

**250 Years of Civic Learning and Engagement:
The Purpose & Impact Across Massachusetts Higher
Education in 2025**



Overview

- Introductions and Framing
 - 9 Whys Exercise | Liberating Structures
 - Commonwealth History & Policy
 - Ideas: How Can We Support the Commonwealth's Aspirations for the Next 250 Years in Regards to Civic Learning & Engagement?
 - Why is Assessment Needed?
 - Next Steps
-



Powerful Purpose

A powerful purpose attracts participation and has two essential attributes.

1. A personal touchstone for you as an individual

2. Fundamental justification for the existence of your work to the larger community

1. Find a partner and ask, “What do you do when working on civic learning and engagement efforts at your institution?”
2. Please make a short list of activities.
3. Then ask, “Why is that important to you?”
4. Keep asking, “Why? Why? Why?” up to nine times or until participants can go no deeper because they have reached the fundamental purpose for this work.

What's Your Why?

Responsibility of institutions to help their students care for one another.

First-generation (citizen) - felt a responsibility to the country.

If we don't have widespread people claiming and enacting civic identities to build the kinds of societies we want to live in we will be living in a S**t storm.

The importance of students recognizing they have a voice- regardless of what their profession / station / career in life is.

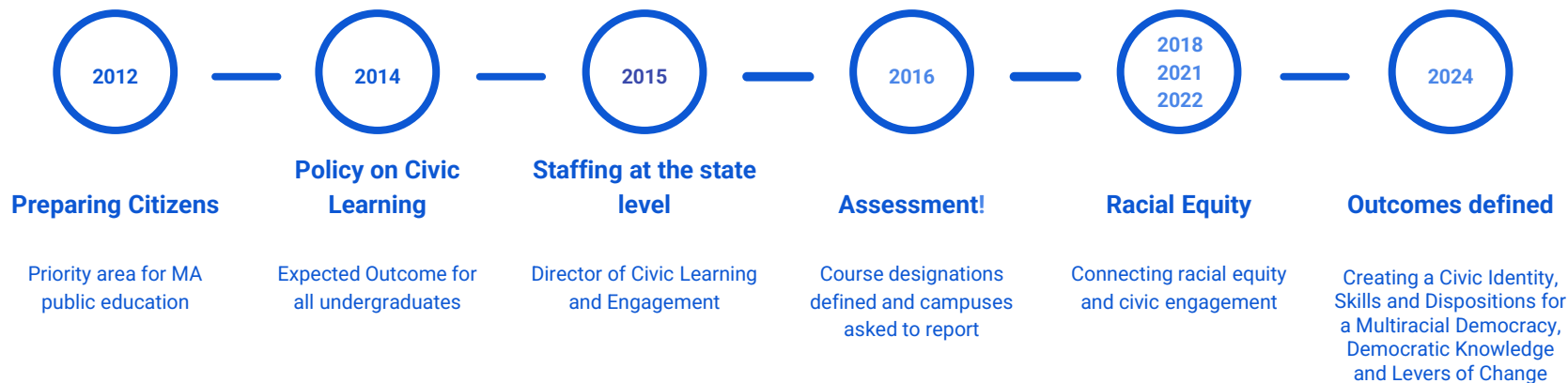
There is value for the institution, the student, and the community in doing civic learning work.

Moving the conversation - so ideologies can intersect.

Essential that students know their role in community change; we cannot rely on the government. We need to connect with one another to make our communities thrive.

Because democracy requires an active citizenry and bringing everyone to the table.

Commonwealth History and Policy



The 2014 policy defined **Civic Learning** as:

acquiring the **knowledge and skills** needed for informed and effective participation in civic and democratic life, and acquiring an understanding of the political and social **values** underlying democratic structures and practices.

The 2016 guidance on course designations defined **Civic Engagement** as activity designed to provide reciprocal benefits to both the students and a broader community or communities beyond the classroom and involving planning, action, and reflection.

What Ideas Do You Have to Support the Commonwealth's Aspirations for the Next 250 Years in regards to Civic Learning & Engagement?

Aspirations for the Next 250 Years

The network is so important - so finding ways within the Commonwealth to invest in the network to support our students in 'being the best' - That the community still stands with the network on this goal.

Democracy still exists.

That there is a shared understanding of what we do in the Commonwealth to support our students.

