

Best Practices for Promoting Student Civic Engagement: Lessons from the Citizen Scholars Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst

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Abstract

This article introduces the Citizen Scholars Program, a 2-year service-learning and leadership development program that integrates theory and practice to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and vision the authors believe they need in order to build community, be effective citizens, and advocate for social justice. The authors present 16 learning objectives, five methods used to assess the program, 17 program best practices, and four program challenges.

Introduction

In this article, we introduce a 2-year service-learning and leadership development program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass Amherst) called the Citizen Scholars Program, which integrates theory and practice to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and vision they need to build community, be effective citizens, and advocate for social justice.

History of the Citizen Scholars Program

Service-learning has a long history at UMass Amherst. Individual faculty members have integrated service into their courses since the 1960s; a campus-wide service-learning faculty fellows program has brought eight to 12 faculty members together each year since 1994 to design new service-learning courses. In 1998, two faculty members who each taught a service-learning course proposed linking their courses to form a program, so students who began exploring the complexity of social issues in the first course could continue working together through the second course. In 1999, the university's newly established Commonwealth Honors College agreed to sponsor the program, which was named the Citizen Scholars Program. The Corporation for National Service provided a substantial 3-year grant to support the program.

In its initial form, the program offered two courses (an introduction course and a capstone course), and required students to take three other elective service-learning courses. It brought the

students together for monthly dinners and discussions. As of 2011–2012, the Citizen Scholars Program includes the components listed below.

- Students complete five courses: Four sequential honors courses, and an elective course in social or political theory.
- Students complete a minimum of 60 hours of community service/activism per semester during the first year, and a minimum of 40 hours of service/activism per semester during the second year. During the first year, the service focus is on a community-based organization and ideally links closely to the capstone projects in public policy and community organizing during the second year.
- Students receive a financial grant of \$1,000 for each of their two years in the program.
- Students may apply for grants of up to \$2,000 for in-depth summer internships involving non-profit administration, public policy, or community organizing.
- Students complete course projects aimed at creating structural change in regard to social problems, developed in collaboration with community members.
- Students and staff participate together in events (e.g., fall and spring retreats, monthly evening gatherings, a spring recognition ceremony). These events aim to build a learning community focused on service-learning, activism, and social justice.

In 2002, the program was selected by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as one of 21 national models for promoting political engagement among students (*Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007*).

Program Learning Objectives

According to the program's mission statement, "The Citizen Scholars Program is a leadership development program that integrates theory and practice to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and vision they need to build community, be effective citizens, and advocate for social justice" (*Citizen Scholars Program, 2012*). Program faculty and staff members have worked with students to

translate this mission statement into a list of specific learning objectives in three categories: knowledge for democratic citizenship, skills of democratic citizenship, and vision for a more equitable society (see Appendix A).

Overview of the Program: Students and Incentives

Students apply to the program during the spring of their first or second year at the university. Up to 25 students are selected to begin the following fall. Typically, about 15 of those students complete the full program. Special efforts are made to recruit male students and students of color. Even so, around 70–80% of the participants are white female students. Because the program has been based in the Honors College, almost all of the students have been honors students. In fall 2012, the program was re-positioned as part of the university's Office of Civic Engagement and Service-Learning, and thus became available to all students; two-thirds of the cohort beginning in fall 2012 still came from the Honors College. A majority of the participants have done community service before, and seek a structure to support their service interests. A minority of the participants specifically seek the program's focus on social justice and social change.

In addition to the intrinsic benefits of the program, the Citizen Scholars Program has offered participants three further incentives: fulfillment of university requirements, funding for summer internships, and a structured learning community.

Assessing the Program

Four forms of assessment have contributed to our knowledge of the impact of the Citizen Scholars Program on student participants, and a fifth is under way (*Polin & Keene, 2010*). The program's assessment is ongoing and leads to purposeful changes in the program each year.

Assessment Method I: Exit Interviews

For most of the program's life, we have performed open-ended exit interviews with the student participants. The first interview question is "What was it like for you to be in the Citizen Scholars Program?" Follow-up questions ask for details, examples, and stories about specific elements of the program. The one-hour interviews are recorded, transcribed, and reviewed by program faculty and staff.

Assessment Method 2: Formal Studies

Several times, the program has been formally studied. Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, and Corngold (2007) included the program as one of 21 national exemplars of education for political engagement. Tania Mitchell (2005) and Mary Hannah Henderson (2012) based dissertation studies at least in part on the program. Two more dissertation studies are in progress.

Assessment Method 3: Archival Data

The program leaders systematically collect course materials that offer a wealth of data. These data include student participants' program application essays, final directed reflections from each course, capstone projects, the transcribed exit interviews, and autobiographies, which the participants write at least three times during their program experience. The autobiographies include a political autobiography (see Mitchell, Visconti, Keene, & Battistoni, 2011), a spiritual autobiography, and a motivational story of self (Ganz, n.d.).

