

Know Where You Start, Not Just Where You're Going: Civic Incomes Assessment at Radford University

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Abstract

Following a map requires understanding of two places: the origin and the destination. In higher education, there is a tendency to begin the journey without an understanding of where we start. To truly tell the story of the value a higher education experience provides, we need to know more about the origin point in addition to the destination.

Higher education assessment models focus on student learning outcomes, a vital but incomplete snapshot of student learning. To accurately assess the value-add an undergraduate degree provides, we need to also understand the knowledge, orientations, and skills that students bring with them into their college experience. Civic engagement assessment efforts face a similar challenge to other assessment processes in higher education: inadequate understanding of with what capacity students begin their undergraduate experience.

Universities that do civic engagement work tend to move directly into acts of civic leadership, but that assumes all students enter with a well-established set of civic skills. However, while some students will enter with an existing skills base, not all students will. Students who are thrust immediately into acts of civic leadership without those necessary skills will be ill-equipped to act effectively and may produce counter-productive results. To provide better understanding of how to scaffold civic engagement efforts that support students, a student incomes assessment is necessary.

Assessment of student learning outcomes is an established practice, but few if any institutions systematically assess the level of knowledge and skills with which students begin their collegiate experience. Assessing students' baseline of civic knowledge allows a university not only to strategically align our civic work with building those skills, but they allow us to discern the longitudinal growth of those skills over the course of a students' matriculation. In effect, an incomes assessment allows us to quantify the value-add of a college degree from the difference in scores from income to outcome.

Beginning in 2024, Radford University began a project to understand student learning incomes. All students in the UNIV 100 orientation class complete a 21-question battery of questions to assess their level of civic learning incomes. Students complete a shortened version of the instrument from the ICPSR's Political Engagement Project that categorizes student incomes into four areas: Civic Knowledge, Civic Dispositions, Civic Efficacy, and Community Engagement. The four categories allow a nuanced measure of the scaffolded nature of civic engagement, moving from knowledge to efficacy, and then from commitment to action.

This paper will describe the origin of the project and present the initial findings of the first iteration of the civic incomes study.

Introduction

Radford University has begun a project which holds significant promise for the future of civic engagement assessment. Civic engagement is a pedagogical and co-curricular approach that channels students' interpersonal, political, and problem-solving skills into organized action within their communities. Radford University uses Thomas' Ehrlich's definition, "Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes." (Ehrlich 2000)

Civic engagement is a high-impact pedagogical practice (HIP), often subsumed under the concept of service learning or community-based learning in Kuh's typology for the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Civic work is one of multiple vital elements to high-quality teaching and learning such as ePortfolios, internships, and group work. (Kuh n.d.) Institutions like Radford University have the faculty-to-student ratio that allows us to deploy HIPs throughout our curriculum.

Civic engagement also aligns with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Social Determinants of Health in both the Neighborhood/Built Environment and Social and Community Context categories. (Social Determinants of Health n.d.) Communities where town-gown divides do not exist or are minimal have healthier, mutually beneficial interactions centered around discussion of ways to improve the quality of life for all involved. The American Democracy Project terms the care for and interaction with the communities in which universities are located as serving as 'stewards of place.' As Radford University's new brand identity focuses strongly on the unique nature of our home in the New River Valley, an active civically engaged student body aligns well with that focus.

Enhanced civic engagement for students also contributes to building several important skills, like communication, teamwork, professionalism, and leadership. Thus, the work would align with the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Career Readiness Competencies and would also supplement our efforts to satisfy the governor's expectations of work-based learning. (What Is Career Readiness? n.d.) Civic engagement helps build interpersonal communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and professionalism skills in students.

Most notably, recent research shows that there is a direct link between a student's civic engagement involvement and their success as students and in their careers after graduation. Specifically, students who participated in civic engagement saw gains in personal and social responsibility, development of positive mindsets and dispositions, improved graduation and retention rates, learning, intellectual and practical skills, and improved career-related skills. (Chittum, Enke and Finley 2022)

The Need

Universities that do civic engagement work tend to move directly into acts of civic leadership, but that assumes all students enter with a well-established set of civic skills. However, while some students will enter with an existing skills base, not all students will. Watt and Ziegler identify the following five core prerequisite civic skills:

- Understanding of government processes
- Leadership Styles
- Communication
- Teamwork and Organizing for Collective Action
- Interpersonal Relationship Building (Watt and Zielger 2003)

Students who are thrust immediately into acts of civic leadership without those necessary skills will be ill-equipped to act effectively and may produce counter-productive results. To provide better understanding of how to scaffold civic engagement efforts that support students, I proposed a student incomes assessment.

Assessment of student learning outcomes is an established practice, but few if any institutions systematically assess the level of knowledge and skills with which students begin their collegiate experience. (Torney-Purta, et al. 2015) Assessing students' baseline of civic knowledge would allow universities not only to strategically align our civic work with building those skills, but they would allow us to discern the longitudinal growth of those skills over the course of a students' matriculation. In effect, an incomes assessment would allow us to quantify the value-add of a college degree from the difference in scores from income to outcome assessment.