The Power of Coalition.
That this is strengthened and that we teach folx how to continue to build their coalitions.

That the 'street work' continues - that not just a few individuals know how to do this work [civic engagement] but instead that the masses know.

Higher education will continue to support a civic ethos - inclusive of academic freedom.

Scaling programming that brings community members into systems to support community goals.

Systems that enable the youth to organize and systems to respond accordingly.

That higher education will continue to stand up against tyranny.

Creating spheres of influence to empower all members of community to have the wherewithal to engage

"Liberal education is a **living tradition** whose inherent flexibility and responsiveness contribute to its ongoing vitality and relevance.

Responding directly to the signal challenges of our time—*challenges that strike at the very heart of our democracy*—What Liberal Education Looks Like presents an aspirational vision of liberal education that is centered on its **potential to serve all our students and to renew our democracy**.

Fulfilling this vision will require a **determined effort to rally the higher education community around it** *and to carry it into the public square*.



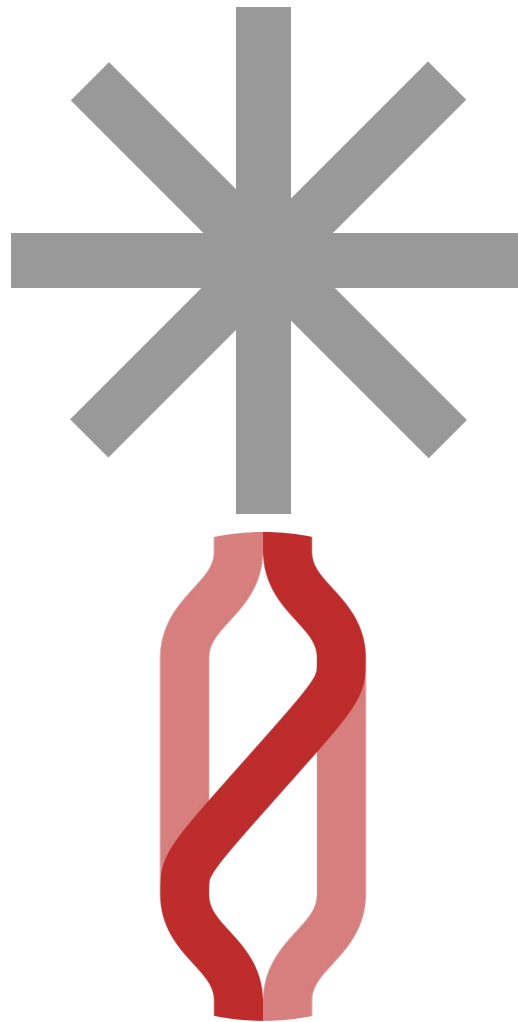
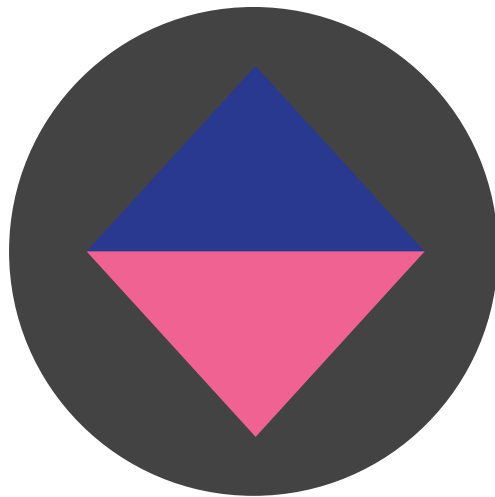
It will also require renewed and reinvigorated commitment to the civic and democratic purposes of higher education."

