

# APSA Presidential Task Force Report on New Partnerships

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## OVERVIEW

Several principles guide the task force's work. In the area of research, it seeks to promote opportunities for political science research to break out of the confines of professional specialization; show that there is a factual common ground on public issues across ideological divides; and critically inform important matters of public discussion. It also prioritizes providing research opportunities to colleagues from a variety of types of institutions.

In the area of teaching, it seeks to encourage partnerships across two- and four-year institutions in order to both expose students at all institutions to cutting-edge research, and to draw on and disseminate best practices in teaching first-generation and traditionally underrepresented students.

In the area of civic engagement, it seeks to advance training and professional recognition for community-focused and civically engaged research, and to promote public engagement and contributions to public discourse as critical functions of the political science profession.

*The Task Force developed and advanced a total of seven new programs in its first year of activity.*

Between February 2018 and 2019, the Task Force held three, day-long in-person meetings and over 30 conference calls. They held meetings at two APSA conferences and presented three panels at the 2019 APSA Annual Meeting. Through this work, the Task Force developed proposals for five new programs aimed at advancing its aims in the areas of research, teaching, and public engagement.

In addition to these proposals, the Task Force adopted two existing proposals for research and civic engagement projects, and worked with APSA and an external funder to facilitate fellowship support to the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In the area of civic engagement, the Task Force seeks to advance training and professional recognition for community focused and civically engaged research through the creation of an Institute for Civically Engaged Research (ICER), and a new APSA Distinguished Award for Civic and Community Engagement.

### Distinguished Award for Civic and Community Engagement

The new award honors significant civic or community engagement activity by a political scientist, alone or in collaboration with others, which explicitly merges knowledge and practice and goes beyond research to have an impact outside of the profession or the academy. The award carries a \$1,000 honorarium and provides the recipient with funds and staff support to organize an activity to advance civic and community engagement at the following year's annual meeting.

### Award Committee

- Chair: Dr. Amy Cabrera Rasmussen, California State University, Long Beach
- Elizabeth Beaumont, University of California, Santa Cruz
- Ethan Frey, Ford Foundation
- Christopher F. Karpowitz, Brigham Young University
- Veronica Reyna, Houston Community College

### Institute for Civically Engaged Research

The Institute for Civically Engaged Research trains political scientists to conduct rigorous, ethical research that informs the public, addresses real community concerns, and moderns reciprocal and respectful engagement with various publics.

The Institute is led by Amy Cabrera Rasmussen, Peter Levine, Valeria Sinclair Chapman, and Amanda Grigg. The first ICER took place at Tufts University's Tisch College of Civic Life from June 17–21, 2019.

Fifty graduate students and faculty from across the country and around the world applied for ICER, and 17 were admitted and enrolled. Guest speakers included MIT's GovLab, Jarvis Hall (North Carolina Central University), Jamila Michener (Cornell), Celeste Montoya (University of Colorado), Pearl Robinson (Tufts), and Archon Fung (Harvard). Activities included presentations, seminar sessions, collaborative breakouts, and individual writing.

Evaluations for ICER were overwhelmingly positive, with 82% of recipients reporting that they were very satisfied with the institute. A majority (88%) of respondents also reported that they felt more confident in their ability to conduct high-quality civically engaged research as a result of ICER.

The Institute for Civically Engaged Research aims to not only provide training in engaged research but to create a cohort and community of civically engaged researchers. Encouragingly, 88% of participants indicated that they planned to remain engaged with future ICER events and collaborations.

Beyond these results, the activities of ICER alumni indicate that our aim of creating a cohort of engaged researchers was a resounding success. Since ICER 2019, alumni have formed an accountability

group that meets via video conference once per month, developed a panel on engaged research to be presented at the 2020 MPSA conference, and submitted a symposium proposal to *PS: Political Science & Politics* featuring seven articles on civically engaged research in political science.