The Project

Radford University faculty and staff developed a task force to develop a student civic skills income assessment. The primary goal of this enhanced institutionalization is to align civic engagement with efforts at Radford University to improve student retention and success.

Members of the team included leadership from the Citizen Leader program, and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Improvement as well as to coordinate with Quest (freshman orientation) and UNIV 100 Orientation leaders to administer the incomes assessment. The program will Radford University to better integrate civic engagement into the curriculum, assess student learning, develop a metric of civic skill growth over the course of a student's college career, and show the relationship between civic work and student success. Doing so will allow us to better assess the role that civic skills and engagement play in student success at Radford University and ensure the long-term viability of our prior Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) for SACS COC accreditation. Furthermore, the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) expects all universities in the Commonwealth to assess civic learning among its students. The data which this instrument will collect could provide a template for schools across Virginia to better understand students' civic skills and knowledge.

Expected outcomes

- Creation of an instrument to be deployed to all incoming students measuring their level of civic knowledge and skills
- Assessment of current participation in civic engagement as a high-impact practice in the classroom

Team Development and Instrument Creation

The team convened beginning in February of 2024. I provided a number of externally produced assessment instruments to the team for consideration. The advantage of adapting existing instruments is primarily to allow for external validity of the data we collect. After consideration, the team decided to adapt the Inter University Consortium for Political and Social Research's (ICPSR's) Political Engagement Project (PEP) instrument initially developed in 2005. (Beaumont, Colby and Ehrlich 2018) The team met and collaborated on reducing the more than one hundred response prompts in the PEP to a more manageable 21-question survey that could be administered in a single one-hour period (see Appendix for the complete questionnaire).

During those deliberations, the team considered several deployment options. While some of the team's preference was for administration during New Student Orientation, Director Lucas indicated that the schedule was already too overloaded to effectively deliver the instrument to students. Lucas offered a class period during the UNIV 100 course, which provides us with the opportunity to reach more than eighty percent of all incoming students. The team decided that the UNIV 100 deployment would be the best available option, and the instrument will be administered during Fall 2024's UNIV 100 class schedule.

Once the team completed the instrument and had a deployment plan in place, we created an application for the Radford University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Since this data will be made public and could contribute to research, it was imperative to seek and secure IRB approval. The Radford University IRB approved this project with reference number 2024-075.

The team thus completed all necessary steps to deploy the instrument beginning in Fall 2024 developing a four-criteria system to measure different elements of civic engagement:

1. Civic Knowledge
2. Civic Efficacy
3. Community Engagement
4. Civic Dispositions

Deployment

Civic Knowledge

The knowledge component is the foundation of civic engagement. It's basically understanding the things that allow you to participate effectively. The questions in this category include both politics and public affairs knowledge. Public affairs knowledge can align with both

social/community concerns and political concerns. In the survey 41.2% of the questions in this category align with both civic and community knowledge. This category includes the following topics:

- **Government Structure:** Knowing how your government works, the different branches (legislative, executive, judicial) their roles, and the different levels of government (local, state, federal) and their jurisdictions. It also addresses the way the government structures interface with people and communities.
- **Government Processes:** Understanding how laws are made, how elections work, and how citizens can influence decision-making. This could involve knowledge of voting procedures, public comment periods, and/or contacting your representatives about community concerns.
- **Social Studies Knowledge:** This broader knowledge base helps you understand the historical, cultural, economic, and social forces that shape your community and the country. It allows you to see the bigger picture of how the government entities connect and why they function. It lays the foundation for understanding community issues and how you can help. (Galston 2007)

Civic Dispositions

Civic disposition is a powerful force that fuels civic engagement. It is the inherent qualities of mind and character of an individual. Some examples of civic dispositions include compassion, cooperation, empathy, honesty, individual responsibility, political tolerance and effective participation. (Komalasari 2016) As a result, it may generate a sense of belonging, of being connected to something larger than yourself – your neighborhood, city, or even the nation. In this survey, 60.9% of the disposition questions may align with civic or community dispositions. These dispositions provide several key benefits for civic engagement:

- **Shared Values and Identity:** When you feel connected to others who share your values and concerns, it motivates you to act together for the common good. This shared identity makes working towards a better community more meaningful.
- **Social Support and Trust:** A strong sense of community fosters trust and social support among residents. This makes people more likely to help each other, volunteer their time, and participate in civic and/or community activities. It creates a sense of "we're all in this together."
- **Collective Efficacy:** When people, as a group, believe they are part of a cohesive community, they feel a sense of collective efficacy – the belief that together they can achieve positive change. This empowers them to tackle complex issues and advocate for improvements.

