

Homeland Security and Civic Engagement

A Report of the Second Annual Summit

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Context

All facets of higher education, especially community colleges, have an important role to play in framing discussions of political and social issues influencing Homeland Security program initiatives with their students and their communities. On February 29, approximately 140 community college educators and public service agency representatives gathered for the second annual Homeland Security and Civic Engagement Summit sponsored by the Community College National Center for Community Engagement and the League for Innovation in the Community College as a part of the League's annual *Innovations* conference in San Francisco. The meeting was held to assist community college stakeholders create and improve homeland security education and training programs that emphasize community engagement. The 2004 summit offered views of current research and practice as well as strategies and tips for connecting homeland security academic curriculum to civic engagement.

The summit drew presenters representing many facets of homeland security program development that emphasize civic engagement. R. Thomas Flynn, President of Monroe Community College (NY) and Jerry Ryan, President of Raritan Valley Community College (NJ), are working with state and federal government leaders to promote and advocate the community college's role in educating and training the Homeland Security workforce. While they both emphasize the critical role of community colleges in responding to this need, they also advocate the benefit of strong partnerships with four-year colleges and universities toward providing a unified approach to meeting the educational and informational needs of students and communities. A focal point in establishing these relationships involves the incorporation of concepts of civic engagement into all levels of program development.

Lyvier Conss, Executive Director of the Community College National Center for Community Engagement (CCNCCE), described model service learning projects throughout the United States that address the critical importance of service learning, civic engagement and homeland security, and domestic preparedness. These programs are funded by The Corporation for National and Community Service, Learn and Serve America, that oversees service-learning grants, and support initiatives to implement projects on homeland security and domestic preparedness, service learning, and civic engagement. The CCNCCE initiative titled Supporting Actions for Engagement (SAFE) was developed in response to two phenomena: (1) the changing homeland security and emergency preparedness needs that have evolved from natural disasters, terrorist actions, the threat of war, and other incidents affecting our communities; and (2) the documented need to involve young people in civic and political institutions.

The SAFE grant supports 10 community colleges throughout the country and provides training for community college presidents and service learning practitioners. Training and technical assistance is provided by experts in the field on service learning and civic engagement throughout the United States and its territories. One aspect of the SAFE project is to conduct program evaluations as well as the development and dissemination of publications. Sub-grantee colleges are providing program development to assist children in developing home evacuation and fire safety plans for their families, as well as

survey instruments to measure a variety of topics from war adjustment to school bullying. As research identifies additional issues, projects will be developed to address them. The point is to encourage the development of best practices that are tailored to respond to the need of the individual community.

Gail Leftwich, the Executive Director of “By the People: America in the World,” an initiative of MacNeil/Lehrer Productions, described a project that aims to energize and enhance the conversation on America’s role in the world through a series of nationwide and local broadcasts and events that demonstrate the relevance of foreign policy issues to local concerns. The project includes three national PBS specials, national and local forums for civic dialogue, and an interactive website (<http://www.by-the-people.org/>). The goals of the project include facilitating discussion among diverse groups by providing web-based and other resources that can support and extend the work of local organizations involved in projects focused on community engagement and development. Community colleges are seen as natural partners in this effort, and summit participants were encouraged to develop ways to collaborate with this program through their institutions.

Larry Thacker, Senior Associate Dean of Career and Technical Programs at Mesa Community College (AZ) described the Connector Program at Mesa Community College (<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/dept/d12/connector/>). This is a service learning program with an experiential learning component that emphasizes civic engagement. Thacker explained that the fire science programs at Mesa have this component as a requirement for the degree/certificate program. Its purpose is to work with citizens who are victims of accident, crime, property loss, or illness after the professional firemen have completed their response protocol. Although police and fire personnel may be expected to fill this role during times of crisis, that assumption is not reasonable. However, students who are enrolled in these programs are trained to provide the support and follow-up needed. The experience of helping citizens in crisis has enormous benefit for these students in terms of understanding each circumstance from a social service perspective. Although the social services imperative differs from the primary mission of public safety organizations, it offers a critical element of support for the agency personnel, as well as for those affected by crisis.

