

Infusing Active Citizenship Throughout a Research University: The Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University

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Abstract

The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University is a university-wide initiative to prepare students in all fields of study for lifetimes of active citizenship. The driving concern for this is the view that the very survival of our democracy depends on increasing citizen participation in democratic processes, and that Tufts can play a leadership role by ensuring that its graduates are equipped and committed to do so. The experience to date of this uniquely comprehensive civic engagement model offers lessons that can be useful to other research universities.

This article describes the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, why it was created, and the approaches used in developing it. We focus on how Tufts' status as a research university has influenced evolution of the Tisch College, challenges encountered and how we have tried to address them, what we have learned in the process, our future vision and issues we anticipate in the years ahead. One may view the Tufts experience in either of two ways—either as a highly unusual set of circumstances (including uniquely high financial investment and presidential leadership)—a constellation of factors that few other schools could replicate—or as a cluster of factors that are well within the grasp of many institutions. We believe strongly in the latter view. The preconditions for success with the Tufts model exist in abundance in many research universities (Hollister et al. 2002).

Initially called the University College of Citizenship and Public Service, it was renamed the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service in May 2006 when Mr. Tisch, a Tufts Trustee, chairman and CEO of Loews Hotels, and co-chairman of Loews Corporation, donated \$40 million to endow the College. (This account refers to University College in discussing the history of its development and Tisch College in describing its ongoing operations.)

Creating a University-Wide Virtual College

In 1997 former Tufts President John DiBiaggio asked a small group of faculty and administrators to help him develop a lasting program in the area of community service.

Midway through his presidency, Dr. DiBiaggio was talking about a legacy project (although of course he did not use that phrase). Throughout his career as a university administrator, he had been a champion of civic education and community service learning. An early leader of Campus Compact, Dr. DiBiaggio had worked with U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy to organize a Massachusetts chapter of Campus Compact.

A period of almost two years of planning ensued. Rob Hollister, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, convened a faculty-student task force to consider programmatic options. An inventory of our existing assets confirmed that Tufts already had in place substantial strengths in civic education and public service, resources that were located in diverse parts of the university. Trustee and Professor of Public Service Brian O'Connell, Founding President of Independent Sector, built the interest of his fellow trustees. He saw an opportunity for his alma mater to do much more than establish a strong community service program. Rather, he advocated that Tufts take bold leadership in reclaiming the civic mission of higher education. An influential advocate of civic education, O'Connell had written, "No leader or leadership institution—particularly no educator or educational institution—can presume that fostering active citizenship to prolong our democracy...is someone else's business." Dean of undergraduate admissions, David Cuttino, urged that we build on the growing community service activism among high school students and college undergraduates and create a program that would prepare our students to take their place among the future civic leaders of the world.

Professor Molly Mead designed initial student and faculty programs. Mel Bernstein, Vice President for the School of Arts, Sciences and Engineering, embraced the plan both for the importance of civic education and also as a strategy for addressing programmatic and financial priorities of his school.

As is true with many new initiatives, the first version of this one was quite different from what eventually emerged. Dr. DiBiaggio's initial idea was to create a new graduate school of public service with a special emphasis on community service and on citizen participation in public affairs. We quickly determined that there were two problems with this model. First, there already existed many fine graduate schools of public service, policy and administration. It would have been extraordinarily difficult to attract significant external support for a new graduate school, even one with a distinctive focus on citizen action. Second, Tufts had in place several well-established graduate degree programs in different areas of public policy. These programs had no desire to simply be folded into a new school and, in any case, there was little to be gained in doing so.

We scanned the civic initiatives of sister universities and affirmed that two approaches were most common. One was to develop a separate center or degree-granting school. The second was to focus on achieving specific local community benefits (e.g., restoring social and economic vitality to an abutting distressed urban community). There were many such excellent programs across the country. In our analysis, a fundamental limitation of both approaches was that, regardless of how strong their

outreach, they were “public service ghettos,” engaging only a fraction of the student body and of the professoriate. We decided to take a dramatically different tack—to create a virtual college that would integrate values and skills of active citizenship in all fields of study. We aspired to far greater scale of impact and to demonstrating that civic engagement is the opportunity and responsibility of faculty and students in all disciplines.

