



2-12-2020

Civics Across Campus: Designing Effective Extracurricular Programming

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Recommended Citation

Abernathy, Claire and Forestal, Jennifer L.. Civics Across Campus: Designing Effective Extracurricular Programming. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 16, 1: , 2020. Retrieved from Loyola eCommons, Political Science: Faculty Publications and Other Works, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15512169.2018.1512870>

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Civics Across Campus: Designing Effective Extracurricular Programming

Abstract: This study focuses on examining the role that isolated extracurricular events can play in furthering students' civic education; these one-time events require few resources to implement and therefore provide valuable opportunities for faculty to engage new audiences on their campuses in the work of civic learning. In order to develop more effective civic learning in these isolated extracurricular activities, we follow a two-pronged approach. First, we use survey data to explore the differences in political knowledge, civic skills, democratic values, and feelings of efficacy between extracurricular event attendees and students in introductory political science courses. Second, we use insights drawn from this comparison to suggest strategies to design more effective programming, including identifying key audiences and implementing targeted events. In so doing, our work not only adds to the growing literature on civic learning, but also provides a model for how to practically implement successful, and manageable, extracurricular civic education programs.

Keywords: civic education, extracurricular programs, political skills, democratic values, civic engagement

Political science has long recognized the importance of citizens' habits and attitudes in sustaining a healthy democracy (Tocqueville 1969; Mill 2006). And as early as Aristotle, those invested in the practices of engaged citizenship have looked to education as a site in which to cultivate those habits and gain experience with democratic skills of discussion, negotiation, and compromise (Aristotle 1996; Dewey 1916). There is evidence that this strategy works—levels of education are widely recognized as being correlated with increased political participation (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

More recently, however, there is evidence that our schools are failing in this regard. Young people are demonstrating lower levels of political knowledge, interest, and engagement; only 49% of eligible millennial voters cast ballots in the 2016 general election, substantially lower turnout relative to older generations, and those under the age of 30 account for 32% of the country's "political bystanders"—those who do not follow public affairs and are not registered to vote (Fry 2017; Pew Research Center 2017). And this lack of engagement may betray more serious underlying concerns—recent studies suggest that young people are no longer finding it essential to live in a democracy (Foa and Mounk 2017).

Recognizing the role that institutions of higher education can play in revitalizing democratic engagement, in this study we assess the effectiveness of extracurricular campus programming in helping students develop the knowledge, skills, values, and sense of efficacy they need to be active and informed citizens. In particular, our analysis focuses on examining the role that isolated extracurricular events can play in furthering students civic education; these one-time events require few resources to develop and can be implemented with relative ease. They therefore provide valuable, and manageable, opportunities to engage new audiences in the work of civic learning.

Our investigation into the role of optional campus-wide activities in facilitating students' civic engagement has two parts. First, we examine the differences in civic learning outcomes between classroom and non-classroom settings by comparing survey data on students' political knowledge, civic skills, democratic values, and feelings of efficacy. Conventional wisdom would have us expect to see more successful interventions in the classroom; though our data confirms this outcome, our results nevertheless help us to more precisely understand the differences between extracurricular activities and classroom interventions. More specifically, our data show that while extracurricular event attendees are generally more knowledgeable than students in our courses are at the beginning of the semester, these attendees are less likely to have confidence in their skills and political efficacy, particularly relative to our students at the end of the semester.

Second, using these insights from the collected data, we explore ways in which isolated extracurricular events might be altered to improve students' civic learning outcomes. Semester-long courses involve a sustained, and intentional, curriculum; extracurricular programs often are "one-off" events. Though it may therefore be difficult to design singular extracurricular events that mimic coursework perfectly, our data nevertheless points to ways that organizers might develop more intentional extracurricular civic programming in response to student needs. In particular, we highlight the need to identify key audiences and implement targeted events to ensure impactful and comprehensive civic learning across campus. In so doing, our work not only adds to the growing literature on civic learning in higher education, but also provides a model for how to practically implement successful, and manageable, programs of civic education outside the classroom.

Literature Review

Following the publication of *A Crucible Moment* (2012), there has been renewed interest in assessing the effectiveness of civic education programs. Much of this excellent work, however, has focused on using different pedagogical strategies to bring civic education into the classroom and curriculum (Study Group on Civic Learning and Engagement for the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education 2014). But, of course, there is more to a college experience than coursework alone. Indeed, the pedagogical value of extracurricular activities has been widely noted (Kuh 2008). In what follows, we briefly review the literature around civic learning before turning to our own intervention.

