

Reporter: Peggy Shaffer

Core conference themes:

1. How do we move from diffuse democratic experiments to more just, comprehensive, democratic systems?

Create culture change by infusing democratic principles across the institution—connecting to mission statements of public and private institutions, integrating multiple disciplines and departments, engaging students, community, staff, faculty, and administrators, embedding engagement experiences in operating budgets, embracing democratic pedagogies, and dialogic problem solving.

2. How do we educate and prepare citizens to be more effective participants in a just and deliberative democracy?

Embed the following capacities in curricular and co-curricular experiences across the institution:

- Conflict “management” skills
 - Listening skills—listening across difference
 - Naming and framing skills
 - Amplify and make space for difference where it feel or is suppressed
 - Ability to build a structure of some type for people to link together in order to create change
 - Helping people see and enact action that leads to change. Gives/constructs agency
 - Ability to put things into larger perspective; thinking short and long term about your goal struggle
 - Ability to help people envision what’s possible and achievable
 - Ability to plan, convene, and execute a productive public event
 - Ability to think beyond an “individualists” and positional leadership model—individual voice matters, but as part of larger network, group, or public
 - Ability to collaborate
 - Ability to find/build common ground esp. around divisive issues
- **What innovations, ideas, opportunities, and/or action steps** received the most support among your group?
- Fully involving students in all aspects of engagement—having students involved as equal partners at the table in conferences, in teaching, in governance structures, in course development, publishing, etc.

The following ideas and actions steps were also discussed and embraced:

- Involve students in orientation and reflection about community work
- Get students more centrally involved in these kinds of conversations—e.g. Bentley college conference—Students as Colleagues
- Book resource—Gibson/Longo volume New Public Leadership
- More faculty partnering with students
- Students more fully integrated into governance
- Post questions on No Better Time Wiki blog
- Put more emphasis on students publishing their experiences

- Students involved in curriculum development—LsSalle (Philadelphia) “Leadership and Global Understanding” minor
 - Democratic pedagogical practices
 - New democratic models of teaching and learning conversation needs to be connected with conversation about student democratic leadership which needs to be connected with executive leadership models at most institutions—how do we connect these conversations and reconcile the discrepancies
 - Nick Longo—example of mapping leadership across campus
 - Undergraduate research conference
 - Virginia Tech—“Engagement Academy”
 - Student leaders weekend retreat—moving students beyond practices that reinforce the status quo
 - Utilize and build on what students know and what they have done—include this in the knowledge and experience we value in higher ed world
 - Bring as many departments and units in the institution into the engagement process as possible
- In the probes (suggestions, not mandatory questions), we ask about **language, assessment, and technology**. Please share with us anything regarding these topics that resonated with your group.

Our group addressed the implicit tension in the notion of democratic leadership—we came up with the following terms to clarify what we meant by democratic leadership:

- Need to ask first what we value and what we expect?
 - Groups must define the concept of democracy together
 - Can/should? be grounded in the work of an educational institution
 - Dialogue inclusive of all, dialogue shaped by all
 - Representing a constituency well
 - Serving others
 - Respecting others
 - Where one gains everyone gains
 - Being able to think beyond the self
 - Facilitator of dialogue
 - Distinguishing between positional authority vs democratic leadership
 - Participating in a process
 - Embracing change in institutions—seeing roles differently
 - Understanding generational differences, strengths and challenges
 - Looking beyond labels but understanding them (thinks more comprehensively)
 - Leading with “hands behind back”
 - Standing in front, behind, beside
 - A “process” thing—movement model of charismatic leader vs. diversity of individuals coming together to created shared vision
 - Also an outcome thing—democratic outcomes that make like better for citizens
- In the probes, we ask about **justice, equity, and freedom**. Please share with us anything regarding these values that resonated with your group.
- Our group did not address this topic specifically; however we did talk about what capacities were necessary for democratic leadership, which touches on all three of the

listed concepts. We identified the following capacities necessary for democratic leadership:

- Conflict “management”
 - Listening skills—listening across difference
 - Naming and framing skills
 - Amplify and make space for difference where it feel or is suppressed
 - Ability to build a structure of some type for people to link together in order to create change
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 - Ability to collaborate
 - Ability to find/build common ground esp. around divisive issues
- Were there **people** in your group who were interested in working on these ideas? (If so, please be specific about who and the plans being hatched.)

No specific plans were hatched, but John Saltmarsh raised the issue of connecting and reconciling the various conversations about democratic leadership, democratic models of teaching and learning, and executive leadership models at higher education institutions. Edward Zlotkowski called for better and more equitable student partnerships—students as colleagues at conferences, student publications, and recognizing and utilizing the skills, knowledge, and experiences that students bring to the table. Kathleen Knight Abowitz and Peggy Shaffer talked about putting some of these questions on the No Better Time Wiki to extend the conversation and gather resources.

- Based on the discussion, what do you think should be the **top priorities** for educators and practitioners?
 1. We need to better include students as equal partners
 2. We need to reconcile the contradictions and tensions between promoting democratic leadership and institutionalizing deliberative democracy practices within the curriculum with the hierarchical corporate structures that define the bureaucratic structures of higher education and the hierarchical professional structures that define academic disciplines.
- Additional comments:

Innovative programs/best practices mentioned during the session:

- Intergroup Dialogues –UMass Amherst and other institutions

- Center for Student Engagement and Community partnerships Virginia Tech
- “Citizen Scholar” designation Virginia Tech
- Defining student citizenship
- Impact Program—U Mass Amherst
- Community and all university involvement in building a vision and commitment and part of permanent governances
- Acting Locally—Miami University--Sequences Curriculum
- Promoting cultural shift among faculty and administrators to embrace this kind of leadership education
- Students as peer educators and leaders along side faculty and community leaders
- Programs which encourage long-term sustainability of the work, to hand on to the next group of students and changing of leadership mid year
- Self examination an important part of leadership work
- Helping students learn about place and local communities—leadership takes place in context
- Ithaca College Community partnership and environmental sustainability—Mike Smith—teaching students to deal with the realities of transience and community engagement
- Preparation and sequencing of community based learning and leadership