Early on, DiBiaggio took the evolving concept to the Tufts trustees, who asked all of the right questions: “Will this effort pull resources away from pressing priorities of the University? Is this an area in which Tufts can do something of truly outstanding quality? Why do we need to create a new college—why not simply organize a university-wide civic education program?” The infusion strategy of our proposal concerned some of them. Trustee Chairman Nate Gantcher challenged, “What exactly is the program? Show me the syllabus!” Our answer, which barely satisfied him at the time, was, “If you create the University College, in a few years we will be able to show you a couple of hundred syllabi—of courses that integrate values and skills of active citizenship, in courses that are fundamentally about other topics.”

In addition to gathering and integrating the recommendations of faculty, students, alumni leaders and other national advisors, the organizing team began to put in place building blocks of the eventual University College (later renamed the Jonathan M. Tisch College, as noted above). These steps aimed to build support for the ambitious initiative that we were designing. DiBiaggio, Hollister and Lincoln Filene Center director Badi Foster led a high-profile undergraduate course and community forum on Leadership for Active Citizenship. DiBiaggio created an annual Presidential Awards program to recognize undergraduate and graduate students for exceptional citizenship and public service. Foster organized a large summer faculty workshop to strengthen professors’ civic engagement capabilities.

At the end of a two-year planning process, in November 1999 the Trustees voted to establish the University College. In so doing they made a dramatic, formal commitment to civic education as a defining dimension of a Tufts education. They took this bold step for three reasons—to address the urgent need for more effective civic leaders, to respond to growing student demand, and to take better strategic advantage of, and build upon, existing strengths of the university. The mission of the College was to prepare students in all fields to be effective public citizens and community leaders. It would focus on undergraduates, but ultimately engage all graduate programs as well. Then three months later, alumni Pierre and Pamela Omidyar gave Tufts its second largest gift ever—\$10 million—to build the University College. Motivated by their belief in the power of community, they pledged to invest additional funds if the College developed well and proved its worth. We now had institutional leadership and funding. The next challenge was to create an effective set of programs.

Building Program and Reaching Scale

In the five years since establishment of the University College, our major role has been to engage and support the rest of the University. College staff members function as catalysts, resources and partners to an expanding group—staff, faculty, students, administrators, alumni leaders, and other advisors and supporters.

Primary elements of our approach have been to integrate active citizenship in courses across the entire curriculum and extra-curriculum, to support civic engagement research, and to develop an enduring set of community partnerships. We approached our work as a process of culture change—to build a broadly shared ethos of citizenship and public service.

In this process of development, the Omidyars' engaged style of philanthropy has been a critically important ingredient to our success. In their personal lives and their philanthropy, Pierre and Pamela Omidyar model being active citizens, the goal of the program they were supporting. In a talk at the 2002 Tufts Commencement Pamela told graduating students, "Be an enzyme—a catalyst for change. Act on the environment around you. Make it your mission to make some small difference in the great scheme of life." They encouraged organizers of the College to be innovative, to take risks, to achieve clear results and to measure them, and to constantly adjust our strategy based on evolving experience. University College developed more quickly and securely because of their supportive partnership. Eschewing the arms-length posture of conventional philanthropists, they worked to make sure that their investment was successful.

Presidential Transition

Presidential transitions are a common challenge for new programs in higher education. When John DiBiaggio announced his retirement in 2000, University College leaders wondered, "Will the next president support a program that is so closely identified with his predecessor?" Fortunately, the College figured prominently in recruitment of the next president. New president Lawrence S. Bacow stated that one of the reasons why he chose to come to Tufts was the great opportunity and promise represented by the University College.

Dr. Bacow embraced DiBiaggio's project, added his own ideas, and has been a compelling advocate for continuing development of the College. He has made active citizenship one of three primary themes of Tufts' strategic vision. He has challenged the College to strengthen its research activities.

He instituted an annual Presidential Symposium on partnering with host communities. This session, which he personally chairs, convenes students, faculty and community partners to assess the educational impacts and benefits to local communities of the community-engaged work of Tufts' students and faculty. In September 2005 he convened the first international conference of the heads of universities from around the

world to confer about the civic roles of higher education. These twenty-nine leaders from twenty-three countries issued a joint Talloires Declaration and launched a follow-up network to build the international civic engagement movement of higher education.

Four Program Areas

Tisch College and its many partners have built four program areas: Faculty, Students, Community Partnerships, and Alumni. In each area, the mix and the strategic orientation of College activities have changed considerably as we learned from experience.

Over time we clarified that our strategy is to work with different levels of intensity with different proportions of our key constituencies. Therefore, we aim to build *intensive* civic engagement capacity among 5 percent of students, faculty and alumni; to build *general* civic engagement capacity among 35 percent of each of these groups; and to build *basic* civic engagement capacity among 100 percent of the groups.