Debbie Mikolajczyk, Coordinator of Entrepreneurial and Leadership Development, and Pam Whitelock, Dean of Lifelong Learning at Gulf Coast Community College (FL) offered perspectives on the value of engaging the community in efforts supporting collaboration, conflict resolution, and consensus. The concept of citizen leadership can be taught through efforts that provide a context for creative problem solving on behalf of the common good. Educating a diverse population to collaborate to resolve conflict, accept responsibility for the direction of the community, and reach consensus about community problems and solutions involves citizen leadership education. Using materials developed by the National Issues Forums and the Kettering Foundation, Gulf Coast Community College developed a Citizen Leadership Institute (<http://lll.gulfcoast.edu/leader/>) to educate students and the community about critical social issues. Whitelock and Mikolajczyk discussed the National Issues Forum topic, “Terrorism, What Should We Do

Now?” The format of this publication was used to set the stage to help students deliberate issues and involve them in the process. The activity was further tied to learning and civic engagement and opened the activity to the public through the college’s public policy institute where students and citizens are trained to be moderators. Participants learn to respect differing perspectives on issues. Once awareness of the problem occurs, active deliberation moves discussion of the issue to the next stage. This process helps participants learn how to respond, how to minimize the likelihood of the same issue happening again, and how to proceed over the longer term. The college believes that it is part of its mission to provide this kind of support to its students and the community. The desired outcome is to provide traditional citizenship education, to foster a sense of duty among the participants that can be broadly shared with their community. Furthering democratic principles by including topics that are often taken for granted in our society, such as voter education and learning how to critically evaluate political and social issues, are necessary to this process.

Jon Alexiou, Director of Community College Initiatives, The Chauncey Group International and a former campus president at Miami Dade Community College, discussed reasons why community colleges should be engaged in conversations about the levels of preparedness necessary for homeland security training initiatives. He reminded the audience that *homeland security* is a new phrase in the lexicon of American life since 9/11. This represents a change of language and a change in national focus. But there is reluctance by community colleges to address the challenges associated with a potential loss of civil liberties. The academy has always stood for civil liberties, civil rights, and tolerance. Homeland security and campus life seem to represent opposite ends of the spectrum. Do these new program initiatives place us at odds with our core values? Alexiou argues that they don’t, but educational institutions must tread this new ground carefully. We must be aware of the attitude and mood of our campuses. Community colleges belong to their communities and, as a result, have a responsibility to moderate the tension between liberty and security. We have only to reflect on events like the Palmer raids, Japanese American internment during World War II, and the McCarthy years to be reminded of our propensity to react because of fear. Today, there are many who fear the post-9/11 reactions could be another example of this behavior. We must ensure that liberty is not compromised by our actions. The tension point between security and liberty must be addressed through thoughtful dialogue and deliberation. We must strive for the participation and involvement of our students, faculty, and community in developing programs that emphasize service learning and civic engagement in order to promote safety without compromising liberty.

Plan of Action

This gathering provided the context for those discussions to occur. The participants were representative of community college public safety programs, industry, and public service entities. They were surveyed at the onset of the program to determine their understanding of and participation in the development of homeland security programs that emphasize civic engagement, as well as their knowledge of available financial resources.¹ A majority of the participants indicated that their colleges were actively involved in

¹ Information shared by Lyvier Conss. Document attached.

program development and that they had a broad understanding of the concept of civic engagement. About half the participants indicated that they were not aware of state and federal grant opportunities, and instead were pursuing these initiatives within existing college resources. Although there was interest in establishing collaborative relationships with educational, public safety, and industry organizations, a minority of the participants indicated that they had not pursued these opportunities. The participants' need paralleled the purpose of the summit, which is to help community colleges create and improve strategies to build civic engagement into homeland security curriculum. Because community colleges are strategically placed throughout the country, they are ideally equipped to provide this education and training that includes the concepts of civic engagement.

Of course, there are challenges when considering how best to engage and educate the population in the aftermath of 9/11 on issues like bioterrorism, infectious disease, civil liberties, and the economic impact of terrorist activities. But when these principles and priorities are identified as a part of solution-oriented approaches – something that is emphasized by civic engagement – costs and tradeoffs can be deliberated. Gulf Coast Community College provides opportunities for students, faculty, and the community to be trained to frame issues so that they can be thoughtfully considered through debate, dialogue, and deliberation. Gulf Coast Community College values the premise that everyone has the innate ability to function as a citizen leader. Every citizen should be prepared to make choices and to accept leadership roles. Our students must possess the skill to apply their knowledge to influence democratic decision making.