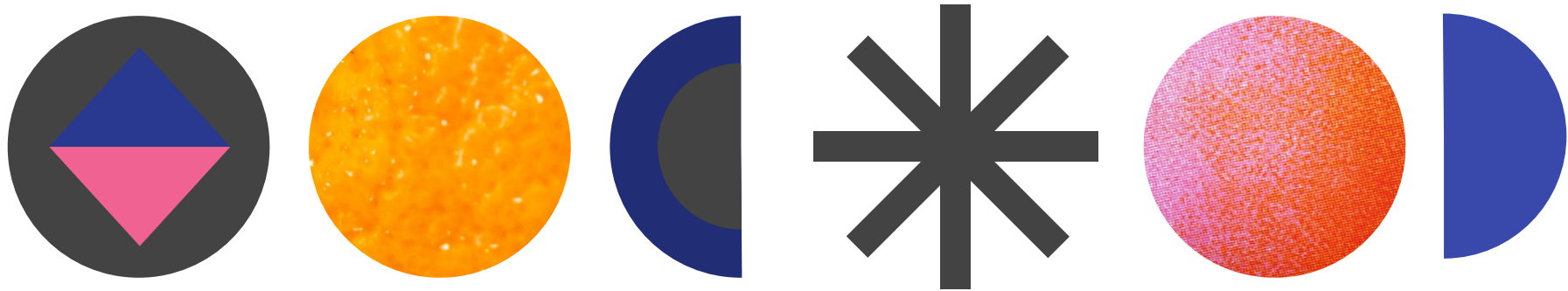
"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Preamble to the *US Constitution*

Join Us This Afternoon:

Putting Vision into
Practice for the Next 250
Years of Democracy:
Tools for Engaging and
Assessing Civic Learning
Outcomes





Putting Vision into Practice for the Next 250 Years of Democracy: Tools for Engaging and Assessing Civic Learning Outcomes



Overview

- Welcome
- Current State of Civic Learning Outcomes
- Case Studies
- Invitation!

Current State of Civic Learning Outcomes

Graduation competency
for civic engagement

In need of revision for
relevance and
timeliness

Course designation

Curricular checklist

Strategic plan
inclusion

Co-curricular outcomes

Presidential
leadership

Mission and values but not a
direct learning outcome

Course level outcomes



Case Study: General Education Outcomes

Quinsigamond Community College, Worcester, MA



Goal Statement: Students will develop civic knowledge, skills and dispositions through learning and practice.

Important note: QCC's learners are diverse in many ways that may impact how they demonstrate mastery of learning outcomes. Learners may use approved assistive technology or other adaptive methods to meet General Education learning outcomes.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

1. **Knowledge:** The learner identifies civic elements within the context of learning experiences.
2. **Knowledge and Dispositions:** The learner examines their own background in the context of civic and democratic principles.
3. **Critical Thinking and Skills:** The learner determines the impact of their participation in civic engagement activities on themselves and the community.

General Education Learning Goals Assessment 2022 - 2023

Mission

General education at Quinsigamond Community College provides students with the skills, knowledge and perspectives that enable them to achieve their academic, professional, and personal goals.

Assessment Plan Highlights

- Civic Learning & Engagement GELG
- Recruit Faculty
- Kick-off meeting in late May
- Assignment Charrette to refine Civic Learning assignments late August 2022
- Data Collection in December 2022
- Assessment of artifacts January 2023

Civic Learning & Engagement GELG

Students will develop civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions through learning and practice

Objective #1

Learner builds personal voice and agency by examining own cultural background in the context of civic and democratic principles.

Objective #2

Learner analyzes civic elements within the context of learning experiences.

Objective #3

Learner reflects upon and connects knowledge from learning experiences to own civic identity and local and global civic life.

Objective #4


When provided the opportunity, learner appraises their participation in activities of personal and public concern that are both life enriching and beneficial to the community.

Data Collection Plan

Measure	Data to be Collected	Date/Term for Collection	Who?
Embedded course assignments that measure at least one of the objectives	Assignment artifacts will be assessed using rubric	Artifacts will be collected in December, 2023	Faculty member will provide assignment artifacts to be assessed.

Helping Faculty Create Assignments to Assess

Assignment (Re)Design Charette

- Faculty came to the Charette with either an existing assignment or one that they had created for this purpose.
 - Assignments were introduced in groups and then feedback was offered on the clarity and transparency of the assignment as well as it's effectiveness to assess the SLO
 - Feedback on the Charette was very positive.
 - **“When I saw how long it was I thought the morning would drag on, but instead it flew by and I found it really interesting to hear about the other assignments. I thought the feedback on my assignment was very useful”**
- 

Evidence Collection, Evaluation and Interpretation


- 187 student artifacts were collected across 15 different assignments from faculty teaching in two separate schools at the end of the Spring 2023 semester
- Based on the funding available, four members of the QCC QORE team were able to assess 78 artifacts.
- This evaluation phase started during the summer of 2023 lasting through fall 2023 and included an orientation session, a norming session, independent evaluation of the 78 artifacts.
- We then met to analyze the results and plan our next steps.
- This assessment aimed to provide feedback that would help students, faculty, and staff understand learning strengths and areas for improvement.

