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Abstract

The authors introduce a framework for considering the particularities of civic engagement in higher education. Colleges and universities make increasing reference to civic engagement in mission statements and other guiding documents; however, these documents often do not allow for distinctions between types of civic engagement activities that might occur in specific academic disciplines. This suggests a singular approach to civic engagement. The authors argue that actual pedagogies demonstrate variance and nuance in purposes of and approaches to civic engagement. Supporting faculty considerations of what content and skills are necessary for civic engagement in a particular academic discipline, the authors examine the notion of disciplinary literacy and adapt it to the college classroom.

Discipline-Oriented Citizenship

Universities occupy an essential and evolving space in the social landscape. Most universities demonstrate particular concern for the academic, professional, and personal development of their student body. Evidence from any number of mission and vision statements signals such a commitment. Formally, universities recognize their role in developing the whole person through the concept of *in loco parentis*, whereby the university writ large assumes the responsibilities of guardian and caregiver for the developing student.

Brubacher (2017) noted that universities focus on the whole student, with the goal of "each citizen … fulfill[ing] [their] political, economic, and social aspirations"; yet, despite institutional efforts, "even the professionally oriented superior students seemed to find a wall … between their academic preparations for success in a complex, technological civilization and the separate interests and goals of their private, purely personal life" (pp. 347–348). This struggle highlights the perennial tension created by what Parker (2010) described as the inherent selfishness of individuals who have not yet grown to understand how their own wellbeing is inherently tied to the wellbeing of others in their community—a learned approach to shared living required in a democracy.

Thus, inconsistencies can emerge between a university's stated goal of providing broad academic grounding and a student's understandable desire for knowledge and skills leading to gainful employment. Welch (2016) detailed such inconsistencies that existed among land-grant institutions that simultaneously offered forms of community service and outreach while promoting economic recovery and seeking to pay off various national debts through tuition revenue. Today, state-funded institutions, like our own regional comprehensive university, maintain a palpable tension among traditional liberal arts education, students' professional development, and the need for tuition revenue. We worry that debates about these issues can overlook questions of civic development, perhaps subsuming the formation of active and engaged democratic citizenship to marketable skills like "critical thinking."

Through this article, we invite faculty from across academic disciplines to consider how they might build on the content and skills necessary for competency in their respective fields. For instance, a philosophy professor might privilege close reading and advanced discussion strategies, while a geography professor might focus on discrete cartographic skills. These skills, necessary to each discipline, create opportunities for engagement in civic life. Our primary purpose in expanding the notion of disciplinary literacy stems from an interest in providing civic engagement opportunities within the curriculum.

Promoting Civic Engagement in Higher Education

When arguing for the importance of discrete and purposeful citizenship education, we find it useful to refer to the documents guiding institutional plans and aspirations. Reviewing mission and vision statements, for instance, we see regular reference to *citizenship development*, but as with many widely used terms, no consistent definition exists. Further challenging consistency within the academy, such references are often associated with calls for *civic engagement*, a broad term that has seen increased usage since the 1970s and that includes service-learning, community internships, social responsibility, and other forms of outreach (Welch, 2016).

Our institution claims that "our highest purpose is to empower our students with the knowledge, skills and core values that contribute to active citizenship, gainful employment and life-long learning in a democratic society and interdependent world" (Salisbury University, 2018). The mission statement aligns with the broader university-system mission, which references the goal of "preparing graduates with the knowledge, skills, and integrity necessary to be successful leaders and engaged citizens, while providing knowledge-based programs and services that are responsive to needs of the state and the nation" (University System of Maryland, 2018). In both statements, we see connections to broader movements such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement initiative and the American Democracy Project. However, we also perceive in both the inherent tensions, referenced earlier, between "the civic mission of schools" (Carnegie Corporation, 2003) and the more pragmatic, if not neoliberal, need for professional development and preparation for employment. Though we detail this tension later in the article, for now, consider the leverage these statements offer to faculty, students, and administrators interested in promoting various aspects of civic engagement and citizenship development.

