

Democratic Civic Engagement: session notes

Has the “movement” stalled? Where is the energy on campus?

What is the purpose of higher education – to what end? For individual gain and career development.

Service learning moved from a “civic” purpose to pedagogy.

College and universities haven’t encouraged civic learning that is really political learning.

Students don’t agree that they are a-political. They have different issues: genocide, climate, and poverty.

Russell Dalton, the Good Citizen.

A generational problem. Activists are on line.

What do you want us to do?

Lower the tuition enough so that students don’t have to work all the time, so they have the time to engage.

Help students identify their needs, to work with them to find ways to make change happen.

Are our institutions educating students to be participants in a democracy – core concepts of reciprocity, the role of expert knowledge, the democratic sharing of task sharing and lay participation. What does this mean in terms of our institutional environment.

“Investigating intellectual communities.” Research to colleges to find the features of a robust intellectual learning community. The end result wasn’t a paper, it was presentations to the relevant authority. Faculty allowed class time to be used to analyze and challenge what was happening on campus.

Ethics. Maybe ethics is a matter of seeing or not seeing something as inhumane. The structures at universities prevent us from seeing what is happening. How can universities help us see better? Smart professionals get out into the real world. Disciplinary knowledge is too limiting.

The university needs to BE an environment that encourages that kind of activity.

German university model is the problem. But there is also public anthropology, criminology, etc.

HE is designed to perpetuate the status quo. It doesn’t change its purpose because that isn’t what is desired as an outcome.

Students as effective leaders in communities.

New jobs, green jobs, public good jobs, are the outcomes of career development.

Paul Hawkin: the bottom up movement in response to poverty, lean toward hope itself.

How would I know it if I see it – if I want my higher education to espouse and practice civic engagement, how would I know it?

Why don't we know what "causes" interest students?

Reciprocity applies to student –university relationships too.

Denmark: all commuter colleges, all free, students paid, students help with the governance, no attention to their public life: they are on their own, and they do just fine.

Students get engaged because it's part of the game. They are there to get jobs. This is a legitimate mission of the academy.

The values aren't competing. We want both (individualism, community).

I have real doubts as to whether boards of trustees and state legislatures want real democracy. They liked service because it's more passive. They don't want students to have agency. It's about funding, power.

What would this look like?

More experiments

More freedom

Fewer workshops

Lots of space for faculty to reach out and bring the public into the university

There's a struggle between formal and informal, resist systems, coordinated systems and rubrics

Change the process for effectuating change: e.g., faculty senates need to the activists, but they aren't.

Community-based ownership of campuses (as communities). Too often, there are many little fiefdoms on campuses that are tackling the same problems, and they don't even know about each other.

Use deliberative democracy as a way to practice campuses as communities, as a way to make change and decisions.

As a citizen, my interest is that you produce students who can "do" this work, who can participate in community planning, change, etc.

We need enabling structures. Offices need to have more access to models and strategies. They don't know how to do that, and they don't have time to explore other ways. So they default to what they always do. They need bridges to create those spaces.

Measuring engagement: you have to take into account issues that students of color face. Their engagement is with each other, because they are struggling to survive in a community that is not welcoming.

If you ask students about the economic crisis, they'll help solve it.

Campuses are gardens, you need to design the spaces