

Community Engagement for Civics Education (CE)² or “CE Squared”



**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
CIVICS EDUCATION**

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Community Engagement for Civics Education: (CE)² or “CE Squared”

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Community Engagement for Civics Education: (CE)² or “CE Squared”

- What is the role for higher education in encouraging citizen civic participation?
 - Does teaching civics really increase community interest in the political process?
 - Do “regular” people in the community care about the process of governing?
 - Would our state be a better place if more people registered and voted?

This paper describes the successful development of a small grant funded project, **Community Engagement for Civics Education: (CE)²**, at Walters State Community College (Morristown, Tennessee) which culminated in a series of student-led public civics classes presented free on-campus for any member of our multi-county area who was interested in learning more about how our government works and how civic engagement can promote good government.

Section I - (CE)² Statement of Purpose

I teach Political Science to a diverse student population in rural east Tennessee. I have a degree in Public Administration with a specialty in local government management. I’ve worked for local, county, state, and federal agencies, and I’ve been a candidate for election. I even serve as a County Election Commissioner in TN.

I’ve created my classes as experiential. Many students are first-in-family to attend college (or even complete high school). Six years ago, these courses were lecture/test/lecture/test...etc. formats. By creating an environment which values student dignity, respect, and questioning, rural community college students meet face-to-face many government officials. My students will hear guest presenters – federal judges, mayors, US Congress members, TN legislators, public defenders, US ambassadors, and more. Students prepare intense questions for our guests and understand that “these people work for us!”

So far, so good? Yes, some students enroll in American Government because it fulfills their program requirement for Social Work or Education. Others have stated a Political Science major. Actually this mix promotes more in-depth discussions from broad perspectives and interests. And – we know that I cannot force students to vote (lol), but I do consider being a registered voter as contributing to the student’s class participation grade for the semester.

The (CE)² project brings basic civics education to the diverse residents of the multi-county area served by Walters State Community College. As a collaboration among WSCC faculty, WSCC students, and local public sector/government leaders, (CE)² delivered a series of 4 focused, simplified sessions explaining one area of civics engagement. Each session was delivered on campus by a Political Science student and a local civic leader (e.g. the mayor, a judge, a commissioner, etc.) working together to create an interesting and informative 90 minute educational experience for community members.

Section II - (CE)2 Design, Mission, Goals

General Overview of Proposed Project:

Civics is the study of the rights and duties of citizenship. Civic education is a vital part of any democracy, and equips ordinary people with knowledge about our democracy, our Constitution, and important things like voting, taxes, courts, and participating in local community decisions.

Faculty Fellows Scholarship:

The (CE)² project was developed as part of a Faculty Fellows Scholarship competition at Walters State Community College in Morristown, Tennessee in 2021. The purpose of the Faculty Fellows Scholarship program is to allow faculty members the opportunity to participate in scholarly activities that advance the mission of Walters State Community College. The goal of this program is to provide support to faculty in their efforts to improve teaching and learning that increases the educational attainment and workforce preparedness of students.

The Call for Proposals for the Faculty Fellow program published in March 2020 specified:

1. Guidelines

Potential project areas include, but are not limited to:

- Redesign of a course to include a High Impact Practice (HIP) as outlined by TBR taxonomies and/or the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)
- Implementation or design of advising (should align with the Advise to Rise efforts)
- Implementation of technologies in a course/program
- Faculty and student collaborative research
- Scholarly research related to academic discipline or college initiatives
- Projects focused on workforce development
- Research conducted in conjunction with dissertation hours

Faculty who do not receive a fellowship will be notified in writing.
Projects that are not selected are eligible for resubmittal the following year.

2. Expectations

Each Faculty Fellow will share their work during the All Faculty meeting at the beginning of the semester.

Each Faculty Fellow will report monthly, during the fall and spring semesters, to the Director of Instructional Design to work on project aspects

Faculty Fellows may share their work at conferences, conventions, etc as deemed appropriate.

Faculty Fellows will be available to provide mentorship to future faculty fellows.

Faculty Fellows will serve on the selection committee for the subsequent year of their fellowship.

Faculty Fellows will make their completed work available for the use of the college.

The (CE)² Project Design:

The (CE)² project was designed to bring basic civics education to the diverse residents of the multi-county area served by Walters State Community College. As a collaboration among WSCC faculty, WSCC students, and local public sector/government leaders, (CE)² proposed to deliver a monthly series of 6 focused and simplified sessions explaining one of the areas of civics engagement. Each session was delivered on campus by a team comprised of a Political Science student and a local civic leader (e.g. the mayor, a judge, a commissioner, etc.) who have worked together to create an interesting and informative 90 minute educational experience for community members.