When discussing civic engagement in presentations or during consultations with faculty at our institution, we highlight the multiple benefits of engagement opportunities. Rather than focus on citizenship development at the (perceived) expense of intellectual or professional development, we show how the development and application of a student's civic understandings complements and adds to intellectual and professional development. We describe the potential of coursework that explicitly exposes students to meaningful engagement opportunities structured within and responsive to particular academic disciplines or tracks. We consider *meaningful engagement opportunities* as those that intentionally place students in reciprocal relationships with stakeholders outside the university, within the context of a credited academic experience, typically a course. We further explore the conditions for meaningful opportunities in later sections.

In our experience, academics are intrigued by the idea of helping students see the relevance of their discipline's content in contexts outside academia. For those in the traditional liberal arts, application outside the academy highlights the value of faculty expertise to the world, and it provides another point of argument against technocratic, neoliberal approaches to higher education. For those in the sciences, civic engagement demonstrates how scientists contribute to understanding and acting on community issues. For those in professional programs, this approach to civic engagement aligns with existing notions of application in the field. At the same time, civic engagement provides opportunities to explore the soft skills of critical thinking, research, and writing.

Our focus on embedding meaningful civic engagement experiences in a wide range of (undergraduate) courses exposes a fundamental gap in the academy: Faculty often do not know how to do this work. There is a clear need for professional development opportunities that help faculty design and integrate meaningful, reciprocal community engagement. Faculty have a wealth of expertise and experience in their fields, but many are new to the communities in which their institutions reside. Many are affiliated with fields that may not recognize the scholarly value of civic engagement to tenure and promotion. Many also have limited experience with curriculum design.

To help address the need for useful faculty professional development at our own institution, we created an intensive, cross-disciplinary professional development program: Civic Engagement Across the Curriculum (CEAC). In describing CEAC, we outline the descriptive framework at the heart of our civic engagement approach.

Providing Support

Begun in 2015, CEAC has developed into a flagship initiative of the Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement (PACE) at Salisbury University. Each fall semester, CEAC brings together up to 10 faculty to explore the purposes of and methods for integrating meaningful civic engagement experiences into their courses. CEAC deliberately draws participants from each academic school at the university, highlighting the benefits of interdisciplinary thinking at the core of good civic engagement (Surak & Pope, 2016). The model is not unique but does demonstrate the potential that professional development holds for universities wishing to meet their goals of helping students develop the habits of democratic citizens such as a concern for justice, an ability to work with and across difference, and an interest in promoting a collective good (Surak et al., 2017).

CEAC promotes three curricular guidelines developed by Welch (2016); organizing the program around Welch's best practices allows us some confidence of overlap with similar initiatives at other institutions (we have written about overlap with at least one other institution; Surak et al., 2017). First, the civic engagement experience must be academically and theoretically grounded. We believe firmly that civic engagement experiences enhance the intellectual development of students. Thus, democratic citizenship comes not at the expense of, but rather through, intellectual growth.

Second, the civic engagement experience must provide an outcome for a community partner. We help faculty consider and cultivate meaningful reciprocal relationships with one or more of the many community organizations around our institution. Engaged in real-time civic work, partners can provide opportunities for students and faculty to see the immediate application of the theoretical and academic knowledge associated with classroom learning.

Third, the outcomes of the civic engagement experience should be shared outside the classroom. We appreciate the value of self-reflection for student development, and we advocate for student writing. However, we also demand that community-centered experiences be oriented toward the community—that faculty and students change their focus from conversations within the classroom to conversations outside the classroom. Students must acknowledge the contributions of their community partners, broadcast their learning, and, ideally, advocate for others to join the efforts.

Welch's (2016) guidelines provide a basic rubric for assessing participating faculty's civic engagement plans. The guidelines also result in a largely administrative application, as PACE tags civically engaged courses in the campus registration system. To offer more explicit conceptual guidance for integrating civic engagement, we leverage other frameworks.

Framing Civic Engagement

We structure CEAC around three overlapping, sympathetic, and complementary frameworks. We use readings and iterative assignments to explore justice-oriented citizenship, social responsibility, and disciplinary literacy. Here, we introduce each framework and describe its utility for faculty civic engagement considerations.