Civic Learning SLO Assessed

- Rubric used to assess artifacts.

CLE General Education Rubric

✓ Description: **This rubric is based on the Civic Learning and Engagement General Education student learning outcomes as of 2022, when this project started. It is being used for the CLE Pilot Assessment (Summer 2023).**

	4 Distinguish ed	3 Proficient	2 Developing	1 Novice	0 Not evident
1. KNOWLEDGE: The learner identifies civic elements within the context of learner experiences. 					
2. KNOWLEDGE AND DISPOSITIONS: The learner builds personal voice and agency by examining <u>own</u> cultural background in the context of civic and democratic principles.					
3. CRITICAL THINKING AND DISPOSITIONS: The learner reflects upon and connects knowledge from learning experiences to given levels of civic engagement (e.g. forging own civic identity; participating in local and global civic life)					
4. CRITICAL THINKING, DISPOSITIONS, and SKILLS: The learner determines the impact of their participation in civic engagement on themselves and the					

Case Study: Civic Values Assessment Rubric

This is an assessment rubric modeled after the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics, drafted by a team convened by the DHE in 2016. It presents this definition: *Values guide and are guided by our actions. Civic Values are the social and political values that underlie democratic structures and practices; they guide engagement in civic life, orienting members of a community or citizens of a democracy to act with others to foster public deliberation and collective work toward a common good*. It provides Framing Language and a Glossary, along with a Rubric with 7 categories, each with four performance indicators for levels of performance from Benchmark to Capstone. The 7 categories are:

- Empathy
- Open-mindedness
- Civic Negotiation
- Diversity
- Human Dignity
- Social Justice
- Public Good

The rubric can be found at [Rubrics for Civic Knowledge & Civic Values – A National Collaboration](#).

Civic Values Rubric

	Capstone (4)	Milestone (3)	Milestone (2)	Benchmark (1)
Empathy				
Open-mindedness				
Civic Negotiation				
Diversity				
Human Dignity				
Social Justice				
Public Good				

Case Study: Civic Learning Through a Lens of Racial Equity

The handouts available in the room identify four domains of learning, each with multiple elements:

- **Creating a Civic Identity** ,
- **Skills and Dispositions for a Multiracial Democracy** ,
- **Democratic Knowledge and Levers of Change** , and
- **Practical Experience with Communities On and Off Campus** .

Assessment tools exist to measure some elements of these domains, especially more traditional elements of knowledge and skills, but we haven't yet found tools for assessing the integration of knowledge and skills with a commitment to racial equity or for assessing the creation of a civic identity and a sense of agency to address and respond to injustices.

Available at [A Framework for Civic Learning Through a Lens of Racial Equity.pdf](#).

Identify stakeholders to lead and actively participate in the inventory process

Clarify the institution's civic purpose and rationale for conducting the inventory

Scope the relevant activities to be inventoried

Determine the methods used to gather information

What can it be integrated into?

Activities Rubric

CAMPUS CULTURE:

	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary
Alignment and articulation of civic and democratic purposes, e.g. reflection of institutional history and context; mission, vision, and strategy; communication	There is no direct mention of civic and democratic purposes in the institution's mission and vision.	Institution's mission and vision mentions civic and/or democratic purposes	Institution mission clearly articulates civic and democratic purposes
	Strategic plans do not purpose not adequately address the institution's civic mission and vision	Some strategic plans throughout the institution address the importance of civic and democratic purposes	Strategic plans throughout the institution clearly focus on promoting its civic and democratic purposes
	Little communication exists that emphasizes the institution's broader civic and democratic purposes	There is some communication throughout the broader institution that emphasizes the institution's civic and democratic purposes	Institution has reflected on its historical role in addressing issues pertaining to its civic and democratic purposes Communication vehicles effectively emphasize the institution's civic and democratic purposes
Operationalization and integration of civic and democratic purposes, e.g. policies for academic freedom and free speech; opportunities for shared governance, etc.	Few, if any, opportunities exist for the campus community to participate in shared governance	Some opportunities exist for the campus community to participate in shared governance activities	Many opportunities exist for the campus community to participate and influence the broader campus community through shared governance
	There is not clear understanding of the campus' freedom of speech policy	A policy exists regarding freedom of speech, but has not been updated/is not well-understood	A clear policy on freedom of speech is well-understood across campus
	Definitions of the campus policies on civic purpose are hard to find on the institution's website	The campus community sometimes feels that they are effectively able to articulate their voice to affect the institution	The campus community feel that their voice matters in addressing issues at the institutional level
	Campus members do not feel like their voice matters in campus issues The community is not adequately	There are sporadic efforts to integrate the broader community into campus efforts	Efforts exist to integrate and involve the broader community (around the campus) into campus activities