Despite variation in emphasis and method, the existing civic education literature all recognizes that deep and effective civic learning occurs across multiple dimensions (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools 2011). As a result, comprehensive civic education programs must focus on four distinct content areas if they are to develop the widest range of democratic capacities in students. Civic education programs must (1) build political knowledge about our system of government (Guilfoile and Delander 2014; Milner 2006), (2) foster civic skills to discuss, evaluate, and formulate arguments about real-world issues and events (Feldman et al. 2007; Guilfoile and Delander 2014; Hess 2009; McDevitt 2008), (3) cultivate democratic values of tolerance, civic responsibility, and respect for freedom and human dignity (Colby et al. 2003), and (4) develop feelings of political efficacy (J. Kahne and Westheimer 2006; Feldman et al 2007; Pasek et al 2008).¹

¹ There are two commonly recognized dimensions of political efficacy: *internal political efficacy* which captures the degree of confidence that individuals have in their own abilities to understand and participate in politics and *external political efficacy* which speaks to individuals' beliefs that government is responsive to citizens' needs and demands.

Each of these dimensions of civic education is necessary to foster student engagement in the practices of effective citizenship.

To date, the growing literature on civic learning outcomes in political science has tended to focus attention primarily on the classroom curriculum and experiences to assess the changes in students' civic attitudes or levels of political knowledge. Scholars have considered the effects of in-class activities like structured debates (Feldman et al. 2007; Kahne, Crow, and Lee 2013) and simulations (Kathlene and Choat 1999; Jenkins 2010). They have also explored the impact of out-of-classroom service-learning experiences (Hunter and Brisbin 2000; Jenkins 2010; Kahne, Crow, and Lee 2013). As a foundational component of higher education, these curricular interventions form the necessary groundwork for any successful civic education program.

While important, however, classroom activity is only one part of the overall college or university experience. To be truly effective, research shows civic learning should span both formal classroom and informal social or extracurricular experiences (Forestal 2016). As less formal, often voluntary, interventions, extracurricular activities serve as valuable pedagogical supplements to students' classroom experiences (Strachan & Senter 2013; Howard & Posler 2012; Kuh 1995; Kuh 1993; Pascarella, Ethington & Smart 1988). And it is when institutions take advantage of these extracurricular experiences to create a "campus climate of engagement" that we see the most successful civic learning outcomes in students (Seligsohn & Grove 2017; Thomas & Brower 2017). Efforts like Miami University's annual campus-wide "Citizenship & Democracy Week" have been shown to use extracurricular events to infuse a commitment to civic education across disciplines, as well as to increase certain civic engagement outcomes in students (Forren 2017). Often, however, these extracurricular interventions are explicitly tied to coursework (Crigler, Goodnight, Armstrong,

& Rameshor 2017; Hoffman 2015) or are included in larger commitments like residential living-learning communities (McTague 2017) or student clubs and organizations (Strachan & Bennion 2017). While these are all important incubators of civic education, they require a higher level of commitment from students. In this study, by contrast, we explore the learning outcomes of lower-stakes, “one-off” extracurricular events on student civic development. By widening the scope of study in this way, we can ensure that scholars have a more comprehensive understanding of effective civic education programs--including, importantly, how to ensure that students achieve civic learning outcomes from the low-cost/low-commitment extracurricular engagements that can be developed and implemented more easily.

Research Design

This study examines civic learning outcomes for students at a mid-sized regional public university in rural New Jersey. Like many institutions of higher education, the campus has organizations dedicated to promoting civic engagement on campus. In order to test the effectiveness of these initiatives, we sought to understand the differences in civic learning outcomes between extracurricular programming and introductory political science courses. Though extracurricular activities do not, of course, involve the same regular participation as courses require, we argue that sustained engagement with civic learning is only one part of what make coursework so successful. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of civic education coursework is the level of intentionality that instructors bring to their course design by tailoring course content towards particular audiences and emphasizing certain learning outcomes over others. By comparing survey data from students

enrolled in introductory political science courses with that of extracurricular event attendees, we can identify strategies for designing similarly intentional programming outside the classroom.

Extracurricular Programming on Campus with the Political Engagement Project. During fall semester 2016, the campus Political Engagement Project (PEP), in partnership with other university offices, sought to foster a climate of political awareness and participation across the campus. Created as part of AASCU's American Democracy Project initiative, PEP is an interdisciplinary committee of faculty, staff, and students who collaborate to plan and promote programming focused on fostering civic education. PEP regularly develops programs - open to students, faculty, staff, and community members - that are designed to increase political awareness and engagement in the campus community.

In addition to the university's ongoing voter registration efforts, in fall 2016 PEP held a lecture series that featured political science faculty as well as guest speakers.² An absentee ballot party in late October served as an informational session on voting, helping students cast their mail-in ballots and assisting students as they requested mail-in ballots.³ Finally, PEP hosted viewing parties for each of the presidential and vice presidential debates, as well as an Election Day party from 7pm until midnight on November 8th.⁴ From late September up through the election, each week featured,

² These presentations, held on a weekly basis throughout the semester, considered a wide range of issues relevant to the 2016 election, including foreign policy, women in politics, media coverage of politics, congressional elections, and the Electoral College.