The notion of justice-oriented citizenship emerged from the work of Westheimer and Kahne (2004). Their review of civic education programs identified three conventional approaches. Using the example of a canned food drive, the authors illustrated the distinctions among the approaches. A personally responsible citizen will contribute to a food drive. A participatory citizen will help arrange the food drive. A justice-oriented citizen may complete both of these actions but will also "explore why people are hungry and act to solve root causes" (p. 240) associated with hunger. Though the authors avoided presenting their typology as a hierarchy, discussions of their work have consistently evolved toward promoting a justice-oriented approach.

In the context of CEAC, justice-oriented citizenship helps faculty consider interactions between their academic disciplines and their communities. Exploring a wicked social issue like hunger requires considerable academic study. Students interested in the topic must consider economics, public policy, religion, history, and resource allocation, among other factors. Indeed, the task is too large for a single academic discipline to examine adequately, though the discipline can provide a lens for viewing the issue, helping students focus more narrowly on a particular piece of the puzzle. This is the heart of Welch's (2016) first guideline, that community partnerships should be theoretically and academically grounded.

Social responsibility describes a person's responsibility to their community (Youniss & Yates, 1997). In discussing civic engagement in the academy, we draw from the literature on social responsibility in higher education. For instance, Colby et al. (2003) applied concepts of social responsibility from K–12 education to the purposes of higher education. In addition, Jacoby (2009) explored the various ways institutions of higher education enact their responsibilities to their communities.

At PACE, we are particularly enamored with Musil's (2009) work on the "civic learning spiral," which describes six civic engagement braids that can highlight a student's development: self, communities and cultures, knowledge, values, skills, and public action. Each braid comprises various descriptions of outcomes associated with social responsibility. Thus, the civic learning spiral offers a way to think about both the discrete developmental elements of social responsibility and how social responsibility might express itself in ways that faculty can evaluate.

Conceptions of literacy have expanded in recent years. Once limited to creating and understanding written texts, the idea of literacy has expanded to include content-area literacy (McKenna & Robinson, 1990), media literacy (Livingstone & Van der Graaf, 2008), and literacies of the body (Jones, 2013). Scholars have drawn useful connections to civic literacy

(Lisman, 1998) as an approach to thinking about the knowledge and skills needed for democratic citizenship. In education, researchers have engaged literacies in specific academic disciplines to grapple with the particular skills and habits of mind necessary for fluency in those fields—hence, the growing body of research around disciplinary literacy, which describes an approach to embedding advanced literacy strategies within particular content areas (see Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

In CEAC, we utilize disciplinary literacy as a way to help faculty remain connected with their discipline's particular ways of knowing and forms of expertise. This helps ground the work in tangible ways while helping to reinforce the academic component of civic engagement exercises in college courses.

Situating our work within the frameworks afforded by justice-oriented citizenship, social responsibility, and disciplinary literacy helps us challenge a singular approach to civic engagement efforts. Each course, with particular objectives, content, and ways of exploring the world, will necessarily have particular approaches to incorporating civic engagement. As we ask faculty to consider those approaches, we remind them of the three guidelines for civic engagement coursework introduced earlier. The outcome has consistently been the development of sincere and authentic course curricula that foster meaningful intellectual growth in the context of applied citizenship.

Evidence from Practice

Since 2015, the 10-week CEAC seminar has provided guidance and support for more than 50 faculty integrating civic engagement into their courses. For the purposes of this article, we center on how faculty come to see civic engagement as relevant to their academic discipline (we have reviewed positive outcomes of the program, including descriptions of course revisions, elsewhere; see Surak et al., 2017; Surak & Pope, 2016). We have long felt comfortable with and confident in the concepts at the foundation of the seminar. We believe the seminar is intimately tied to the broader mission of higher education generally and of our institution specifically. Yet, we explore the data here to offer more substantive arguments beyond our sense of proper purpose.

Idiocy and Puberty

Each seminar series opens with the same reading: Walter Parker's (2010) chapter "Idiocy and Puberty." Parker traces modern Western sensibilities about citizenship to the Greek terms *idios* and *polites*. According to the original, an idiot or *idios* is a person so selfish and inward-looking that they reject the shared nature of democratic living. By contrast, a member of the *polites*, or one who has experienced puberty, has come to understand and embrace their role as a member of the shared group. *Polites* recognize that their actions have consequences on others and that they are dependent on others in the same fashion.