Each semester Professor Lawrence's American Government and Political Science students have had the opportunity to hear from many local government leaders who have volunteered as guest lecturers in individual classes. Many students have likely never met and/or asked questions of a mayor, a judge, or a US Congressman. Not only do the students learn facts about government, but probably more importantly, they easily become more comfortable with the experience of engaging and participating in the process of governing.

The (CE)² Project Genesis:

The proposal for (CE)² grew out of a conversation with Dennis Inman, Magistrate Judge (Retired), United States District Court, Eastern District of Tennessee. Judge Inman has been a featured guest in my classes for the last 4 years. The simple question arose, "How could we bring these introductory civics sessions to a broader audience?" I am indebted to Judge Inman for his support and for his continuing participation in Civics Engagement with students at Walters State.

The (CE)² series has many benefits:

1. WSCC students can participate and grow their experience in public policy and presentations.
2. CE² may be structured as either a "regular" class project or even an "honors" enrichment project for students.
3. Community members may be drawn to learn more about WSCC and post-secondary education. It is likely that many attendees will come to a campus for the first time.
4. The civic leader "expert" partners will be more engaged with WSCC beyond just visiting the campus.

And obviously, a primary outcome will be:

5. Community members will be more equipped with civics knowledge, and will likely be more involved and engaged in the democratic processes.

Contribution to WSCC Mission, Strategic Plan, and Goals:

(CE)² supports the WSCC Mission to be a learning-centered, comprehensive, public community college dedicated to increasing educational attainment and supporting economic development by providing affordable, high quality educational opportunities. The table below identifies contributions by line item:

Mission Steps		(CE)² Contribution
Offers programs of study leading to associate degrees or certificates	YES	(CE) ² students will receive full course credit for their participation
Fosters and inspires student engagement and success	YES	(CE) ² students will be important creators of this program and will expand their engagement beyond the traditional classroom
Delivers public service and non-credit programs in support of workforce development and personal enrichment	YES	Community civics classes provide a public service and provides new knowledge and skills which citizens may build on in both employment and continuing education
Employs highly qualified faculty and staff	YES	WSCC Political Science faculty will supervise and lead the (CE) ² students to provide academic continuity
Provides convenient access through multiple campuses and advanced technology including distance learning through digital means	YES	The (CE) ² program can be delivered on multiple campuses. After a pilot project term, the sessions may well be recorded and distributed digitally
Partners with other educational institutions to promote access and facilitate articulation and transfer	TBD	Once certified, the (CE) ² program should qualify for articulation and transfer credit with other TBR institutions.
Pursues external sources of support and entrepreneurial initiatives	YES	(CE) ² students will learn directly from many external (out of WSCC) resources in many areas of government
Assesses and responds to community needs	YES	There is a clear need for Civics education in our communities
Provides opportunities for promoting diversity and enhancing cultural awareness	YES	It is expected that minority participation by both students and citizen participants will be an important factor in project design.
Pursues resourcefulness, effectiveness, and efficiency through comprehensive accountability and continuous improvement programs	YES	The (CE) ² design includes measurement and metrics which can be used to evaluate and continuously improve the model

Strategy, Goals and Indicators:

(CE)² effectively addresses many of the strategies and goals in the WSCC Strategic Plan 2015-2025. The table below highlights the “Top 4”

Strategy	(CE) ²	Indicator
Access	More opportunities for citizens of the region to access courses and programs including underrepresented and underserved populations	Measurement of number of community attendees including analysis of population segments.
Student Success	(CE) ² will attract more interest in the undergraduate Political Science program	Enrollment in declared POLS majors or courses. Persistence to completion among POLS students
Program Quality	Effective partnerships supporting the mission	Evaluation by government partners of the quality and comprehensiveness of (CE) ² citizen programs.
Efficiency	(CE) ² relies on volunteer professional support from government leaders	Tabulation of actual number of volunteer hours worked by government partners.

Alignment with WSCC’s Core Competencies:

Participating POLS students will find that (CE)² gives each student the opportunity to exercise and demonstrate all competency requirements embedded in Walters State Core Competency (CC) courses ENGL 1010, SPCH 1010, MATH 1530, or MATH 1630 or MATH 1710 and INFS 1010, AGRM 2630/2631 or MGMT 1100. All participating (CE)² students will receive a final evaluation which touches on each of these Core Competencies.