Faculty Our initial work with faculty concentrated on curriculum development. We provided a large number of seed grants and staff assistance to colleagues who were already committed to our mission. We worked as intellectual community organizers to encourage others to join their ranks. This approach achieved reasonable progress, but we were disappointed that the creative curricular projects of individual faculty members appeared to have only limited influence on their colleagues and were expensive to sustain. Therefore, in our third year we shifted to a new approach, one that we hoped would have greater “ripple effect.” Instituting a Faculty Fellows program, we began to invest in building a cadre of faculty peer leaders. This has turned out to be a highly effective strategy.

Each spring Tisch College invites faculty to apply to become Faculty Fellows, a two-year, part-time appointment. Tisch College administrators collaborate with school deans to choose Faculty Fellows who represent a broad spectrum of disciplines. They are selected also for their leadership standing and potential, and for the predicted broader impact of their proposed projects. The Fellows are, in effect, deputized faculty leaders of active citizenship at Tufts. The program gives them an official leadership role. They also receive financial support (\$15,000/year for the costs of their projects) and College staff assistance. At monthly meetings the Fellows report on their work, receive feedback, and explore ways to support each other’s efforts. These lively gatherings are a kind of interdisciplinary salon, a regular occasion for faculty to debate what constitutes active citizenship and discuss alternative approaches to civic engagement research and teaching. The current group of fourteen Faculty Fellows represents five of Tufts seven schools, and there are twenty-two present and former Fellows.

A few examples will illustrate the role of the Faculty Fellows. Chris Swan, Chair, Civil and Environmental Engineering, led a curricular review and development process in his department that has led to the development of new courses that prepare engineers

to be active citizens. Christine Economos, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, conducted a major community-based research project, Shape Up Somerville, a comprehensive intervention to combat childhood obesity in one of Tufts' host communities. Marina Bers, Child Development, is studying the impact of students' participation in building virtual communities on their civic values and skills. Bruce Hitchner, Chair of Classics, is working as chair of the Dayton Peace Accords Project to help draft a new constitution for Kosovo. Adil Najam, Fletcher School of International Law and Diplomacy, is extending his research about diaspora philanthropy by Pakistanis in America to better understand the nature of citizenship in new immigrant communities.

A Growing Focus on Research Even as our focus on curriculum development was succeeding, it became increasingly apparent that the College needed to place greater emphasis on civic engagement research. A major priority of the new Tufts administration was to elevate the University's research productivity and reputation. In our research university setting, accelerating development of the research dimensions of active citizenship would strengthen faculty participation and support.

We now are supporting four kinds of civic engagement research—research about processes of civic participation; research about how young people develop civic values and skills; research that is civically engaged, produced in collaboration with community representatives; and research about public problems (public policy research). We are selecting more Faculty Fellows who will focus on research projects. In addition, we have begun to help departments and schools to recruit new faculty who are promising civic engagement scholars. The existence of the College is an attraction to some prospective new faculty. This approach is being supported by a major gift raised by President Bacow to create the Schuster Faculty Development and Civic Engagement Fund—monies that are used to recruit and support the development of new faculty and to strengthen active citizenship, in the School of Arts and Sciences.

Two years ago three Arts and Sciences faculty (Kent Portney in Political Science, Susan Ostrander in Sociology, and Deborah Pacini-Hernandez in Anthropology) organized a Civic Engagement Research Group (CERG) that meets monthly to hear and discuss research by Tufts professors and colleagues from elsewhere. Twenty-five to thirty faculty members and students attend the monthly meetings of CERG and the group continues to grow. Some members are collaborating on a jointly authored book about civic engagement research in different disciplines.

Doug Brugge, a Faculty Fellow from the Medical School, is spearheading development of a Community Research Center to facilitate and support community-based research by faculty across the University. Tisch College leaders Nancy Wilson and Molly Mead are Co-Principal Investigators on a longitudinal study of the impacts of University College programs and activities on students. The College sponsors a scholarly book series on Civil Society through the Tufts University Press. When Provost Jamshed Bharucha started a Summer Scholars program to support undergraduates to work with faculty on research projects, the College supported five slots focusing on civic

engagement research. Our future research plans include establishing an annual international research prize and a visiting scholars program.

Students Our goal with students is to develop knowledge, skills and values that will make them effective, engaged citizens. We use the term “citizen” not in its traditional meaning of who does and does not get to vote in elections, but in the broader meaning of a person who works with others to build stronger communities and societies.