A typical CEAC conversation shows how faculty apply the ideas to their students. An art faculty member observed, "Students are self-absorbed; they take selfies in class." A sociology faculty member suggested that "they have empathy, but only as long as it's for a pre-existing idea." A political scientist countered that "in this economic environment, students need to be selfish. It leads to employment after college. What can we do that is not at the expense of that reasonable goal?" "But to be successful, you do need to be aware of the world," claimed the artist. To which

the sociologist rejoined, “Students have a narrow sense of community. They see it differently than we do.”

These comments generalize anecdotal experiences across broad swaths of the undergraduate population, but they are nevertheless instructive vis-à-vis faculty concerns regarding their students’ civic development. The seminar exposes the tension between the university developing the whole person—including civic attitudes—and the university helping to prepare students for a productive foray into the job market. As one geography faculty member noted, “People outside my department are very slanted in that their ideas focus on the pragmatic and employment and things that can be measured. Civic engagement deals with more intangibles and only is measurable when it’s failing.” Some faculty have already considered the role of a traditional liberal arts education in their professional courses or the role of professional application to liberal arts courses—but the tension is always present and worth exploring.

Civic Engagement in a Discipline

Much of the CEAC seminar involves faculty defining what civic engagement means in and to their academic discipline. Early in the seminar, participants bring in a popular or scholarly piece representing what civic engagement means in their field. Frequently, their selections end up as assigned readings for the redesigned course.

One education faculty member brought a piece about a traveling Holocaust exhibit that incorporated survivor testimony. Eight weeks later, her redesigned Holocaust education course would lead students through planning and carrying out activities associated with the Holocaust Day of Remembrance. A philosophy faculty member shared news articles about efforts in Britain to integrate philosophy into K–12 education. Later that year, she introduced a new “philosophy in schools” program to the public school district around our institution.

In most cases, the task of finding civic engagement examples from an academic discipline’s literature helps distill the relevance of civic engagement to that discipline. This critical moment serves to crystallize ideas for civic engagement in the faculty member’s mind. As faculty explain the articles to their colleagues in the seminar, they must parse the relationship between their academic discipline and the broader discourse of civic engagement. Because their colleagues are educated but not experts in the field, the presenting faculty must distill their discipline to key elements and demonstrate the value that those elements can bring to the broader community.

Describing the ultimate value of the revised civic engagement assignment, one history faculty member commented that “the assignment will help [students] learn key skills in the discipline of history while being mindful of the social and moral responsibilities of writing about American Indian history and culture.” The faculty member anticipated that the assignment and restructured course would plant the seed of civic engagement in our students by showing them they can be political agents and problem solvers. The assignment invites them to be creative about cultural/public history educational efforts that can change perceptions and increase awareness of Indian history in the community.

This faculty member reflected on the core potential of an academic discipline to benefit the broader world—the heart of what CEAC enables. Rather than being caught up in the minutiae of historical facts, the revised assignment would allow students to use historians’ tools to better understand problems of the present, and to propose solutions for the future.

The Benefit of Expertise

Particular areas of expertise are perceived as requiring particular responsibilities. For example, the philosopher might describe a responsibility to promote reasoned public debate. By contrast, the geographer might describe a responsibility to provide accurate representations of spatial relationships in order to support an understanding of the community. Throughout the CEAC program, we are clear with faculty that their expertise remains central to their students' success in the course. We do not want to send students off into the community to find something that interests them. Meaningful civic engagement requires greater care.

Often, faculty settle on a balance, as did one history faculty member who decided, "I can let the students pick the specific issue, but I will provide broad themes for their selection." Faculty often moderate their interests, such as the economics faculty member who admitted,

I'd like students to understand the nuts and bolts of [food assistance] programs and how these programs operate. But some studies aren't feasible in a semester long study. Students would need to know research skills, and—in a perfect world—data analysis.

After consulting with his CEAC peers, this faculty member eschewed an idea to have students share their own (presumed) experiences with food assistance. Instead, the students would examine "government literacy and … [conduct] surveys and [present] results at a forum showing gaps in literacy."