³ Early voting opportunities are fairly limited in New Jersey, with mail-in ballots being the only option to vote early or away from a voter's precinct polling place. The student body, while largely comprised of New Jersey residents, hails from all parts of the state, making mail-in ballots the only option for many students wishing to vote without missing a day of class.

⁴ At the debate parties, students participated in debate bingo, which helped them to track the issues addressed by the candidates while they watched the debates. At the Election Day party, students watched the results come in, made their final Electoral College projections, and played a round of "Who Said What?" with quotes and policy positions from the presidential candidates. While

on average, two events – one lecture and one party.⁵⁶ Collectively, the lectures and parties constitute PEP’s Election 2016 series.⁷

The Election 2016 series was heavily advertised both on-campus and in the surrounding community through flyers, email blasts, and press releases and was open to all students, faculty, staff, and community members. For most of these events, there was no requirement that students attend; though individual faculty did offer extra credit for attendance at events in the series, we do not have any information about how many faculty did so.⁸

In order to assess the effectiveness of these lectures and parties in promoting civic learning, we conducted post-test surveys at three events during the Election 2016 series: (1) “Foreign Policy in the 2016 Election and Beyond,”⁹ a lecture from a political science professor specializing in International Relations; (2) the watch party for the 3rd presidential debate; and (3) “A History of

refreshments were not provided at the lectures in the Election 2016 series, light refreshments were available at each debate watch, and pizza and cake were served at the Election Day party.

⁵ Find a complete list of lectures and parties included as part of the Political Engagement Project’s Election 2016 Series in Appendix A.

⁶ Outside of these scheduled events, the Political Engagement Project also maintained an Electoral College tracker which was updated on a weekly basis to reflect the latest polling in battleground states, and a Democracy Wall where students would respond to a new question each week. These weekly open-ended questions were tied to the events occurring that week, directing students’ attention to topics that they could learn more about at a lecture that week. For example, in the week that featured our lecture on foreign policy, the question posed on the Democracy Wall was “What foreign policy issues are the most important to you during this election?” In this way, the Democracy Wall served as an additional way to promote the events in the Election 2016 Series.

⁷ The Election 2016 series, like most PEP events, was funded from PEP’s general operating budget which is allocated annually from the Office of the Provost.

⁸ Only one event required attendance from some of the students present. A lecture on women in politics in the 2016 election, delivered by a guest speaker, was held during a class meeting time, and several faculty brought their classes to the event.

⁹ This lecture presented candidates’ statements and positions as well as information about the state of public opinion on a range of foreign policy issues (trade, the Iranian nuclear agreement, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and broader views about the role of the U.S. internationally).

Presidential Spin,” a lecture from a guest speaker, a professor of history and journalism at a neighboring university. Student attendees at each of these three events were given the voluntary survey to complete at the end of the event; in total, we received 61 survey responses from attendees across these three events.^{10 11} The survey included political knowledge questions (3 questions), questions about democratic values (6 questions), and asked students for a self-assessment of their own level of political and civic skills (5 questions) and feelings of political efficacy (2 questions). There were also questions about students’ demographics, as well as questions that solicited feedback about the events themselves.¹²

These survey results report the civic learning outcomes for student participants in this extracurricular programming. However, considering the results from Election 2016 attendees in isolation does not allow us to adequately assess how the political knowledge, skills, values, and efficacy demonstrated by student attendees at extracurricular programs differ from those observed among students in different pedagogical contexts. Comparison of the civic learning outcomes at

¹⁰ We estimate that the survey administered at the guest lecture and at the final debate watching party had a response rate of about 50%, while survey at the foreign policy lecture had a response rate nearing 100% of the smaller audience that was present at that lecture.

¹¹ In assessing the civic learning among event attendees, we are only observing responses to a post-test survey completed at the close of the PEP event that they attended. Using only post-event survey administration, we are not able to establish a pre-event baseline for the population of event attendees, nor are we able to directly observe how student performance on the survey changed as a result of the event. Given that, we consider this survey to be a reflection of the political knowledge, skills, values, and efficacy of student participants in the PEP extracurricular events, and not a direct measure of how the event changed their outcomes.

¹² This survey instrument largely draws from previous instruments focused on civic and political education; questions come from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), the American National Election Study, and the American Democracy Project’s *Educating for Democracy* project, among others. See the survey instrument used at these three events in Appendix B.1. Where relevant, the existing survey instruments where the questions were drawn from are noted.

events to those observed in two introductory political science courses, where we conducted pre- and post-test surveys of students' levels of civic education, provides a valuable baseline; in this comparison, we can assess how the civic learning achieved over the course of an intentionally-developed, semester-long course compares to the civic learning observed among attendees at "one-off" extracurricular events. And, as we argue, the direct comparison of survey responses across these two different populations - students in introductory courses and students in extracurricular events - can indicate strategies for maximizing the impact of extracurricular programming on students' civic learning.