Key to the knowledge component are the over 150 courses per semester that are offered across virtually every department in the University. In these courses students learn discipline specific knowledge that will prepare them to be thoughtful effective citizens. Some of these courses are offered in a community context; many are not. As an example of the former, students are assigned to spend a day a week supporting the work of community agencies in Boston Chinatown and attend a three-hour class where they learn the history of an immigrant community in the United States. As an example of the latter, students learn theories of positive youth development in a traditional classroom setting with the strong likelihood they will use those theories in later efforts to create youth programs in local communities.

To build active citizen skills we have developed a number of student programs. In its first stage, the College’s work with students emphasized an undergraduate peer leadership program, Citizenship and Public Service Scholars. Twenty students from each class—diverse in their majors and personal backgrounds—receive leadership training, engage in rigorous community work, and build the active citizenship of their fellow students. This program was immediately successful, but it had less effect on other students than we needed to achieve. In addition, other students were eager to participate directly in College activities. Therefore, we began to build a broader set of student programs—Active Citizenship Summers, Civic Engagement Fund, Media & Public Service Program, and postgraduate public service internships. Our programming for students has engaged a widening and more diverse audience including several high-visibility courses and campus-wide events. We collaborated to build the civic learning capabilities of several partner organizations—the undergraduate volunteer service organization (Leonard Carmichael Society, which is by far the larger extracurricular group at Tufts), a pair of programs for community service-oriented work-study (Tufts Literacy Corps and Tufts Jumpstart), the Hillel Social Justice Program, and Science Elementary Education Partnership Program. We defined civic learning outcomes and are tracking them through a longitudinal study, covering four undergraduate classes across six years (first year to second year out of Tufts).

Each year students can apply to participate as Tisch Fellows in our Active Citizenship Summers program which provides a stipend to enable them to undertake a community project or internship. In the summer of 2005, forty undergraduate and graduate students were supported to do projects in communities across the United States and around the world. More than one-half worked in Tufts host communities. Their projects ranged from planning an Immigrant Women’s Health Fair in Somerville to preventing childhood parasitic infections in Nicaragua.

The Tisch Civic Engagement Fund encourages new ideas from Tufts students to create positive change, encourage existing student groups to integrate active citizenship in their activities, and support community-identified needs through increased student participation. Thirty-five individuals and groups received support from the Fund in 2005. Michelle Botus is helping adult learners prepare for the GED. A group of African-American students is organizing a large regional Emerging Black Leaders Symposium.

In 2004-05, 140 undergraduates (3 percent) were engaged in intensive civic engagement capacity development programs. A total of 1,120 (23 percent) took a course with a community project component, and an even higher proportion took a course with active citizenship content.

Community Partnerships Prior to creation of the University College, students and faculty were doing a broad variety of community research and service in many metropolitan area communities. These varied significantly in their quality and their responsiveness to community needs. During the past five years, we have built a set of long-term community partnerships as an essential way to elevate what students learn by working in a community and to elevate the extent and quality of benefits to communities. We have sought to increase the proportion of research and service that is located in Tufts host communities, to which Tufts owes a special institutional responsibility—Somerville, Medford, Boston's Chinatown, Grafton, and the Mystic River Watershed. We have worked to plan and conduct these partnerships in close collaboration with community representatives. In 2004-05, 321 students provided 16,500 hours of services to forty-six community organizations in host communities. The College maintains regular contact with student placement supervisors to ensure positive community impact and productive learning opportunities. We recently launched a community research center that will support faculty community research partnerships. The growing scale and quality of community partnership activities has strengthened the University's relations with government agencies and nonprofit organizations in its host communities.

Alumni The original plan for the University College included almost no programming for alumni, a fact that changed quickly. As soon as the College was created, alumni started to come forward with program ideas. Deborah Jospin ('80) established public policy internships in Washington, D.C. for graduating seniors to honor her deceased husband, Dan Dutko. A group in the Alumni Association started the Tufts Citizenship and Public Service Award that now is given each year to high school juniors in eighty schools in fifteen states. The Travel-Learn program added a Travel-Learn-Serve option. Another group started an annual Alumni Service Day during the Commencement and reunion weekend. Boston-area alumni organized a set of Citizenship Circle dinners for experienced alumni to advise younger alumni and graduating seniors about public service careers and vocational opportunities. The dinners have become an annual activity and are being replicated by other alumni chapters.

