearly 600 law students in law-related placements in Philadelphia and nationwide. Nearly 65 percent of the third-year class exceeded the 70 hour pro bono requirement—a strong testament to the program's success

in instilling the importance of doing pro bono work. Virtually without exception, students reported that they had a favorable experience at their pro bono placement and that it enhanced their law school experience.

Public Interest Career Opportunities

The Public Service Program provides our students with unique access to many of the nation's leading public interest em-

*Pro bono placements
expose students to
clients and their
needs and help
deliver legal services.*

ployers. Participation in a pro bono placement has often led our students to pursue summer internships and full-time employment in public interest practice. Several pro bono projects led to full-time summer internships for many of our students. For example, 22 students from the Feminist Working Group assisted the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund's Judicial Education Project in researching and drafting a book on gender bias in the legal profession. Thirty-nine law students aided the Brennan Center's Holocaust Litigation Project by evaluating initial questionnaires for indicia of viable claims following the settlement of the 'Swiss Banks' case. And 12 students performed research for Freedom House's Rule of Law Initiative on their Global Training and Support Consortium in Algeria and Morocco.

The program has also created initiatives that explicitly connect students' summer internships with pro bono work. For example, the Edward V. Sparer Summer Fellowship Program funds students to undertake summer internships at civil legal services organizations, followed by acade-

mic research on a topic related to their work. In addition, Sparer Fellows are expected to continue to work for the agency on a pro bono basis following their summer experience. Last summer, the Sparer Fellowship Program funded students to work at the AIDS Law Project, the Center for Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights, Community Legal Services, the Education Law Center, Pennsylvania Health Law Project, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), and the Women's Law Project. In many instances, Sparer Fellows reported that their summer experience affirmed their commitment to practice public interest law. A Sparer Fellow at the Institutional Law Project, for example, said that the work reinforced plans to pursue a career as a civil rights lawyer, while another attributed placement at HIAS to a decision to pursue a full-time career working with illegally detained immigrants.

Philadelphia Community

The Public Service Program has forged strong ties to Philadelphia's vibrant public interest legal community, including virtually every public interest agency, governmental organization, and pro bono attorney in the Philadelphia area. These relationships not only expose students to real clients and their needs, but they also meet a gap in the delivery of legal services, thereby contributing to the betterment of the community.

Last year, funding from the Pennsylvania IOLTA (Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts) enabled the program to hire expert legal services attorneys to provide training, supervision, and consultation to students who assisted approximately 1,000 clients of Philadelphia's most needy. For example, under the supervision of the Philadelphia Legal Assistance Benefits Unit, 15 law students provided representation and counseling on food stamp issues to 60 clients. Under the supervision of the Homeless Advocacy Project, eight law students provided legal assistance and referrals to 420 homeless persons by con-

Susan J. Feathers, Esq., is Director of the Public Service Program of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Philadelphia, PA 19104; Pam Wölfe is the Program's Associate Director.

ducting outreach at churches. Under the supervision of the legal director for the Family Unit of Philadelphia Legal Assistance, 15 student interns assisted pro se indigent clients on such issues as custody, support, divorce, dependency, welfare, and protection from abuse. And under the legal supervision of an expert legal services lawyer, 49 law students assisted more than 250 claimants at administrative hearings in unemployment benefits cases.

Several new student-initiated projects have recently begun. Last spring, 12 students founded the Immigration Project, where students work with detainees in Pennsylvania's county jails on issues including asylum, convention against torture, and removal based on aggravated felonies. In collaboration with the Institutional Law Project and the Prison Law Society, students also created the Prisoners' Legal Assistance Project to provide civil legal assistance to inmates.

Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Equally important, so has the feedback from the many organizations that students have served. In the words of Eve Biskin Klothen, the former vice pres-

ident of Pennsylvania Legal Services, "Law students completing the Public Service Program not only leave with a clear message that there are many unmet legal needs in our society, but they also provide critical assistance toward meeting those needs."

Faculty Participation and Student Learning

Many members of the Penn Law School faculty participate in the Public Service Program. Some faculty supervise students on pro bono projects in conjunction with their seminars. For example, Harry Reicher's International Law students assisted him in conducting legal research on religious freedom for Agudath Israel World Organization; students enrolled in Dina Schlossberg's Small Business Clinic assisted her in providing legal assistance to the People's Emergency Center; students in Nathaniel Persily's Constitutional Law seminar performed research on several Supreme Court cases, including *Bush v. Gore*; students in Jason Johnston's Environmental Law seminar are working on a research project for a local environmental

group; and Alan Lerner supervised law students in his work for the Children's Policy Research Practice Center.