Political Education in Courses. Introductory political science courses are intended to reach wide cross-sections of the student population and to promote civic learning. In our introductory political science courses, instructors select course materials and structure assignments and projects to develop the civic and political knowledge, skills, values, and/or efficacy for our students over the course of multiple meetings during a semester. Indeed, we developed the curriculum and assignments in these introductory courses to cultivate particular civic learning outcomes in our students--- Introduction to Politics, for example, focused on developing students' civic skills and sense of democratic values, while Introduction to American Politics focused on building students' political knowledge, skills, and efficacy. To assess the effectiveness of political science coursework on advancing these student outcomes, we administered a longer survey instrument, which includes the questions asked at the

PEP election events, to students enrolled in our introductory courses as a pre- and post-test to measure their progress toward these desired outcomes over the course of the semester.^{13 14}

Through the pre- and post-test surveys, we are able to assess the changes in civic education that follow from conscientious planning for our courses to cultivate knowledge, skills, values, and efficacy. Seeing the progress of these students, many of whom come into the course demonstrating low levels on these political learning metrics, shows the growth possible within the sustained, structured engagement with political topics offered in the classroom, giving us a standard for potential civic learning growth to aspire to in extracurricular settings.

Demographics

Institutional Demographics. A mid-sized regional public university located in rural New Jersey, our institution is predominantly white and 59% of students are women (Table 1). While the majority of students are enrolled full-time, fewer than half of all students live in on-campus housing; the majority of students commute to campus. Most students, moreover, are originally from the surrounding counties, which are somewhat more Democratic leaning areas, though the plurality of voters in these counties have not declared a partisan affiliation in their voter registration.¹⁵

¹³ 31 students completed both the pre- and post-test surveys in Introduction to American Politics; 27 students completed both the pre- and post test surveys in Introduction to Politics.

¹⁴ In this paper, we report only the results of the questions that were also asked of event participants, not the additional questions included on the longer course survey. The extended survey instrument used in these courses can be found in Appendix B.2. Where relevant, the existing survey instruments where the questions were drawn from are noted.

¹⁵ The party composition of the surrounding counties is 32.21% registered Democrats, 24.93% registered Republicans, 42.29% unaffiliated with a party, and 0.57% affiliated with third party. Information comes from the statewide voter registration summary.

Extracurricular Events. Each of the events in the Election 2016 series was open to students across campus, and the data shows that a relatively diverse set of students attend our PEP events. Men accounted for a slight majority of the event attendees at the presidential spin lecture and the debate watching party, while a substantial share of the audience for the foreign policy lecture were women (Table 1). The racial demographics of event attendees were fairly reflective of the university's racial composition, with the exception of the debate watching party where the student audience was overwhelmingly white (Table 1). The events also attracted students from across different majors, with the exception of the foreign policy lecture, which was attended largely by political science majors (Table 2).

Political Science Introductory Courses. Introduction to Politics and Introduction to American Politics are courses available to students across the university; as these courses can fulfill general education requirements for most students, many students outside of political science enroll in them. In Fall 2016, political science majors accounted for 29.6% of students in Introduction to Politics and 22.6% students in Introduction to American Politics; the majority of students enrolled were from other disciplines, with a large proportion coming from other social sciences (Table 2).¹⁶ The courses are relatively representative of the university's overall racial demographics, though both were much more heavily male than the overall university population (Table 1).

¹⁶ Relative to the university population, social science majors are overrepresented in both Introduction to Politics and Introduction to American Politics. The social sciences account for 21.5% of majors campus, and more than 80% of majors in Introduction to Politics and more than 60% Introduction to American Politics. Students majoring in any field in the social sciences are required to take several courses in other social science disciplines as part of the university's general education expectations, accounting for the high proportion of social science majors enrolled in both courses.

Analysis of Civic Learning In- and Outside the Classroom

How do the civic learning outcomes from extracurricular programming compare to the outcomes evident from our courses? Acknowledging that the structure of extracurricular opportunities differs from the experience of a semester-long course, we anticipate that there will be differences in the civic learning that we see across these two samples. Instead of approaching these differences as incommensurable, however, we seek to understand how we can use the variation in outcomes across courses and extracurricular events to design more effective programming outside the classroom. After comparing students' political knowledge, skills, values, and efficacy across events to the outcomes in our courses, we use this data to consider how we can develop extracurricular programming that captures some of the same strong civic learning evident in our classrooms by the end of the semester.

Political Knowledge. Student attendees at all three PEP events tended to demonstrate high levels of political knowledge. Across all events, 90% of attendees correctly identified which political party is more conservative (Table 3), nearly 60% of attendees were able to name both of New Jersey's Senators (Table 4), and 45.8% of attendees were able to name four or more freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment (Table 5). There was some variation in political knowledge levels across the three events, with guest lecture attendees tending to perform less well on the knowledge questions.

