What Should Students Gain from Civic and Democracy Engagement in College?¹

Purposeful civic engagement involves students reflecting on their own civic identities and experiences; exploring democracy’s development and aspirations; practicing productive dialogue with those who disagree; and examining—both in general and career-related studies and projects—public choices that affect individuals and communities. College civic learning includes:

**Democratic Knowledge and Levers for Change.**
Democratic knowledge encompasses local, state, national, and global systems with attention to public and policy choices related to students’ careers. Students Explore:

- Key democratic principles and debates about their meaning and application
- Constitutionalism and political systems that frame democratic governance
- Founding and freedom texts for the U.S. democratic republic
- Historical and comparative knowledge of freedom movements, U.S. and global
- Authoritarianism; racial/ethnic/religious repression; and other anti-human rights movements
- Public policy and equity issues/choices related to students’ career learning
- Political levers for influencing change—in civil society and career fields.

**Where?** In general education programs and courses that explore democracy’s development, principles, contestations, and challenges, including movements for policy and societal change. And in students’ majors, including career and technical fields.

¹Note: An earlier version of this framework for college civic learning has been revised based on feedback from the field. The draft will be further discussed and published in 2024.
Practical Civic Experience and Projects.
Students Help Create New Solutions Through:

- Work with diverse partners on research projects related to public good questions
- Work with diverse partners and community organizations on significant problems, including problems related to their career choices
- Presentation of project results to others
- Collaborative reflection—with mentors and peers—on insights gained from their community-based learning, including Implications for future work.

Where? Research and/or Action Projects Completed to Meet Degree Requirements—in Majors, Minors, Certificates, and/or General Education

The projects will likely be part of one or more high impact practices, such as undergraduate research, service learning, community-based projects, practicums, diversity and global learning, capstones and/or e-portfolios that include students’ civic work and learning.

Bridge-Building and Problem-Solving Skills. Students Practice:

- Critical inquiry and evidence-based reasoning
- Communications skills: Written, oral, collaborative, and intergroup
- Digital, data, and media literacy
- Productive engagement with diverse views and experiences
- Testing and improving solutions with diverse partners
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Systems thinking about public issues and questions.

Where? Practiced Across General Education and All Majors, including Career and Technical Majors, and in Co-Curricular and Community-Based Experiences and Projects

►►► Resulting In: Purposeful Civic Engagement and Graduates’ Own Choices for the Future

Through their course-taking, practical experiences working on public questions, and guided reflection on their own identities, goals, civic voice and involvement, students will make their own decisions about how they want to contribute to the public good beyond college.

Some students may work on public good questions related to their professions and/or workplace. Others may become active in local and/or faith communities. Some will choose public service as their career. Many will contribute primarily as engaged and knowledgeable voters. Whatever their choices for the future, all students should graduate civic- and democracy-ready as well as career-ready. And they should be deeply conversant with public good questions related to their intended careers.