

# Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement (CLDE) For All Postsecondary Students

A New Coalition to Advance Equity-Committed Civic Learning in College

[www.collegeciviclearning.org](http://www.collegeciviclearning.org)

**Founders and Leaders:** American Association of Colleges and Universities, Complete College America, College Promise, and State Higher Education Officers Association (SHEEO). With Support from **Sixty-Five Higher Education and Student Success Organizations**, including **state systems** (MA, MD, VA, UT) and **six institutional accreditors**. (See website for details.)

**Context:** A Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement (**CLDE**) movement has been spreading across the US since the 2012 publication of *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*. (See *A Crucible Moment*, and profiles of civic learning initiatives on website.)

Nonetheless: college-level civic learning remains **optional and deeply inequitable**. (Data point from research on Service Learning: **77 %** of community college students vs **40%** of four-year students **never took a single course with a community-based project**.) Meanwhile, US distrust in democracy has deepened while authoritarian movements gain ground worldwide. Democracy needs new talent.

**Response:** The CLDE Coalition to Engage All College Students with Democracy's Future and **Build New Capacity to Tackle Democracy's Urgent Problems**. To these ends, **CLDE Promotes:**

**Quality and Equity:** Build commitment and capacity—across postsecondary education—to make civic learning and democracy engagement an expected part of a quality college education for all college students, with **equitable participation by students from underserved communities a top priority**.

**Democracy Engagement:** Engage students with democracy's history and future in a **diverse United States, in U.S. communities still struggling to reverse inherited disparities, and in a globally interdependent world where authoritarianism is on the rise**.

**Collaborative Problem-Solving:** Prepare each postsecondary student, through creative combinations of general education, arts and sciences studies, and career-related studies, to **work directly on selected public problems** that society needs to solve—e.g., problems in racial healing, health, education, housing, climate, digital access, human rights, justice systems, interfaith cooperation, and more. **Work on public problems is linked to completion gains**.

**Policy Commitment:** Secure policy support and investment in the goals listed above.

## Questions for Policy and Educational Leaders to Consider:

- See the Framework for College-level CLDE **overleaf**. Find CLDE Examples where all students participate in civic inquiry at [www.collegeciviclearning.org](http://www.collegeciviclearning.org). How can you help with this work?
- Many educators now are making equity a priority. **CLDE calls for students themselves to work on significant public issues, including equity/inequity issues**. Can your equity and civic learning work be connected? What steps can you take to build those connections?
- Where is your institution or state system on College CLDE? Is preparing students to help shape democracy's future a current priority? If not, should it be? **What steps can you take to strengthen leadership commitment to what used to be a top goal for college learning?** (See *A Crucible Moment on website* for more details on that history.)

## Framework for Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement in College

Knowledge	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarity with key democratic texts and universal democratic principles, and with selected debates—in US and other societies—concerning their applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of the diverse cultures, histories, values, and contestations that have shaped US and other world societies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical and sociological understanding of several democratic movements, both US and abroad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to multiple religious traditions and to alternative views about the relation between religion and government</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding one's sources of identity and their influence on civic values, assumptions, and responsibilities to a wider public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of the political systems that frame constitutional democracies and of political levers for influencing change</li> </ul>
Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical inquiry, analysis, and reasoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative reasoning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering and evaluating multiple sources of evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking, engaging, and being informed by multiple perspectives</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written, oral, and multi-media communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberation and bridge building across differences</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to communicate in multiple languages</li> </ul>
Values	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for freedom and human dignity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open-mindedness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tolerance</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Justice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical integrity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility to a larger good</li> </ul>
Collective Action	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of knowledge, skills, and examined values to inform actions taken in concert with other people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Navigation of political systems and processes, both formal and informal</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moral discernment and behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compromise, civility, and mutual respect</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public problem solving with diverse partners</li> </ul>	

Source: The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. 2012. *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities. Page 4. *A Crucible Moment* was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education and developed in concert with K-16 educators, civic organization leaders, and research scholars from all parts of the United States.

**See also:** [Our Shared Commitment: Democracy Learning is a Top Priority for Postsecondary Education](http://www.collegeciviclearning.org). [www.collegeciviclearning.org](http://www.collegeciviclearning.org). How might your organization discuss and engage this Shared Commitment?

For more information, contact Carol Geary Schneider, [cgs@aacu.org](mailto:cgs@aacu.org)