The relatively high knowledge levels of PEP event attendees is even more striking when compared to the baseline responses from students in our courses. While 59% of PEP event attendees could name both of New Jersey's Senators, at the beginning of our courses fewer than 15% of our students in both courses could identify them. Likewise, while almost half of the attendees at PEP events could name four or more of the First Amendment's guaranteed freedoms,

only 17.9% of students in Introduction to American Politics could do so. While more students in Introduction to Politics could identify First Amendment freedoms (37%), the percentage still falls short of the 45% of student attendees at PEP events who could do the same.

However, by the close of the semester, the levels of political knowledge among students in our courses had increased substantially. Students enrolled in Introduction to American Politics, in particular, demonstrated levels of political knowledge that surpassed those observed among event attendees - by the end of the term, 71% of students could name both of the state's Senators and 55% could list four or more freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment. The Introduction to American Politics course achieved its civic learning objective of developing students' political knowledge; students displayed measurable gains on this civic learning outcome, even surpassing the high knowledge levels evident among event attendees.

Political Skills. In questions aimed at assessing students' political skills, students were asked to rate their abilities to engage with politicians and assess political problems. Students at the PEP events tended to report a high degree of confidence in their abilities, indicating that they could perform these tasks "well" or "very well." A slight majority of attendees across all events indicated that they knew who to contact to get something done about a social or political problem (Table 6), and 37.3% of event participants reported confidence in their ability to develop strategies for political actions (Table 10). For the other political skills, large majorities of event attendees believed that they could effectively recognize conflicting political interests (Table 7), weigh pros and cons of different political positions (Table 8), and articulate their political views (Table 9).

However, there is again variation across these events in the skills that participants felt that they had. Students attending the foreign policy lecture and debate watch tended to rate themselves

as highly capable across a range of political skills. In contrast, attendees at the history guest lecture tended to rate themselves lower across most of these political skills, demonstrating less confidence in their abilities to know who to contact, to recognize conflicting interests, to articulate personal political views, and to develop strategies for political action.

In their lower self-assessment of their political skills, the survey responses from guest lecture attendees more closely align with students' self-ratings at the start of our courses. Students began both Introduction to Politics and Introduction to American Politics with low levels of confidence in their political skills. In particular, students in both courses expressed little confidence in their abilities to know whom to contact about social or political problems or to develop strategies for political action (Tables 6, 10). Yet by the end of the semester, students in both courses had improved their political skills well beyond those reported by the PEP event attendees. By the end of the semester, 67% of Introduction to Politics students and 84% of Introduction to American Politics students indicated that they would know whom to contact about a social or political problem; by contrast, only 50.8% of attendees across all PEP events rated themselves as capable of practicing this skill "well" or "very well" (Table 6).

Likewise, while only 37% of student respondents at events expressed confidence in their capability to develop strategies for political action, 48% of Introduction to Politics students and 64.5% of Introduction to American Politics students felt assured in their ability to create such strategies by the end of the semester (Table 10). In both classes, the development of students' political skills was a key learning objective and, by the close of the semester, students had grown more confident in their capacities to engage in political action. Indeed, by the end of the term,

students in our courses felt far more confident across all political skills than PEP event attendees (Tables 6-10).

Democratic Values. In assessing their understanding of democratic values, students were presented with different instances that might be observed in a democracy and asked to rate them on a scale from “very bad for democracy” to “very good for democracy.” Overall, the large majority of students at the PEP events indicated in their responses that the need to express opinions freely (Table 11), to listen to and discuss politics with people that they disagree with (Tables 12, 15), to demand political rights (Table 13), and to peacefully protest against unjust laws (Table 16) were “somewhat good” or “very good” for democracy. While students across events were largely in agreement on whether some traits were basically good for democracy, differences are observed across events in the willingness of students to select the strongest response category (“very good for democracy”); attendees at the foreign policy lecture and the debate watching party were more likely to select “very good for democracy” compared to attendees at the guest lecture.

Despite overall support for democratic values demonstrated in event attendees’ responses, however, some students indicated that certain actions that scholars widely agree are valuable for democracy (e.g. people demanding their political and social rights) were bad for democracy. Additionally, 12.1% of student respondents at events thought that it was good for democracy when people who are critical of the government are forbidden from speaking at public meetings (Table 14). Though there was strong consensus on most of the political values questions, not all students demonstrated an understanding of these foundational democratic values and norms.

As with political knowledge and skills, the PEP attendees’ understanding of democratic values--particularly of those attending the guest lecture-- was more similar to the baseline responses

at the start of our courses (Tables 11-16). Indeed, PEP event attendees often supported these accepted democratic values more strongly than did students in our classes. For example, while 50.8% of PEP event attendees indicated that it was “very good for democracy” when citizens’ demand political rights, for example, only 44% of students in Introduction to Politics, and only 35% of students in Introduction to American Politics, thought the same.

