



**Report of the Steering Committee of the American Democracy Project at  
Montclair State  
2005-06**

**Background**

In April of 2005, Provost Richard Lynde invited several members of the faculty and staff to join a steering committee to develop an institutional strategy to foster civic engagement at Montclair State University. Working with over 200 other institutions affiliated with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the American Democracy Project was established on campus. The committee was charged with developing, implementing and coordinating activities on campus that would encourage undergraduates to participate in the civic life of their communities, to foster collaboration and communication among those already engaged, while encouraging additional members of the faculty, staff and student body to also become involved. Members included:

- ◆ William Berlin, Political Science
- ◆ Kenneth Brook, Anthropology
- ◆ Rick Brown, Student Leadership Programs
- ◆ Michelle Campagna, New Student Experience
- ◆ Ann Frechette, Communications and Marketing
- ◆ Carolyn Jones, Graduate School
- ◆ David Keiser, Curriculum and Teaching
- ◆ Todd Kelshaw, Communications Studies
- ◆ Gurvinder Khaneja, Institutional Research
- ◆ David Kois, Student Government
- ◆ Freyda Lazarus, Center for Community Based Learning
- ◆ Angelo Lilla, Student Government
- ◆ Bryan Murdock, Center for Community Based Learning
- ◆ Dana Natale, Center for Community Based Learning
- ◆ Reginald Ross, Enrollment and Student Academic Services
- ◆ Robert Taylor, Earth and Environmental Studies
- ◆ Greg Waters, Honors Program

Ten members of the committee participated in a national ADP conference in Portland, Oregon, in June of 2005, and a series of subcommittees were established to help guide implementation activities during the first year of operation. The following subcommittees were established for the first year of the projects:

- First-year Audit
- Mission and Goals
- Kickoff

- Procedural Guidelines
- Web-presence

**MSU Constitution Day** (September 2005)

On September 14, 2005 the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Office of Student Leadership Programs sponsored two events for Constitution Day. The first was a Constitution Day table positioned between the SGA table and a voter registration table during the Student Activities Fair. The table featured information about the US Constitution and a large-scale copy of the Constitution which people were encouraged to sign. The second event was a panel discussion on "Free Speech." The audience was comprised of 100 freshman students from the Emerging Leaders Learning Community and approximately 20 others including MSU students, staff, and faculty.

On September 16, 2005 from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. MSU hosted a videocast and discussion on "Free Speech in the Digital Age." National Public Radio's Margot Adler hosted a discussion from the William G. McGowan Theater at the National Archives. The discussion focused on censorship issues involving libraries, textbooks, and the Internet. The program examined the reasons for both safeguarding and limiting speech including: protection of minors, community safety, ensuring a free marketplace of ideas, and guaranteeing democratic institution – all excellent topics to jump start classroom discussion on First Amendment freedoms. Following the videocast, there was a discussion forum, moderated by Todd Kelshaw of the Communication Studies Department. The 27 students, faculty and staff attending the event shared in a lively and challenging discussion regarding the issues raised in the video-cast. The program was provided by the Annenberg Foundation as part of their "Justice Learning" initiative.

**Get Out the Vote** (October 2005)

The MSU ADP Get Out the Vote Campaign was launched in October via email to encourage students to cast a ballot in the governor’s race. Arranged by the Office of Communications, this project drew emails of interest and support from students. The secondary goal of this undertaking was to create an electronic “branding” vehicle for the MSU ADP while also fostering involvement in the governor’s race.



*A Public Service Message brought to you by MSU's American Democracy Project -- the University's catalyst for educating and inspiring students to become engaged participants in American civic life.*  
<http://www.montclair.edu/american-democracy-project/>

**GOT VOTE?**

On November 8, 2005, New Jersey voters will elect a Governor who will make many decisions that will shape the future of public higher education in the Garden State.....

### **Curricular Initiatives** (November 2005)

Curricular initiatives among steering committee members and key MSU faculty and staff occurred concerning potential civic engagement themes for the Contemporary Issues requirement of the General Education program, and the Freshman Experience Program. Explorations began about the use of the *New York Times* in a special educational readership program.