SMART Purposes and Objectives:

SMART	(CE) ²
Specific	Create a Civics education program for the Hamblen County community members. Involving POLS students and community/government leader volunteers. Equip ordinary people with knowledge about our democracy, our Constitution, and important things like voting, taxes, courts, and participating in local community decisions.
Measureable	Six 90-minute public sessions delivered over 6 months.
Achievable	Outreach to volunteers has already resulted in likely volunteers. Faculty is “on board” and interested.
Relevant	Strong support from government and citizen groups is confirmed
Timely	Target date for public component is dependent on post-COVID protocols; however, planning of curriculum and program can be started now.

Project Scaling:

The initial implementation of the (CE)² project was sited on the Morristown WSCC campus. Although open to citizen attendees from a multi-county area, the first six classes focused on Hamblen County participants. However, the model is not dependent on local geography, and therefore, (CE)² could easily be replicated and ported to other WSCC campuses.

Section III - (CE)² Implementation

“Pilot” Semester:

The original planned program was scheduled for the fall 2021 semester; however, COVID restrictions prevented on-campus, in-person classes. Therefore, we decided to test the concept in an “optional” track in my hybrid (Zoom based) American Government class. All students in my traditional American Government class are required to research a topic of their choosing and make a presentation to the class. I offered students an option of choosing a topic which they could “teach” to an audience of residents of our local counties. Five students accepted the optional track. They worked with volunteer mentors who were all senior government officials. However, instead of presenting each of their topics to the public, they “piloted” their presentations in front of their classmates.

Honors Class and Federal Court Internships Implementation:

After a “pilot” fall semester where students in the traditional American Government class worked on an optional “track” and in partnership with civic leaders, to design civics topics, a new class offering was created for the spring 2022 semester. The class had to meet all TBR (Tennessee Board of Regents) requirements for a 3-credit hour undergraduate Political Science class. However, the format was somewhere between a traditional community college class and a graduate school seminar. The topics which the students prepared and presented, and their mentors were:

Topic	Mentor	Title
Local Government	Bill Brittain	County Mayor
Courts	Cynthia Wyrick	Federal Magistrate Judge
US Gov’t & Congress	Zac Rutherford	Chief of Staff Rep. Diana Harshbarger
Elections	Jeff Gardner	Elections Administrator

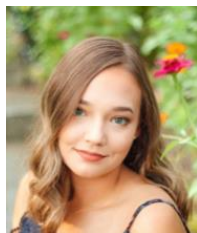
Students also participated in a 5-week, 1 day/week, on-site internship in the U.S. Federal District Court in Greenville, Tennessee. Their participation contributed to their individual course grade. Each student attended court sessions, kept a daily journal, wrote a summary report about their activities, and made recommendations as to improvements for continuing this program.

Student Selection and Biographies:

Acceptance for the CE2 program was by application to the professor. Academic Advisors and other faculty also made recommendations. An informational marketing piece (a “rack card” format) was distributed to all academic advisors and prominently displayed in student areas.



Ryan Sadlon – a sophomore Political Science student. Ryan was a student in both my American Government and Introduction to Political Science classes. He is an active student athlete (golf team) and an honors student who plans a career as a lawyer.



Emma Gerding – a dual-enrollment student from nearby Claiborne County. Emma completed 2 years of college credit before graduating from her high school.



Anthony Lee – a Tennessee Re-Connect student, a scholarship program for adults (over 25 years old) and returning military veterans. Anthony worked for 10+ years after graduating high school in an automotive factory. When he moved to a county Public Works job, he decided to “try” going to college. Anthony hopes to work in elected government.



Hailey Barrett – a freshman who recently graduated from a local Christian Academy. Hailey was particularly interested in the CE2 program because of the internship opportunity – she hopes to pursue a career in law and possibly serve as a judge.

SPECIAL PROJECTS:

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Community Engagement for Civics Education

POLS 2990 (3 credit hours) is a hybrid course where students are paired with local public sector/government leaders to create an interesting and informative presentation for the community.