Starting Civic Engagement and Homeland Security Programs

CCNCCE is a valuable resource for all colleges that are either developing or retooling programs that incorporate homeland security initiatives across the curriculum. Along with the efforts of the League for Innovation and the National Council for Continuing Education and Training, and with the endorsement and support from the American Association of Community Colleges and the leadership of presidents such as Tom Flynn and Jerry Ryan, community colleges nationwide have stepped up to the plate early on to offer programmatic solutions that hallmark civic engagement. Our organizations are proven to be well-tooled machines designed to respond efficiently and cost effectively. It should be no surprise that they also welcome the opportunity to advance community engagement as part of this educational process. Although not initially successful in convincing the Federal Government that community colleges would be the best provider of these educational initiatives, our institutions began developing programs and enhancing existing programs that emphasize community engagement. This has resulted in community colleges competing in grant processes offered through the Centers for Disease Control, the Department of Homeland Security, Corporation for National and Community Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Education, and the National Institutes of Justice. What will this new workforce look like? What will be the evolving focus of the training? Are program curricula to be grounded in crisis management as we, the citizenry, prepare to live in a state of constant readiness of attack, or is there more to this emerging field? It is critical that the principles of community

engagement remain central to the mission of this emerging field and become a valued component of general education in the postsecondary arena.

For those summit participants who were not living close to areas that were attacked, it is difficult to fully identify with the fear and the very sense of crisis that has been borne by those who did. President Jerry Ryan from Raritan Community College (NJ) poignantly brought this point home. As he recalled, the sheer numbers of victims, as well as the magnitude of the destruction, made it almost impossible for public safety agencies to respond beyond managing the crisis at hand. Who then deals with the aftermath and with those victims whose circumstances are not considered to be critical? From this experience, the college has been actively developing partnerships with local law enforcement, firefighters, and human service agencies to develop community-based programs that assist with the development of evacuation plans and curriculum for child-care centers to help children cope with fear and uncertainty. Evacuation plans with parent notification components are also being implemented for child-care centers in conjunction with local public safety officials, should these centers be at risk. These excellent examples are hallmarks of the role community colleges can play in conjunction with the support of CCNCCE in educating students to become engaged with their community. They are also working examples of the foundational mission of the community college, and they demonstrate what our institutions do best.

Throughout the day, community college leaders whose colleges have developed forward-looking programs provided examples of active civic engagement. These efforts were not limited to public safety programs. Programmatic efforts that emphasize civic engagement are embedded in liberal arts curricula through interdisciplinary course offerings focusing on diversity, public policy, and international issues. Examples include student affairs programming that focuses on service learning initiatives, as well as technology and applied sciences programs that zoom in on biotechnology, information technology, veterinary technology, and aviation programs. In each case, the importance of dialogue with students, faculty, the community, and university partners was emphasized. Each model program demonstrated how community colleges could engage students and their communities in coming to terms with issues surrounding homeland security. Small groups that were led in the afternoon by Gary Thompson, chairman of the Law/Criminal Justice Program at Monroe Community College (NY), in conjunction with the summit's slate of presenters, helped participants develop action plans that can be used on their campuses to identify available resources, local partnerships, and best practices within their communities. Participants were asked to relate their particular scenarios to an academic discipline and identify learning objectives. As a part of this exercise, the teams of participants developed collaborative action plans that brought their organizations' strengths into play. For example, each team was asked to consider a campus crisis that would incorporate civic engagement strategies into the problem-solving process. One team considered childcare center evacuation and parent notification strategies. Another looked at strategies to increase awareness of cyber safety for children and seniors with the support of community agencies, community libraries, inner-city groups, and community action centers. And yet another considered emergency communications and the role students could play in learning to act as intermediaries between the public and

emergency management agencies. There is no limit to the range of collaborative efforts between academic disciplines and social service and community agencies that can be involved in creating information and training programs designed to develop communication strategies that heighten the awareness of citizens and mitigate fear.