Since the community leadership of alumni is the best measure of the University College's success, how could the College contribute to their civic lives after they graduate? We have tried to make our interactions with alumni a two-way street—involving alumni in strengthening Education for Active Citizenship of current students (providing and mentoring public service internships, guest lecturing in classes, donating money) and also developing ways for their alma mater to strengthen the civic work of alumni (workshops to help alumni of retirement age to re-tool for new community service roles and a June 2005 workshop for sixty alumni chapter leaders on how active citizenship programming can strengthen their chapters).

New Initiatives

Tisch College has developed both by refining its initial programs and also by embracing and supporting new initiatives invented by members of the Tufts community. One such unanticipated addition is a Media and Public Service program, co-sponsored with the undergraduate Media and Communication Studies program (in which 20 percent of Tufts seniors minor). A new course on Producing TV Shows for Social Change (students produce short documentaries about public issues) created by Emmy Award-winning network producer Roberta Oster Sachs was so successful that she and MCS director Julie Dobrow developed it into a set of courses and internships that teach media literacy and media skills as essential tools for active citizenship.

Organizational Position and Staffing

Initially the University College was located within the School of Arts, Sciences and Engineering in order to facilitate maximum impact on the undergraduate student body which is enrolled exclusively in that school. However, this organizational arrangement positioned the College as a sub-unit of the School of Arts, Sciences and Engineering, undercutting its University-wide potential. Therefore, the President and Provost repositioned the College to report to the Provost, and the University College dean joined the Provost's Council of school deans. Elevating the College to the same status at Tufts' seven schools has been a powerfully influential organizational step.

During its first four years, a 25-member University College Faculty Steering Committee of representatives from all of Tufts schools advised on program directions. At present we are developing a set of adjunct appointments in Tisch College for faculty leaders of active citizenship. This group will be faculty governors of the College. While professors' primary base remains in their home departments, the adjunct appointments support their vital role in developing active citizenship across the University.

At its inception, the College organized a National Advisory Committee chaired by alumnus and trustee Alan Solomont, a successful businessman and national political activist. These distinguished public leaders have been a highly effective source of advice, liaison with external constituencies, and fundraising assistance. In 2003, the

group became a Board of Overseers to give it the same role and status as the Boards of other Tufts schools.

At present the College is run by fourteen full-time professional and support staff. As the College grew in complexity and scale, it became clear that we needed to add new management capabilities in order to succeed in its next stage. Nancy Wilson joined us in the new position of Director and Associate Dean, bringing strengths in strategic planning and management.

Challenges

While the process of organizing the University College has been facilitated by several factors (uniquely generous financial support, forceful leadership by two presidents, and also by faculty and alumni leaders), we of course have faced some challenges along the way. These have included: tensions with Tufts' research goals, the common perception that public service activities lack academic rigor, competition for resources, reservations on the part of existing public service-oriented departments, and how to communicate effectively about so comprehensive an initiative.

Tensions with research goals In comparison with other segments of higher education, research universities have been slower to innovate in the area of civic engagement curricular, research and service work. Professors in research universities work within a reward structure in which research excellence in the disciplines is the ultimate value. Yet Tufts has built a pioneering new model of civic engagement at the same time that it has elevated its scholarly aspirations and productivity.

The founding mission of the University College emphasized education of students. It did not stress research and the development of new knowledge about civic engagement. However, the research dimensions of active citizenship at Tufts are essential ingredients for two reasons. First, the University's determination to strengthen its research activities and reputation mean that faculty members will participate most energetically in activities that are consistent with and reinforce their research work. Even if teaching were the sole focus of the College, elevating its research activities would be an essential way to build and sustain faculty participation in the educational campaign. Faculty members are more likely to teach active citizenship if they also are involved in civic research and if their civic engagement research activities feed and enrich their teaching. Second, while civic engagement research was not part of the founding label of the College, that aspiration now is a fundamental part of the College's mission. As the research goals of the University have increased, it is only natural, perhaps inevitable, that civic research grow in importance. Today, contributing to the knowledge base about civic engagement is an explicit, high-priority part of its mission.

Perception that public service activities lack academic rigor The University College has faced the standard preconceptions, on the part of faculty and others, that civic and public service programs are academically less worthy or respectable. We are

fortunate that these perceptions are not as strong or pervasive at Tufts as they are at some sister institutions, but they exist nonetheless. We have actually found that some of the strongest members of the faculty, both teachers and researchers, have joined in our work. In addition, focus groups with high school students revealed that the most intellectually talented students are keen to tackle the world's big social problems. Our approach is to demonstrate the impact on learning and research accomplishments and to acknowledge that this negative view will likely be slow to disappear.

