A CRUCIBLE MOMENT: COLLEGE LEARNING AND DEMOCRACY'S FUTURE

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Association of American Colleges and Universities

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“DEMOCRACY NEEDS TO BE BORN ANEW EVERY GENERATION, AND EDUCATION IS THE MIDWIFE.”

John Dewey

"WE BELIEVE THAT ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY IS IMPORTANT BUT MUST NOT BE CONFUSED WITH CIVIC HEALTH."

A Nation of Spectators, 1998

COMPETING NATIONAL NARRATIVES

- In a diverse democracy, higher education must embrace a civic mission to educate students to become informed, engaged responsible citizens locally, nationally, and globally.

- In the competitive global market, higher education needs to contribute the nation's economic productivity and prepare students for the workforce.

TROUBLING SIGNS IN US DEMOCRACY

- Resurgent nativism and anti-immigrant attitudes and policies
- Reconfiguring race and racial categories even in the midst of intensified racial segregation
- Inflammatory, vitriolic public discourse with little regard for accuracy or facts
- Dysfunctional state and federal legislatures.
- Assault on public employees, governmental solutions, and collective responsibilities.

INDICATORS OF ANEMIC CIVIC HEALTH IN US

- U.S. ranked 139th in voter participation of 172 world democracies in 2007.
- College seniors surveyed in 2006-07 averaged just over 50% in a civic literacy exam.
- Just over 1/3 of college faculty surveyed strongly agreed their campus actively promotes awareness of US or global social, political, and economic issues.
- Just over 1/3 of students surveyed strongly agreed that faculty publicly advocate the need for students to become active and involved citizens.

ONE LAST INDICATOR FOR HIGHER EDUCATION TO PONDER

- Only one-third of college students surveyed strongly agreed that their college education resulted in increased civic capacities.
  - Civic *awareness* expanded
  - *Skills* learned to effectively change society for the better
  - *Commitment* grew to improve society

TROUBLING SIGNS IN OUR ECONOMY

- 32 States Project Shortage of Degreed Workforce

- Overall labor shortage of 21 million anticipated in 2020
  - Health Care
  - Engineers
  - Energy
  - Transportation
  - Manufacturing
  - Technology
  - Teachers
  - Accountants
  - Government
  - Geospatial

Department of Labor

Robert J. Jones, April 18-20, 2012

WASC Presentation

MORE TROUBLING ECONOMIC SIGNS

- U.S. College Attendance
  - Was 1st in the world but is now down to 14th

- U.S. Share of 25-34 year olds with a BA degree
  - Was 1st in the world and is now #14 and projected to fall to #18

OECD
Robert T. Jones, WASC

AGAINST TIDE OF SINKING EDUCATIONAL RANKING, REASONS FOR CONCERN

- Breadth, depth, and application of skills are EXPANDING
- Breadth and level of academic and technical preparation is INCREASING
- Of 46.8 million new and replacement jobs in 2010, 34% required some college
- Higher education is no longer the preferred pathway to middle-class jobs, it is increasingly the only way

A NATIONAL CALL TO ACTION

A CRUCIBLE MOMENT

College Learning & Democracy's Future

The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

THE ORIGIN AND AUTHORS OF THE REPORT: *THE PEOPLE'S DOCUMENT*

- The Department of Education led by the Under Secretary Martha Kanter
- The contract to GPI, Inc working with the Association of American Colleges and Universities
- A National Task Force overseeing the project
- A series of five national roundtables with 140 people from a wide range of constituent groups inside and outside of higher education.
- Several open sessions at a number of national and regional conferences
- A commissioned paper on what we know from research on the impact of civic learning and democratic engagement on student learning and development.

For Democracy's Future: Five Essential Actions

From The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement

1. **Reclaim and reinvest in the fundamental civic and democratic mission** of schools and of all sectors within higher education.

2. **Enlarge the current national narrative that erases civic aims and civic literacy** as educational priorities contributing to social, intellectual, and economic capital.

3. **Advance a contemporary, comprehensive framework for civic learning—embracing US and global interdependence—** that includes historic and modern understandings of democratic values, capacities to engage diverse perspectives and people, and commitment to collective civic problem solving.

4. **Capitalize upon the interdependent responsibilities of K–12 and higher education** to foster progressively higher levels of civic knowledge, skills, examined values, and action as expectations for every student.

5. **Expand the number of robust, generative civic partnerships and alliances, locally, nationally, and globally** to address common problems, empower people to act, strengthen communities and nations, and generate new frontiers of knowledge.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Foster a CIVIC ETHOS across all parts of the campus and educational culture.
2. Make CIVIC LITERACY a core expectation for all students.
3. Practice CIVIC INQUIRY across all fields of study.
4. Advance CIVIC ACTION through transformative partnerships, at home and abroad.