Assessment Method 4: Program Staff Reflection

In addition to time spent with the student participants, the program's faculty participants and staff engage in structured reflection on the program. During the academic year, weekly faculty/staff meetings (supplemented by individual conversations and e-mails) consider every aspect of the program—the curriculum, the service, the progress of students as individuals. If a student is in difficulty, the whole staff contributes to a discussion of how best to support the student through the experience. The faculty and staff also take a day at the end of each semester for a retreat to assess the successes and challenges of the semester, and to plan for changes intended to address those challenges.

Assessment Method 5: Inter-Institutional Study

The program co-directors are partnering with colleagues from Stanford University and Providence College on a study of alumni from the cohort-based, multi-term civic education programs of the three institutions. This mixed-methods study (Battistoni, Keene, Mitchell, Reiff, & Visconti, 2010) was launched by interviewing 10 randomly selected alumni from each program who are 5 years or more past graduation.

Findings

Our efforts in continuous assessment have shown that over the last 14 years we have become increasingly successful in fulfilling the program's 16 learning objectives. Many Citizen Scholars Program students have a transformational experience, one that indeed leaves them with the knowledge, skills, and vision to set them on the path of working for a just society. Below, we present some of the program's successes, and "best practices" that we believe account for these successes.

Program Successes

Nearly all students completing the program demonstrate a developed sense of empowerment. Citizen Scholars "find their voices," and become confident and competent in using them. They discover their own agency and practice using it in their service, in their capstone projects, and in their lives outside the program. Students grow increasingly comfortable working with communities that are unlike their own, and demonstrate the skills of partnership and alliance that help them become good allies. They develop dialogical skills that they use increasingly without guidance or facilitation. They bring these skills to bear in the classroom, in their own lives, and in their community service. They demonstrate a growing capacity to communicate effectively across difference. They develop a strong sense of community, and they learn both how to build community and how to sustain it. This community sensibility is the most consistently self-identified positive outcome of the program.

This community sensibility is also a major factor in students' demonstrable skills in working well collaboratively, with each other, and with their community partners. Students develop a set of skills that show significant improvement as they progress through the program. These skills include reflection, contemplative practice and mindfulness, visioning (evident in a more robust and more idealistic vision of the future than the students had when they entered the program), ability to communicate across difference, ability to write effectively for different audiences, ability to engage in difficult conversations, and ability to facilitate a meeting. They also leave with a more sophisticated understanding of some of the fundamentals of social justice theory, and how it applies to privilege and power and to the complexities of their own identity.

By the end of the program, students are more comfortable talking about difference, privilege, power, and the various "isms"

that sustain social injustice. The student participants are also more comfortable embracing their idealism, and much more willing to act on their vision that is informed by that idealism. They are more comfortable with the “messiness” of the real world, with complexity and ambiguity. They tend to view the world as confident problem-solvers. The students are more comfortable taking risks. They become more adept at storytelling; they are more comfortable and more insightful about their own biography. The students leave the program with a stronger commitment to civic action—a commitment that is still forming. Many of the students are uncertain where this commitment will take them, but they appear to be less anxious than their peers about the state of the economy and their entry into the world. They are more open to career paths that are different from the ones that they preferred when they entered the program.

Program Best Practices

As the program has evolved, we have identified approaches that we believe contribute to the transformational learning of the student participants. Some of these best practices are core elements of service-learning pedagogy; others may be carried out by other programs but not named as best practices; still others may be possible only in a few courses or programs. To date, we have counted 17 best practices. Sometimes these best practices fit naturally into our work, and sometimes we struggle to follow them.

Best Practice 1: We practice developmental teaching. We aim to “meet students where they are.” We try to remember that we are teaching individuals—not content, and not even a group of people, but individuals within the group we have intentionally constructed. This means that we deal with each person at the state of development and with the knowledge, skills, and values that she or he brings “into the room.” To do this, we build relationships through which we can gauge each person’s capacities using tools like biography and dialogue. This relational teaching is sometimes challenging to students. For example, because we know them, students sometimes tell us about the heavy demands of their other courses, and ask us to reduce or eliminate some of our assignments. We do have to clarify that being in relationships where we know one another does not imply lowered expectations; it may instead raise expectations.

Best Practice 2: We use a “two-eyed approach” (*Horton, 1997*). We keep one eye on where students are, and the other eye on where we aim to take them. We continually move back and forth between

“the two eyes.” This practice requires us to meet the students where they are while at the same time holding a clear vision of the knowledge and skills that we aim to help them develop.

Best Practice 3: We use a non-didactic approach to instruction. Most class time is spent in whole-group dialogue, small-group dialogue, student-facilitated dialogue, or listening and responding to student presentations. We draw from the Highlander Center model of the learning circle, which views every participant as having something to learn and something to teach (*Horton, 1997*).