Civic Efficacy

Civic efficacy refers to a citizen's cognitive belief that they can make a difference in their community and they feel a responsibility to take action. (Mitra and Serriere 2015) Essentially, efficacy is the feeling that you must act, which is the precursor to taking action so you can make a difference. There are two key aspects to civic efficacy:

- **Internal Efficacy:** This is the confidence you have in your own understanding of politics and/or community issues and your ability to navigate through the system. It's believing you have the knowledge and skills to participate effectively.
- **External Efficacy:** This is the belief that the government listens to and responds to the voices of its citizens. It's the feeling that your actions, like voting, contacting representatives, or tackling community concern (e.g. opioid epidemic, homelessness) can have an impact on policy decisions.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is the action one takes. Students join knowledge, skills, disposition, and efficacy to make a positive change in their community's quality of life through political and non-political actions. (Ehrlich 2000) It can be groups or individuals working to address public issues. In the survey 44.4% of the questions align with community or civic concerns with the remaining questions closely balanced towards community engagement and political engagement. The following are examples of such actions:

- Volunteering: In food banks, community gardens or Habitat for Humanity.
- Electoral participation: Voting in elections on the local, state, and national level and voting on ballot issues or millages.
- Organizational involvement: Serving on a neighborhood association or non-profit board to solve a problem
- Community Organizing: Working with others to solve a problem or engaging in the political process to get people registered to vote and help them to get out to vote.
- Social Activism: This typically addresses larger national or international issues such as climate change or people's rights. (Saltmarsh and Zlotkowski 2011)

In sum, the prior three categories: knowledge, disposition, and efficacy, are precursors to action. Effective civic and/or community engagement require people to work together to reach their common goal.

Results

The 2024 Civic incomes Survey provides some insight into the knowledge, disposition, and efficacy of you, the Radford University students. Results suggest that the new incoming Radford University students may have the disposition to engage in civic or community life. The data indicates that they require additional support to develop their civic knowledge and civic efficacy in order to take action to become engaged citizens.

Figure 1.1 shows the average results from 686 Radford University students enrolled in UNIV 100 F2024, who completed the civic incomes assessment. The Knowledge construct shows students averaging a 2.98 on a 5-point Likert scale. In the Dispositions construct, our students rated their capacity a 3.55 on a five-point scale. The Efficacy category students had an overall average of 3.02. The Engagement category had an average of 2.99. A closer look into each of these categories will provide insight about their current level of civic development.

Civic Knowledge

The Civic Knowledge category, shown in Table 1.1, addresses what students already know about civic and community life. This category had an overall score of 2.98. Radford University will expand resources to help these students develop their knowledge about civics and community over the next four years. The Civic Knowledge category contains 17 questions. Most of the questions address politics with a few focused on the community.

The highest questions were, *ideology scale* (Q14) and knowing the difference between legitimate and fake news (Q10_8) with scores 3.97 and 3.63 respectively. The questions with the two lowest scores include, *reading about politics and public affairs in a newspaper* (Q6-1) and *listen to news on a podcast* (Q6-3) with scores 2.16 and 1.97 respectively. Radford University will expand use of its *New York Times* campuswide subscription to bolster these scores over the coming year.

Civic Dispositions

Table 1.2 displays results in the highest score category, with an average of 3.55, that shows students have the desire to act. The Civic Dispositions category contains 23 questions. Most of the questions address concerns or actions about the community. Many of the others focus on a person's values, beliefs, and/or attitudes and how they view group dynamics. Few questions are politically specific.

Respondents rated, *Willing to stand up for what I believe to be right* (Q1_4) the highest, 4.20, which suggests students are willing to take a stand on an issue in which they believe. The second highest rated question, 4.2, was, *Compassionate, concerned about all people regardless of race, gender, ethnic background, orientation, or ability* (Q1_6). These scores suggest incoming students have convictions and that they respect and value people who differ from themselves. These are positive foundational traits on which to develop into future civic and community leaders. The lowest rated questions, *involved in solving community problems* (Q1_5) and *guided by spirituality or religious faith* (Q1_1) with scores 3.04 and 3.1 respectively suggests, particularly for the lowest rated question that incoming students may lack experience or knowledge about how to engage effectively in solving community problems. Faculty and staff can help. Events such as the Wicked Festival, Winter Card and Student Engagement forum are a few examples. However, students may need to develop a greater focus on civic or community engagement experiences to enhance their skills as they develop into engaged citizens who can effectively participate with others to solve civic and community issues.

Civic Efficacy

Table 1.3 displays this category, with an average of 3.023, which shows students are willing and should take action to help make the world a better place. The Civic Efficacy category contains 32 questions. Overall, the questions were mostly evenly split between a political/civic focus and a social/community focus. There were a few questions that focused on the individual.

The highest scores were within the civic/political area with *Obeys the law*(Q11_1) and *Votes* (Q11_6) with scores of 4.02 and 3.99 respectively. The two lowest rated questions, *Taken part in*

a protest, march, or demonstration (Q12_5) and *Attended a speech, informal seminal or teach-in about politics* (Q12_4) have scores 1.84 and 1.92 respectively. As an individual, one shows that you take responsibility to participate and respect civic norms. However, engaging with other like-minded individuals to tackle a civic or community issue may require more knowledge or skill development. Relatively few students have participated in important opportunities such as attending speeches or volunteering for civic or community organizations. The university has opportunities for students to engage with communities on and off campus, in addition to opportunities to learn more about civic and community life and concerns (e.g. speakers, such as the NYT columnist Frank Bruni, themed events such as Constitution and Citizenship Week, Poli Sci Days, etc.). The university recently joined with the Constructive Dialogues Institute, and we will further integrate such elements into the curriculum to help build those skills.