<h4 style="color: #f15a24; margin: 0;">THE PROJECT</h4> <p style="font-size: x-small;">As a collaboration among WSCC faculty, WSCC students, and local public sector/government leaders, your team will deliver a series of 5 focused and simplified sessions to community members explaining one of the areas of US government. Each session will be delivered on campus by a team comprised of a Political Science student and a local mentor/civic leader (e.g. the mayor, a judge, a commissioner, etc.) who have worked together to create an interesting and informative 60 minute educational experience for community members.</p>	<h4 style="color: #2c3e50; margin: 0;">THE COURSE</h4> <p style="font-size: x-small;">POLS 2990 (11630) students will meet with Professor Lawrence for 4 class sessions to design and plan their individual projects. Students will work independently and directly with their mentors and communicate through weekly reports which will be reviewed and supervised by the professor.</p>
<h4 style="color: #2c3e50; margin: 0;">PREQUISITES</h4> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Successful completion of either POLS 1030 or 1010 (or equivalent) or permission of the instructor and a cumulative GPA of at least 2.75. Enrollment is limited to 10 students.</p>	<h4 style="color: #f15a24; margin: 0;">BENEFITS</h4> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Some POLS 2990 students may also apply to serve as an unpaid intern working in the United States District Court, Eastern District of Tennessee, in Greenville, TN.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">All TN Promise Students must complete and submit eight (8) hours of community service. This course may help you meet your community service requirement.</p>

COURSE INFORMATION

POLS 2990
Spring 2022
3 Credit Hours
CRN: 11630
Contact: Steve Lawrence
Email: Steven.Lawrence@ws.edu

Mentor Recruiting and Biographies:

Professor Lawrence personally recruited the volunteer mentors. Success of the CE2 program depended on the ability of the mentors to work closely with, and relate to each student. The mentors understood that they were committing weekly time to communicating with and guiding each student in their research of their topic area. Also, mentors were instructed that the student was the “primary” presenter for the public classes – the mentors would speak in a supporting role. Three of the mentors had been guest speakers in our previous American Government classes, and therefore, had experience working with Walters State students.

Bill Brittain is the Mayor of Hamblen County, Tennessee; he was first elected in 2010. The County Mayor is the chief executive officer of the county, and has the powers and duties previously exercised by the county judge, except judicial functions. The County Mayor serves as a non-voting, ex-officio member of each committee of the legislative body. Mayor Brittain has been a guest lecturer in our American Government classes and mentored Emma Gerding to present a public session about Local Government.



Cynthia Wyrick serves as a United States Magistrate Judge in the Eastern District of Tennessee, at Greeneville. She was formerly the City Attorney for Pigeon Forge. Judge Wyrick also served as Past President of the Tennessee Bar Association. Judge Wyrick has presented a guest lecture about the US and TN judicial systems to my American Government classes. She mentored Hailey Barrett to present the CE2 public class about the court systems. Judge Wyrick also championed the creation of the internship opportunity for CE2 students.

Zac Rutherford is the Chief of Staff at the U.S. House of Representatives for Congresswoman Diana Harshbarger, TN01. Zac has served in various positions related to the U.S. Congress since 2017. As a student at the Citadel military college in South Carolina he increased community involvement, and encouraged and facilitated student involvement on many local and national political campaigns. Zac was a mentor during the pilot CE2 class; he mentored Anthony Lee to present the CE2 public class about the U.S. Congress.



Jeff Gardner is the Administrator of elections for Hamblen County, Tennessee. He is Responsible for the administration of Municipal, Local, State and Federal elections held in the county. The Election Commission Office serves the voting public and candidates in all things pertaining to an election: Local, State and Federal. The Election Commission Office is responsible for filing and maintaining all voter registration records for Hamblen County and Morristown. Mr. Gardner mentored Ryan Sadlon to present the CE2 public class about the Election Process.

Class Deliverables:

Grading met all the requirements of a traditional 3-credit hour class. The syllabus included the following explanation of grading:

Project Proposal	10%
Student Journal of Activities	20%
Design of Presentation Aids	20%
Individual Topic Presentation & Honors Project	25%
Mentor's Evaluation	10%
Class participation & Attendance	15%

Each student's journal tracked and commented on each activity. These included:

- Each class meeting
- Each mentor meeting/discussion
- Research Time
- Internship hours
- Design of your class presentation
- Public Presentation Time

Community Engagement for Civics Education POLS 2990 Spring 2022 Student Activity Journal				
Student Name: _____ Page __ of __				
Date	Participants	Total Time (Hrs/Mins)	Topics/Description/Results	Comments

Course Outcomes

- ▶ 1. Given a selected aspect of the U.S. Constitution and/or American local government structure, the student will be able to identify and/or discuss its significance and function.
- ▶ 2. Given a selected aspect or characteristic of American government, the student will be able to prepare a public presentation to discuss its significance and impact upon citizens.
- ▶ 3. Given a selected aspect, institution, process or branch of American government, the students will be able to identify and discuss its structure and function.