The economics faculty member was moving toward the key outcome for civic engagement in the university classroom: providing avenues for students to meld academic expertise with civic engagement and public action. The revised course opened opportunities for students to build a skillset valuable to economics as an academic discipline while simultaneously engaging with a pressing social issue identifiable in their immediate community. As that faculty member continued his revisions, colleagues in the seminar offered options for closer engagement between the students and the community. Ideas like "observing a school lunch," "working with Title 1 coordinators," or "suggesting some solutions in the kitchen as a group" all sought ways for the students to pair their academic study with demonstrable efforts to address the issue with community partners.

In the ultimate expression of this reciprocal partnership, students become viewed as legitimate sources of information, while the expertise and experience of community members already engaged with the topic are acknowledged and respected. Often, this comes through face-to-face interactions. Following a restructured course in environmental studies, one faculty member invited an experienced professional into class. Having been introduced to students' efforts to understand and improve recycling efforts on campus, the guest speaker remarked to the class, "I hope your fresh perspective might lend some insight to those who have been working on the problem [of recycling] for the last 20 years."

Discipline-Oriented Citizenship

Over our time building, facilitating, and revising the CEAC seminar, we have also revised our methods of explaining the conceptual mechanisms at play. Faculty participants read and discuss pieces related to justice-oriented citizenship and social responsibility; they hold thoughtful discussions exploring and explaining the forms of literacy privileged in their academic disciplines; and they continue to revise their courses to align with Welch's (2016) three guidelines. In facilitating this programming, we have identified another term that we now use

when conversing with faculty about the ethos of integrating civic engagement into their coursework: *discipline-oriented citizenship*.

We conceive of discipline-oriented citizenship as describing the purposes of civic engagement within a particular specialization or field of higher education. Using discipline-oriented citizenship as a lens allows for nuances and distinctions between the particular purposes for and types of civic engagement that may emerge in different courses. This concept melds two key concepts: disciplinary-oriented literacy and social responsibility.

Shanahan and Shanahan's (2012) distinction between disciplinary and content-area literacy is useful in this context. In describing the reading process in the secondary setting, they differentiated between how students and teachers engage particular forms of texts. Content-area literacy includes the skills and techniques needed to engage with particular texts within a discipline to gain the key knowledge of the discipline. Content-area literacy differs from disciplinary literacy, which places an "emphasis on the knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate, and use knowledge within the disciplines" (p. 9). We approach disciplinary literacy as an active application of gained knowledge within a particular field, such as what one would find in a civic engagement context.

Drawing upon the literature of the field, Shanahan and Shanahan (2012) identified the formation of disciplinary differences as the gatekeeping function of those within the discipline, differences in knowledge bases and in "a reflection of the activities in which the disciples themselves are engaged," including "struggles for power, alliances, theoretical shifts, the creation of new forms of knowledge, and so on" (Bazerman, 1998, as cited in Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012, p. 48). Adhering to this definition yields a conception of civic engagement that situates students as agents who are both learning and learned. Students experiencing civic engagement based on these concepts could expect opportunities to expand their knowledge, use that knowledge to address genuine problems, and reflect on what additional knowledge and effort are needed.

In applying discipline-oriented literacy through civic engagement, one must consider the relationship of the individual to their larger community. Civic engagement is often couched in terms of "civic participation," with participation coming from "citizens" or being allowed or required through one's "citizenship." Citizenship is a problematic term when associated primarily with legal status. We use citizenship in a broad sense "as a shared set of expectations about the citizen's role in politics" and "our relationship to others in the polity" (Dalton, 2009, pp. 23, 24). Our use of citizenship does not focus on particular values held or which values "should" be held by individuals, but rather comprises a shared sense of expectations as to how people engage in public life, specifically within the context of the theoretical and practical needs of a stable and functioning democratic society. This is an important counter to those who critique civic engagement as having a particular political or ideological slant, including faculty who associate civic engagement with a propensity for political extremism (Abrams, 2018).

Social responsibility must also recognize the power relations that exist within all public interactions. Faculty in the classroom must assist students in navigating the power asymmetries they may encounter. Not doing so can lead to the reproduction of inequitable and unjust power relations, creating conformity rather than critical action (Murray & Maynooth, 2013). Faculty must take special care to acknowledge that interactions within the classroom are not likely a good model for active civic participation; CEAC supports those efforts by exploring how

classroom interactions can prepare students for and help them make sense of community interactions.

