

## **Principles for Excellence in College Civic and Democracy Learning:**

The Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Coalition invites college educators to:

**1.Include All College Students in High Quality Civic Learning:** Purposeful civic inquiry and its partner, evidence-based reasoning, are necessary capacities in a self-governing democracy and in an innovation-fueled economy. All college students need to develop these capacities and practice them in general education, majors, and career-related studies.

**2.Foster Students' Civic Purpose and Agency:** Through their studies, all students deserve opportunities to reflect on their own civic values and goals and make examined choices about how and where to use their civic capacities and agency. Civic learning rooted in the spirit of liberal education should be analogous to teaching writing. College provides multiple opportunities for civic inquiry and practice, but the larger purpose is students' own development and exercise of values, voice, and choices for the future.

**3.Commit to Pathways Thinking and Planning:** Civic and democracy capacities include habits of mind and heart that are fostered over time. An initial course or course sequence is necessary but not sufficient. Ensure that your curriculum and majors provide multiple ways to help students explore public good questions and policy choices and apply evidence-informed reasoning to significant questions and choices.

**4.Help Students Explore the Value and Complexities of Constitutional Democracy:** Constitutional democracy—U.S. and comparative—should be a core component of college civic learning and examined as a way of living in community rather than assumed to consist only in elections, voting, and/or political controversies. Help students explore how the United States, founded as a federal republic, came to see democracy's principles both as inspiring for all, and as continuing spurs to needed societal change.

**5.Teach the Arts of Collaboration and Problem-Solving:** Students need ongoing practice both in dialogues across differences—including cultural, religious and political differences, *and* in collaborative problem-solving to guide choices and action. This kind of practice can and should be included in many courses, from first to final year, and in all majors, including career and technical fields.

**6.Emphasize the Career Skills Advantage:** The capacities central to a creative democracy also are essential to career success; there is abundant evidence that employers both seek and reward them. Help students articulate and document for employers the high-value intellectual and practical skills they gain through civic and ethical inquiry and community-based problem-solving.

**7.Assess Students' Ability to Apply Civic Lenses to Complex Questions and Choices for Action.** While civic and constitutional democracy knowledge are foundational, the key test is whether students can bring public good perspectives to real-world challenges and responsibilities. Set benchmarks for K-12 civic and history learning and from that baseline, assess college students' gains in civic knowledge and capacities.