



OUR MISSION

To strengthen public life and advance deliberative democracy in and through higher education.

WHO WE ARE

In June 2007, a small group of diverse faculty, campus leaders, and civic leaders gathered at the University of New Hampshire to discuss the role of higher education in American democracy. We were encouraged by promising societal developments in community dialogue, deliberation, conflict management, and collaborative governance. We agreed that these practices can address citizen polarization and ideological division, as well as disengagement from and cynicism about American social and political systems. We explored their promise for addressing persistent race and class-based inequities. We expressed concern about civic illiteracy, and identified a need for a more informed and vigilant citizenry, one that is attentive to both democratic ideals of justice and equity and to post 9/11 policies affecting security, civil liberties, and freedom. We acknowledged that this work is inherently political, and that we will advocate for high standards of ethical, effective public participation. We agreed to approach this work from an interdisciplinary perspective, across curricular and co-curricular activities.

We believe that colleges and universities can do more to teach about and for democracy. We are committed to serving, collectively, as a resource and advocate for colleges and universities embracing this challenge. We welcome new members, and membership is free.

WHAT WE EMPHASIZE

Understanding Democracy

- * Democratic ideals, particularly freedom, justice, and equity
- * History and philosophy of American democracy
- * Political and social theory and practice
- * Social, political, and economic justice
- * Global interdependence and international problem solving

Practicing Democracy

- * Inclusive dialogue
- * Public reasoning and deliberation
- * Conflict management and problem solving in a public context
- * Democratic leadership and collaborative decision and policy making
- * Social and political efficacy

Modeling Democracy

- * Institutional decision making, democratic leadership, and shared governance
- * Integrative curricular and community partnerships
- * Minding the gap between institutional mission and action



HOW DO WE USE THE TERM ‘DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY’?

The Democracy Imperative (TDI) envisions democracy as a form of government that is of, by, and for the people *and* as a set of principles and practices that guide how people interact and work together everyday to improve society. In a strong and effective democracy, citizens employ the *arts of democracy*—inclusive dialogue, informed reasoning, shared governance, conflict transformation, and collaborative policy and decision-making—according to core democratic principles of justice, equity, and freedom.

The deliberative democracy movement is a confluence of renewed efforts to engage citizens in public life and ongoing efforts to make our social and political systems inclusive, fair, and accessible. A deliberative democracy has certain characteristics: an educated and informed citizenry, just and equitable processes, and vigorous participation of ordinary citizens in community life and political and social policy making at all levels. Citizens study issues and discuss and critique laws and public policies. Dissent is not only welcome, it evidences citizen involvement and is understood as an act of patriotism.

Policy makers are responsive to ideas generated through public reasoning and deliberation. People see their will reflected in policy solutions. Citizens work together across different ideologies and perspectives to build their communities to achieve shared ideals. Citizens understand both the foundational principles and practices of democracy and their role in protecting those principles and practices. This is *deliberative democracy*.

WHAT WE DO & HOW WE CAN HELP

We are a **network**. Our members share an interest in education for a more deliberative democracy and work together to share ideas; steward and distribute knowledge; develop, validate, and disseminate practices; and encourage innovation. Members contribute resources. They facilitate smaller communities of practice and help with TDI projects. They host regional gatherings and get together at TDI-sponsored sessions at national conferences. Members play an active role in reaching out to others to be part of this national movement.

We are a **resource** to individuals and institutions. Our web site contains discussion materials, a course syllabi repository, links to other national organizations in higher education *and* in democracy building, recommended readings, Constitution Day materials, announcements, and more. We also sponsor regional gatherings, workshops, sessions at national conferences, projects, and Webinars. We can connect individuals and institutions with others doing related work.

We are **advocates** for change in higher education. Our *Statement of Principles and Practices* and *Catalyst Papers* can be used to frame campus conversations. Our members are available to work with faculty, administrators, and community partners.

We provide tailored support to colleges and universities. Contact TDI to arrange for assistance with designing new programs, creating space for democratic dialogue and deliberation, managing conflict, faculty or staff development, and promoting democratic leadership and decision making on campus.