Competition for resources Tisch College is no exception to the principle that any new initiative, regardless of how well aligned it is with major priorities of the University, will encounter competition for resources and the perception that it is draining resources away from other programs. It is incumbent on us to make visible the benefits of what we do provide to colleagues across the institution. Fortunately, our infusion approach does truly benefit others as we seek to improve teaching and research across the institution.

Vision for the Future

As we continue to build active citizenship at Tufts, here is where we aspire to be in ten years:

- A decisive majority of Tufts students graduate prepared for lifetimes of active citizenship. Through an intensive combination of curricular and extracurricular experiences they have developed knowledge, skills and values that equip them to be effective community leaders in all walks of life.
- Tufts alumni are recognized as leaders in citizenship and public service. When someone says, "I went to Tufts," the other party in the conversation immediately thinks, "Active Citizen!"
- There is a dramatic increase in the number of alumni involved in elective politics, from serving on local school boards to the U.S. Senate. Similar jumps are evident in the number of alumni who are incorporating civic values and skills in their lives as business women and men, and as staff and board members of nonprofit organizations.
- Tufts has become a leading center of civic engagement research, producing new knowledge about how citizens participate in public affairs, about how people learn values and skills of active citizenship, and about selected public problems (exhibiting distinctive strength in environmental policy and in child and family policy). The University is known also for its Center for Community Research which supports faculty and students to conduct research in collaboration with community representatives.
- Alumni contribute vigorously to the civic development of current students and Tufts supports the community work of its graduates in myriad ways. Each year alumni organize and mentor over two hundred public service internships for undergraduates and graduate students. At the Alumni Service Day every May, 250 alumni complete a project that benefits one of Tufts' host communities. The Tufts Award for Citizenship and Public Service is awarded each spring to juniors in three hundred high schools in twenty states.

- Fully one-half of the volunteer service activities of Tufts students and faculty contribute to the work of community partnerships in Tufts' host communities. Jointly planned and managed by organizations in Medford, Somerville, Chinatown and the Mystic River Watershed, our community partnership work meets two expectations: maximum contributions to students' civic skills and maximum community impacts.
- Several of our strongest new faculty chose Tufts over other employment options because of its excellence in civic research and education.
- Top students decide to enroll in the School of Arts, Sciences and Engineering, and in Tufts' professional schools, because of the University's unique civic commitment.
- The typical Tufts undergraduate takes several courses that integrate active citizenship; participates in volunteer service activities that not only provide service, but also teach about the causes of community problems and solutions to them; does a summer public service internship; and through a semester of Study Abroad learns about international civil society. Each undergraduate participates in campus discourse about public controversies and works with a professor on a civic engagement search or community partnership activity. Although graduating with a significant amount of debt, a graduate decides to take a lower-paying job, for example, with an environmental advocacy nonprofit due to receipt of financial support from the Tufts loan repayment assistance fund.
- Sixty-five faculty members, representing all seven Tufts schools, are adjunct professors in Tisch College. This community of citizen scholars and their colleagues teach three hundred courses that incorporate active citizenship.
- Institutionally Tufts strives to excel as an active citizen. The University pays all of its employees a living wage and assures that its contractors do likewise. In partnership agreements with its host communities, Tufts commits to guaranteed financial aid for local residents and to mobilizing the expertise and human energies of its faculty, staff and students to provide substantial community service. The Omidyar-Tufts Microfinance Initiative invests a major portion of the Tufts endowment in microfinance projects to combat poverty around the world.
- The Tufts Capital Campaign has raised funds to sustain Tisch College core operations and also for a network of twelve endowed chairs that anchor active citizenship across the University. In addition, the campaign has raised an endowed scholarship for students that provides access to a Tufts education for a diverse group of students with outstanding potential to be community leaders.
- By bringing together its dual strengths in internationalism and in active citizenship, Tufts has become a pioneer in global citizenship. The Talloires Network, launched at the Talloires Conferences on the Civic Engagement Roles and Responsibilities of Higher Education, hosted by President Lawrence Bacow in September 2005, has grown to over one hundred universities working together to build the international university civic engagement movement.
- Tufts' comprehensive infusion model is being emulated by many other colleges and universities across the United States and around the world.

Lessons Learned

As we reflect on our efforts to date, we think we have learned some things about alternative approaches to strengthening active citizenship activities in one research university. We offer these “lessons” for consideration by others doing similar work.