At the end of the semester, however, students in our courses again out-performed the PEP event attendees. While only 50.8% of student respondents at the PEP events considered it “very good for democracy” when people demand their political and social rights, nearly three-quarters of Introduction to Politics students recognized this as a “very” important democratic value by the end of the semester. Similarly, 77.8% of Introduction to Politics students indicated that it was “very good for democracy” when everyone has the right to express opinions freely, compared to 55.9% of event attendees expressing the same. The cultivation of democratic values was a core learning objective in Introduction to Politics, and, over the course of the semester, students in this course were more likely to develop an enhanced understanding of democratic values relative to event attendees.

Political Efficacy. Students attending PEP events reported confidence in their personal grasp of politics, with 73.8% of attendees across all events responding that they “agree somewhat” or “agree strongly” that they have a good understanding of important political issues (Table 17). These responses, which reflect students’ sense of internal political efficacy, did vary across events; strong majorities of students at the debate watch and the foreign policy lecture demonstrated high internal efficacy, while slightly less than half of students at the history guest lecture indicated that they had a solid understanding of political issues.

Event attendees were somewhat less confident that the government is responsive to the demands of average citizens. Across all events, 53.3% responded “disagree somewhat” or “disagree strongly” that “people like me don’t have a say” in government decisions, indicating that a slight majority have a sense of external political efficacy (Table 18). Students at the foreign policy lecture demonstrated lower levels of external political efficacy, with half of attendees expressing skepticism that people like them have influence on government. This stood in contrast to students at the other two events, where slight majorities indicated that average citizens do have a say in what government does.

Comparing event attendees and students at the start of our courses, both samples demonstrated relatively similar levels of internal political efficacy. By the end of the semester, however, more students in both Introduction to Politics (55.5%) and Introduction to American Politics (48.4%) strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of political issues; only 27.9% of event attendees strongly agreed. Turning to external political efficacy, event attendees expressed higher confidence that people like them do have a say in government actions compared to the class samples at the start of the semester. However, by the end of the term students in Introduction to American Politics, in particular, exceeded the external political efficacy demonstrated by event attendees. Student responses from that course reveal students’ developing sense of external political efficacy - by the end of the semester, 67.8% of students in the course disagreed that they don’t have a say in government decisions, surpassing the 53.3% of students at events who disagreed.

After analyzing these survey responses, it is clear that there are gaps in students’ civic learning. As we saw, the PEP event attendees--students who self-selected to participate in election-related extracurricular programming--had similar, or at times higher, civic learning outcomes

compared to the students in our courses at the beginning of the semester. And yet, the students in our courses saw often dramatic shifts in their civic learning outcomes by end of the term as they narrowed their gaps in civic learning. Across both Introduction to Politics and Introduction to American Politics, students at the end of the semester had made marked progress on the civic learning outcomes that each course had prioritized - students in Introduction to Politics developed a stronger sense of democratic values and their own political skills, while students in Introduction to American Politics demonstrated higher levels of political knowledge, greater confidence in their political skills, and growth in their feelings of efficacy. Though some of this variation between courses and PEP events is to be expected from the difference in format between the sustained instruction of a semester-long course and the “one-off” extracurricular events, as we discuss below, we argue that these differences in civic learning outcomes are nonetheless instructive as we consider how to build more successful extracurricular programming around civic learning.

Maximizing Civic Learning Outside the Classroom

In order to cultivate sustainable civic habits in our students, our initial exploration in assessing extracurricular civic learning experiences highlights the importance of using isolated events to cultivate the political knowledge, skills, values, and efficacy of audiences that are missed by classroom-based civic learning programs. Much of the recent scholarship assessing the role of extracurriculars in promoting civic engagement has focused on more intensive extracurricular programming (e.g. coordinated campus-wide event series (Forren 2017), residential learning communities (McTague 2017), student clubs and organizations (Strachan and Bennion 2017), or extracurricular opportunities tied explicitly to courses (Crigler et al 2017)). In contrast, we consider

the impact that one-time extracurricular events have on students' civic education. These "one-off" events can be implemented much more easily by faculty interested in creating civic and political learning opportunities for students outside the classroom, requiring fewer resources and less extensive coordination than some of the other valuable yet time- and resource-intensive programs that have been the subject of recent analyses. Here, we discuss how we can use the differences between civic learning outcomes in our classrooms and the PEP events to develop extracurricular events that might serve as more effective venues for civic education.

The data collected from our political science courses highlights the potential for dramatic changes in students' civic learning outcomes. And this is to be expected. When designing courses, instructors make deliberate decisions about assignments, course content and structure, as well as incentives to complete this work. Consistent with the literature (e.g. McHugh & Mayer 2013; Forestiere 2015), our results show that intentionally designing courses to develop students' civic learning outcomes can be a successful strategy for improving students' civic learning.

