

- Integration of experiential education across the institution—our departments, colleges, and universities—is important.
- We need to dig deeper into the complex experiences in which students are involved.
- We must recognize the dialectic between the construction of knowledge and the development of efficacy.
- The developmental journey is important, and its effects are likely to be long-term and not always easy to evaluate or measure at the end of the semester.
- As political scientists, we need to be revising what we are talking about and how we are doing it, as one shoe does not fit all feet.
- Gender and different populations may benefit more or less from experiential education.
- The role of the community partner and its link to the university is very important in the student learning process.
- We need to better understand the differences (as well as overlaps) among service learning, civic engagement, and learning for political engagement.
- The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) offers “Eight Principles of Good Practice for All Experiential Learning Activities” that are significant in sharpening the experiential learning process and outcomes.

#### TRACK SUMMARY: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT II: POLITICAL BEHAVIOR EFFECTS

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This year’s participants in the Civic Engagement II track agreed with last year’s participants that civic engagement is both a means and an end. Active learning through community or political engagement can provide students with a deeper understanding of political science concepts while also helping them develop the skills they need to become engaged citizens. Participants in this year’s track focused on how to assess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that students develop through coursework, internships, and extracurricular programs.

Track moderator Elizabeth Bennion provided a toolkit (“Assessing Civic Education and Engagement Activities: A Toolkit”) for assessing civic engagement activities, covering a full range of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches from participant counts to fully-randomized, multicampus field experiments. Bennion presented a summary of assessment methods used in civic education and engagement scholarship in the discipline and discussed the need for more teacher-scholars to clearly define their learning objectives to allow them to operationalize and measure learning outcomes. She stressed the importance of using both pretests and posttests to ensure that high levels of civic knowledge or engagement are not preexisting conditions and recommended both indirect and direct measures of student learning outcomes. For example, self-reports and surveys should be supplemented with tests of civic and political knowledge, writing assignments, or journals and evaluated using a rubric. Bennion also promoted the use of comparison or control groups to ensure that observed changes are actually the result of the program being evaluated. Finally, she highlighted the need to study behavior directly, whenever possible, and the need to conduct more

longitudinal studies to test the long-term effects of civic engagement pedagogy.

While track members noted that instructors should not assume that a student’s long-term civic attitudes and behavior will change dramatically after a single civic education experience, participants were encouraged by the measurable changes they observed in their research and teaching.

Several track participants presented their own research. One set of papers explored how civic skills are tested and developed through online social networking activities (Jenni Fitzgerald and Jacqueline A. Kelo, “Civic Participation and the Facebook Generation”; Renee Bukovchik Van Vechten and Anita Chadha, “How Students Talk to Each Other: Findings from an Academic Social Networking Project”). An assessment of how students interacted with each other through discussion boards on an academic website showed that online communities can function as a training ground for active social and political involvement. Helping each other develop informed perspectives by deliberating civilly was an important way that students practiced and learned the skills that form the basis for civic engagement.

From rural to urban settings, college courses incorporating public affairs internships or problem-solving activities can also provide students with opportunities to participate politically, improve their skills, and expand their notion of democratic citizenship. For instance, requiring students to take on a local issue, such as advocating for a stop sign at a busy intersection, can yield similar learning outcomes as those gained from interning in a Washington, DC, political office. According to two studies presented in the track, students’ political knowledge, facility with policymaking procedures, and political efficacy appear to increase through hands-on experiences (Jeff Dense, “Civic Engagement in the Rural University”; Claire Haeg and Matthew Lindstrom, “Getting Potomac Fever: Increasing Civic Engagement through Internship Learning Communities”). Additionally, the subject matter need not be limited to the United States: one longitudinal research project demonstrated how an extended Model UN project that brings undergraduates studying international relations together with high school students can have lasting effects on individual attitudes about foreign affairs, knowledge, and levels of political efficacy (Alison Rios Millett McCartney, “What Happens after Graduation? An Evaluation of the Impacts of Civic Engagement Courses on Post-College Practices”).

Efforts to teach students about civic affairs and provide experiential learning can be “brought together under one roof” by coordinating a university-wide program designed to spark wider interest in civic affairs that can also double as a resource center for local community and government groups. This kind of institutional commitment to promoting civic and political engagement can encourage interdisciplinary ventures that lead to similar positive outcomes among participants, including increased political awareness and knowledge and differences in political affect, as another presenter showed (Adam H. Hoffman, “Civic Engagement Institutes at Universities: Reaching beyond Political Science Majors”). However, all of these studies—whether about individual courses, internships, or a university institute—also reminded participants of the inherent limitations of assessing civic education and the incremental, diffuse, or qualitative gains that this education can produce, as well as the challenges presented by small *ns* and the need to locate effective comparison or control groups.