Align active citizenship with the core priorities of the university

This is perhaps the most important lesson from the Tisch College experience so far. We are building excellence in active citizenship—a strategic theme—as an avenue to accelerating achievement of core institutional priorities with respect to academic quality and fundraising. If active citizenship activities are viewed—by their advocates and by others—primarily as an end in themselves, they inevitably will be in competition with other needs of the university. In our early consultations with Tufts administrators and trustees, we committed to developing the University College in ways that would accelerate institutional progress toward the institution’s two top fundraising priorities—undergraduate financial aid and faculty development. We have stayed true to this commitment. As a result we have avoided conflict and also secured additional support from colleagues who care deeply about those core priorities. In Tufts’ current capital campaign, the \$60 million goal for the College is one-third for financial aid, one-third for faculty development, and one-third for core operations of the College.

Reframe active citizenship as a route to high quality teaching and research

In order for research universities to reach the full potential of their active citizenship work, they must shift from a mindset that concentrates on demonstrating the value of these activities in and of themselves to a perspective that active citizenship can be a path to achieving higher academic quality. At Tisch College we argue that one of the primary reasons to promote active citizenship in the academy is to achieve higher quality research and teaching. Big thinkers like big problems.

Foster broadly shared leadership

In order for a university-wide, infusion strategy to be effective, it requires collective leadership from all constituencies—administrators and staff across the institution, trustees, faculty, alumni, students, and external partners. A key ingredient of the early success of the College has been impressive, growing leadership from each of these groups. This shared leadership story has been not only “top down” and “bottom up,” but also “side to side”—peers influencing and supporting each other to build active citizenship as a signature theme. In the early stages of this effort a small group of administrators carried the ball. Over time they have been joined by widening circles of colleagues in all parts of the institution.

Continually adjust your strategy and programs

It is a positive thing that the current programs of the College look different in important ways from the proposal that the trustees approved five years ago. We

frequently have modified activities that were not working well enough and added new elements. We shifted from an early emphasis on a student peer leadership program to greater engagement with a broad array of student partner organizations. From an initial, almost exclusive concentration on curriculum development, we moved to greater focus on supporting civic engagement research. Creative initiatives of members of the Tufts community progressively reshaped the initiative, adding the new Media and Public Service program, the Presidential Symposium on community partnerships, and the entire alumni program area.

Develop a wide web of initiatives that reinforce one another

The impact of individual policies and programs has been magnified by how they have strengthened one another. This dynamic has helped to reach a “tipping point,” making active citizenship a broadly supported part of the Tufts culture. Growing student activities reinforced the interest of faculty in helping to build active citizenship. Examples of presidential leadership and new forms of institutional citizenship reinforced the commitment of community partners and faculty alike. None of the Tisch College activities are required of students. Our philosophy is that high quality voluntary opportunities will attract broader participation (and participation without the resistance that requirements can engender). Over four years of college, the typical undergraduate participates in multiple active citizenship activities—both in the curriculum and extra curriculum.

Invest in civic engagement research

For research universities it is perhaps a no-brainer to invest heavily in research. We mention this as a “lesson” of the College because we were slow to embrace this essential working principle; it was a definite weakness of our early strategy. Significant emphasis on research is essential to the prospects of active citizenship in any research university. In addition, research universities as a group have a golden opportunity, indeed a responsibility, to play a true leadership role in elevating civic engagement research. Supporting research both aligns Tisch College’s mission to faculty members’ own priorities and finds its way into courses on an enduring basis.

Keep our eyes on our prize

Our outcome focus is the behavior of graduating students—future generations of democratic participants. We therefore keep staff and resources focused on student development, with community benefits. We have not sought to apply resources directly to community consulting, for instance, without being led by the associated faculty or student outcome.

Mobilize the extraordinary power of alumni

We knew from the outset that it would be important to involve alumni in building the University College. Several of them were key allies and “co-conspirators” in the planning period. Yet we still underestimated the huge power of alumni—not only as alumni, but as developers and doers of programs; as funders, as role models, as

sources of external validation. Alumni are perhaps the greatest untapped resource of institutions of higher education. In the cluttered world of alumni communications, the call to celebrate and enhance the civic lives of alumni has met with tremendous response. Treating them primarily as donors misses the opportunity to engage their enormous substantive capabilities. In our experience, they have been extraordinary partners in developing active citizenship at Tufts.