Best Practice 4: We teach the students dialogue and deliberation skills. We train the students to engage in dialogues across their differences—to deliberately structure conversations in which they explore differences in their life experiences, social identities, and perspectives (*Zuniga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007*). Speaking honestly and actively listening are equally important. This skill helps students tackle difficult conversations and make difficult decisions about some aspect of the course or the program.

Best Practice 5: We rely on personal biography. Student applications for the program ask for brief life stories. At the program’s opening 2-day retreat, participants share their political autobiographies, discussing experiences that have led them to care about issues important to them. This emphasis on lived experience continues throughout the program.

Best Practice 6: We aim to be transparent in all we do. We call this transparency “showing them the ball.” When the teaching teams and program leaders consistently explain their goals and the program activities to achieve those goals, we position the students as co-creators of their learning. We invite them to share responsibility. Transparency about the program’s processes does not mean that every detail about the program’s activities is open for debate. Starting each semester, however, with the creation or re-creation of program ground rules (e.g., for discussion, for starting each class with an agenda, for learning objectives) lets students see what we are doing and why.

Best Practice 7: We use contemplative practice. Our use of contemplative practice starts gently, with a brief period of silence and sometimes a guided meditation at the beginning of each class. In the second course, Tools for Change, students spend more time focusing on being in the present moment, and paying attention to themselves in their environment. We believe that the more centered students are in themselves, the better able they are to move through challenges that arise in work for fundamental social change.

Best Practice 8: We extend the classroom, through retreats and more. It is in the retreats at the beginning of each semester that much of the work of community building takes place. The knowledge and trust built through the retreats, monthly evening gatherings, required dialogues between individual students, one-to-one meetings with members of the teaching team, and field trips to learning sites encourage students to view each other as resources and support for their own learning and development.

Best Practice 9: Reflection captures what experience teaches us. The program emphasizes reflection by asking students to write reflectively on their reading assignments and service experiences, and to discuss in-class lessons learned. The students are asked to summarize their key “learnings” at the end of most class sessions. As a staff, we also practice reflection.

Best Practice 10: We believe that “creative discomfort” leads to deep learning. Many of the program’s students have been socialized by years of schooling to be obedient subjects. Challenges arise—created by the teaching team, by the students’ service experiences, or by students pushing each other to reconsider their assumptions and “try on” new ways of thinking and viewing the world. The program’s staff works to make the program a safe space for “creative discomfort.”

Best Practice 11: The teaching and administrative staff function as a team. We use a series of team practices. For example, participating faculty members share their course designs and visit each other’s classes to plan smooth transitions from one class to the next. The program staff sometimes participates in the program’s courses to learn the curriculum through students’ eyes, to share their expertise on different topics, and to deepen their relationships with the students.

Best Practice 12: We believe that playfulness is important. The work we are doing is serious; the challenges we face in exploring the structures of injustice in our society and how to work for change can be daunting. We strive to take ourselves and each other seriously without taking ourselves too seriously. We sometimes segue from one discussion to the next with an icebreaker or group game that gets us out of our seats, moving, and using our bodies, thereby calling on different sides of our brains. We bring in food. We welcome humor.

Best Practice 13: Compassion and self-care are necessary. One of the program’s most important learning objectives is the cultivation of empathy and compassion by all program participants (students, faculty, staff). We, and our students, need to extend to

ourselves the compassion that we hope the students will extend to others. We emphasize self-care, the work of finding and maintaining balance in a life full of challenge. We link contemplative practice to the goal of self-care. We encourage students to limit the number of commitments they make so they can enter deeply into the commitments they hold.

Best Practice 14: Groups of students engage in service with a limited number of community partners. The program's staff members place the students in a limited number of community organizations, both to ensure that reciprocal benefits build on each side of the partnership, and so the students can either be present at the same times or at least have some continuity of experience with other students in the program who work with the same community partner.

Best Practice 15: We construct a learning community that extends over multiple semesters. The program has evolved from two core courses (and three electives) to a sequenced curriculum of four 4-credit courses and one elective:

- Course 1: *The Good Society* requires students to unleash their imaginations and envision how society might be organized if it were truly good. At the end of the course, students write papers detailing the elements of their visions of "the good society." The next three courses focus on developing knowledge and skills that Citizen Scholars can use to move society closer to those visions.
- Course 2: *Tools for Democratic Change* introduces students to a variety of tools for their work for social change. Tools include social justice theory, systems analysis, contemplative practice, and a variety of others selected and researched by the students.
- Course 3: *Public Policy and Citizen Action* explores how public policy is created and implemented through the different branches and levels of government, how those policies form a framework that shapes every element of their lives, and how citizens can work together to propose or alter policies.
- Course 4: *Organizing: People, Power, and Change* takes students through the history, theory, and practice of organizing, giving them an understanding of the processes they can use to bring people together to work for a common cause.