### Growing Democracy, Community Conversations

In addition to developing two programs, the Task Force also allocated funding to support a member-led civic engagement project called Growing Democracy, Community Conversations. This effort, led by Ashley Nickels and Casey Boyd-Swan of Kent State University, aims to bring together community members, scholars, and practitioners to share information, experiences, and insights on issues of democracy and civic engagement.

The Growing Democracy Project emerged from an observation that higher education values civic learning and community engaged scholarship but offers few resources for co-creating civic and political educational tools along-side community members. Nine months in, the project has hosted five series consisting of nine events, as well as a community planning session. In doing so, Growing Democracy has succeeded in its efforts to create collaborative spaces and generate new conversations around pressing local and national political concerns.

A schedule of events to date can be found below. In 2020, workshops will culminate in a new website featuring the co-created curriculum.

- March 2019: Difficult Dialogues, with Dr. Brandi Blessett and Professor Jacquelyn Bleak, moderated by Dr. Ashley Nickels
- April 2019: Democracy 101—"Backyard Civics" with Alicia Robinson, Shannon Garrett, and Thalia Anguiano, moderated by Anna Hutcheson
- May 2019: Navigating Government-Overcoming Burdens and Accessing Information, led by Dr. Casey Boyd-Swan and Professor Joseph Mead, JD.
- September 2019: Power of the Media, with Dr. Meghan Rubado
- October 2019: Mobilizing through Storytelling, with Jerry Peña

### TEACHING

In the area of teaching, the Task Force advanced two programs: Peer to Peer Pedagogical Partnerships (P4) and APSA Educate. The first, a grant program, brings political science faculty from two- and four-year institutions together to develop cutting-edge teaching materials and share best practices for teaching and mentoring historically underrepresented students. The second, a new website, will be a hub for curated, high-quality political science education materials.

#### Peer to Peer Pedagogical Partnerships

The P4 program launched in Houston on March 22, 2019, with a day of presentations and collaboration at Rice University. Presentations focused on both cutting-edge teaching methods and research in the area of race, gender, and American politics. The event involved 35 political science faculty members representing nine community colleges and universities in the Houston area.

In the months since, eight teams have been hard at work sharing best practices for teaching and learning, and developing new teaching resources based on cutting-edge research.

Each team is made up of faculty from at least one community college and at least one regional public, liberal arts, or research institution. Their resources include simulations, active learning modules, and guided discussions, and will be made available to political scientists in Houston and beyond through APSA Educate in fall 2020.

Professor and chair of political science at Rice University and P4 partner Ashley Leeds said of the program: "There is so much that community college and university political scientists share, but we lack occasions to collaborate. P4 is a unique opportunity to bring us together, build on our strengths, and create new ways to connect to today's college students. P4 is not only something practical; it is also joyful!"

#### APSA Educate

The APSA Educate website is an online library for political science education that will provide curated, high-quality political science teaching and learning resources. The website will be open access and will include materials relevant to both political science faculty and to members of the public interested in learning more about political science.

The newly appointed faculty advisory board will play an active role in developing the website and soliciting content. APSA has also hired a political science PhD candidate to serve as the website's editor.

#### Advisory board members:

- Jennet Kirkpatrick, Arizona State University
- Rachel Cobb, Suffolk University
- Derrick Cogburn, American University
- Bruce Pencek, Virginia Tech
- Andrew Rich, CUNY
- Cammy Shay, Houston Community College
- Renee Van Vechten, University of Redlands

For development and design, APSA is partnering with web design firm American Eagle, an industry leader with over 25 years of experience with web services. APSA Educate was soft launched at the 2020 Teaching and Learning Conference, and a full launch is planned for the 2020 annual meeting.

### RESEARCH

#### Research Partnerships on Critical Issues

In the area of research, the Task Force aims to create opportunities for political science research to break out of the confines of professional specialization; show that there is a factual common ground on public issues across ideological divides; and critically inform important matters of public discussion. It also prioritized providing research opportunities to colleagues from a variety of types of institutions.