### **MSU ADP Website** (December 2005)

An independent project-specific website was created and linked to Provost's site; the steering committee approved a statement of mission and goals for the project and they were posted on the website at:  
<http://www.montclair.edu/american-democracy-project/>

### **MSU ADP Campus Audit** (January - February 2006)

A campus engagement audit was prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and finalized by the Audit subcommittee, to ascertain faculty, staff and student attitudes toward civic engagement and to determine where curricular and co-curricular activities were taking place on campus. Incentives were pledged by from local merchants and a web interface created for the audit.

In February of 2006 the ADP Campus Audit was launched with posters, a full page ad in the *Montclarion*, sponsored by the Student Government Association. Within the month of February, the ADP: co-sponsored a speaker with the Political Science Department; lobbied for the eventual approval of "Democracy: Promise and Performance" for 2007-2010 Contemporary Issues theme by the General Education Committee; and designed a sequential, developmental model for service-learning that would work to address civic engagement in tandem with class sections from New Student Experience, General Education program, and several capstone courses to address civic engagement. Building upon such efforts, the Center for Community-Based Learning submitted a grant proposal to the Corporation for National Service, Learn and Serve America.

### **Completion of the ADP Campus Audit** (March 2006)

#### **Results of the Faculty Survey**

The survey was administered to approximately 1,400 full-time faculty and staff employed at MSU in spring 2005, and 257 responded to the survey (18 percent). Fifty-eight percent of the staff and 42 percent of the faculty completed the survey. Sixty-five percent of the respondents were females. Among those who indicated their race/ethnicity 71 percent Caucasian, 12 percent African-Americans and 8 percent Latino(a) responded to the survey. Representation was fairly evident from each of the colleges and schools of the university. The demographics of the responded did not differ significantly from the demographics of full-time employees of the university. Here are the major findings:

- Almost 50 percent of the respondents indicated that they were either aware or had participated in civic engagement activities, while at MSU.
- Almost 9 percent indicated that they had taught a service learning course at MSU

- A large proportion of faculty and staff believe that “*they do have a responsibility to serve their community*” (90 percent) and that “*they can make a difference in their community*” (87 percent).
- The issues that were rated as very important by almost three-fourths of respondents were: education, human rights, civil rights and health care.
- Over 90 percent of the respondents voted on- or off- campus and among them, over two-thirds believed that they did so because it was their duty or responsibility.
- Over 60 percent of the faculty and staff indicated that they joined a local community group or association, participated in fund raising or volunteer with local community or religious community was that they felt that they could make a difference, to become more involved in their community and that their community benefited from the same.
- A large proportion of the faculty and staff indicated that the top most reasons for participating in various other activities, i.e., contacting public officials, sending an e-mail to media, signing a petitions etc., was that they could make a difference.
- Television and newspaper were the most influential media to obtain any news, i.e., local, national and international.
- Word of mouth was most influential in getting information about volunteering, fundraising/charity or community needs.
- Faculty cited the following suggestions to increase the awareness of civic engagement at MSU
  - Activities related to civic engagement be advertised more and be more visible on campus.
  - Activities related to civic awareness should be scheduled at convenient times.
  - Recognition, credit and incentives be given to the participants
  - Planned events, at specific times throughout the semester
  - Specific venue be selected, named appropriately (civic plaza) and meeting or activities be held at specified times related to civic awareness.
  - Integrate community service in freshmen experience and other course.
  - Simplify civic awareness and use simple terminology to get people involved.

### ***Results of the Student Survey***

The survey was administered in spring 2005, to over 11,000 undergraduates enrolled at MSU. Over 8 percent (911) of the undergraduates responded to the survey. Seventy-two percent of the females responded to the survey. Among those who provided information about their race/ethnicity, 60 percent Caucasians, 15 percent Latians, 10 percent African-Americans and 7 percent Asian students responded to the survey. Almost half of the respondents were in the age range of 21- 25 years. Seventeen percent each of freshmen and sophomores, 30 percent juniors and 36 percent of the juniors represented the responding strata. A fair representation was evidenced from each of the school and colleges at the university. Here are the major findings:

- Almost 75 percent of the respondents indicated that they were not aware and did not participated in activities pertaining to civic engagement at MSU.
- Almost 11 percent of the respondents indicated that they had taken a service learning course at MSU.
- A large proportion of undergraduates agree or strongly agree that “*they can make a difference in their community*” (85 percent); that “*they are comfortable working with cultures other than their own*” (79 percent); that “*they have the responsibility to serve their community*”; and that “*aside from their involvement with civic engagement activities at MSU, they still believe in participating in their own community*” (70 percent).
- Education (94 percent), Human rights (89 percent), Civil rights (86 percent) Health care (84 percent), were cited as important or very important issues by the respondents.
- Seventy-five percent of the responding undergraduates indicated that they had voted on- or off-campus and over two-thirds believed that it was their responsibility to do the same.
- A majority of the undergraduates indicated that the top most reason for participating in various activities was that they felt that they can make a difference.
- Television and Newspaper were cited as the most influential media for getting local, national or international news. On-line or internet emerged as an important media in getting news as well.
- Word of mouth was most influential in getting information about volunteering, fundraising/charity or community needs.
- Undergraduates cited the following suggestions to increase the awareness of civic engagement at MSU
  - An overwhelmingly large proportion of the respondents indicated that civic engagement activities be advertised.
  - Areas that could be used for advertisement were cited as: Montclairion, Web site, course catalogues, Dormitories, Black Board, Radio and other high traffic areas.
  - Provide incentives in the form of letter of recommendations, credits and formal awards.
  - Activities should be scheduled at convenient times
  - Incorporate civic awareness in courses at MSU.
  - Assist students to envision issues related to civic awareness and guide them.

The results of the survey can be found by clicking on “Engagement Survey” at: <http://www.montclair.edu/americandemocracyproject/projects.html>

### **Presentation at the 2006 National ADP Conference** (June 2006)

Five members of the ADP Steering Committee made a presentation at the national ADP conference in Utah entitled: Building the Campus Infrastructure to Support Civic Engagement. The panelists discussed the context for the project at Montclair State University and the strategies and programs employed during the first year to encourage civic engagement. The design, implementation and

preliminary results of the campus audit were also presented, and members of the audience were genuinely impressed with the range of activities and accomplishments during the first year. The conference presentation is available on the MSU ADP website.

### **MSU ADP Committee Structure and Procedures** (June 2006 - Procedural Guidelines Subcommittee)

Dr. Todd Kelshaw used his disciplinary training and expertise with the support of his sub-committee members in taking on the task of developing procedures and guidelines for the MSU American Democracy Project. The Procedures Subcommittee submitted a meticulously drafted nine page document entitled "MSU ADP Committee Structure and Procedures," defining the organizational structure and democratic mode of operation to be followed by the MSU ADP. We hope this exemplary document can serve as a model for ADPs throughout the country.

### **Lessons Learned and Future Plans**

A review of the attached proposal and first-year implementation strategy demonstrates the first year of the MSU ADP has surpassed all expectation regarding both programming, marketing, staff involvement, and impact. Clearly, the ADP has done its part in assisting MSU satisfy its commitment to civic engagement through pedagogy, scholarship and application involving students, faculty, and institutional projects, programs, centers, and initiatives.

Following the 2006 national ADP conference, the Steering MSU ADP Steering Committee held a future planning session. During this session, the guidelines document submitted by the Procedural Guidelines subcommittee was formally adopted, outlining MSU ADP structures and procedures, roles and responsibilities, categories of activities, etc. The preliminary results of the campus audit were also discussed. The committee entertained numerous ideas for future projects including: a Civic Engagement Brown Bag Lunch Discussion Series, Justice Talking Programming, a Point of View Film Series coordinated by MSU students, and a lecture series addressing immigrant and woman's rights. As an outcome of the 2005-06 Constitution Day activities, Luis Rodriguez has agreed to chair a task force to plan Constitution Day events for 2006-07.

After much discussion, the committee agreed to the need for additional, and more aggressive, project advertising in the coming year, despite the existing commitment to civic engagement among key faculty, staff and student leaders. Additionally, the committee determined the MSU ADP must both do more to assist faculty in applying their scholarship to civic engagement, and more clearly and appropriately recognize students and faculty who participate in the MSU ADP.

Given the uncertainty regarding the 2006-07 budget, the continued participation, or continued level of participation, of active ADP staff members will need to be determined during the coming months. Working in conjunction with

the Provost's office, the MSU ADP Steering Committee will need to determine its future, and whether it should seek designation as a standing committee or as a task force that exists primarily to encourage more projects that foster engagement. Limited budgetary resources were acknowledged though there was general agreement that the work was so important that partnerships and collaboration could continue to produce results with a minimum of support and bureaucratic structure.