However, our courses cannot reach all students across campus. Given this, institutions that value civic education programming should consider how extracurricular events can and should serve as an important avenue for students outside our classrooms to develop political knowledge, skills, values, and political efficacy. Clearly, attendance at extracurricular events differs from enrollment in a semester-long course. Courses offer sustained contact with the curriculum, while extracurricular programming offers more limited opportunities to engage with ideas during one-time events happening intermittently throughout the semester. While instructors can expect students will complete assignments and attend classes, extracurricular event planners have limited incentives at their disposal to encourage attendance and engagement. The optional nature of extracurricular

activities, as well as their irregularity, makes designing extracurricular civic learning programming that much more challenging.

And yet, we argue that these differences between curricular and extracurricular activities are not insurmountable. By comparing survey data collected from PEP event attendees with similar data collected in coursework, we find two areas in which the differences between courses and extracurricular activities are instructive, pointing to strategies that organizers might use to design more effective extracurricular events. In particular, we highlight issues of 1) *audience*, the type of students the intervention is designed to reach, and 2) *learning outcomes*, the type of educational objectives the intervention is designed to achieve.

Audience

Judging from the set of students in our courses relative to students attending PEP events, extracurriculars are an important opportunity to extend civic learning to students outside the social sciences who are less likely to be taking our courses. Students enrolled in Introduction to Politics and Introduction to American Politics came disproportionately from disciplines within the social sciences; in contrast, some of our events attracted students from a wider range of majors. Notably, a large number of arts and humanities students attended the guest lecture, which was co-sponsored with the history program, and students from across disciplines joined us for the debate watch.

Within the constraints of degree and curriculum requirements imposed at the university level, individual faculty have less ability to encourage students from other disciplines to take more political science courses; however, we *can* use extracurriculars to reach groups of students that we otherwise might not. Indeed, the fact that our courses are dominated by students in the social

sciences makes extracurriculars that engage students across campus in civic education even more crucial; these events might be the only exposure to civic education that many students outside the social sciences have. Though the PEP extracurricular events are already attended by students from a more diverse set of disciplines than we teach in our courses, we can still further our efforts to reach students across campus.

By developing programs tailored to students in business, education, and the natural sciences - majors that were underrepresented at both our events and in our courses - we can help students develop the capacity to be politically engaged around the civic and political issues that relate to their interests and their field of study. The interdisciplinary guest lecture serves as a strong model for this strategy, as this partnership tapped into the disciplinary “buy-in” of a number of programs on campus, including those in the arts and humanities--a group that is not as well-represented in our courses. In planning effective “one-off” civic learning events, then, organizers should be conscious of creating events that have this interdisciplinary appeal in order to target audiences who may not be exposed to civic education in courses or see the intrinsic value of civic and political education.

Learning Outcomes

In addition to using this data to think about the audience of extracurricular programming, our data also show how we might begin to tailor extracurricular programming to better meet the educational needs of our students. This is one area in which we find similarities between extracurricular and course planning. Just as courses have learning objectives that are used to drive curriculum decisions, so too should we plan extracurriculars with clear learning outcomes in mind. We see clear improvements among our students on the civic learning outcomes that each course prioritized; bringing the same intentionality of course and curriculum development into

extracurricular events can facilitate more effective civic learning in these outside-the-classroom opportunities.

The PEP Election 2016 series, for example, was largely planned, as many similar extracurricular events are, to convey timely political knowledge about the upcoming election. In our data, however, we notice that students at the PEP events, despite being a self-selected sample, nevertheless had relatively low outcomes on particular political skills, in perceptions of the importance of particular democratic values, and, to a lesser extent, in their levels of political efficacy. Bringing the logic of course design into the extracurricular planning process would mean that we should plan more events that speak to political skills, democratic values, and political efficacy rather than emphasizing knowledge.

Likewise, we might consider mimicking the repetition of course contacts by approaching civic learning extracurriculars as a series of events rather than single isolated occurrences. Often organizations on campuses plan multiple events per semester; instead of thinking of these as “one-off” events, organizers could attempt to develop themes that tie distinct events together. Conceptualizing events as part of a series allows organizers to bring a central theme of political skill-building or democratic values to the context of different political issues that students across disciplines find personally relevant and interesting.

Extracurriculars have been shown to support student learning in a variety of formats (Kuh 2008; Forren 2017; McTague 2017; Strachan and Bennion 2017). As courses are only one part of life on a college or university campus, those seeking to promote civic learning should begin to invest more time in designing extracurricular programming that can achieve similar outcomes. Indeed, though we recognize the differences between time spent in courses and time spent in extracurricular

events, we argue that this only enhances the need to plan extracurricular programs with intentionality. To maximize the effectiveness of extracurricular events as a forum for cultivating students' political knowledge, skills, values, and efficacy, we advocate for approaching civic education outside the classroom as a more cohesive program of events and activities, with each event consciously designed to target specific audiences and to promote certain elements of student's political education.