Case Study: Democracy Inventory Guide

AAC&U + Campus Compact

Useful Resources

The Compiled List

[Civic Learning, Engagement,
Assessment, Research,
Culture Resources](#)

Civic Learning Resources



Please add your ideas; you will have access to the developing resource list.

Thank you!



Invitation - Keep the Conversation Going

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Civic Learning and Engagement
Community of Practice
May 9 (10-11am)

October Conference

EXTRAS!!

Commonwealth History and Policy

2012: MA BHE adopts “Preparing Citizens” as one of 6 strategic priorities for MA public higher education.

2014: MA BHE adopts “Policy on Civic Learning” defining civic learning and calling on all public institutions to involve all their undergraduates in civic learning through the classroom, the curriculum, and engagement in communities beyond the campus.

2015: MA DHE hires John Reiff (part-time) as Director of Civic Learning and Engagement to work with campuses to build capacity for civic learning.

2016: MA DHE asks campuses to identify and report courses with Civic Learning with Engagement Required, Civic Learning with Engagement Optional, and just Civic Learning. Reiff begins organizing statewide conferences on civic learning.

2018: MA BHE adopts Racial Equity as its top priority for MA public higher education. The vision statement *Newly Undergraduate Experience* (2021) and the implementation recommendations in the *Strategic Plan for Racial Equity* (2022) connect civic learning with racial equity.

2020, 2021, and 2023: DHE leads two virtual symposia followed by a hybrid conference exploring *grassroots* civic engagement.

2024: DHE and cross-campus team create professional and curriculum development tool “Civic Learning Through a Lens of Racial Equity,” using it to lead 5 regional two-day PD institutes across the state. The tool identifies 4 major outcome domains: **Creating a Civic Identity**, **Skills and Dispositions for a Multiracial Democracy**, **Democratic Knowledge and Levers of Change**, and **Practical Experience with Communities On and Off Campus**.

2025: DHE involves faculty and staff from across the state in discussing assessment of civic learning outcomes.

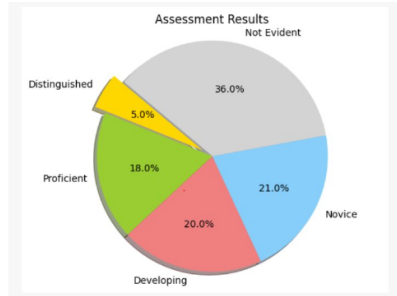
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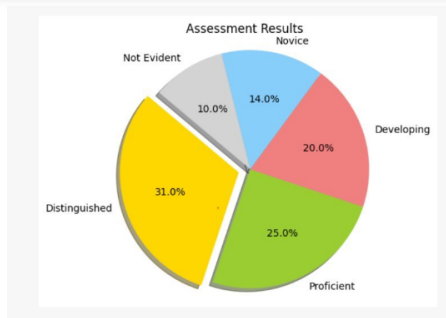
Results

SLO #2 KNOWLEDGE AND DISPOSITIONS: The learner builds personal voice and agency by examining own cultural background in the context of civic and democratic principles.



Results

SLO #3 CRITICAL THINKING AND DISPOSITIONS: The learner reflects upon and connects knowledge from learning experiences to given levels of civic engagement (e.g. forging own civic identity; participating in local and global civic life)



What Did We Learn and What Do We Want to Know Next?

About the Process

- Continued professional development opportunities
- Separate Rubrics for Each SLO
- Need for more artifacts from a broader range of disciplines

From the Results?

- Raise awareness of the importance of civic learning both in the classroom and beyond.
- Develop tailored instructional strategies to address specific GSLOs where students underperformed
- More systematic review of student performance at different course levels