This course sequence includes linkages across the courses. For example, each of the courses after the first one will sometimes refer back to students' visions of "the good society," asking them how particular issues or areas of focus relate to their own visions, perhaps challenging them or being incorporated into them. The structure also allows faculty members to try new approaches such as dialogue or contemplative practice, which, if successful, can be adopted by the other program faculty members.

This four-course structure helps to shape each cohort as a learning community. When we ask our students in their exit interviews what stands out for them about their experience in the program, the most frequent initial response is the experience of community.

Best Practice 16: We use project-based capstone experiences. In the third course (Public Policy and Citizen Action), each student identifies a social problem that could be made better by government at some level (local, state, or national). To identify their social problems, we encourage the students to draw from their service placements, identifying a problem of the people who are served by their community organization. Students (individually or in teams) then research current policies to address the issue; the policies that have been adopted and implemented to address this issue in other cities, states, or countries; and any new policies or proposals for policy changes. The students identify alternative policies that might address their issues. They articulate a set of criteria for judging the potential success of each policy alternative, and they recommend the alternative that by their criteria has the greatest promise.

While the students spend the semester learning this model of policy analysis (*Bardach, 2004*) and drafting their own policy recommendations, they also learn about how government actually functions. For example, they visit and report on at least one meeting of an arm of town government (e.g., select board, the school committee, or another town committee). They take a field trip to the State House in Boston, and attend a working session of the legislature.

In the fourth course (Organizing: People, Power, and Change), each student again has a project. We encourage the students to work in teams and to continue with the issue that was the focus of their policy projects. The challenge this semester is to apply to their issues the elements of Marshall Ganz's (2012) organizing model. The model includes the identification of a problem and a goal for change, the relational work of motivating people to join together to work toward change, and the formulation of strategies and tactics for a campaign that must then be "rolled out" and managed.

When students move from their policy project directly to their organizing project, they typically have great success. One example is Lindsay McCluskey (whose story is in Appendix B). Lindsay examined the policies governing the provision of state-funded, need-based financial aid. She discovered that this program, the Mass Grant program, was funded from the same budget line that also funded a number of other scholarship and financial aid programs. Over the past 20 years, as the state share of funding for higher education shrank and this budget line decreased, earmarks for the other programs increased their share of the shrinking pie. The impact on need-based financial aid was dramatic, reducing it from an amount that met most of the unmet needs of most low-income students in Massachusetts to a level that, at best, contributed to only a small percentage of students' college expenses.

In her organizing project, Lindsay organized other UMass Amherst students to participate in a "lobby day" at the Massachusetts State House. Her team of students met with the chair of the legislative committee that had oversight for this part of the budget. The committee had just passed its recommendation for the budget, continuing the practice of shrinking the Mass Grant. Lindsay's presentation, however, persuaded the legislator to introduce an amendment to the budget that added \$3 million to the Mass Grant program.

Although no other Citizen Scholar has generated \$3 million to support access to education, other student participants have linked their policy projects to organizing projects, which have contributed to change. Examples range from a bill to protect victims of sexual assault from further harassment by the perpetrators, to a measure approving the use of food stamps in a local farmer's market.

Best Practice 17: We develop student capacity to take on critical peer leadership roles. Three strategies are used to implement this best practice of peer leadership: Undergraduate teaching assistants, a student campus-community liaison program, and the AmeriCorps Student Leaders in Service program.

Undergraduate teaching assistants (TAs). Each semester, one or two outstanding program participants join the teaching team for the course they took the previous year. These undergraduate TAs extend the program's capacity. Through written feedback and one-to-one meetings with students, they increase the amount of attention each student participant receives, which is especially helpful in these writing-intensive courses. They provide a bridging function between the students and faculty members. For example, they help plan class sessions and lead small-group discussions.

The use of undergraduate TAs is especially effective in helping students negotiate a program that asks the participants to take risks, and that exposes their vulnerabilities (as sometimes happens in their autobiographical work).

Student campus-community liaison program. A second way we involve students as peer leaders is through a student campus-community liaison program. For some of the community partners who work with large numbers of students, we identify a Citizen Scholar who has worked well with the organization in the past, and who has built good relationships with the organization's staff. We ask that student to serve as a liaison between the community organization and the program. Liaison students help the organization recruit, orient, and support student volunteers.

AmeriCorps Student Leaders in Service program. Massachusetts Campus Compact provides several part-time AmeriCorps positions to UMass Amherst each year; students in this AmeriCorps Student Leaders in Service program perform 300 hours of service over the calendar year, and then receive a cash award that can be used to further their education. Citizen Scholars Program participants typically fill some of these positions. In addition to the community service they would normally do, these students help recruit the next year's Citizen Scholars.