Many of the students enrolled in faculty-based placements found that their pro bono experience gave a real-world dimension to their coursework and learning. Whether writing a memo for submission to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda or working on an amicus brief involving constitutional debates over methods of adjusting for census undercounts, students have enriched both their substantive knowledge of the law and their practical understanding of legal procedure. We hope that the program will continue to develop even richer links to the core curriculum and thus unite theoretical understanding with practice opportunities.

Lawyers have a unique privilege and duty to do the public good and serve society. Through its innovative Public Service Program, Penn Law School has effectively imparted this message. Our graduates lead the way in making public service an important part of their professional lives.

Civic Renewal at Sweet Briar

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K-12 schools throughout the state, brings teachers to campus for symposia and workshops, and maintains a legal-education resource library.

Through its symposia, the Center for Civic Renewal has sponsored presentations on topics that include "Religion in the Public Square," "Understanding the War on Terrorism," "Civil Rights and Liberties During Times of Crisis," "271*: From Recounts to Renewal after 'The Perfect Storm' of Election 2000," "Civic Renewal in the United States: Americans' Participation (or Lack Thereof) in Public Life," and "Technocracy in America 2000: The Media's Impact on Presidential Politics." These CCR programs have featured, among others, NBC correspondent Andrea Mitchell, ABC correspondent Ann Compton, Dallas Morning News editor Lee Cullum, NPR correspondent Daniel Schorr, C-SPAN co-founder John Evans, author Doris Kearns Goodwin, Judge Kenneth Starr, former U.S. Supreme

Court Marshal Dale Bosley, columnist Andrew Sullivan, Professors Susan Estrich, Larry Sabato, and Theda Skocpol, the Reverend Barry Lynn, and James Towey, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. From small classroom discussions to presentations before hundreds of students, faculty, staff, alumnae, and community members, these speakers have bolstered the knowledge of their audiences about civic affairs.

Among the recent graduates in Sweet Briar's Government Department, two were selected for the Teach for America program, part of the AmeriCorps national service initiative. They are currently teaching in the inner city sections of Houston and Washington, D.C. Another graduate joined the Peace Corps and now serves in Africa. We believe that they and others who have taken an interest in civic renewal while at Sweet Briar College are truly fulfilling the Center's motto, penned by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis: "The most important office in our democracy is that of private citizen."

Endnotes

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- ⁹ Mead, *Beyond Entitlement*, p. 7; Marc Landy, "Public Policy and Citizenship" in *Public Policy for Democracy*, Ingram and Smith, eds., p. 26.
- ¹⁰ Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider, "Constructing Citizenship: The Subtle Messages of Policy Design" in *Public Policy for Democracy*, Ingram and Smith, eds., p. 68.
- ¹¹ Joe Soss, "Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action," *American Political Science Review* 93 (1999): 363-80.
- ¹² Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, "Racial Polarization on Criminal Justice Issues: Sources and Political Consequences of Fairness Judgments," paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA, August 30-September 2, 2001; Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, "Political Participation of the Urban Poor," *Social Problems* Vol. 48, No. 3, pp. 362-85.
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Civic Engagement Redux

by Joanne Green and Donald Jackson

Civic Engagement in American Democracy by Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina (Editors). Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1999. 420 pp. Cloth \$52.95. ISBN: 0-8157-2810-7. Paper \$19.95. ISBN: 0-8157-2809-3.

Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work by Henry Milner. Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2002. 256 pp. Cloth \$45.00. ISBN: 1-58465-172-5. Paper \$19.95. ISBN: 1-58465-173-3.

Public Policymaking in a Democratic Society: A Guide to Civic Engagement by Larry N. Gerston. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2002. 230 pp. Cloth \$58.95. ISBN: 0-7656-1054-X. Paper \$22.95. ISBN: 0-7656-1055-8.

A recent statement from the Task Force on Civic Education of the American Political Science Association contains the following assumption and conclusions:

We ... take it as axiomatic that current levels of political knowledge, political engagement, and political enthusiasm are so low as to threaten the vitality and stability of democratic politics in the United States. We believe that political education in the United States is inadequate across the board. We believe that we who have chosen to teach politics as our profession bear major responsibility for addressing the problem (APSA Task Force on Civic Education, 2002).

From the topics that might be critical in “addressing the problem,” the task force noted four: “teach tolerance; teach collaboration; teach analysis; teach our traditions,” and then proceeded to reduce those to one statement: “Teach the motivation and competence to engage actively in public problem solving.”

Such a statement may be easily produced, but actually accomplishing the task

is quite another matter. And this was by no means the first time the American Political Science Association addressed the subject of civic education. From its founding in 1903, the association appointed committees on the subject in 1906, 1911, 1920, and 1939 (Schachter, 1998), and during the past several years there has been a plethora of books on civic education, civic engagement and civic literacy – as the subject recently has been variously described. In this essay we review two recent books and a guide to civic education prepared for student use.

