

Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement (CLDE) For All Postsecondary Students

A New Coalition to Advance Equity-Committed Civic Learning in College
www.collegeciviclearning.org

Founders and Leaders: American Association of Colleges and Universities, Complete College America, College Promise, and State Higher Education Officers Association (SHEEO).

With Support from **Sixty-Five Higher Education and Student Success Organizations**, including **state systems** (MA, MD, VA, UT) and **six institutional accreditors**. (See website for details.)

Context: A Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement (CLDE) movement has been spreading across the US since the 2012 publication of *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*. (See *A Crucible Moment*, and profiles of civic learning initiatives on website.)

Nonetheless: college-level civic learning remains **optional and deeply inequitable**. (Data point from research on Service Learning: **77 %** of community college students vs **40%** of four-year students **never took a single course with a community-based project**.) Meanwhile, US distrust in democracy has deepened while authoritarian movements gain ground worldwide. Democracy needs new talent.

Response: The CLDE Coalition to Engage All College Students with Democracy's Future and Build New Capacity to Tackle Democracy's Urgent Problems. To these ends, **CLDE Promotes:**

Quality and Equity: Build commitment and capacity—across postsecondary education—to make civic learning and democracy engagement an expected part of a quality college education for all college students, with **equitable participation by students from underserved communities** a top priority.

Democracy Engagement: Engage students with democracy's history and future in a diverse United States, in U.S. communities still struggling to reverse inherited disparities, and in a globally interdependent world where authoritarianism is on the rise.

Collaborative Problem-Solving: Prepare each postsecondary student, through creative combinations of general education, arts and sciences studies, and career-related studies, to **work directly on selected public problems** that society needs to solve—e.g., problems in racial healing, health, education, housing, climate, digital access, human rights, justice systems, interfaith cooperation, and more. **Work on public problems is linked to completion gains.**

Policy Commitment: Secure policy support and investment in the goals listed above.

Questions for Policy and Educational Leaders to Consider:

- See the Framework for College-level CLDE [overleaf](#). Find CLDE Examples where all students participate in civic inquiry at www.collegeciviclearning.org. How can you help with this work?
- Many educators now are making equity a priority. **CLDE calls for students themselves to work on significant public issues, including equity/inequity issues.** Can your equity and civic learning work be connected? What steps can you take to build those connections?
- Where is your institution or state system on College CLDE? Is preparing students to help shape democracy's future a current priority? If not, should it be? **What steps can you take to strengthen leadership commitment to what used to be a top goal for college learning?** (See *A Crucible Moment* on website for more details on that history.)

Framework for Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement in College

Knowledge	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity with key democratic texts and universal democratic principles, and with selected debates—in US and other societies—concerning their applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the diverse cultures, histories, values, and contestations that have shaped US and other world societies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical and sociological understanding of several democratic movements, both US and abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to multiple religious traditions and to alternative views about the relation between religion and government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding one's sources of identity and their influence on civic values, assumptions, and responsibilities to a wider public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the political systems that frame constitutional democracies and of political levers for influencing change
Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical inquiry, analysis, and reasoning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative reasoning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering and evaluating multiple sources of evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking, engaging, and being informed by multiple perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written, oral, and multi-media communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberation and bridge building across differences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to communicate in multiple languages
Values	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for freedom and human dignity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-mindedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical integrity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility to a larger good
Collective Action	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of knowledge, skills, and examined values to inform actions taken in concert with other people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigation of political systems and processes, both formal and informal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral discernment and behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compromise, civility, and mutual respect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public problem solving with diverse partners 	

Source: The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. 2012. *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities. Page 4. *A Crucible Moment* was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education and developed in concert with K-16 educators, civic organization leaders, and research scholars from all parts of the United States.

See also: Our Shared Commitment: Democracy Learning is a Top Priority for Postsecondary Education. www.collegeciviclearning.org. How might your organization discuss and engage this Shared Commitment?

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