Program Challenges

In the early years of the program, we talked frequently about "building the plane while we were flying it." Although changes to the program today are less substantial than in those times, they are still significant, as we continue to wrestle with four challenges.

Program Challenge 1: Diversity

Mirroring the demographic profile of UMass Amherst generally, each year about 80% of the Citizen Scholars Program applicants are white. Mirroring the demographic profile of service programs across the country, 80–90% of the applicants are women. We continually struggle to increase the visible diversity (of race and gender, particularly) within the program, so that multiple perspectives are represented in discussions, and so that students interested in the program will see within it students who "look like them."

Program Challenge 2: Neoliberal Sensibilities

Hyatt (2001) has charged that service-learning is designed to produce neoliberal citizens. She argues that many service-learning

projects produce young adults likely to sustain, rather than challenge or transform, the status quo. This observation has surfaced in other studies (*Ilich, 1968; Mitchell, 2008; Polin & Keene, 2010*).

From frequent contact with alumni, and more recently from the alumni research project with colleagues from Stanford University and Providence College, we know that the vast majority of Citizen Scholars Program graduates go on to lives of engagement. We are less certain, however, about what kind of engagement they practice.

We know that the program's graduates are active in their communities. They tend to join civic organizations. They are civically and politically informed. They vote. They are gainfully employed. They tend to retain the idealism that brought them to the program. They value community. They exhibit the features of citizenship that Westheimer and Kahne (*2004*) identified for "a personally responsible citizen." We are less clear, however, about the degree to which the program participants demonstrate civic leadership or how active they are in promoting or effecting progressive change.

We know from ongoing ethnographic work with undergraduates at UMass Amherst (*Keene, 2009*) that UMass Amherst students carry deeply internalized neoliberal sensibilities. We know that most see the world through an idiom of competition, consumerism, efficiency, and markets. For many, the idea that government is the problem rather than the solution makes sense. Some have trouble reconciling their desire for collective action to make the world a better place with discomfort about constraints on their own personal gratification or choices. In other words, some struggle with the contradiction of wanting to live like citizens but feeling compelled to live like customers (*Giroux, 2011*).

That the program's students see the world through neoliberal lenses is not surprising. Neoliberal thinking is the "common sense" that surrounds them, and their formal education offers insufficient opportunities to explore and challenge that common sense. We find that within the Citizen Scholars Program, when we do challenge this common sense (for example, in the first course of the program in a comprehensive exploration of sustainable economies in the modern world), students sometimes balk, because the idea of sustainability stands in contrast to a logic that demands continued and unfettered growth.

We have discovered that many of the students graduate with a vague sense of how the world works, and in particular how the global economy works. They deplore economic injustice and are well versed on the impacts of injustice on communities, but they

do not have a sufficiently comprehensive analysis to expose where this injustice comes from. In short, they have a simplistic understanding of how global capitalism works.

We struggle with how to address this conundrum. Adding another course to the curriculum seems untenable. It is already a challenge to convince students to commit to five courses outside their majors. Our ongoing evaluation suggests that we need to cut content from the existing courses so that students can delve deeper into each course's content. For now, however, we encourage the students to elect an economics course. We challenge them to bring their understanding of political or social theory gained in their elective economics course to bear on their reflection and in their actions.

Program Challenge 3: A Clash of Cultures

Even as they tell us that the Citizen Scholars Program offers them a chance to do meaningful work with their lives and to learn things they cannot find elsewhere on campus, many of the program's students struggle with the process of collaborative learning. We have come to recognize in their struggles a history of successful socialization into what Freire (2000) calls "the banking model" of education. The students expect their teachers to make deposits of knowledge "into" them, and they expect that those deposits will pay for their next steps as they move from campus to careers. This model of education fits well with the notion of "self as consumer." Program students tell us that they tend to see the university as a place to take courses that lead to a degree, and to engage in other activities that add to their credentials. Even when they honestly want to engage in the kind of learning for which the program aims, the habits they bring to the program work against them.

The classes in the Citizen Scholars Program present the students with a kind of "culture shock." The classes are structured for active learning. They work only if students take responsibility for contributing to the learning process. On the one hand, the students tend to like the program's learning opportunities. On the other hand, they tend to struggle with the amount of work—and the kind of work—that the program requires. For example, deep and engaging dialogue will not happen if students have not read carefully and thoughtfully. Major projects will not work if students do not accept step-by-step structure and assignment deadlines. Discussions of personal goals, values, and differences in perspective do not work if the students do not assume a share of responsibility

for the discussions. Program participants claim to want to be challenged and to be taken seriously. At the same time, however, they chafe at the program's class being unlike their other classes, at the different expectations, and at the practice of community accountability. They sometimes get frustrated when the shortcuts they take in other courses are not tolerated in the program's courses.