Community Engagement

The second lowest category, averaging 2.99, is shown in Table 1.4. Students may lack community engagement experience as they enter Radford University. The university will have ample opportunities to engage with communities on many levels, local, regional, state, national, and international. The Community Engagement category has 28 questions. These questions address both civic components and community issues.

Action is the highest-level form of civic engagement. The highest rated question was *Vote regularly* (Q15_1) with a score of 4.0, followed by *Collaborate with teammates to achieve a common goal* (Q9_7) with 3.94 score. The lowest scores were linked to the questions, *Worked with a political group or volunteered on a campaign* (Q12_7) and *Worked as a canvasser going door to door for a candidate or cause* (Q12_10), which has scores of 1.69 and 1.52 respectively. Radford University is committed to providing students with opportunities to engage in civic and/or community concerns. Examples include volunteering for and joining community organizations, attending talks and dialogue events, connecting to political leaders in Radford, the New River Valley, and all of Virginia.

Discussion

Assessment is an area of great import and attention in higher education today. For civic engagement, assessment is not only significant for accreditors and reviewing parties, but as a diagnostic for students and faculty members. (Mandarano 2015) Much assessment effort has been placed on student learning outcomes, but the results of this study suggest strongly that we must not only consider student learning as a product, but the level of civic capacity with which students enter their college experience.

Understanding learning incomes will help, as shared anecdotally in the results section above, how to improve pedagogy and co-curricular interventions. Students will, when the survey is administered periodically throughout their college experience, develop a longitudinal knowledge of their growth. In effect, the delta between a student's learning income score and a subsequent score close to graduation can quantify the value-add of a college education for students.

As the Task Force proceeds, securing opportunities for a second and perhaps third iteration of this instrument as students matriculate will provide that longitudinal growth measure, which can not only serve as a motivator for students but will provide the public with a clear indication of how much students grow in a higher education environment.

Finally, there is significant potential for scaling this model out to other areas of import in higher education. There are several areas of student learning that are nearly universal within higher education assessment models: written and oral communication, scientific reasoning, critical thinking, etc. The same income-outcome model could be used in each of those areas to provide students a growth dashboard which would allow them to track their progress over time in ways that make more sense than a traditional GPA.

