2008 FOCUS Fellows

Elizabeth Carlson, Mennonite College of Nursing

Karen Pfost, Department of Psychology

Joseph Zompetti, School of Communication

Faculty Opportunities for Creating Civic & Community Understanding Among Students

Why do we need civic engagement?

TED Talks:

A must for every teacher to view.

Robinson, K. (2008). *Do schools kill creativity?*

Retrieved December 2, 2008 from

http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html
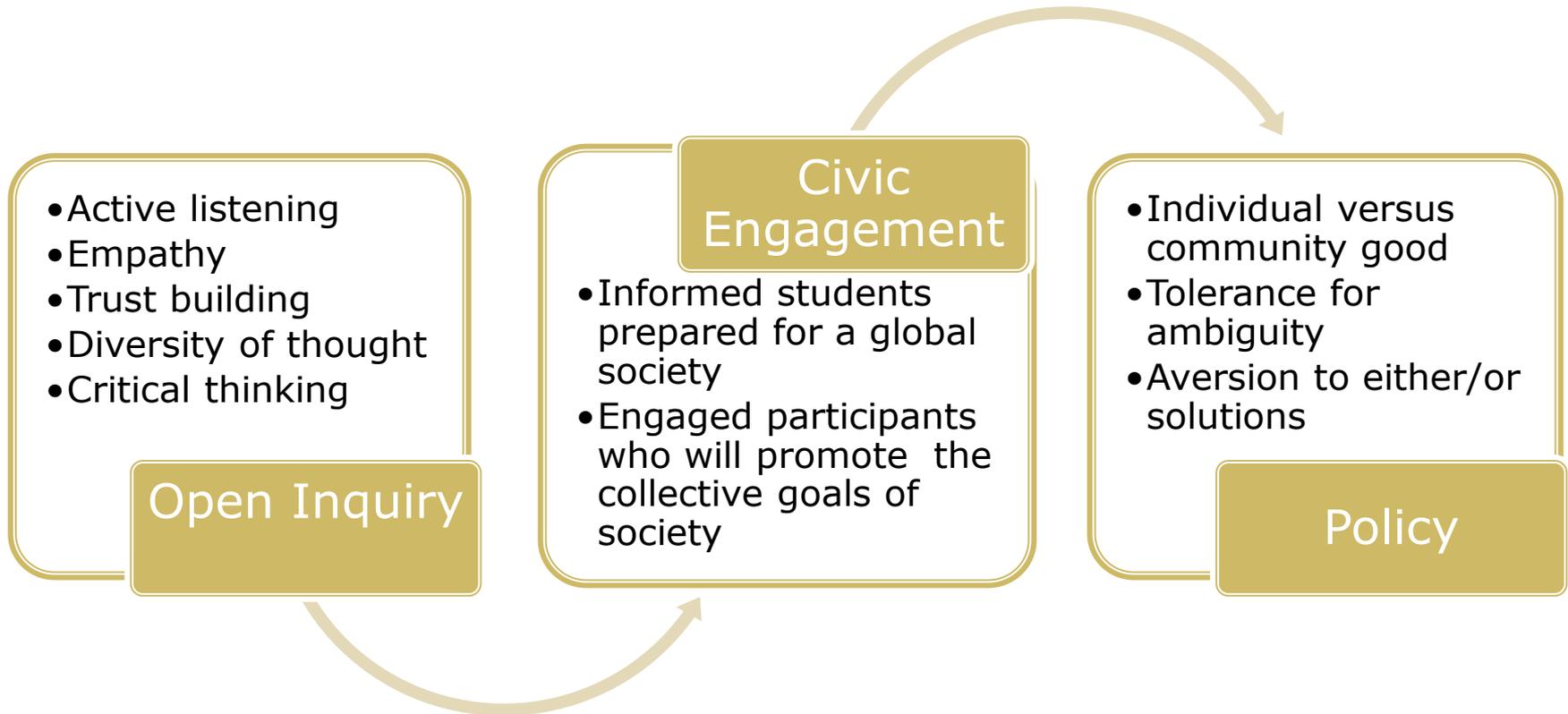
Civic Engagement

ISU prepares students to be **informed** and **engaged** citizens who will promote and further the **collective goals of society**. The University promotes **active learning** experiences through which the student will gain an awareness and understanding of **civic engagement as a lifelong responsibility**. Furthermore, the University encourages faculty and staff to serve as engaged civic leaders and role models promoting the quality of life for all citizens through collaborative and individual action.