All of these activities strengthened the awareness of the participants to more thoughtfully consider these difficult issues with a civic engagement perspective. We are reminded that during times of crisis, we may turn away from our most cherished values. We may be inclined to, as Jon Alexiou stated, “erect barriers between citizens.” Our campuses stand as examples of tolerance and understanding. It is important to recognize that these principles are not necessarily at odds with the objectives of homeland security programs, but we must be vigilant in our efforts to encourage open dialogue and debate whenever possible in the academy as well as in our communities toward the goal of helping to create a more involved citizenry.

Our responsibility as community college educators is to find the middle ground that encourages a reasoned, thoughtful dialogue on these far-reaching issues while engaging all constituencies. Keeping civic engagement at the core of these discussions ensures that those issues central to our freedoms remain at the forefront of the challenges that lie ahead.

CCNCCE stands ready to assist community colleges by providing services and resources, training, model programs, funding opportunities, conferences, and publications, a sample of which is listed below. Please access the website at <http://mc.maricopa.edu/engagement> for more information.

Research and Funding Resources for Disaster Preparedness

Office	Program	Purpose
Health Resources and Services Administration	Emergency Medical Services for Children www.hrs.gov	To protect populations with special needs, including native Americans, minorities, and the disabled; to support demonstration projects for the expansion and improvement of emergency medical services for children who need treatment for trauma or critical care
National Institutes of Justice	Domestic Anti-Terrorism Technology Development Program www.usdoj.gov/njj	To support the development of counterterrorism technologies, assist in the development of standards for those technologies, and work with state and local jurisdictions to identify areas of vulnerability and be prepared to respond
US Department of Education	Education Discretionary Grant Programs for Fiscal Year 2004 http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/find/edlite-forcast.html	Chart 4 – Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools 84.184L – Emergency Response Plans for School Safety Initiatives 84.184L – Safe Schools/Healthy Students (numerous other opportunities)
US Department of Homeland Security	Domestic Preparedness, Homeland Security, Counterterrorism http://www.dhs.gov.dhspublic/display?theme=47&content=533&print=true	Enhancements to state and local terrorism preparedness efforts as well as coordinated prevention and security enhancement for first responders; increase in border and transportation Security Operations. Coast Guard protection. Pre-deployment of federal emergency response assets and active government emergency response plans
RIC's Rural Homeland Security FAQ	Rural Information Center http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/faqs/homelandfaq.htm	Information and funding resources for local governments in rural communities
Rutgers University Homeland Security Research Initiative	Commission of Jobs growth and Economic Development http://dimacs.rutgers.edu/RUHSRI/RUHSR17-8-03.ppy	Aimed at coordinating homeland security research.
University of South Florida	SOURCES for Homeland Security Funding http://www.research.usf.edu/sources/homelandsecurity/	A biweekly online publication from the Division of Research Grants

Research and Funding Resources for Disaster Preparedness

Office	Program	Purpose
Centers for Disease Control	Immunization Research, Demonstration, Public Information and Education www.cdc.gov	To assist states, political subdivisions of states, and other public and private nonprofit entities to conduct research, demonstrations, projects, and provide public information on vaccine-preventable diseases and conditions
Corporation for National Community Service	AmeriCorps, Senior Corps Learn and Serve http://www.nationalservice.org/research http://learnandserve.org/resources/guidelines03.html	Through its three major programs, the Corporation for National and Community Service, part of the USA Freedom Corps, works in partnership with community organizations across the nation to provide opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their country
Department of Health and Human Services	Center for Disease Control www.cdc.gov	To assist states and communities in establishing and maintaining preventative health service programs to immunize individuals against vaccine-preventable diseases.
Department of Homeland Security	Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=63&content=964	This program provides funding for mitigation activities before disaster strikes. In recent years, it has provided assistance for mitigation planning. In FY03, Congress passes a competitive pre-disaster mitigation grant program that will include project funding.
EPA-Environmental Protection Agency Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response	Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention (CEPP) Technical Assistance Grants Program http://www.cfda.gov/static/66810.htm	To provide financial assistance for chemical emergency planning and community right-to-know programs established to prevent or eliminate unreasonable risk to the health and environment of communities within the state