In short, the program does not adhere to the philosophy of being "democratic classrooms" in the sense of faculty members sharing power equally with the students, where everyone has an equal say about what will be done. Rather, they are "classrooms for democracy," where the teaching team (which includes peer teachers) retains the power to structure the setting for learning, and the students are offered the power to fill in that structure.

Three problems can arise with the clash of cultures between the university's mainstream culture and the program's culture. First, we ask students to be accountable to each other and to us, and sometimes they are not. Second, students sometimes actively resist our approach. We know, however, from theories of group process, that discontent is a normal phase in group development, so we ask them to work through their discontent. Third, sometimes the program simply is not a good fit for a particular student, and the student ends up leaving.

Program Challenge 4: Institutional Support

Sustaining the program is a challenge as upper-level administrators are replaced and the university's budget is increasingly pressured. The program began in 1999 as a program of the Commonwealth Honors College, supported by a line in the Honors College base budget and enhanced by a 3-year grant; when the grant ended, the Honors College took on the full cost of the program. In 2012, it was placed under the Provost's Office with only about half of its 2011–2012 academic year budget. We are faced with a mandate to either scale down the program to perhaps two courses, or to find new sources of support. Given the integrated, developmental nature of the program, the staff is agreed that developing a "CSP [Citizen Scholars Program] lite" is not a viable option. To keep the full curriculum in place, program staff members are working to secure resources.

Conclusion

Many authors, from President Truman's Commission on Higher Education (1947) to Battistoni and Longo (2005), Saltmarsh

and Hartley (2011), and Schoem and Hurtado (2001) have written about how a democratic society requires that higher education include civic learning and purposeful preparation of students for democratic citizenship. In 2012, this need was articulated in the AAC&U (Association of American Colleges and Universities) report for the U.S. Secretary of Education, *A Crucible Moment*. The report begins by quoting David Mathews, who warns that U.S. society is moving toward “what cannot be”: “a citizenless democracy” (*National Task Force, 2012, p. 1*). Focusing on “higher education as a site for citizenship,” this report “uses the dual terms ‘civic learning’ and ‘democratic engagement’ to emphasize the civic significance of preparing students with knowledge of, and for, action” (*p. 3*). From our assessments, we believe that the Citizen Scholars Program is a model for merging civic learning and democratic engagement with the preparation of civic leaders.

Service-learning is a central teaching tool of the Citizen Scholars Program’s efforts to promote civic learning and engagement. We are guided by Nadinne Cruz’s definition of service: “the creation and maintenance of more just relationships” (*personal communication, 1997*). We attempt to engage our students in “more just relationships” with the individuals they encounter in their service, as they move across boundaries of race, class, and other forms of social identity that may be laden with themes of privilege, power, and oppression. At the same time, we seek to engage the students in analysis of the social structures that lead to injustice, and to position them as democratic actors who can collaborate with others to work for “more just relationships” in the structures of society.

At this time in U.S. history, when the practice of democracy is threatened in so many ways, our society needs for its institutions of higher education to reclaim their public purpose and employ approaches to develop citizens. We believe that the Citizen Scholars Program—a multi-semester, cohort-based, civic education program with a curriculum that includes visioning for the future, contemplative practice, skill development related to public policy and organizing, and a service-based commitment to social justice—is a model for civic educators everywhere.

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Appendix A: Citizen Scholars Program Intended Learning Objectives

Learning Objective 1: Political Knowledge for Democratic Citizenship: An understanding of

- elementary conceptions of the functions of government and the roles of citizens in a democracy.
- elementary conceptions of the ways that economic systems and political systems influence each other.
- the ways that citizens can identify, access, and use power to influence the status and actions of government.

Learning Objective 2: Service-Learning: An understanding of

- service within a broader framework of civic engagement, recognizing political action as a related and parallel form of engagement.
- different models of service, and contrasting approaches of charity and justice.
- service grounded in mutual and reciprocal relationships.

Learning Objective 3: Social Theory, Social Analysis, and Social Justice: An understanding of

- basic social theory.
- why social analysis is needed to identify power relations and explain manifestations of social injustice in the United States and beyond. (Students will not necessarily develop a comprehensive social analysis within the program but will develop the knowledge necessary to see the need for such analysis and the motivation to seek it in specialized courses in other programs—e.g., economics, political economy, social justice, anthropology, sociology, political science, literary criticism, public policy.)
- different conceptual models of justice (e.g., distributive justice).
- the root causes of at least one major social problem (e.g., substandard housing, lack of access to health care, hunger, unemployment, AIDS, environmental degradation), and an elementary understanding of several others.
- the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression.
- the diverse communities in which students serve, and of communities, societies, or institutions that operate on assumptions different from students' own assumptions.
- elementary theoretical and cognitive foundations for explaining and negotiating difference (e.g., understanding of the concepts of culture, relativism, ethnocentrism, culture shock, privilege, ally-ship).
- each student's own values, beliefs, assumptions, and life goals within a civic context.