Appendix: Figures

Figure 1.1: Average Scores By Category

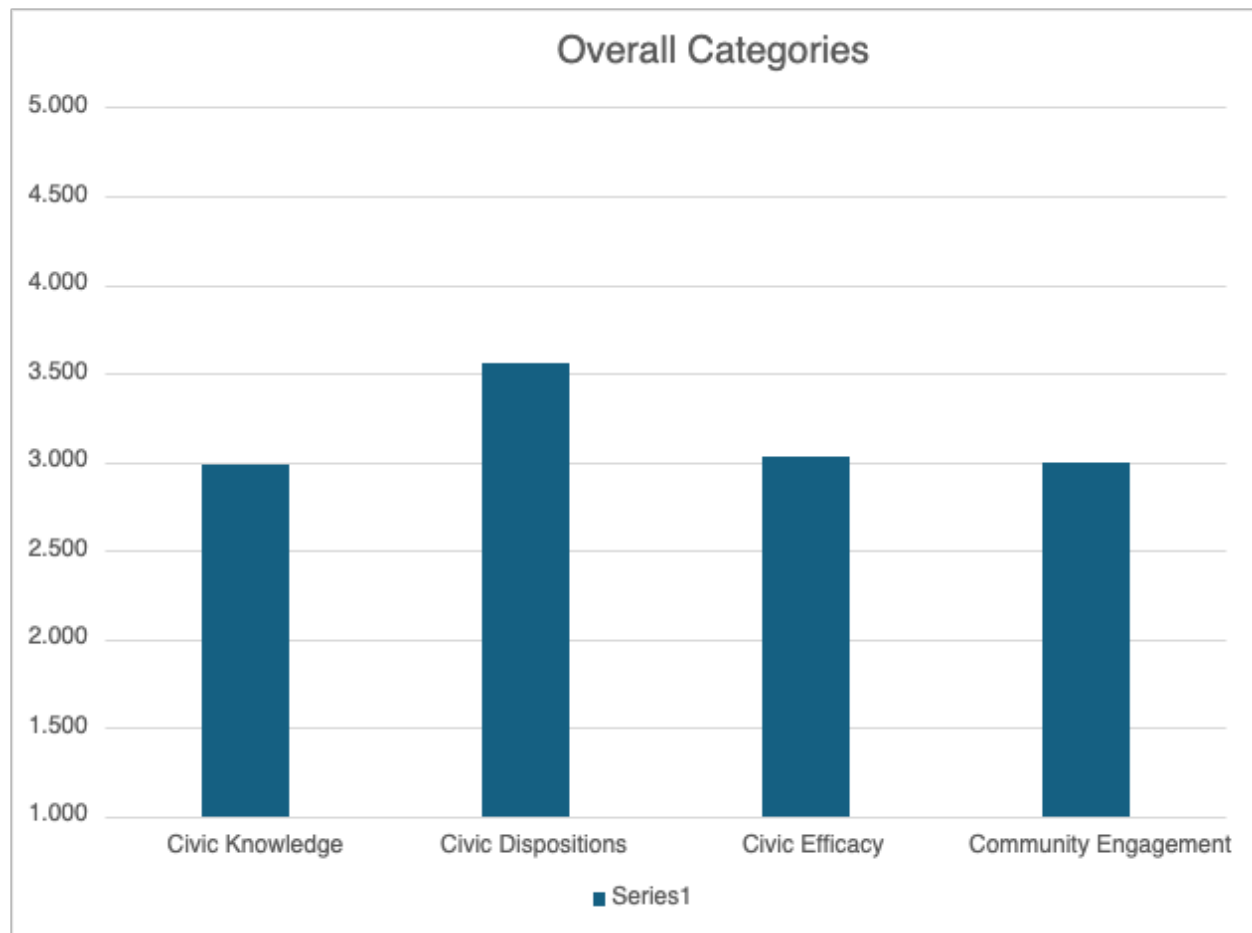


Table 1.1: Civic Knowledge Scores

	Question Text	Score
Q4_4	I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people.	2.86
Q4_6	I consider myself well qualified to participate in the political process.	3.26
Q5	Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. How often would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?	2.83
Q6_1	Read about public affairs and politics in a newspaper (print or online)	2.16
Q6_2	Watch the news on television	2.53
Q6_3	Listen to news on a podcast	1.97
Q6_4	Read about public affairs and politics on social media	3.32
Q6_5	Discuss public affairs and politics with others in-person	2.71
Q9_6	Gather and analyze information from different sources	3.63
Q10_2	Recognize conflicting political interests	3.62
Q10_4	Know whom to contact to get something done about a social or political problem	2.61
Q10_6	Weigh the pros and cons of different political positions	3.53
Q10_8	Know the difference between legitimate and fake news	3.63
Q12_2	Worked together with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live	2.47
Q14	Ideology scale	3.97
Q16	Home Political Discussion	2.87
Q17	High School Political Discussion	2.75
Average		2.98

Table 1.2: Civic Disposition Scores

	Question Text	Score
Q1_1	Guided by spirituality or religious faith	3.1
Q1_2	Concerned about international issues	2.88
Q1_3	Fair, unbiased	3.59
Q1_4	Willing to stand up for what I believe is right	4.29
Q1_5	Involved in solving community problems	3.04
Q1_6	Compassionate, concerned about all people regardless of race, gender, ethnic background, orientation, or ability	4.2
Q1_7	Concerned about government decisions and policies	3.43
Q1_8	Concerned about justice and human rights	3.96
Q4_2	I believe I have a role to play in the political process.	3.44
Q9_1	Reach a compromise	3.81
Q9_3	Deal with conflict when it comes up	3.73
Q9_8	Assume the leadership of a group	3.39
Q10_3	Explain my political views to others	3.39
Q13_1	I want to help other people	3.95
Q13_2	I want to do something about an issue I care about	3.85
Q13_3	It makes me feel good about myself	3.32
Q13_4	I want to do my part as a community member	3.35
Q13_5	By getting involved I can influence what happens in the community or nation	3.31
Q13_6	What happens in politics has an impact on my life	3.65
Q13_7	I want to further my educational or career goals	3.85
Q13_8	I feel excited, energized, or upset by an issue or event	3.48
Q13_9	I was inspired by someone I admire	3.21
Q13_10	I like working with people who share my ideals	3.48
Average		3.55

Table 1.3: Civic Efficacy Scores

	Question Text	Score
Q2_1	Participating in a community-based action	2.79
Q2_2	Helping to promote racial understanding	3.4
Q2_3	Influencing the political structure of my community, state, or nation	2.9
Q2_4	Becoming involved in sustainability programs to protect the environment	3.1
Q2_5	Being very well off financially	3.97
Q2_6	Keeping up to date with political affairs	3.02
Q2_7	Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	3.58
Q2_8	Becoming a community leader	2.67
Q4_3	When policy issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say.	3.22
Q9_3	Deal with conflict when it comes up	3.73
Q9_5	Talk about social barriers such as race	3.33
Q10_5	Persuade others to support my political opinion	2.81
Q11_1	Obeys the law	4.03
Q11_2	Seeks political office	2.35
Q11_3	Helps neighbors	3.53
Q11_4	Belongs to a political party	2.28
Q11_5	Would participate in a peaceful protest against an unjust law	3.17
Q11_6	Votes	3.99
Q11_7	Would be willing to serve in the military to defend the country	2.95
Q11_8	Follows political issues in the newspaper or on the radio, TV, Internet, or Social Media	3.18
Q11_9	Participates in activities to improve the community or society	3.51
Q11_10	Shows respect for government leaders	3.15
Q11_11	Participates in activities promoting human rights or social justice	3.51
Q11_12	Engages in political discussions	2.89
Q11_13	Participates in activities to protect the environment	3.43
Q11_14	Is patriotic and loyal to the country	3.39
Q12_2	Worked together with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live	2.47
Q12_4	Attended a speech, informal seminar, or teach-in about politics	1.92
Q12_5	Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration	1.84
Q12_6	Signed a written or online petition about a political or social issue	2.15
Q12_8	NOT bought something or boycotted it because of conditions under which the product is made, or because you dislike the conduct of the company that produces it	2.27
Q12_9	Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it	2.22
Average		3.023

