

## Northeastern State University

### *White Paper on Civic Engagement at Northeastern State University*

We have identified civic engagement as a top level campus-wide priority through our strategic planning process. Our primary barrier to advancing civic engagement is a lack of campus-wide infrastructure to support and capture civic engagement activity occurring in curricular and co-curricular settings. The purpose of this white paper is to provide a snap shot of current activity related to civic engagement, identify a measurable long-term aspiration, and offer recommendations for moving forward.

#### University Planning Group Strategic Plan

The University Planning Group sub-committee focused on Culture of Civic Engagement proposed the following description and definitions to be adopted by the institution.

Civic Engagement at Northeastern State University is the individual commitment to engage in a shared responsibility to take care of the communities in which we live. This is achieved through the study, reflection and action necessary to take personal and social responsibility in our individual fields of interest as well as in the communities in which we live and serve.

Civic engagement is contributing to a larger community; is caring about the rest of the world; is awareness of social, political, and economic issues within the U.S. and globally; is advocating for a cause; is active in contributing to community.

#### Types of Civic Engagement<sup>1</sup>:

- Academic Service Learning – engages students in a three-part process: classroom preparation through explanation and analysis of theories and ideas; service activity that emerges from and informs classroom context; and structured reflection tying service experience back to specific learning goals.<sup>2</sup>
- Volunteerism – commitment and actions to aid in a program or activity that benefits others
- Community Service – commitment to address and serve community needs
- Community Building - build trusting relationships among individuals and groups around issues of common concern
- Public Education - draw attention to and awareness of local, national and global issues
- Community Development - identify and increase the human or economic assets of a community
- Voting and Political Participation - mobilize influence on public policy through formal political channels
- Civic Leadership - participate in collaborative decision-making for the benefit of the community
- Public Scholarship - engage in research that serves the public interest and has community or societal benefits
- Grassroots Alliances - mobilize allies with a common interest to coordinate strategies for change

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<sup>1</sup> Extracted from Washington State University Center for Civic Engagement, <http://cce.wsu.edu/default.asp?PageID=796>

<sup>2</sup> Jeavons, Thomas H. "Service-Learning and Liberal Learning: A Marriage of Convenience." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*. Fall 1995: 134-140.

## University Environment Scan

In 2009, NSU participated in two national studies focused on student perceptions and experiences related to civic engagement.

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is an assessment of freshmen and seniors to reflect on individual time devoted to various learning activities. NSU 2009 NSSE results related to civic engagement stated:

- 7% of NSU first-year students frequently participate in service-learning or community-based projects during a given year. 80% never took part in such activities.
- By their senior year, 44% of students have participated in some form of practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, or clinical assignment.
- By the time they are seniors, 56% of students have participated in community service or volunteer work.

The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership's (MSL) purpose is to enhance knowledge regarding college student leadership development as well as the influence of higher education on the development of student leadership capacities. Participants are undergraduates, freshmen – seniors. Following are respondent distributions on specific characteristics linked to civic engagement from the NSU 2009 MSL.

- 38.5% of the respondents identified participating in community service.
- 36.4% experienced an academic internship.
- 20% participated in an academic learning community.

The 2009 NSU campus inventory for Campus Compact on academic service-learning occurring during the 2008-09 academic year:

- NSU semester average is 20 academic courses that integrate community service with academic content.
- 402 students participated in academic service-learning which averaged 18.1 hours/week across all courses equaling 109143 hours.
- NSU does not require academic service-learning courses as part of the course curriculum.

Snapshot of activity related to civic engagement in academic units.

- College of Business and Technology – Financial Planning seminars for local community, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program
- College of Education – Reading clinics for children, Knowledge is Power Program partnership with Tulsa Public Schools
- College of Liberal Arts - teacher preparation program focused on the Cherokee language and culture
- College of Optometry – regional optometry clinics, international service trips
- College of Science and Health Professions – Speech Pathology clinics

Snapshot of activity related to civic engagement in co-curricular environment.

- American Democracy Project (ADP) chapter. ADP membership is primarily faculty and staff. A small group of students have recently engaged in ADP. We have sent ADP members to the national conference the last 2 years. ADP has developed a growth proposal for implementation beginning fall 2010.
- Recognized Student Organizations (RSO). 96 student organizations are recognized by NSU. 38% of the organizations organize community service activity as identified in their organization description.

