USM Langenberg Lecture & Civic Engagement Symposium
April 10, 2017
University of Maryland, Baltimore

Report from Breakout Sessions: Summary of Key Themes

The *Symposium on Civic Education, Civic Engagement and Civic Responsibility* included plenary sessions and breakout/discussion groups. The eight discussion groups were facilitated by Symposium steering committee members from MHEC, MACC, MSDE, MICUA and USM. The discussion groups addressed common questions:

> *How can colleges and universities build capacity for civic engagement and civic development? How can we help our students connect their learning to the social, civic, ethical, and environmental issues of the larger community?*
>
> - *What is currently being done on your campuses?*
> - *Who takes the lead (Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Gen Ed Committee)?*
> - *How do you get others involved?*
> - *What obstacles do you face? What do you need to continue or enhance this work?*

Recorders captured the key "take-aways" from the discussions, and they are summarized below.

Faculty and university leaders need to model community engagement, dialogue, tolerance of difference.

- For that they may need support and professional development.
- Faculty who want to engage students in complex thinking and conversations are looking for guidance.
- The best approach to this work is clearly at the intersection of academic affairs and student affairs.

Many people expressed that a one day meeting is not enough time to develop plans or projects,

- but the hope is that this Symposium is the beginning of a more focused state-wide commitment to civic education and engagement on our campuses.

There was great interest in sharing resources, and model programs and projects across institutions from all segments.

- To that end, we will start by setting up a webpage on the USM website to collect and share resources.
- Resources will include existing documents, pamphlets, program announcements, campus reports, participants have that you are willing to share.

- If we get enough interest, we will look for some grant funds to create a curated website for the Maryland P-20 community to use as a "go-to" place for ideas and solutions to challenging campus realities.

"Democracy is a process" - University student engagement requirements should incorporate a spectrum of civic behavioral outcomes:

- Move beyond "one and done" (civic education and engagement should be embedded in the entire P-20 educational experience).
- Higher education needs to build on the work that is started in the K-12 schools, possibly through teacher prep and professional development programs.
- College and university administration should be ready to capitalize on moments and issues that spontaneously generate student engagement. "Follow the students" when addressing issues that resonate with them.
- "Ticking off a class requirement" is not sufficient – there is a spectrum of civically responsible behaviors which need to be communicated to students.
- Classes and experiences with a "cultural competency" expectation need to include a reflection activity.
- Commitments to civic engagement beyond service projects should include local and regularly occurring opportunities for responsible civic engagement (voting, jury duty).

Civic engagement programming should move away from a deficit framework.

- Experiences should form reciprocal relationships.
- Students get or learn as much as they "give" when engaged in a service project.

General education requirements might be reformed to accommodate deeper civic engagement.

- There is a perception that recent general education changes have led people away from "correct" civic learning (E.g.: Should students be able to graduate without taking American history?)
- One idea under this theme included revising general education to include a MD state level course on civic engagement
- Another idea: integration of civic engagement with course of study/major – have majors review their curricula with engagement in mind.
- Ideas like this are restricted by structural barriers to adding courses to degree programs.

Communication and messaging related to civic engagement is integral to the sustainability of any changes.

- More communication efforts are needed to gain and include K-12 partners.
- Participants envisioned work that is connected via goals; goals can unify sectors and levels (K-12/community college/university).

- Broad themes that cross disciplines can unify work on large campuses and work that is across sectors.
- Civic engagement should be built "into the core identity of the institution."
- Institutions need to look beyond their job training goals.
- Unified messaging about priorities is needed, maybe in the form of mission statements.
- Some participants suggested the development of a broad definition of engagement that all institutions could use.
- Participants asked for "top down and bottom up" structural support for this work, so that it is sustainable regardless of regime changes on campuses/in administrations.

Particular resources and structural changes are necessary to revamp civic engagement on campuses.

- Engagement work needs to be included in faculty promotion and tenure processes (this was mentioned in all but one break out group).
- Budgets that support the work are as important as policies.
- Other structures are needed, including programs that are accessible to all students (consideration should be given to UDL, transportation considered, etc)

K12 and higher education are concerned that NCLB's focus on testing only reading and mathematics disrupted and was detrimental to humanities and social studies education.

- ESSA plans should incorporate civic education outcomes as a priority of K-12 teaching.
- Teacher education programs in the state will reflect K-12 priorities.