Assessing both the immediate and longitudinal effects of different types and amounts of civic education presents a serious research challenge, but two papers met this issue head-on by analyzing how varying types of civic education can influence college students' voting activities and lifelong civic behavior (Diana M. Owen, "The Influence of Civic Education on Electoral Engagement and Voting"; Jennifer Bachner, "From Classroom to Voting Booth: The Effect of High School Civic Education on Turnout"). Both studies found that personalized, active curricular approaches to engaging students were critical to activating them and cultivating lasting, public-oriented habits. Students voted more often when either high school or college instruction included personal appeals. They took part in campaigns, used social media to follow campaigns, and attended community meetings, among other activities, when their experiences in political science or government courses conveyed the value of civic engagement. Thus, all of the studies presented by track participants support the general conclusion that active learning and an explicit focus on the value of engaged citizenship can produce measureable differences in levels of civic engagement.

Several members of the track recommended Bob Graham's model for teaching civic leadership skills. By requiring students to define a problem, research it, gauge public opinion, identify the decision-makers, build coalitions, use the media, meet with decision-makers, capitalize on victory, and learn from defeat, instructors are allowing students to practice and develop the skills they will need as citizens and civic leaders. Yet there is much we still do not know about the best ways to promote lifelong engagement.

Track participants suggested many ways that the APSA can facilitate the scholarship on civic education and engagement in political science, including:

1. Publish a monograph providing a literature review, model examples of scholarship across the discipline, and an assessment toolkit for teacher-scholars;
2. Create an [apsanet.org](http://apsanet.org)-linked wiki providing a collective annotated bibliography and detailed summaries of past research, to which scholars could add their own work as it is completed;
3. Support a *Journal of Political Science Education*-published meta-analysis of what we know and what we need to know;
4. Provide links to other resources, including relevant professional associations, national surveys, rubrics, assessment plans, and syllabi; and
5. Support grants and/or conference space for working groups dedicated to multicampus, longitudinal civic engagement scholarship.

As Dewey once wrote, "Democracy needs to be reborn in each generation and education is its midwife." As educators, we have an opportunity to participate in that rebirth.

#### TRACK: CORE CURRICULUM AND GENERAL EDUCATION

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Issues addressed in the Core Curriculum and General Education track at this year's conference are more important than ever. With

the release of *Academically Adrift* (Arum and Roksa 2011), increasing budget shortfalls as a result of the economic recession, and calls for assessment and accountability, higher education and its usefulness have come under scrutiny. While this increasing scrutiny is a concern that others besides those in political science should address, our field's expertise within the political arena would suggest that we have insight into political decision-making and can act as experts that translate information from the classroom to the real world in a variety of ways.

Central to addressing this scrutiny is a need to consider what we teach and how our students learn. It is apparent that there is no agreement among political scientists about what constitutes the core of our discipline. While on one hand, this disagreement is an artifact of the methodological and topical pluralism that characterizes our discipline, on the other hand, this diversity could undermine the role of political science in the core of a college curriculum. The only agreement appears to be that students should take American government courses (Bobbi Gentry and Christopher Lawrence, "What's Core in the Undergraduate Political Science Curriculum?"), but even then, there is a lack of agreement over what should be taught in introductory American government courses (William J. Miller and Jill Miller, "So Many Freshmen! The Challenges and Goals of Introductory American Government Courses").

We are further challenged by the fact that many of our students do not take introductory courses with the intention of becoming political science majors. Students enroll in our general education classes to fulfill requirements, often vary in interest level, and face challenges besides academics that affect their classroom performance. Furthermore, no matter which institution or student body we face, we ask a lot from a single political science course. In our core courses, we balance the goals of teaching students the basics of our trade and teaching them important skills such as how to register to vote, how to analyze and criticize points, and how to apply content knowledge to the real world. Our track also found that we expect students to leave our classes with a wide variety of skills. One larger concern is that we ask students to do critical thinking in our courses without necessarily scaffolding in the steps to teach them to become critical thinkers (Nicholas Spina and Tara Parsons, "The Many Objectives of a Political Science Education: A Study of Introductory American Government Classes across Four Institutions").

We also increasingly find ourselves faced with teaching a classroom full of students at varying levels of academic preparedness (Emily Neal and Kimberly Turner, "Opportunities and Challenges in Teaching Research Methods in a General Education Course at a Community College"). Given this diversity, there are several key questions we must address, including: How do students learn? How can we better use assessment as a tool to learn the best methods to help students learn while not being evaluative? (Dana Dyson, William Laverty, and Derwin Munroe, "Gen Ed on our Minds: What Can Assessment of 'Introduction to American Government' Tell Us about General Education Outcomes?") Future inquiry not only should concern the development of best practices, but should also use these practices as recommendations—not fundamental truths—that can be applied to every classroom and every student to help students succeed.

Further complicating the matter is the challenge of a new type of student who expects different outcomes than those to which we, as teachers, may be accustomed. The ongoing debate between