FALSE CHOICE: CAREERS OR CITIZENSHIP

- Narrow, instrumental alignment of workforce jobs with college courses and majors is short-sighted and prepares students for the 19th century not the 21st.
- Every year more than 1/3 of the entire US labor force changes jobs
- Every year, 30 million Americans are working in jobs that did not exist in the previous quarter

PRACTICAL, WISE CHOICE: CAREERS AND CITIZENSHIP

- "In addition to the obvious labor-force needs, having more Americans with higher levels of postsecondary achievement is vital to our civic health. The heart of a vibrant democracy is educated, engaged citizens."

  Charles Kolb, The Committee on Economic Development

- "A failing grade in history suggests that students are not only failing to comprehend our nation's story and that of our world but also failing o develop skills that are crucial to employment across sectors."

  Norman Augustine, former Lockheed Martin CEO

EMPLOYERS ARE RAISING THE BAR

- **91% of employers** say that they are "asking employees to **take on more responsibilities** and to **use a broader set of skills** than in the past"
- **90% of employers** say that their "employees are **expected to work harder to coordinate with other departments** than in the past."
- **88% of employers** say that "the **challenges their employees face are more complex** than they were in the past."
- **88% of employers** agree that "to succeed in their companies, employees **need higher levels of learning and knowledge** than they did in the past."

AAC&U and Hart Research Associates

EMPLOYERS' TOP PRIORITIES FOR STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN COLLEGE

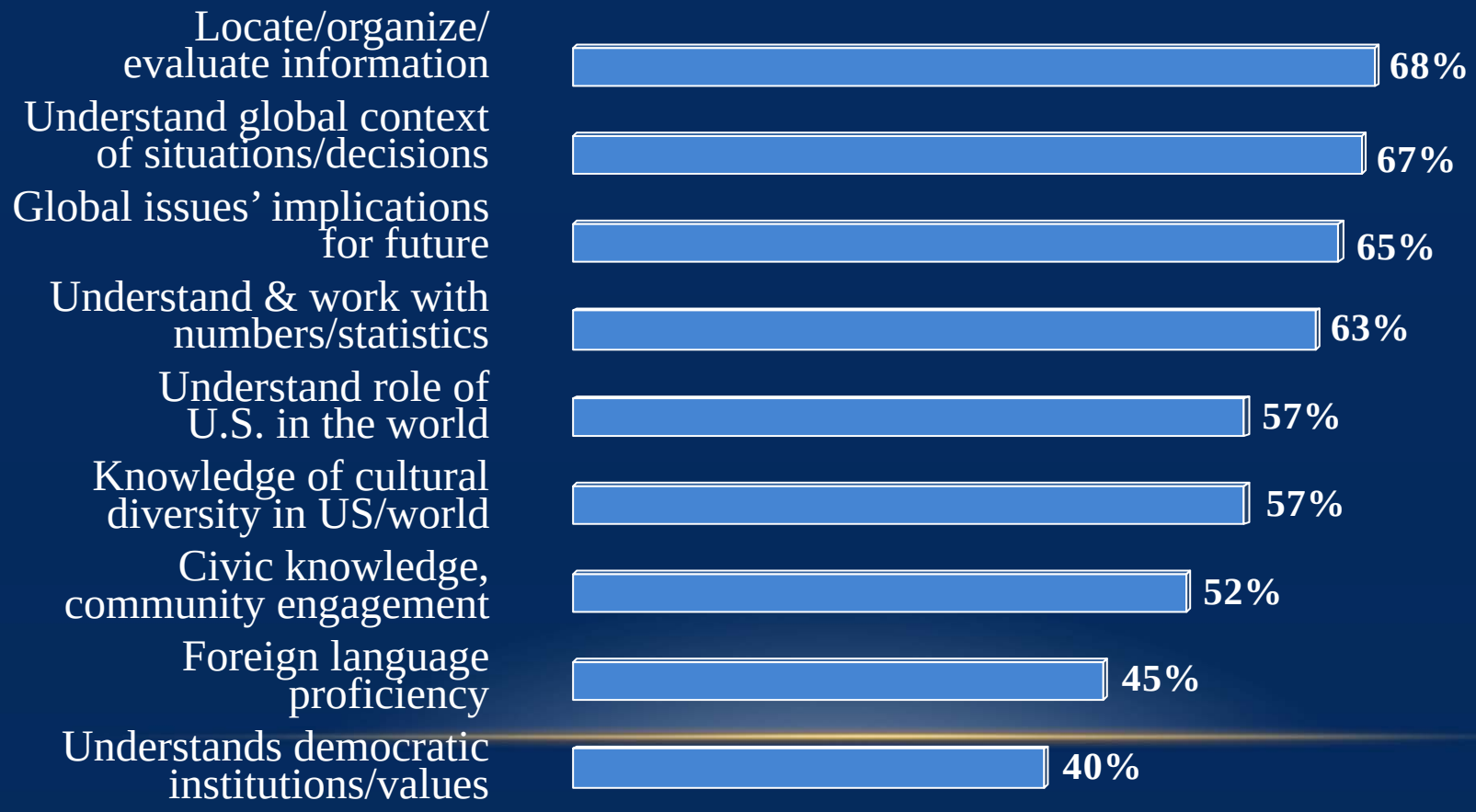
% saying two- and four-year colleges should place MORE emphasis on helping students develop these skills, qualities, capabilities, knowledge