Table 1.4: Community Engagement Scores

	Question Text	Score
Q3_1	Working through political parties	2.88
Q3_2	Raising awareness of issues through discussions	3.48
Q3_3	Voting in elections	3.86
Q3_4	Working with community groups	3.38
Q3_5	Personally contacting influential decision-makers	3.05
Q3_6	Participating in public protests or demonstrations	3.09
Q3_7	Working to get attention by the news and/or social media	3.35
Q3_8	Giving money to a candidate or cause	2.88
Q3_9	Becoming informed about issues in order to influence others	3.66
Q4_5	I believe I need to stand up for my political views.	3.56
Q9_4	Make a statement at a public meeting	2.97
Q9_7	Collaborate with teammates to achieve a common goal	3.94
Q10_1	Reach a compromise	3.71
Q10_7	Develop strategies for political action	2.71
Q12_1	Discussed political problems with friends	2.82
Q12_7	Worked with a political group or volunteered for a campaign	1.69
Q12_10	Worked as a canvasser going door to door for a political candidate or cause	1.52
Q15_1	Vote regularly	4
Q15_2	Discuss political problems with friends	3.4
Q15_3	Work together with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live	3.28
Q15_4	Contact or visit a public official - at any level of government - to ask for assistance or to express your opinion	2.54
Q15_5	Attend a speech, informal seminar, or teach-in about politics	2.78
Q15_6	Take part in a protest, march, or demonstration	2.89
Q15_7	Sign a written or online petition about a political or social issue	3.07
Q15_8	Work with a political group or volunteer for a campaign	2.64
Q15_9	NOT buy something or boycott it because of conditions under which the product is made, or because you dislike the conduct of the company that produces it	2.97
Q15_10	Buy a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it	2.9
Q15_11	Wear a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or place a sign in front of house	2.62
Q15_12	Give money to a political candidate or cause	2.36
Q15_13	Work as a canvasser going door to door for a political candidate or cause	1.95
Q15_14	Participate in community service or volunteer activities for generally non- political organizations or programs	3.19
Q15_15	Be an active member of one or more political groups or organizations	2.59
Average		2.99

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Appendix: Civic Incomes Instrument

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research survey entitled “Understanding Civic Knowledge and Skills for Incoming College Students.” The study is being conducted by Dr. Chapman Rackaway, Chair and Professor of Political Science at Radford University, PO Box 6945, 801 E. Main St. Radford, VA 24142.

The purpose of this study is to examine your knowledge of and orientation to political life. Your participation in the survey will contribute to a better understanding of you as a student and your beliefs and provide more ways for you to be a leader and contributor to your community, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the United States, and the world. We estimate that it will take about twenty-five minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire. You are free to contact the investigator at the above address or phone number to discuss the survey. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. Participation is entirely voluntary.

The survey asks some questions about your political

ideology and beliefs about specific political issues. While we anticipate the survey poses no greater risk than you would find in everyday conversation or social media involvement and is designed to minimize any potential discomfort, it is possible that seeing these questions may create stress. If you feel uncomfortable answering any questions at any time, you may skip them or ultimately end participation in the survey.

The research team will also work to protect your data to the extent permitted by technology. However, it is possible, although unlikely, that an unauthorized individual could gain access to your responses because you are responding online. This risk is similar to your everyday use of the Internet. Identification numbers associated with email addresses will be kept during the data collection phase for tracking purposes only, you may be contacted prior to graduation with a request to take a follow-up survey. Your IP address will not be recorded. No identifying information other than your email address will be recorded, and we will store the data securely to ensure your confidentiality.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and have the right to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. If you wish to withdraw from the study or have questions, contact the principal investigator listed above. If you

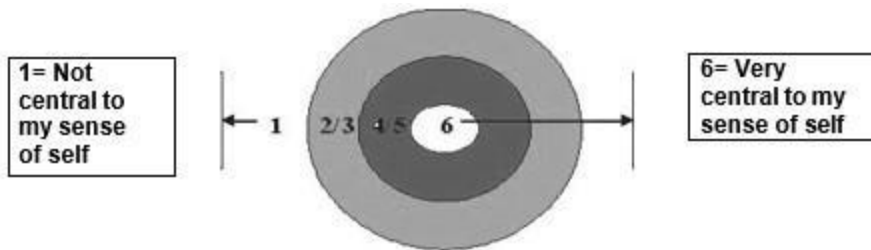
choose not to participate or decide to withdraw, there will be no impact on your grades, academic standing, or anything else.