Civic Engagement

WELCOME to the FOCUS
(Faculty Opportunities for Creating Civic &
Community Understanding Among
Students) Modules.

http://www.focus.ilstu.edu/modules/

Conceptual Framework

Open Inquiry
- Active listening
- Empathy
- Trust building
- Diversity of thought
- Critical thinking

Civic Engagement
- Informed students prepared for a global society
- Engaged participants who will promote the collective goals of society

Policy
- Individual versus community good
- Tolerance for ambiguity
- Aversion to either/or solutions

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the links between concepts of **open inquiry**, **dialogue**, and **critical thinking** and the implications these concepts have for **decision making**.

- Understand the links between concepts of **policy**, **political learning**, and **civic engagement** and the implications these have for developing **active citizenry**.

Learning Outcomes

- Consider ideas for innovative classroom or curriculum assignments that foster skills of **active listening**, **empathy**, **trust building**, and **collaboration**.

- Consider ideas for innovative classroom or curriculum assignments that foster skills of **media literacy**, **political learning**, **advocacy**, and **policy development**.

Learning Outcomes

- Imagine curriculum changes that would create a **culture of care and caring** within a classroom or an organizational setting.

- Imagine curriculum changes that would create a **culture of participatory inquiry** and active engagement in the political processes that affect daily life at a local, regional, national, or global level.

Open Inquiry

- Civic engagement requires the social skills necessary to successfully collaborate in a group and to forge coalitions among varied interests.

- To do this, the student must be able to learn from different perspectives.

- The ultimate goal is to create a safe space for students to surface their assumptions, to question previous judgments, and to change the way they think, feel, and behave.

Barriers

- **Apathy** from helplessness

- **Incivility** as disrespectful regard for another

- **Avoidance** and indirect politeness

- **Polarization** as dichotomous thinking

- **Sound bite** thinking

- No **role models** of constructive conversations

- **Biases** that impede open-minded exploration

Policy

- Civic engagement requires the social skills necessary to deal respectfully with difference, live with unresolved conflict, and accept that solutions to complex problems should be viewed as temporary and evolving.

- To do this, the student must be able to talk with, and listen respectfully, to those who hold different views.

- The ultimate goal is to create a safe space for students to develop critical awareness of how hierarchies of power and status infuse all personal and group relationships.

Barriers

- **Culture of silence**
  - Bias of only seeking the "right" perspective
- **Culture of individualism**
  - Bias that assumes the malicious intent of others
- **Culture of accountability**
  - Bias toward apathy as in "not my problem"
- **Culture of group atmosphere**
  - Bias toward action versus reflection

Student Learning Outcomes

- Develop listening skills and apply habits of critical analysis to their own lives.

- Display empathy by recognizing multiple perspectives.

- Identify the hidden cultural assumptions that have shaped their world view.

- Seek out the hidden cultural assumptions that have shaped other's world view.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify ethical tensions.

- Highlight ambiguities, fallacious reasoning, and lack of clarity in media presentations.

- Create policy analyses that incorporate aspects of power, tension, and time horizon.

Open Inquiry & Policy Process

Steven Levitt shares data that shows car seats are no more effective than seatbelts in protecting kids from dying in cars. This is a great one to start a discussion on policy, politics, and evidence.

Levitt, S. (2008). *Are children's car seats necessary?* Retrieved December 2, 2008 from

http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/steven_levitt_on_child_carseats.html

Summary