Valencia College

Civic Inventory for the Democracy Commitment

Dr. Scott F. Creamer, Campus Coordinator

Valencia College is a comprehensive state college in Florida with branch campuses in Orlando, Kissimmee, Winter Park, and Lake Nona that offers two and four-year degrees while serving almost 32,000 full-time students (over 60,000 total headcount enrollment). Valencia College offers a wide variety of academic and occupational programs.

Part of Valencia College’s philosophy is that it is a multicultural institution committed to preparing world citizens for the 21st century while recognizing that the aim of education is the development of the whole person; one who is prepared to value citizenship and to participate in a global community. Part of its mission is a commitment to institutional community involvement, community development, community service, civic leadership, civic engagement, and, of course, civic education. The following table is a summary of the internal civic inventory taken by Dr. Scott F. Creamer, Professor of Political Science at Valencia College and Campus Coordinator for the Democracy Commitment, which describes the civic engagement that is already occurring and identifies opportunities to begin work in areas where civic engagement activities could occur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Intentionality</th>
<th>Academic Focus on Civic Engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The Bill Castellano Civic Leadership Scholarship</td>
<td>1. Curricular Focus on Civic Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Matador Model United Nations</td>
<td>1. A focus on civic engagement in General Education courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>• National Model United Nations Conference</td>
<td>-one of the pursued student learning outcomes is ethical responsibility – the demonstration of awareness of personal responsibility in one’s civic, social, and academic life</td>
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<td>• Civic Leadership Internship Program</td>
<td>2. A focus on civic engagement in Florida</td>
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<td>• Southern Regional Model United Nations Conference</td>
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<td>• Valencia on the Hill (civic leadership internship)</td>
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<td>• Constitution Day events</td>
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<td>• Veteran’s Day events</td>
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<td>• Arab-American Day (East campus)</td>
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<td>• Political debates</td>
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<td>• Voter registration drives</td>
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community colleges’ General Education requirements

- Student learning outcome of global socio-cultural responsibility – actively participate as an informed citizen in social, cultural, global, and environmental matters

3. Content of POS 2041 U.S. Government (required course for all Associate of Art degrees), POS 2112 State and Local Government, POS 2232 Government and the Media, and POS 2940 Internship in Civic Leadership (faculty as supervisor) courses

- explore foundations of democracy, core principles of American democracy, key founding documents, contemporary issues in American life, etc.

II. Teaching and Learning

1. Democratic teaching styles (encouraging critical thinking, taking independent positions and supporting them, not simply agreeing with the faculty member’s point of view, providing opportunities to challenge others in respectful ways)

- critical thinking as student learning outcome – effectively analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and apply information and ideas from diverse sources and disciplines

2. Diversity

- Faculty, as part of their required faculty learning outcomes, need to achieve a competency in diversity by designing learning opportunities that acknowledge, draw upon, and are enriched by student diversity. An atmosphere of inclusion and understanding is promoted in all learning environments.

3. Civic Leadership Programs

- civic leadership internship for students interested in a career in public service or in seeking political office

- intern with public policy agencies and elected officials at federal, state, and local levels while being supervised by a political science faculty member
-upon completion of internship and classroom presentation, students receive a $500 Presidential Scholarship
-68 students since 2004 have been placed in internships
  -In 2011, internships included those with U.S. senators Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio; Florida senator Andy Garcia; representatives Corrine Brown, Eric Einsnaugle, and Darren Soto; Girl Scouts of America; CourWatch Florida; the Orlando Police Department
  -Bill Castellano Civic Leadership Scholarship

4. Service Learning – experiential learning that benefits the community and enhances student engagement with course content
  -faculty development course Service Learning Across the Curriculum (LCTS 3213) through the Office of faculty Development

III. Student Experiential Learning
1. Service Learning course SLS 2940
   -students earn college credit while responding to needs in the community and applying knowledge from their courses with guidance from a faculty supervisor
   -2011 projects have included taking students to the Dominican Republic (Kevin Mulholland and Christie Pickeral) to host a science camp for children, Habitat for Humanity projects (supervised by Ann Farrell, Rachel Allen, and Andy Ray), Coalition for the Homeless projects (Rachel Allen), and involvement in Give Kids the World (Deb Hall)

