

Proposed Task Force on Developing a Campus-wide Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Strategy

To: Faculty Assembly

From: Allison Rank, Civic Engagement Coalition Chair
Gwen Kay, Faculty Assembly Chair

Date: Timeline assumes circulated 9/23/24; so then can be approved on 10/7/24

Rationale

As a regional comprehensive university, SUNY Oswego has an obligation to support our students in developing the skills, values, and knowledge necessary to contribute meaningfully as democratic citizens. As a nation, we're currently facing

- (1) significant problems that require citizens with specific expertise, ethical reasoning, communication skills, etc. to solve;
- (2) the rise of authoritarianism at home and abroad with a significant decline in commitment to democratic values including among young people; and,
- (3) the loss of public forums and cross-cutting networks that provide exposure to a range of perspectives and experience developing the relationships and skills that support democracies.

Faculty and staff in a range of programs, offices, and disciplines are well-positioned to help students build relevant skills and dispositions while also connecting their curricular and co-curricular interests to broader public questions. Our current campus efforts lack cohesion and are often isolated from both each other and from disciplines and programs that could (and should) play a significant role. We do not have an agreed on definition of what constitutes civic engagement, a vision that can pull together curricular and co-curricular civic learning to support one another, or a strategy for assessing our students' growth in these areas. Developing a campus-specific vision around civic engagement will allow us to strengthen our current programming; respond more effectively to SUNY System opportunities, requests, and requirements in this area (including but not limited to the proposed civic discourse competency and Service Corps program), and better invite a range of disciplines and viewpoints into these efforts.¹

¹ Details on the Empire State Service Corps are available [here](#). Appendix I is memo from the Chancellor with the proposed civic discourse learning outcomes (as of September 2024).

The task force will propose a long-term vision of civic engagement that strengthens our ability to meet our responsibility as a regional comprehensive university, fits the needs of Academic and Student Affairs as well as other campus units that engage in this work, and can be embraced by a range of disciplinary perspectives. A cohesive, informed, and integrated civic engagement strategy will enhance both curricular and co-curricular opportunities and make it possible for us to strategically capitalize on - rather than being reactive to - external programs and requirements.

Charge

- Propose a campus definition for civic engagement (and associated terms).
- Recommend curricular and co-curricular learning outcomes and guidance connected to the proposed definition.
- Provide guidance for implementing the Civic Discourse in Democracy core competency (System-proposed core competency expected to be required starting Fall 2025).
- Recommend next steps for developing a cohesive campus-wide civic engagement strategy (e.g., assessment, programming)

Timeline

October 21, 2024: nominations sought at Faculty Assembly; call for administration designees

November 4, 2024: Elections for faculty and professional staff seats; administration designees announced

November 2024: Task force reviews selected literature on definitions and assessment strategies; considers models from other regional comprehensive universities; meet with representative(s) from the American Democracy Project to help guide the planning process

December-February 2024: Continue research into literature and models as needed; review relevant content prepared as part of the [Carnegie Community Engagement Reclassification](#) process; conduct stakeholder focus groups and interviews.

March 2024: Draft task force report

March 31, 2024: Task force report electronically presented to Faculty Assembly
Executive
Board

April 14, 2020: Review by the Academic Policies Council, General Education Council, Graduate Council, Priorities and Planning, UUP, departments, and other interested groups completed and comments submitted to task force

April 28, 2024: Task Force final report due to Faculty Assembly

Membership

Given the importance of embedding civic engagement across campus and thus the need for a definition and strategy that can be embraced across Academic Affairs and Student Affairs as well as a wide range of disciplines, the proposed membership emphasizes representation from across campus.

The task force shall consist of (15) members beyond the conveners:

Seven (7) Faculty members and/or professional staff elected by the Faculty Assembly as follows:

- Two (2) CLAS faculty members – no more than one from any subdivision
- One (1) Library faculty
- One (1) SCMA faculty member
- One (1) School of Business faculty member
- One (1) School of Education faculty member
- One (1) representative from Institutional Research

Two (2) Representatives from Academic Affairs selected by the President

Three (3) Representatives from Student Affairs selected by the President

One (1) Representative from the President's Office

One (1) Representative from Gen Ed Council

One (1) Representative from EXCEL

Prepared by: Allison Rank, Civic Engagement Coalition Chair