Conclusion

In an era of reduced funding and increased demands on faculty and staff, it is becoming more and more difficult for institutions of higher education to take on the challenge of providing sustained, high-quality civic education programming. With these constraints in mind, those invested in the work of civic learning must begin to consider how to make best use of all available resources towards that end. In this vein, we have proposed expanding our understanding of civic learning to include not only classroom and curricular interventions, but also to take more seriously the role of extracurricular activities in developing students' political knowledge, skills, values, and feelings of efficacy. Unlike many approaches to the study of extracurricular learning outcomes, however, we turn our attention not to sustained, high-demand activities like student clubs but instead focus primarily on improving civic learning outcomes in smaller, less resource-intensive "one-off" events.

In order to facilitate more effective civic learning in these isolated extracurricular activities, we developed a two-prong approach that uses survey data to 1) explore the differences in students' political knowledge, civic skills, democratic values, and feelings of efficacy between classroom and

non-classroom settings and 2) use these differences to suggest strategies to design more effective programming. As expected, we found that classroom interventions were more successful in improving students' civic learning outcomes; yet using insights from the collected data we can more accurately pinpoint the differences in audiences and outcomes between the two groups. Though extracurricular events will likely never achieve the same outcomes as regular coursework due to structural differences between the two experiences, our study nevertheless demonstrates how organizers can design intentional extracurricular programming that not only better responds to student needs, but that also appeals to often-underserved audiences. The result is a more efficient use of the limited resources campuses can devote to civic learning: more effective extracurricular programming that appeals to wider audiences, without requiring significantly more money or effort.

As with all scholarship in teaching and learning, however, our conclusions are more than just theoretical; there are practical implications of our argument regarding the civic learning outcomes of extracurricular programming. In this final section, we briefly discuss how practitioners and organizers might use our data-driven approach in order to implement more effective extracurricular programming around civic learning. In particular, we consider how our own institution has been using the method discussed here to cultivate a robust extracurricular program that is more intentionally designed to improve students' civic and political education. Finally, we conclude with some implications of this study for the study of civic learning, more generally.

To implement this intentional approach to extracurricular programming on our own campus, the Political Engagement Project is using the data discussed above to tailor our programming in a number of ways. First, responses collected from extracurricular civic engagement events in fall 2016, for example, showed that students were not as well-equipped to engage in

political activity as students who were enrolled in political science courses, particularly with regard to civic skills. As a result, PEP organized a series of “civic action workshops” for the spring 2017 semester; these events were explicitly intended to build students’ civic skills by introducing them, in a hands-on way, to a variety of strategies for engaging with the political system on issues that they find meaningful.

Likewise, the data collected at the fall 2016 events show that the guest lecture --an event that was co-sponsored by the history program--attracted a noticeably different audience than did the two more clearly election-related events. And this difference in audience was accompanied by distinct differences in levels of political knowledge and civic skills. This suggests that there is a definite need, and a potential audience, for events that more clearly introduce students of all disciplines to relevant and important political issues, actors and institutions, both at home and abroad. Using this data, PEP has plans to more regularly partner with disciplines outside the natural allies of political science in order to engage questions of civic engagement with more diverse audiences and perspectives.

In fall 2017, for example, PEP organized a panel event relating to the New Jersey ballot initiative on the environment. Drawing on the lessons about audience outlined above, PEP took an intentionally interdisciplinary approach to planning this event, inviting panelists who represented the perspectives of biology, law, and public policy to speak about how they understood the ballot initiative, its causes, and its consequences from their own disciplinary perspective. Because of the inclusion of the natural sciences as well as the more traditional perspectives of law and public policy, the event was marketed widely--with a deliberate intention to get non-social sciences students in the door. The event was largely a success, with more than 50 attendees from across the university; over

two-thirds of students attending were majoring in the natural sciences, including biology, health sciences, environmental science, and sustainability.

The success of PEP's more recent programming points to the potential benefits of designing extracurricular activities in a more intentional way. But while our study is an important first step in expanding our understanding of effective out-of-classroom civic learning opportunities, it is not the last word in extracurricular civic learning. Scholars of civic learning should spend more time assessing the effects of lower-stakes campus-wide civic engagement events. Research shows that successful civic learning programs will reinforce those themes not only in the classroom, but also throughout a student's life on campus. In many cases, however, these opportunities are tied to courses and are not always available and accessible for all our students. Likewise, though there is excellent work being done on the value of extracurricular programs like living-learning communities and student clubs and organizations, these, too, represent more time- and resource-intensive opportunities. By contrast, our study focuses on lower-stakes, "one-off" extracurricular events, showing how assessing these extracurricular events against political science courses can help to drive more intentional--and effective--programming. In order to ensure that institutions of higher education are maximizing their impact on the civic development of their students, however, more work remains to be done around this question of low-stakes on-campus extracurricular events and programming.

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