2. Service Learning Components of Courses
   -projects include web design for the non-profit agency Greyhound Pets of America (supervised by Colin Archibald), created videos to advocate for various non-profit groups (Linda Anthon), volunteer at and research project on various non-profit agencies (Erin O’Brien), service at Second Harvest Food Bank (Ellen Pastorino), planning and managing donation drives for Orlando-based non-profit
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<th>Co-Curricular and Extra Curricular Focus on Civic Engagement</th>
<th>I. Student Groups</th>
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<td>• Student Government Association</td>
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<td>• Student Leader Team</td>
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<td>• Valencia Volunteers</td>
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<td>- runs and sponsors fundraisers such as those for Alzheimer’s research and supporting troops in the U.S. military through events like barbecues, pizza sales, Adopt an Angel drive, etc.</td>
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<td>- works with over 200 community agencies in Central Florida</td>
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IV. Divisions and Departments
1. As part of the General Education requirements, there is a special focus on civic engagement college-wide. Explicit examples include health related departments and their course content, in addition to the course components of the political science department (e.g. POS 2041 U.S. Government is a required course where there is extensive teaching of democratic principles in the U.S. and discussion and critical analysis of one’s place within this system and republican society).
2. Study Abroad and Global Experiences (SAGE) program’s goal of creating a more global student citizenry through workshops, short and long-term study abroad programs, and active committee work on internationalizing the curriculum

V. Leadership Programs
1. Leadership Symposium
   - educates students on the importance of networking, professionalism, and communication skills during an annual spring term event
2. Leadership Speaker Series
3. The Next Dimension Leadership Program (East campus)
   - lectures by motivational speakers and life coaches on topics like human diversity, leadership, finances, team building, and life skills
4. Skillshops
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<th>Evaluations of Civic Engagement</th>
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| - Student evaluations of faculty  
| - Use of Community College Survey on Student Engagement (CCSSE) for measuring student engagement  |

### Critical Analysis and Recommendations

Valencia College has done commendable job developing and expanding academic, professional, and service programs and projects aimed at engaging community college students in civic learning and democratic practice. The goal of being a member of the Democracy Commitment organization as a signatory institution is to educate every graduate in democracy, and Valencia has accomplished this task already to a large extent considering its focus on teaching democratic methods and principles campus-wide and strong community service learning and internship programs. After review of other institutions and their programs, those of Valencia are not standard on major campuses and is demonstrative of just how progressive Valencia College is in many academic and professional areas, including promoting civic engagement. However, there is always room for improvement. The following are:  
- African-American Cultural Society  
- American Arab Culture Club  
- Amnesty International  
- Campus Crusade for Christ  
- Caribbean Student Association  
- Gay/Straight Alliance  
- Latin American Student Organization  
- Muslim Student Association  
- Republican Club  
- Secular Student Alliance  
- Valencia Haitian Student Association  
- Valencia Intercultural Association  
- Valencia International Club  
- Model United Nations (U.N.)  
- Valencia Students for Change
some recommendations given either current needs for improvement or areas not considered previously for civic involvement:

- Make CCSSE results more accessible to the public by putting the data on the Valencia College website (Assessment & Institutional Effectiveness website or otherwise)
- Weekly or monthly updates provided by the campus coordinator keeping faculty and students aware and excited by upcoming civic-related events
- A small online magazine, or e-zine, written and distributed college-wide by the campus coordinator that celebrates service learning and civic engagement
- Expand student and youth leadership programs
  - annual leadership conference that connects high school and college students to community-based youth and student organizations and features workshops on topics like financing college education, community building, and social and cultural activism
  - intensive training program for Valencia College students interested in gaining practical skills in political action. This “camp” would focus on subjects like electoral campaigns, citizen activism, and grassroots advocacy and organization
- Draw upon more legislators, community partners, and public policy groups for internships through elevated marketing of the program
- Civic and Community Engagement Certificate
  - Many colleges and universities, such as Northwestern University, The University of Connecticut, Johns Hopkins University, and many others, along with community colleges like De Anza College have certificate programs (or similarly in social policy) that engage students in leadership
development and community-based or service learning. A certificate would also add an additional qualification for those seeking public policy or political advocacy work in the future.

- Collaboration and joint events with The University of Central Florida on projects and programs
  - UCF attends the American Democracy Conference every year
  - Campus coordinator would maintain regular contact with Dr. Thomas Bryer, Professor of Public Administration at UCF, to coordinate joint, collaborative efforts

- Campus coordinator would encourage faculty and students to form a delegation to attend the Democracy Commitment annual conference (campus coordinator will attend this conference), along with possibly attending other political science, public administration, social policy, and civic leadership conferences

- Utilize additional campus/district civic engagement assessment instruments regularly throughout the academic year