If you have any questions or wish to update your email address, please call Dr. Chapman Rackaway at 540-831-6602 or email him at crackaway@radford.edu. You may also request a copy of the survey using the contact information above. This study was approved by the Radford University Committee for the Review of Human Subjects Research. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject or have complaints about this study, you should contact Dr. Jeanne Mekolichick, Institutional Official and Associate Provost for Research, Faculty Success, and Strategic Initiatives, jmekolic@radford.edu, 540-831-6504. If you agree to participate, please follow the link below. Otherwise, use the X at the upper right corner to close this window and disconnect. To complete the survey, please continue below

ALL ABOUT ME

Imagine that the figure below is a diagram of you. The middle circle (5) is made up of characteristics that are

very central to your sense of who you are as a person. The next circle (4) is made up of qualities that are quite central to your sense of self, and the outer circle (3 or 2) includes those that are somewhat important to your sense of self. Qualities that are not part of your sense of identity belong outside the circles (1). If a quality seems good or desirable but isn't an important part of who you are, you should answer "Not central to my sense of self" (1). How important to your sense of who you are is each of the following characteristics?



	Not Central to My Sense of Self (1)	2	3	4	Central to my Sense of Self (5)
Guided by spirituality or religious faith	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Concerned about international issues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fair, unbiased	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Willing to stand up for what I believe is right	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Involved in solving community problems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Not Central to My Sense of Self (1)	2	3	4	Central to my Sense of Self (5)
Compassionate, concerned about all people regardless of race, gender, ethnic background, orientation, or ability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Concerned about government decisions and policies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Concerned about justice and human rights	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following:

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	EssentialVery
Participating in a community-based action	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helping to promote racial understanding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Influencing the political structure of my community, state, or nation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Essential/Very
Becoming involved in sustainability programs to protect the environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Being very well off financially	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Keeping up to date with political affairs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Becoming a community leader	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

YOUR PERSPECTIVES ON POLITICAL ACTION

3) There are many ways people try to influence political decisions or outcomes. Here is a list of a few ways. How effective do you think each is in influencing political outcomes?

	Not effective at all	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Very effective	Extremely effective
Working through political parties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Not effective at all	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Very effective	Extremely effective
Raising awareness of issues through discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Voting in elections	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Working with community groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Personally contacting influential decision- makers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participating in public protests or demonstrations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Working to get attention by the news and/or social media	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Giving money to a candidate or cause	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Becoming informed about issues in order to influence others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please use the following scale to respond to the statements below:

Very
Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Disagree

Neither
Agree nor
Disagree

Agree

Strongly
Agree

I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the political issues facing our country.

I believe I have a role to play in the political process.

When policy issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say.

I think that I am better informed about politics and government than most people.

I believe I need to stand up for my political views.

I consider myself well qualified to participate in the political process.

My Interests

Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether

there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. How often would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Always

Listed below are some ways that people get news and information. How often do you do each of the following?

	None	Sometimes	About Half the Time	Most of the Time	Always
Read about public affairs and politics in a newspaper (print or online)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Watch the news on television	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Listen to news on a podcast	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Read about public affairs and politics on social media	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	None	Sometimes	About Half the Time	Most of the Time	Always
Discuss public affairs and politics with others in-person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My Political Knowledge and Skills

As far as you know, does the federal government spend more on Social Security or foreign aid

- ☐ Social Security
- ☐ Foreign Aid
- ☐ About the Same on Each Program
- ☐ Don't Know

Do you happen to know which party currently has the most members in the U.S. Senate?

- ☐ Democrats
- ☐ Republicans
- ☐ Equal Numbers of Both Parties
- ☐ Don't know

Listed below are some general skills that people use in various situations. Please rate how well you can do each:

	I cannot do this	2	3	4	I can do this very well
Reach a compromise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Help diverse groups to work together	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Deal with conflict when it comes up	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Make a statement at a public meeting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Talk about social barriers such as race	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Gather and analyze information from different sources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collaborate with teammates to achieve a common goal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Assume the leadership of a group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

These are some political skills that people use. Please rate how well you can do each:

	I cannot do this	2	3	4	I can do this very well
Reach a compromise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recognize conflicting political interests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Explain my political views to others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Know whom to contact to get something done about a social or political problem	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Persuade others to support my political opinion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Weigh the pros and cons of different political positions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Develop strategies for political action	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Know the difference between legitimate and fake news	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

MY CIVIC & POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AND GOALS

People have different understandings of citizenship. Below are some statements that could be used to explain what a

good citizen is or does. Please rate how important you think each is for explaining what a good citizen is or does.

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
Obeys the law	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Seeks political office	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helps neighbors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Belongs to a political party	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Would participate in a peaceful protest against an unjust law	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Votes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Would be willing to serve in the military to defend the country	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Follows political issues in the newspaper or on the radio, TV, Internet, or Social Media	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participates in activities to improve the community or society	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Shows respect for government leaders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participates in activities promoting human rights or social justice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
Engages in political discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participates in activities to protect the environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is patriotic and loyal to the country	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Below is a list of things that some people have done to express their views or take social or political action. For each item, please indicate how often you have done it in the past 4 years.