Citizenship is a "learning process" produced and reproduced by experiences (Delanty, 2003). However, Delanty (2003) advised caution in using the term *discipline*. From a Foucaultian perspective, disciplining as a form of citizenship production is the creation of a specific type of state subject. Rather than signaling or practicing citizenship as the embodiment of a particular set of rules and codes, he advocated for the concept of "cultural citizenship," (Gerard, 2003) which is reflexive and empowers and encourages agency of the subject through social learning, nodding toward the work of Luhmann (1989) and Habermas (1989). Citizenship must entail more than rights and group membership. Citizens—*polites*—must learn and practice participation in the political community, specifically "learning of the self and of the relationship of self and other" (Delanty, 2003 p. 602). We also share Delanty's concerns about both the use of the term *discipline* as well as the neoliberal *disciplining* of the student as subject. Contextualizing discipline within the term *discipline-oriented* is meant to address specifically these important concerns of language, power, and practice.

Rationale and Implications

In our conversations with faculty and students about the role of civic engagement in the college classroom, we have found that discipline-oriented citizenship helps clarify purposes. Rather than reifying the perceived split between civic and intellectual development, discipline-oriented citizenship helps faculty and students consider the reciprocal relationship between academic study and social application. This allows for a more nuanced rendering of postsecondary civic engagement development. Instead of being perceived as activities that happen in addition to intellectual development, civic experiences occur *through* intellectual development and in conjunction with the application of learning.

The concept of discipline-oriented citizenship also challenges a general approach to skills development. We presume that all faculty are invested in developing their students' critical-thinking skills, and we expect that most faculty would like to see improved interpersonal communication, including writing skills. Yet, we have also found that students want to develop these skills in concert with "real-world" experiences. Discipline-oriented citizenship offers an opportunity to consider how such skills benefit a student and a community in the real world, in more ways than initial employment.

By providing immediate opportunities for students to apply their developing knowledge and skill in the world, discipline-oriented citizenship can empower college students toward greater involvement. Empowering civic-engagement experiences in the classroom are known to promote civic agency, or "the exertion of influence and power in a given situation," and civic efficacy, defined as "the belief that one can make a difference in the world, and the responsibility to do so" (Mitra & Serriere, 2012, p. 743). Discipline-oriented citizenship incorporates growing confidence in one's intellectual abilities and their role in society.

Finally, discipline-oriented citizenship helps faculty consider intersections between civic engagement and the academic disciplines where engagement may not seem readily apparent. These efforts help make civic engagement, and the specific contributions of academic disciplines to society, visible in ways many find new and exciting. Such visibility at our institution has included a successful application for the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification and recent revisions to formally recognize civic engagement in tenure and promotion. Such

developments help explain the broad interest in CEAC from faculty across liberal arts, science, and professional programs. Most faculty have an inherent love for their academic disciplines and are excited at the prospect of new opportunities to help students find that same love.

Future Study

As a conceptual framework, discipline-oriented citizenship also offers opportunities for formal study. At PACE, we encourage faculty to consider the implications of the civic learning spiral (Musil, 2009) in an effort to develop assessments that address a broad range of student development. We hope that faculty will engage in interdisciplinary collaboration to explore wicked problems and have engaged efforts to examine such collaborations. The spiral provides useful points of inquiry for a wide range of civic engagement experiences and can fit usefully within introductory or capstone coursework.

Perhaps the most pressing questions are related to students' understanding of the concept as it applies to their time in a course or major. Working from a fundamental question can yield valuable insight into students' experiences with and understandings of civic engagement: What can [this discipline] do to improve your community?

CEAC faculty are integrating pre- and post-course surveys meant to explore shifting student conceptions of civic engagement related to their coursework around that question. Specific connections with the civic learning spiral are apparent through Musil's (2009) desired outcomes such as "ability to describe the main civic intellectual debates within one's major" and "development of a civic imagination." Investigating such outcomes will further our understanding of how universities can reach their laudable, and shifting, goals.

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