- Living Learning Community. Housing hosts a living learning community focused on service.
- Big Event. The Senator Rozell Scholars coordinate the annual Big Event, a 1-day community service project. Over 600 students participated in Big Event in March 2010.
- Center for Student Leadership Development and Community Engagement. Student Affairs has designated an office in the University Center lower level to serve as a central location for a newly formed Center for Student Leadership Development and Community Engagement. A graduate assistant is dedicated to resource and program development under the supervision of the Director of Campus Involvement.
- Campus Compact. NSU is a member of Oklahoma Campus Compact. Our activities over the last 4 years with Campus Compact include an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, MLK Volunteer Project grant recipient, and annual survey of service.
- Cherokee Nation Community Service Program. Cherokee Nation requires students receiving financial assistance to complete a set number of service hours per semester. Several service programs coordinated by Cherokee Nation and NSU entities are currently underway.

2015 Aspiration: Carnegie Community Engagement Classification

The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification criteria require the following:

- Infrastructure: a campus-wide coordinating infrastructure (center, office, etc.) to support and advance community engagement, institution have a definition and a process for identifying Service Learning courses
- Budget: internal budgetary allocations dedicated to supporting institutional engagement with community, external funding dedicated to supporting institutional engagement with community, and fundraising directed to community engagement
- Learning outcomes: institutional (campus-wide) learning outcomes for students' curricular engagement with community, departmental or disciplinary learning outcomes for students' curricular engagement with community, outcomes systematically assessed and used
- Integration in curricular activities: community engagement integrated into Student Research, Student Leadership, Internships/Co-ops, Study Abroad, community engagement integrated with curriculum on an institution-wide level - Core Courses Graduate Studies, First Year Sequence Capstone (Senior level project), In the Majors General Education
- Faculty scholarship: associated with their curricular engagement achievements, faculty scholarship associated with their outreach and partnerships activities (technical reports, curriculum, research reports, policy reports, publications, etc.)
- Outreach and Partnerships: Outreach focuses on the application and provision of institutional resources for community use with benefits to both campus and community. Partnerships focus on collaborative interactions with community and related scholarship for the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, information, and resources (research, capacity building, economic development, etc., mechanisms to systematically provide feedback and assessment to community partners and to the institution

## Recommendations for Moving Forward

1. Create a NSU Civic Engagement Council consisting of representative from the American Democracy Project, Student Affairs - Center for Student Leadership and Community Engagement, each academic college, Futures Institute, Herb Rozell Scholars (Big Event), NSGA, and Housing - Living-Learning Community on Civic Engagement, Continuing Education and Athletics. Interested campus community members beyond the identified representatives may attend council meetings. The purpose of the council is to strategically integrate civic engagement through:
  - a. Identifying University-wide goals related to % of students who participate in civic engagement while at NSU.
  - b. Develop University student learning objective(s) linked to civic engagement.
  - c. Create systematic campus-wide tracking or documentation mechanisms to record and/or track engagement with the community
  - d. Develop a systematic campus-wide assessment mechanisms to measure the impact of institutional engagement
  - e. Provide professional development support for faculty, staff, and students who engage with community
  - f. Provide the community with a central outlet for a “voice” or role for input into institutional or departmental planning for community engagement
  - g. Serve as a central communication hub for civic engagement activity occurring throughout campus.
2. Develop an academic initiative that includes the following:
  - a. Begin a conversation on the feasibility of requiring service learning in every major and minor.
  - b. Create an interdisciplinary minor in civic engagement with the aspiration of becoming a major. 12 credits required for a minor to start with, then build a major that is interdisciplinary on top of the minor. Require that all students must complete at least one course in service learning leadership and complete a service learning project as part of that course...and all of those courses have a service learning component available so that students could choose the course they want.
  - c. Create a Service Learning Center that includes full-time faculty who teach required lower division courses in service learning leadership, community development, team and interpersonal relationships, social and political movements throughout history, social organizations and social action, non-profit leadership, etc. etc. The basic idea is a department with a major/minor in areas that may attract new students, provide a route to have existing students participate in service learning.
  - d. American Democracy Project creates a special interest track or certificate within the civic engagement major and/or minor.
3. Designate shared space for civic engagement academic and co-curricular programs coordinated through Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in the facilities master plan.
  - a. This designated space could become a prototype for interdisciplinary programs and services.
  - b. Long-term goal could be a new building dedicated to Making Place Matter through learning, innovation, and outreach.