The collection of essays edited by Theda Skocpol (the current president of the American Political Science Association) and Morris Fiorina contains some excellent contributions—too many to describe them all here. In the introductory essay, the editors provide a useful beginning by identifying three contemporary scholarly approaches to civic engagement. The first is the “social capital” approach, in the past few years most often associated with Robert Putnam (1993, 2000). Putnam has examined participation in voluntary associations, arguing that strong and vital associations (civic engagement) are important in providing a foundation for democratic governance. In his recent book, *Bowling Alone*, Putnam argues that there has been a critical civic disengagement in the United States over the past few decades. Rational choice scholars follow a second approach by examining the costs and benefits that individuals confront when deciding whether to participate in groups. An important framework for such analysis can be found in Mancur Olson’s book, *The Logic of Collective Action* (1968). The third approach is that of historical institutionalists, who examine the patterns of group “belonging” across time. Clearly among the best work using this approach are the two contributions by Skocpol herself in this edited volume.

Skocpol’s first essay, “How Americans Became Civic,” shows how “federated associations flourished” in our past. Federated associations featured local chapters, state affiliates, and national conferences and officers. These included groups such

as the American Legion, the PTA, the Masons, the Odd Fellows, the Grange, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, Federated Women’s Clubs, or (for Catholics) the Knights of Columbus. In such groups people enjoyed social contacts, learned organizational skills and developed their potential as leaders, and through their participation they sometimes influenced political issues of the day. In this historical context, Skocpol’s second essay, “Advocates without Members: The Recent Transformation of American Civic Life,” is particularly enlightening. While some federated associations yet survive, albeit often with diminished and aging membership, we now live increasingly in a world of advocacy organizations, run by professionals, dependent on direct-mail fundraising, and consisting of members whose most likely contact consists of sending a check to a distant national office. The civic disengagement that concerns Putnam can thus be seen in Skocpol’s work as an important transformation of associational life, rather than necessarily as a fundamental decline in social capital. She also appropriately notes that the millions of American who participate in faith-based organizations hardly fit the model of “bowling alone.”

Jeffrey Berry’s essay “The Rise of Citizen Groups” confirms Skocpol’s analysis of current trends, while noting that these days people who write checks to national advocacy groups are also more likely to participate in other ways in the political process. As a rational choice scholar, he notes that the successes of advocacy groups make it “all the more rational for Americans to direct some of their political resources toward Washington-based citizen lobbies.” There also are good contributions in this book on national elections as mechanisms for stimulating political mobilization, political efficacy and diffuse system support, as well as case studies of civic life: the role of women’s groups in transforming politics; the case of the PTA; and one interesting chapter on the “dark side of civic engagement,” which here means the “hijacking” of public policy by activists/extremists.

Joanne Green is Associate Professor of Political Science and Donald Jackson is Herman Brown Professor of Political Science, both at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX 76129.

Henry Milner's book approaches civic engagement, which he terms "civic literacy," from a dynamic perspective. First, he demonstrates that the emphasis on political trust in social capital research (most notably Putnam's work) is misplaced, as he finds that there is no relationship between levels of interpersonal trust and participation/interest in politics in a comparative analysis of sixteen countries in Europe, North America, and Asia. He argues that Putnam's theory does not fare well in countries with different cultural traditions, different histories of voluntary organizations, and different historical views of interpersonal relationships and trust. Church groups, for instance, are very hard to examine comparatively, as their role in societies varies greatly. Hence, he shifts his analysis from trust to knowledge.

Civic literacy is defined as the proportion of the population having the "information and capacity to be competent citizens." Milner examines civic literacy as both an independent and dependent variable, viewing it as both means and end. Civic literacy is operationalized as voting. Following the theoretical tradition of John Stuart Mill, Milner effectively argues that voting is a key form of civic engagement in pluralistic societies. He contends that civic literacy is directly influenced by political knowledge, which in turn is measured by informational levels and operationalized simply as possessing factually correct information on political issues. Low levels of political knowledge correlate with low levels of political participation in comparative analyses. Milner also examines the impact of institutional factors on civic literacy. Consensual institutional systems, such as proportional representation systems, promote civic literacy (as compared to majoritarian electoral systems), because they demonstrate to citizens the need for participation. Civic literacy is also indirectly impacted by the efforts of political entities to promote participation (for example, political parties' drives to get out the vote). Milner also extensively examines the role of the media in influencing civic literacy, arguing that television replaces other more effective sources of political information, negatively impacting political knowledge and hence civic literacy. Adult educational programs are also examined.