Course Competencies


The student who successfully completes Political Science 2990 should be able to:

- 1. Discuss basic characteristics of American Government
- 2. Discuss basic characteristics of Local and State Governments
- 3. Discuss fundamental structure of the US Court Systems
- 4. Discuss the fundamentals of the U.S. system of Elections
- 5. Demonstrate her/his ability to design and present a class describing the aspects and characteristics of the U.S. Government
- 6. Clearly & Accurately create a Journal of her/his activities while developing a public class/presentation about the U.S. Government



Public Presentations:

The CE2 program culminated in the scheduling and presentation of 4 public classes on the Walters State Morristown Campus. Following are some of the marketing documents and related newspaper stories. Note that a QR Code was created to facilitate easy registration.


**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
CIVICS EDUCATION**
Student Notebook

All **FREE** classes meet at 6:00 pm in Room MBSS 124
Walters State Community College Morristown Campus
Doggett Math & Behavioral Social Sciences Building


Free Parking (after 6:00pm)

Presentation Schedule:

Tuesday, March 22nd	The U.S. Court System
Tuesday, April 5th	The U.S. Congress
Tuesday, April 12th	The U.S. Election System
Tuesday, April 19th	Tennessee Local Governments

Bring this notebook with you to each session!

To register: <https://ws.edu/civics-series>


SCAN ME

Community Education for Civics Education is funded by a Faculty Fellows Grant
Each class is presented by a Political Science Honors Student
&
Mentored by a Government Official

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WSCC offering civics course

From Staff Reports

Political science students at Walters State Community College are offering the public a unique opportunity to see how the government works from the inside – through the eyes of government officials.

“Community Engagement for Civics Education” is the focus of an honors special projects in political science course taught by Steve Lawrence, an adjunct professor at the college. Students have spent time meeting and working with local officials and each will make a presentation on their respective areas of study.

Four sessions are planned:

- March 22: Judicial System, with Magistrate Judge Cynthia Wyrick and student Hailey Barrett.
- April 5: U.S. Congress, with Zac Rutherford, chief of staff for Representative Diana Harshbarger and student Anthony Lee.
- April 12: Elections, with Jeff Gardner, administrator of elections for Hamblen County and student Ryan Sandlon.
- April 19: Local Government, with Hamblen County Mayor Bill Brittain and student Emma Gerding.

Meetings begin at 6 p.m. with refreshments. Presentations follow at 6:30 p.m. All presentations will be held in room 124 of the Doggett

See **CIVICS** page A-8

Metrics and Results:

- Four community classes were presented on the Morristown campus.
- More than 100 citizens and guests attended the combined classes.
- Each attendee received a take-home binder with presentation slides and information about WSCC.
- Four students completed their 5-week U.S. Federal District Court internships.
- Four students earned “honors” designation toward their Associates Degree Diploma.
- Four students satisfied their community service requirements for the Tennessee Promise tuition subsidy program.



Steve Lawrence Biography and Goals:

Steve Lawrence has been an Adjunct Instructor teaching “Introduction to Political Science” and “American Government” courses since 2017. He brings experience in private sector corporate senior management and has also worked in state, local and federal government roles.

He is well known in Morristown City and Hamblen County as an advocate for civics engagement. In 2019 he was a candidate for election to the City Council, and he has served since 2021 as a County Election Commissioner.



In 2019 he was co-writer and Assistant Director of a successful Board of Regents grant-funded project called “RHITA - Recruiting Hispanics to Achieve” which doubled entering Hispanic freshman enrollment over 2 years. He was nominated by his peers and recognized with the “Distinguished Adjunct Faculty Award” for 2021-2022.

Steve also served as a United States Peace Corps volunteer; he served for almost 3 years as a volunteer teacher in very rural, economically disadvantaged primary schools in Jamaica, West Indies.



Lawrence has been an invited speaker about Civics and the Constitution at events sponsored by local organizations including the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Taskforce on Diversity, the Tennessee Immigrant & Refugee Rights Coalition, and he has testified about government issues before the County Commission and City Council.

Mr. Lawrence hopes that CE2 becomes a regular offering on the Walters State course schedule.