	None	Sometimes	About Half the Time	Most of the Time	Always
Discussed political problems with friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Worked together with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Contacted or visited a public official - at any level of government - to ask for assistance or to express your opinion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	None	Sometimes	About Half the Time	Most of the Time	Always
Attended a speech, informal seminar, or teach-in about politics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Taken part in a protest, march, or demonstration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Signed a written or online petition about a political or social issue	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Worked with a political group or volunteered for a campaign	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
NOT bought something or boycotted it because of conditions under which the product is made, or because you dislike the conduct of the company that produces it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bought a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	None	Sometimes	About Half the Time	Most of the Time	Always
Worked as a canvasser going door to door for a political candidate or cause	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

To the extent that you are involved in these activities or would consider becoming involved, please indicate how much each of the following reasons influences you to participate in social or political action:

	Not an important influence	A minimally important influence	A somewhat important influence	A very important influence	A vital influence
I want to help other people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I want to do something about an issue I care about	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It makes me feel good about myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I want to do my part as a community member	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
By getting involved I can influence what happens in the community or nation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Not an important influence	A minimally important influence	A somewhat important influence	A very important influence	A vital influence
What happens in politics has an impact on my life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I want to further my educational or career goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel excited, energized, or upset by an issue or event	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I was inspired by someone I admire	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like working with people who share my ideals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a scale on which the political views that people hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

- ☐ Strongly liberal
- ☐ Somewhat liberal
- ☐ Moderate, leaning liberal
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ Moderate, leaning conservative

- ☐ Somewhat conservative
- ☐ Strongly conservative

MY EXPECTATIONS ABOUT FUTURE INVOLVEMENT

Below is a list of things that some people do to express their views or take social or political action. In the future, what do you expect that you will do?

	I will certainly not do this	I will likely not do this	I may or may not do this	I will likely do this	I will certainly do this
Vote regularly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discuss political problems with friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work together with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Contact or visit a public official - at any level of government - to ask for assistance or to express your opinion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Attend a speech, informal seminar, or teach-in about politics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	I will certainly not do this	I will likely not do this	I may or may not do this	I will likely do this	I will certainly do this
Take part in a protest, march, or demonstration	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sign a written or online petition about a political or social issue	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work with a political group or volunteer for a campaign	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
NOT buy something or boycott it because of conditions under which the product is made, or because you dislike the conduct of the company that produces it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Buy a certain product or service because you like the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Wear a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or place a sign in front of your house	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Give money to a political candidate or cause	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	I will certainly not do this	I will likely not do this	I may or may not do this	I will likely do this	I will certainly do this
Work as a canvasser going door to door for a political candidate or cause	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Participate in community service or volunteer activities for generally non- political organizations or programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Be an active member of one or more political groups or organizations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My Background

In your home while you were growing up, how often were political topics discussed?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Often

In your high school, how often were political topics discussed?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ About half the time
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Often

Which of the following best describes your major? (If you have an expected major, please indicate that, even if you haven't yet declared it)

- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Allied Health Sciences
- ☐ Anthropological Sciences
- ☐ Art
- ☐ Biology
- ☐ Biomedical Science
- ☐ Chemistry
- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Communication Sciences and Disorders
- ☐ Computer Science
- ☐ Criminal Justice
- ☐ Cybersecurity
- ☐ Dance
- ☐ Design

- ☐ Economics
- ☐ Emergency Services
- ☐ English
- ☐ Exercise
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Foods and Nutrition
- ☐ Foreign Languages
- ☐ Geology
- ☐ Geospatial Science
- ☐ Health Sciences
- ☐ Healthcare Administration
- ☐ History
- ☐ Information Science and Systems
- ☐ Interdisciplinary Studies
- ☐ Interdisciplinary Studies - Liberal Arts
- ☐ Management
- ☐ Marketing
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Media Studies
- ☐ Medical Lab Science
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Nursing
- ☐ Philosophy and Religious Studies
- ☐ Physics
- ☐ Political Science
- ☐ Psychology
- ☐ Public Health
- ☐ Recreation

- ☐ Respiratory Therapy
- ☐ Social Sciences
- ☐ Social Work
- ☐ Sociology
- ☐ Sport Management
- ☐ Theatre
- ☐ Undeclared

With which gender do you identify?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary / third gender
- ☐ Prefer not to say

How do you identify yourself racially or ethnically? (Please mark all that apply.)

- ☐ American Indian or Native American
- ☐ Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin White/Non-Hispanic
- ☐ Asian American or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ White/Non-Hispanic
- ☐ Other/Additional

When classes are in session, are you typically employed full-time, part-time, or not employed?

- ☐ Full-time (35 hours/week or more)
- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Not employed

What is the highest academic degree that you expect to obtain?

- ☐ None
- ☐ Vocational certificate
- ☐ Associate's degree/AA or equivalent
- ☐ Bachelor's degree/BA or BS
- ☐ Professional degree (JD, MBA, MD, MSW, etc.)
- ☐ Graduate degree (MA or PhD)

Finally, is there anything else you want to tell us about the issues raised in this survey? We also welcome any feedback you have about the survey

Name and Email

What Is Your Name?

What is Your Email Address?

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