

Civic Institutional Matrix: Assessing Assets and Gaps in a Civic-Minded Institution

Overview

This *Civic Institutional Matrix* is designed to help you map your institution's overall commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement, on and off campus, whether locally or globally situated. We invite campus leaders to form a team of key stakeholders to complete the matrix together on behalf of their institutions. We recommend identifying stakeholders who are diverse both positionally within the institution and in terms of perspectives and backgrounds. Overall, the group's sphere of influence should be broad, reaching across the curriculum, co-curriculum, and beyond the campus borders, and should meaningfully involve students and community partners. As you work together to fill in the matrix, think of yourselves as your institution's cartographers, mapping how your institution evidences its core values related to civic learning and democratic engagement.

MATRIX ELEMENTS

The matrix included here consists of a 4 x 6 grid reflecting essential dimensions of a civic-minded institution and key domains of institutional functioning and culture.

Horizontal Axis: Your Dimensions of a Civic-Minded Institution

As team members fill in the matrix, we invite you to review the descriptions of the four dimensions of a civic-minded institution on page 5—civic ethos, civic literacy, civic inquiry, and civic action—and to expand upon and refine these descriptions. As a group, you may also want to identify other important dimensions that are pertinent for your institution.

Vertical Axis: Domains of Institutional functioning and Culture

The matrix identifies six domains. You might find it more strategic and relevant to formulate other domains such as scholarly activities, evaluation and assessment, or policies and procedures. Mapping civic learning and democratic engagement across these domains should help you determine where your institution has assets and gaps.

Rating Box: The Degree of Pervasiveness of Campus Efforts

The matrix asks you to consider two mutually reinforcing aspects of institutional pervasiveness—breadth and depth. Breadth describes the degree to which efforts are present and connected throughout the institution. Depth captures the degree to which efforts are embedded vs. superficial. Significant breadth and depth would be demonstrated by effective, sustainable, and comprehensive institutionalization of programs, policies, and procedures that support civic learning and democratic engagement.

COMPLETING THE MATRIX

As a group, map your institution's commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement. Use sources of knowledge readily available: the experience of team members, information in catalogues and on your institution's website, existing institutional data, etc. Use the space in the boxes provided to summarize and highlight programs, policies, and initiatives that fall into specific **domains of institutional functioning and culture and dimensions of civic learning and democratic engagement** (e.g., major-specific capstone courses that raise civic questions related to the discipline would be listed under the domain of majors and under Dimension 3: Civic Inquiry). The rating boxes allow you to indicate the degree of pervasiveness for each domain across the four dimensions. Use the following scale to fill in these boxes:

Low (L) = little breadth and depth (i.e., isolated and surface-level efforts to implement civic learning and democratic engagement); **Medium (M)** = some breadth and/or some depth, and **High (H)** = strong breadth and strong depth (i.e., integrated and embedded efforts to foster civic learning and democratic engagement).

ASSET-GAP ANALYSIS (SEPARATE FROM THIS FORM)

When your matrix is completed, examine both the assets (patterns of clearly established programs and policies) and the gaps (areas where civic learning and democratic engagement are missing).

As a group, ask yourselves what made your assets possible. What caused gaps to occur? From there, begin to develop an action plan to build on your assets and close your gaps. You may find it helpful to consult the Civic Investment Plan Template and questions in [*A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*, pp. 81-82.](#)

Institutional Matrix: Assessing Assets and Gaps in a Civic-Minded Institution

Use this matrix to summarize the scope of your institution’s efforts to educate for civic learning and democratic engagement

Dimensions of a Civic-Minded Institution

Domains of Institutional Functioning and Culture	Degree of pervasiveness Indicate “L” (Low), “M” (Medium), or “H” (High)	DIMENSION 1: Civic Ethos	DIMENSION 2: Civic Literacy	DIMENSION 3: Civic Inquiry	DIMENSION 4: Civic Action
	Mission, Leadership, & Advocacy				
	General Education				
	Majors				
	Student & Campus Life				
	Community Affiliations				
	Reward Structures				

This matrix was inspired by the institutionalization rubric found in *Making a Real Difference with Diversity: A Guide to Institutional Change* (Clayton-Pederson et al. 2007) and more fully developed by Caryn McTighe Musil and colleagues through the AAC&U initiative: Core Commitments, Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility. See p. 5 for definitions of the recommended dimensions of a civic-minded institution.

Civic Investment Plan Template for Organizations and Groups

This is an invitation to take part in a larger national effort to elevate Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement as an animating priority for the nation and an expected part of every college student's academic and campus life experience. This template is designed for organizations and groups that are not colleges or universities. To consider these questions, please visit the Shared Commitment Statement at www.CollegeCivicLearning.org

Potential actions

- What actions in the Shared Commitment Statement might your organization or group claim as its own and work to implement the coming year?
What collaborations with higher education institutions or other stakeholders have to be established to accomplish that? For example, if you represent a Student Success and/or Equity organization, how might you work with your members to connect students' civic learning with student success initiatives? See Taking Action on www.CollegeCivicLearning.org for examples of institutions that are integrating their student success, equity/inclusion and civic learning initiatives.
- What two ways might you publicize this commitment as you take action?
- What is already in place as a signature civic program of yours that would be strengthened by the engagement of a college or university in your vicinity? How might you initiate that potential reciprocal collaboration?
- What two practices or programs might your organization or group initiate in partnership with a college or university in your area to strengthen some aspect of their civic work?
- What two high-profile events might be instituted in the coming that would underscore the importance of reversing the policy leaders' inattention to postsecondary civic learning, especially for students from underserved communities?
- In scanning the range of potential stakeholders needed to strengthen democracy and civic responsibility what other external stakeholders might you reach out to? In order to accomplish what desired goals?

What Would a Civic-Minded Campus Look Like?

These dimensions of a civic-minded campus were published in *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*, p. 15.

Those using the matrix are invited to adapt them to your own institutional mission, context, and students.

CIVIC ETHOS governing campus life

The infusion of democratic values into the customs and habits of everyday practices, structures, and interactions; the defining character of the institution and those in it that emphasizes open-mindedness, civility, the worth of each person, ethical behaviors, and concern for the well-being of others, a spirit of public-mindedness that influences the goals of the institution and its engagement with local and global communities.

CIVIC LITERACY as a goal for every student

The cultivation of foundational knowledge about fundamental principles and debates about democracy expressed over time, both within the United States and in other countries; familiarity with several key historical struggles, campaigns, and social movements undertaken to achieve the full promise of democracy; the ability to think critically about complex issues and to seek and evaluate information about issues that have public consequences.

CIVIC INQUIRY integrated within the majors and general education

The practice of inquiring about the civic dimensions and public consequences of a subject of study; the exploration of the impact of choices on different constituencies and entities, including the planet; the deliberate consideration of differing points of views; the ability to describe and analyze civic intellectual debates within one's major or areas of study.

CIVIC ACTION as lifelong practice

The capacity and commitment both to participate constructively with diverse others and to work collectively to address common problems; the practice of working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people's lives and the sustainability of the planet; the ability to analyze systems in order to plan and engage in public action; the moral and political courage to take risks to achieve a greater public good.