To achieve these goals, the Task Force developed the Research Partnerships On Critical Issues (RPCI) grant program, and allocated funds for a new Public Scholarship Program. The pilot RPCI program focused on Congressional Reform. In an effort to maximize its impact, the RPCI Task Force on Congressional Reform mirrored the design, aims, and timeline of the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress.

Following the bipartisan character of the Select Committee, APSA brought together academic specialists on Congress with individuals from across the Washington, DC think tank and advocacy community. The goal was to represent the range of organizations involved in congressional reform, without respect to partisanship and ideology.

The co-sponsorship of the R Street Institute and Brookings Institution provided critical support in reaching out to a diverse array of experts on Congress inside and outside the academy.

Support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation enabled us to expand the membership of the Task Force and supported the second plenary meeting. Task Force members, including cochair Frances Lee of Princeton University, and Molly Reynolds of Brookings were invited to testify before the Select Committee. The Task Force completed a report on their recommendations in the fall of 2019. The report has been shared with Select Committee staff and disseminated through a Brookings panel and an R Street Hill event for Congressional staff in January 2020.

The Task Force's work in this area also attracted the attention of The Democracy Fund. With some assistance from the Task Force, APSA partnered with the Democracy Fund to fund a Public Service Fellow to assist the work of the House Select Committee on Congressional Modernization. Though this was not formally a project of the Task Force, it was made possible by the Task Force's activity in the area of Congressional Reform.

### RPCI Congressional Reform Task Force Members

- **Co-chair:** Frances Lee, Princeton University
- **Co-chair:** Eric Schickler, University of California, Berkeley
- **Co-host:** William Galston, Brookings Institution
- **Co-host:** R Street Institute
- Claire Abernathy, Stockton University
- E. Scott Adler, University of Colorado
- Sarah Binder, Brookings Institution & George Washington University
- Casey Burgat, R Street Institute
- Josh Chafetz, Cornell University
- James M. Curry, University of Utah
- Menna Demessie, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation
- Lee Drutman, New America
- Kevin Esterling, University of California, Riverside
- C. Lawrence Evans, College of William and Mary
- John Fortier, Bipartisan Policy Center
- Bernard Fraga, Indiana University
- Marci Harris, POPVOX
- Yuval Levin, American Enterprise Institute
- Nolan McCarty, Princeton University

- Meredith McGehee, Issue One
- Michael Minta, University of Minnesota
- Bruce Patton, Harvard Kennedy School
- Kathryn Pearson, University of Minnesota
- Jason M. Roberts, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- Molly Reynolds, Brookings Institution
- Ruth Bloch Rubin, University of Chicago
- Charles Stewart III, MIT
- Mark Strand, Congressional Institute
- Tracy Sulkin, University of Illinois
- Michele Swers, Georgetown University
- Steven Teles, Johns Hopkins University
- Vanessa Tyson, Scripps College

### Public Scholarship Program

The public scholarship program introduces political science graduate students to the intellectual and practical aspects of presenting academic scholarship to the public. The program begins with an orientation at APSA's offices in DC, where fellows are provided with training in writing for public audiences. In the 2019 program, this included presentations from *The Monkey Cage's* John Sides and Arthur Lupia, the head of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the National Science Foundation.

During the fellowship period, fellows focused on producing public-facing summaries of political science research published in the *American Political Science Review*. This involves collaborating with journal editors and authors under the supervision of APSA staff. Fellows also produced recaps of annual meeting events. This work is shared via APSA's blog, [politicalsciencenow.com](http://politicalsciencenow.com), as well as on APSA social media accounts.

In 2019, staff selected four fellows from over 35 applications. Fellows have so far produced 11 summaries, and articles covered by fellows have an average altmetric score 20 points higher than the average score from the previous year's articles.

Public Scholarship Fellow Maryann Kwakwa writes of the program: "The Public Scholarship Program is the best professionalization opportunity I have had. Political scientists are in dire need of opportunities to practice the art of clear writing; we also need to think about how our research can affect populations outside of the college environment much more than we currently do. This program is a crucial first step in bridging the gap between academia and public in a way that can boost the relevance and underscore the importance of the work we do." ■