Source: *Raising the Bar* (AAC&U, 2010)

OTHER AREAS OF LEARNING NEEDING INCREASED EMPHASIS

% saying two- and four-year colleges should place MORE emphasis on helping students develop these skills, qualities, capabilities, knowledge



Source: *Raising the Bar* (AAC&U, 2010)

Employers Advise on Where to Focus Assessment Resources

One/Two Practices to Which Colleges Should Devote Resources



Internships/Community Based Learning

Faculty evaluated internships or community based learning experiences



Individual Student Essay Tests

Essay tests that measure students' problem-solving, writing, and analytical-thinking skills



Electronic portfolios

Electronic portfolios of students' work, including examples of accomplishments in key skill areas and faculty assessments of them



Senior Projects

Faculty-evaluated comprehensive senior projects demonstrating students' depth of skill in major & advanced problem-solving, writing, and analytic-reasoning skills



Institutionally Scored Essay Tests

Tests that show how a college compares to others in advancing students' critical-thinking skills



Multiple-Choice Tests

Multiple-choice test of general content knowledge

Source: *How Should Colleges Assess and Improve Student Learning?* AAC&U/Peter D. Hart Research, 2008

BUSINESSES' CIVIC COMMITMENTS

- Global Reporting Initiative

  700 companies produce corporate social responsibility reports including environment health, human rights, fair labor practices, product responsibility, and community engagement

- Earthkeepers philosophy

  Timberland Company guides product development, social and environmental performance in the supply chain, energy use, and community engagement.

- UN Millennium Development Goals and UN Global Compact

  Siemans AG organizes corporate citizenship activities in support of these two initiatives

ENLARGE ANOTHER NATIONAL NARRATIVE: COMPLETION *AND* CITIZENSHIP

- Correlation between service learning and college completion
  - academic engagement
  - deepening connections with faculty
  - higher grade point
  - higher retention
  - more likely to complete degrees
  - career clarification

FIGURE 1: A Framework for Twenty-First-Century Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement

Knowledge

- Familiarity with key democratic texts and universal democratic principles, and with selected debates—in US and other societies—concerning their applications
- Historical and sociological understanding of several democratic movements, both US and abroad
- Understanding one's sources of identity and their influence on civic values, assumptions, and responsibilities to a wider public
- Knowledge of the diverse cultures, histories, values, and contestations that have shaped US and other world societies
- Exposure to multiple religious traditions and to alternative views about the relation between religion and government
- Knowledge of the political systems that frame constitutional democracies and of political levers for influencing change

Skills

- Critical inquiry, analysis, and reasoning
- Quantitative reasoning
- Gathering and evaluating multiple sources of evidence
- Seeking, engaging, and being informed by multiple perspectives
- Written, oral, and multi-media communication
- Deliberation and bridge building across differences
- Collaborative decision making
- Ability to communicate in multiple languages

Values

- Respect for freedom and human dignity
- Empathy
- Open-mindedness
- Tolerance
- Justice
- Equality
- Ethical integrity
- Responsibility to a larger good

Collective Action

- Integration of knowledge, skills, and examined values to inform actions taken in concert with other people
- Moral discernment and behavior
- Navigation of political systems and processes, both formal and informal
- Public problem solving with diverse partners
- Compromise, civility, and mutual respect

CONTEMPORARY, COMPREHENSIVE DEFINITION OF CIVIC LEARNING

- Contestation and debates about principles
- Diversity past, present, and future
- Navigating multiple perspectives
- Our world, not just my rights
- Interdependence globally and locally
- New modes of collective action