Learning Objective 4: Tools for Democratic Change: An understanding of

- leadership as an activity that can be learned.
- at a basic level, many of the tools that an engaged citizenry can use to work for structural change, including, but not limited to, policy analysis and advocacy, grassroots organizing, group and organizational dynamics, oral and written communication, and contemplative practice that allows one to remain centered.
- how these tools for change work, and how and when each might be effectively used.

Learning Objective 5: Communities and Community Organizations: An understanding of

- diverse communities.
- at a detailed level, how at least one community organization addresses community problems.

Skills of Democratic Citizenship

Learning Objective 6: Critical Thinking/Reading: The ability to

- construct and define problems in a complex way.
- read across many texts, synthesize arguments, and find connections.
- engage the ideas of others with one's own original ideas.
- engage in dialogical analysis.
- look at local community problems, and connect them with their root causes.

Learning Objective 7: Ethical Thinking and Reasoning: The ability to assess alternative actions in relation to one's core values, and select the alternative that best aligns with those values.

Learning Objective 8: Inquiry and Scholarship: The ability to

- place issues and interests in a context of scholarship to recognize that useful ideas, information, and models may already have been formulated by others, and to look in appropriate places to join conversations about issues of concern.
- frame and pursue significant questions about community needs and aspirations, and about public policy and citizen action, using appropriate research methods effectively (e.g., using library and internet sources, working directly with people).

Learning Objective 9: Communication: The ability to

- communicate complex ideas clearly, both orally and in writing.
- write for many audiences.
- switch codes and to know when this is appropriate (i.e., to engage in formal academic or legislative discourse, and popular or community discourse).
- listen actively and with empathy.

Learning Objective 10: Cultural Competence: The ability to

- recognize that our own beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors are shaped by our participation in systems of power that define us as having specific social identities, and that our identities both connect us with and separate us from other people.
- hear, consider, and engage points of view that are different from our own.
- work within a community that is different from our own.
- recognize and appreciate cultural difference.
- make strides toward seeing the world through the eyes of people who live according to cultural assumptions that differ from our own.
- enter a community (unlike one's own) as an effective supporter.
- enter and exit a community in ways that do not reinforce ethnocentrism or systemic injustice.
- competently participate in work defined as valuable by the community.

Learning Objective 11: Leadership and Teamwork: The ability to

- take responsible initiative.
- deal with power, including its sources and kinds (e.g., *power over*, *power with*, *power from within*).
- vision.
- work with others using principles of reciprocity, collaboration, negotiation, and compromise to build consensus and to work in teams in the absence of consensus.
- facilitate group discussion and deliberation.
- take on leadership roles (formal and informal), and to follow the leadership of others.
- decide when to compromise and when not to compromise.
- create solutions that allow all parties to benefit.

Learning Objective 12: Praxis: The ability to

- translate thought into action (demonstrated by successfully deepening one's work at a service site and by implementing an organizing project).
- engage in reflective practice.
- analyze and question one's own beliefs, values, and assumptions while developing an understanding of the beliefs and values of others.
- design and implement public policy and community organizing projects grounded in collaboration with community stakeholders.
- use political skills to recognize, acquire, maintain, and use political power.

Learning Objective 13: Social Analysis and Systems Thinking: The ability to

- link social problems to their root causes.
- see social problems as complex and the product of multiple and interrelated causes.
- understand complex strategies for addressing social problems.

Learning Objective 14: Community Building: The ability to

- build relationships that sustain one through good times and hard times.
- build a network of such relationships that provide mutual support in the process of working for social change.

Learning Objective 15: Self-Care: The ability to engage in contemplative practice that supports self-awareness and equanimity, find balance, and take care of ourselves so that we can work toward our vision over the long haul of our entire lifetime.

Vision of a More Equitable Society

Learning Objective 16: The ability to hold a vision for the way the world ought to be, an openness to new possibilities, and the courage to act on that vision using imagination, compassion and empathy, conviction, and commitment and accountability.

Appendix B

The stories of two Citizen Scholars illustrate that the program can transform the lives of the student participants. Storytelling (the story of self, the story of us, and the story of now) is a skill student participants acquire as they learn how to engage and organize others to work collectively for a common good. We aim through the stories of Aaron and Lindsay to reflect the centrality of life-stories in the Citizen Scholars Program.

Aaron's Story

Aaron Buford joined the Citizen Scholars Program in his sophomore year (2007) and graduated from UMass Amherst in spring 2009 with a bachelor's degree with individual concentration in youth leadership and urban development and a minor in African American studies. Today, he teaches psychology and U.S. history at Springfield Central High School in Massachusetts. Aaron aspires to pursue a doctorate in psychology and to work as a therapist focusing on issues related to masculinity and youth violence.