Participate in, and contribute to, the higher education civic engagement movement

The University College has been both an active participant and an emerging leader in the higher education civic engagement movement. We have benefited greatly from the experience and guidance we have received from colleagues at sister institutions—including the Center for Community Partnerships at University of Pennsylvania. Princeton Project 55 has been an inspiring model for our alumni programming. In addition, we have learned and drawn support from our participation in national networks, especially Campus Compact. Never underestimate the influence of external support and validation. After the University College completed its early development, we began to share our experience with other schools. We co-convened, with Campus Compact, a learning of thirteen of the research universities whose civic engagement programs are most advanced. Together with The Boston Foundation, the College coordinated the Carol R. Goldberg Seminar, a metropolitan Boston planning process to elevate higher education-community partnerships. In addition, President Bacow is leading the organization of an international network of universities on their civic roles and social responsibilities. This year alone we have presented our work at more than ten conferences across the country, covering a wide range of sectors.

Focus on educational and research outcomes, not community service learning

A common early assumption by faculty and others was that the College was primarily about promoting community service learning. We have advanced a different perspective—focusing on educational and research outcomes for which community service learning is one important methodology. Too frequently civic engagement proponents advocate community service learning as an end in itself. This view is problematic, especially in research universities. It suggests to faculty that they cannot participate unless they want to incorporate service learning in their courses. It pulls attention away from the research opportunities. In a field that has been long on rhetoric, and short on hard evidence of results, it is imperative that we demonstrate measurable impacts.

Build and sustain the highest possible level of institutional commitment

Securing a very high level of institutional commitment has been a key factor in our success to date. By establishing a new University-wide college, the trustees put a stake in the ground. They made a formal, enduring commitment to a set of civic educational

outcomes. The act of creating a new college stated, in effect, that the University now is accountable for these educational results. This step sent a totally different message than if they had endorsed a University-wide initiative or created a new institute.

After its establishment, institutional commitment to the College grew over time, which has been important because achieving institutional commitment is a continuing process, not a one-time task. Institutions rarely make clear, consistent decisions about their priorities. Institutional commitment to the College has grown as President Bacow added his personal leadership and vision. It has grown as additional funders invested and the number of faculty leaders expanded. It has grown as Tufts has gained increasing national and international recognition for its distinctive model.

Future Challenges

Maintain our focus on infusion or become another silo?

Even though our across-the-curriculum strategy is working, there inevitably will be pressures to move away from the infusion model. It may be easier to promote infusion in early stages of the College than it is to sustain it. It is easier to develop separate academic programs than to change many existing ones. In an institution of silos, there will be pressures for us to become another silo. People eventually will say, “Why not create a new certificate program or a master’s degree in community leadership?” As new academic initiatives emerge in future years, administrators may be tempted to locate them in the flexible space represented by Tisch College.

The nature of our catalytic and support functions should and will change over time. To the extent that the College succeeds in integrating active citizenship in all part of Tufts, what will it do next? Options include: (1) continue the same work, since effective infusion must be dynamic, continually refreshed; (2) declare victory and close up shop; and (3) fill the organizational unit with its own programs. Today’s catalyst for change easily could become a victim of mission drift.

Achieving long-term impact

Ultimately the impact of Tisch College will be measured by its success in educating new generations of active citizens and producing new knowledge about active citizenship. In ten, twenty, and thirty years, will greater numbers of Tufts graduates be more effective leaders for community change? Will our democracy reflect the benefit of increased citizen participation? Will the University have achieved major elements of the vision outlined above? The early signs are promising, but it is still too early to assess long-term impacts. We are committed to tracking and measuring these effects.

Sustainability

To what extent will active citizenship become a lasting part of Tufts’ academic programs, culture and institutional identity? Will the defining elements of Tisch College be sustained over the long haul? Again, only future reality can answer these questions. We are seeking to build Tisch College to last by raising endowment for its

core operations, by putting in place a network of endowed chairs to intellectually anchor active citizenship across the institution, by creating real culture change, and by triggering the self-reinforcing dynamic that results from solid achievement with respect to student and faculty recruitment and performance.

Conclusion

The uniquely comprehensive, infusion approach of the Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University may be of particular interest to other research universities as they seek to strengthen their research as well as their teaching and public service missions. In comparison with the more common “separate center or school” model, Tufts’ “college without walls,” across-the-curriculum model is engaging larger numbers of faculty and students in the full range of disciplines. In its comparatively short history, Tisch College already has achieved significant educational outcomes and made active citizenship a defining strategic commitment of the University. Our experience to date indicates that active citizenship can be a path both to higher quality research and teaching and to other institutional priorities as well.

References

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