TRENDS THAT HAVE TURNED CAMPUS LIFE INTO A PUBLIC COMMONS

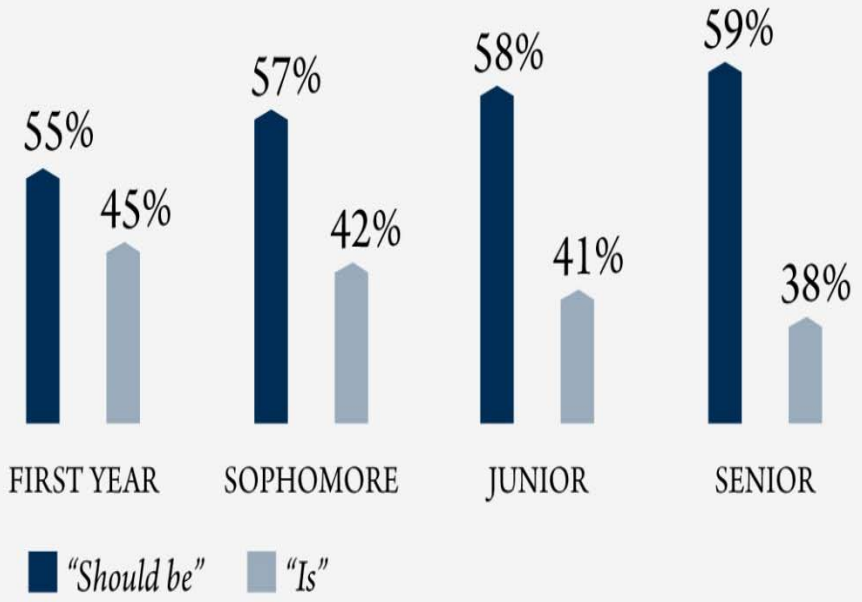
- From monocultural space to multicultural space
- From access for the very few to access for the majority
- From club med to resolve it yourselves
- From *talking about* democracy to *doing* democracy
- From reaching out to the community to being part of the community
- From being sequestered from the globe to bringing global issues onto campus

STUDENTS ARE URGING HIGHER EDUCATION TO EMBRACE CIVIC LEARNING

FIGURE: Student Views on the Importance of Contributing to the Larger Community

Percentages of students who strongly agree that contributing to community "should be" a major focus of college and "is" a major focus of college, by year in school.

Source: Data from Dey et al. (2009).



EDUCATING FOR RESPONSIBLE, INFORMED CITIZENSHIP IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Moving from partial to pervasive depends on it

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

STUDENT AFFAIRS AND EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Education for "associated living" is in the DNA of student affairs
- Key values necessary in a diverse democracy need to be cultivated during out of class time as well as in class time
- Key skills needed for a 21st century citizenship are embedded in co-curricular experiences
- Practice in collective action is routine in much student affairs programming
- Without student affairs involvement, advancing civic learning and democratic engagement will be hampered.

Frequently Confused Terms

LIBERAL EDUCATION: A philosophy of education that empowers individuals, liberates the mind, cultivate intellectual judgment, and fosters ethical and social responsibility.

LIBERAL ARTS: Specific disciplines (humanities, arts, social sciences, and sciences).

LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES: A particular institutional type-usually small, residential-with close interaction between faculty and students, strong focus on liberal arts disciplines.

MARTHA NUSSBAUM AND THE PARTICULAR ROLE OF THE HUMANITIES

- "…democratic politics involves making decisions that affect other people and groups. We can only do this well if we try to imagine what their lives are like and how changes of various sorts affect them. *The imagination is an innate gift, but it needs refinement and cultivation; this is what the humanities provide*" (italics added, 2010a).

THE GOOD NEWS: THE FOUNDATION HAS ALREADY BEEN PARTIALLY LAID

- The Bad News: It is
  - Random
  - Largely uncharted
  - Lacking signage
  - Without sufficient progression over time
  - Optional
  - Available to only some students

THE FOUNDATION HAS ALREADY BEEN PARTIALLY LAID

Curricular civic pathways

- Making civic literacy a core expectation for all students in general education programs

- Integrating civic inquiry into a central field of study

OTHER FOUNDATIONS TO BUILD UPON

Powerful civic pedagogies

- Intergroup and deliberative dialogue
- Service Learning and Volunteer Service
- Collective civic problem solving

STILL MORE FOUNDATIONS LAID IN NEW WINGS

Advancing Collaborative, Generative Civic Partnerships and Alliances

- Beyond traditional campus boundaries, in local and global contexts, sustained and generative where transformation of knowledge, students, and communities occur

THE CHALLENGE OF THE NEXT DECADES OF CIVIC LEARNING

- From elective to expected
- From one time to progressive learning over time
- From individually oriented civic action to collaboratively oriented action
- From some departments, divisions, and people to everyone all over campus
- From parallel practices and programs to integrated ones

FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM

"What the people want is very simple. They want an America as good as its promise."

Barbara Jordon

Together we can make it so.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT

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To download or order *A Crucible Moment,* see:

http://www.aacu.org/civic_learning/crucible/index.cfm