INITIATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative, a newly created effort to measure and improve campus and community civic health, will serve as a signature program of the 10th anniversary of the American Democracy Project (ADP). ADP’s Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative is intended to engage American colleges and universities in two efforts:

1. First, we want ADP campuses to devise measures and metrics for assessing the civic health of their campus as well as their community;

2. Second, we hope our ADP campuses, having conducted the assessment, will find a measure of civic health that needs improvement, and devise a program to respond to that concern.

The Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative is informed by the critical work of the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) – our convening partner organization – on America’s civic health, by national thought leaders, and by research centers and projects on civic issues (e.g., CIRCLE).

Introduction

Civic health data have become an increasingly central component of the national dialogue on civic life. NCoC produces the national civic health assessment, “Civic Life in America”, on an annual basis in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service. NCoC also partners with 25 communities nationwide to use this data to produce reports and initiatives that drive sustainable civic strategies. These civic health initiatives are based on a variety of civic indicators – including how often citizens report discussing politics, involvement in community groups, addressing local issues with neighbors, participation in volunteer and service activities, political action and other measures of social connection and community engagement.

In the new Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative, we intend to create a complementary effort to the substantive national civic health assessment conducted by the National Conference on Citizenship. We hope our initiative will:

1. Develop tools for assessing the civic health of campuses and communities;
2. Expand our understanding of the current state of civic health on college campuses and in local communities;
3. Identify and share ways that a college or university – in partnership with a local community – can improve the civic health of the campus and/or community; and
4. Explore the interplay between campus and community civic health.

This document outlines the Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative’s activities and goals, guiding principles, operational design, plan of action, and key organizations and individuals.
**Activities & Goals**

The focus of the Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative is the creation of a set of nationally informed but locally developed civic health assessment tools, which allow colleges and universities to measure and take action on campus and community civic health issues. The activities of the project will include:

1. Raising awareness about campus and community civic health
2. Identifying areas of civic health where college or university efforts, in partnership with local organizations, could make improvements
3. Identifying strategies that show promise to advance areas of civic health
4. Providing opportunities for sharing and implementing these strategies

The purpose of the Initiative is to engage students and university faculty and staff in campus and community civic health work. The ultimate goal of the Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative, and indeed the goal of the American Democracy Project, is to produce informed and engaged citizens for our democracy.

The Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative will result in a repository of new and existing assessment tools and measures that can be adapted by any postsecondary institution. This repository will be publically available on the AASCU website. The results of the Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative may also serve as another set of data points to inform NCoC’s civic health initiatives. Participating campuses will also be strongly encouraged to produce Civic Health Index reports and infographics in partnership with NCoC to allow them to showcase their data to the community. ADP will assist in outreach to and recruitment of its campuses to be partners in this effort.

**Guiding Principles**

- Use this work to link the concept of AASCU institutions as ‘Stewards of Place’
- Involve students, faculty and community partners in the creation of the toolkit and in measuring and improving civic health of individual campuses and communities
- Hold Campus & Community Initiative Civic Health Summits as part of the next three ADP/TDC annual meetings (June 7-9, 2012 in San Antonio; June 6-8, 2013 in Denver; and June 5-7, 2014 in Louisville)

**Operational Design**

1. **Relationship to key partner organizations and thought leaders**
   As part of our 10th anniversary, The American Democracy Project is launching a Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative with our convening partner, the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC). Other organizations and individuals have been instrumental in conceiving of this project and will continue to contribute in meaningful ways (see list of Key Organizations, below) including, especially, The Democracy Commitment, CIRCLE and Lyon Software. With the assistance and input of these organizations and thought leaders, the Campus Civic Health Initiative will begin to identify existing civic health assessment indicators and to develop new measures for assessing campus contributions to civic learning and health.

2. **Relationship to campus and community leaders and stakeholders**
   In spring 2012, the American Democracy Project and its community college counterpart The Democracy Commitment will identify approximately 20 public colleges and universities that will participate in further developing and piloting the processes and tools of the Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative. Pilot campuses will then identify local campus and community organizations, leaders, and stakeholders with which to collaboratively begin to assess, and later create action plans to improve, civic health. Campuses will be encouraged to hold their own Campus Civic Health Town Hall Meetings and Civic Health Summits to shape their thinking about what aspects of civic health they want to focus on, what assessments and existing indicators to use to measure those areas, how to disseminate overall findings to key stakeholders, and how to use the data to
inform recommendations and action plans for improving civic health on their campuses and in their communities.

Plan of Action

Year 1: Develop Free or Low-Cost Set of Measures and Pilot Measures
- Convene a Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative Summit at June 7-9, 2012 ADP national meeting in San Antonio, Texas for representatives of participating institutions. (Summit will be Thursday, June 7, 2012.)
- Develop, in a collaborative manner, a free or low-cost set of institutional measures or tools – a “toolkit” – for measuring these indicators
- Incorporate existing civic health indicators, when and where appropriate
- Identify a set of institutions that will serve as the Initiative’s participating institutions, and engage them in a development process for the creation of their own Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative Plans. These plans will be shared in the online repository.
- Conduct campus/community civic health assessments among approximately 20 ADP and TDC participating campuses
- Develop local action plans designed to improve and foster campus/community civic health among participating campuses
- Convene a second Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative Summit at June 6-8, 2013 ADP/TDC national meeting in Denver, Colorado for representatives from participating institutions to share the results of their first year and learn from each other’s experiences

Year 2: Refine Measures
- Connect, celebrate, and refine the work of the first year
- Follow a continuous improvement cycle of refining assessment measures and processes
- Convene a third Campus & Community Civic Health Initiative Summit at June 5-7, 2014 ADP/TDC national meeting in Louisville open to all ADP/TDC participants.
- Make online repository of campus civic health tools publically available.

Key Partner Organizations

Convening Partner:
- National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC)

Partner Organizations:
- CIRCLE: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement
- Lyon Software
- The Democracy Commitment