From his sophomore year until graduation, Aaron did community service at the Men's Resource Center of Amherst, Massachusetts (<http://www.mrcforchange.org/>), where, along with fellow Citizen Scholar Malcolm Chu (who later became president of the UMass Amherst Student government body and currently works as a community organizer in Springfield, Massachusetts), he developed the Young Men of Color Leadership Group, a mentoring program designed to empower young men of color to be positive forces in their community and to address negative perceptions of young men of color that were present in the Amherst community at the time. Their program focused on how relationships and issues of masculinity "play out" for men of color, and emphasized violence prevention, healthy relationships, personal growth, and leadership development. In 2007, Aaron was elected president of the UMass Student Government Association and was the chief student negotiator during the 2007 student general strike (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2007). He was active in the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts (PHENOM; see <http://phenomonline.org/>), a Massachusetts higher education network that promotes access to higher education. He was also a mentor and consultant to A Better Chance (<http://www.amherstabetterchance.org/>), a program of which he himself is an alumnus. Aaron sees work as a teacher as building on the work he began as a student. He says,

Back then I was just trying to get young men and my peers to think critically about the world and the issues that were affecting them. And that's what I'm doing now in my classroom. I'm teaching civics and about different social movements and trying to get young people to think critically about the world and how to change it. It was during my time in the CSP [Citizen Scholars Program] that I first began to think seriously about civic responsibilities. . . .

I keep coming back to the same themes in all of the work that I am doing both in my public and private life. For example, the positive masculinity work that I did then has really led me to think about my own work as a teacher, as a parent and as a husband. It's really kept me grounded and thinking about the importance of building relationships.

I can think of lots of applications from CSP [Citizen Scholars Program] that I draw on all of the time. Making the commitment to work that's meaningful—not charity but work that has a lasting impact. I have really been helped by being able to imagine what a good society looks like and this gives me some direction. I talk to my students not just about the way the world is but what is possible and help them get past the "yes, buts." . . . And organizing has been a huge skill that I have taken away from the program and from my practical experience within the SGA [Student Government Association]. I have applied it to everything in my personal life. I see teaching as a kind of organizing and it helps me see where the opportunities are to leverage power from where I currently stand and to address things that need to change.

Finally—I am definitely in it for the long haul—so I look to what I can do right now but I also see myself as building on all of the elements of organizing so that I can address the root causes of the social problems that I confront daily. (*A. Buford, personal communication, October 2011*)

Lindsay's Story

Lindsay McCluskey joined the Citizen Scholars Program in her sophomore year (2006). She graduated from UMass Amherst in 2008 with a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology. Lindsay lives in Washington, DC, where until August 2011 she served as president of the United States Student Association, the nation's oldest and largest student organization (<http://www.usstudents.org/>). The organization represents over 400 college campuses and 4.5 million students on many issues that concern students, most notably college access and affordability. Lindsay's work in community engagement, education policy, and student equity began early at UMass Amherst. In her freshman year she enrolled in the UMass Alliance for Community Transformation (<http://www.umass.edu/uact/>) alternative spring break class, where she explored how people mobilize social power. In the spring of her freshman year Lindsay participated in Tent State University, a week of encampments and teach-ins on the UMass Amherst campus to promote awareness of the challenges facing public higher education and to mobilize students in its support. In her sophomore year Lindsay helped to found the UMass chapter of PHENOM (the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts). She was instrumental in helping to organize PHENOM's first statewide lobby day—now an annual event. Lindsay helped to organize a delegation from UMass to attend the summer national meeting of the United States Student Association. At the meeting she was elected to their board of directors and served in that capacity in her junior and senior years.

At the end of her junior year, UMass students elected Lindsay to the post of Student Trustee, which is the student representative to the UMass System Board of Trustees. Lindsay's classes and her political work during her time at UMass convinced her that higher education was a right that needed to be defended and that there was much work that could be done by students to promote equitable access to higher education. Lindsay saw a considerable need for students to be better organized both locally and nationally to protect their rights, and she saw the United States Student Association as a way to develop those capacities. During her time at the organization, she generated institutional campaigns that helped support higher education, and helped to register and mobilize voters around education issues. Lindsay notes that her time in Washington, DC, has been challenging and rewarding. She says that her organization is proud to be led by young people.

Folks who are directly affected ought to be involved. At the same time, at age 22 it's a real challenge to lead a national organization representing over 4 million people. There's so much going on right now. We were part of passing student financial aid reform last year and I was present when Pelosi and Obama signed their respective parts of the bill. Being part of this was huge and I am certain that without students being organized and vocal that the reform would not have happened. (*L. McCluskey, personal communication, November 2010*)