The most interesting and, perhaps, controversial aspect of Milner's study is when

he uses civic literacy as an independent variable in what he calls the "virtuous circle" of civic literacy. After effectively investigating the factors that impact civic literacy in various societies, he then turns his analysis to the impact of civic literacy on different societies. He argues that high levels of civic literacy lead a population to support policies that promote equality and efficiency, which serve to redistribute resources equitably. In high-literacy countries, there is high political participation by everyone, including the lower class. Hence, the lower-class perspective is incorporated into policymaking decisions, leading to greater support to redistribute wealth and thereby creating and sustaining a welfare state. His theory seems to work well in Scandinavian countries (the source of his case study in section four of the manuscript); however, we question the value of this aspect of his research for the United States. One must wonder how the political culture and views on individualism dominant in the United States play into his equation. A very profound change in values and governmental structures would be necessary for his "virtuous circle" to develop in the United States. However, while Milner acknowledges the complexities of his recommendations, even characterizing some proposals as "wishful thinking," he does present clear and convincing evidence that unless our society (and other low civic-literacy societies) makes serious efforts at closing the knowledge and technology gaps, then one can predict a continued lowering of civic literacy.

Larry Gerston's guide to civic engagement represents a quite different approach; it is meant to encourage students. His foreword offers the following normative direction:

It is certainly not too early for colleges and universities to take positive steps to promote civic and political engagement. Campuses should be expected to promote a single type of civic or political engagement. How? By preparing their graduates to become engaged citizens who provide the time, attention, understanding and action to further collective civic goals. That is exactly the mission of this volume.

We expect that many professors will find that objective hard to swallow. While this may be a reasonable objective for some students, surely there are others whose personal and career objectives may preclude time-consuming civic engage-

ment. That is especially notable when Gerston's strong preference for service learning, achieved largely through civic volunteerism, is identified in his preface. Schachter's essay in *PS: Political Science & Politics* on the history of civic education (1998) concludes that "modern political scientists are split between those who want to create a polity of active citizens working for the community and those who posit the citizen as a passive customer intent on individual satisfaction." Gerston encourages activism. Given the prospect that the level of one's civic engagement will, in the end, be a personal choice, Gerston's book offers a simple and clear introductory manual for students who have chosen to become engaged. Especially helpful at the end of each chapter are the specifications for group and individual projects (choosing a policy issue, relevant fact gathering, preparing a plan of action, developing a timeline, following a local policy through to implementation and policy evaluation).

Nothing in our past suggests that building liberal democracy and fostering civic engagement are easily accomplished. The APSA statement and the books by Skocpol & Fiorina and Milner contain compelling intellectual challenges, but no easy answers.

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Civic Engagement

Anderson, David M., and Michael Cornfield (eds.). *The Civic Web: Online Politics and Democratic Values*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

Scholars and practitioners discuss the issues, opportunities, and dilemmas posed by the introduction of Web sites, e-mail lists, and other computer-networked communications into U.S. national politics.

Fullinwider, Robert K. (ed.). *Civil Society, Democracy, and Civic Renewal*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

Social scientists and humanists explore the meaning of civil society in this collection of essays, which address such topics as social trust, citizen councils, self-help groups, and civic activity by women and African Americans.

Maurrasse, David. *Beyond the Campus: How Colleges and Universities Form Partnerships with Their Communities*. New York and London: Routledge, 2001.

The author offers case studies of how colleges and universities successfully worked with local businesses in four urban settings, providing positive partnerships for the communities.

McLean, Scott L., David A. Schultz, and Manfred B. Steger (eds.). *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives on Community and "Bowling Alone."* New York: New York University Press, 2002.

In this anthology, scholars of American politics and political theory explore the meaning of social capital and its relationship to political participation and civic engagement.

Norris, Pippa. *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Norris examines both access to and use of the Internet in 179 countries, exploring how political institutions have begun to use the Internet and how the public, in turn, has responded.

Purdy, Jedediah. *For Common Things: Irony, Trust and Commitment in America Today*. New York: Knopf, 2000.

A recent Harvard graduate argues that the sharp declines in both interpersonal trust and civic involvement are closely linked, and he offers a prescription for the revitalization of public responsibility.

Sirianni, Carmen, and Lewis Friedland. *Civic Innovation in America: Community Empowerment, Public Policy, and the Movement for Civic Renewal*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2001.

The authors describe civic renewal in four arenas—health, the environment, journalism, and community organizing, linking local efforts in civic innovation to broader networks and patterns. This book is based upon extensive interviews, field observation, and case studies.

Skocpol, Theda. *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003.

Skocpol explores the implications for democracy when participatory groups and social movements are replaced by nonprofit organizations: Is civic involvement every person's right and duty or the job of nonprofit professionals?

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