Annual Assessment Report  
Academic Year: 2012-2013

Name of Department: Office of Student Involvement  
Name of Contact Person: Amy Mynaugh  
Name of Person(s) completing report or contributing to the project: Amy Mynaugh, Tanya Vandermoon, Suzanne Kilgannon

A Abstract

In an effort to not miss an educational opportunity, the Office of Student Involvement often develops programs around topics not typically addressed by other divisional departments. In the fall of 2012 a comprehensive calendar of events was put together connected to the presidential election season titled Get Out the Vote. Using a focus group format, Get Out the Vote learning outcomes were assessed. 74 students who participated in one or more Get Out the Vote event were invited to participate in a focus group where the following topics were addressed:

- Defining civic engagement and voter responsibility
- Impact of Get Out the Vote Program participation on a student’s ability to define civic engagement and voter responsibility
- Feedback related to future Get Out the Vote programming at DePaul

Overall, students reported enjoying the community that was built when gathering at Get Out the Vote events but did not generally credit their attendance at the events to what they know about civic engagement and voter responsibility. Moving forward the Office of Student Involvement will consider ways to alter and enhance to better meet learning outcomes and programmatic goals.

B Introduction and context for this year’s report

1 What is the question being asked?

Does participation in the fall 2012 Get Out the Vote initiative contribute to students’ understanding of civic engagement and political responsibility?

2 What learning outcomes are being assessed?

Students who participate in Get Out the Vote initiatives will be able to define civic engagement.

Students who participate in Get out the Vote initiatives will be able to list presidential candidates, key party issues, voter responsibilities and voter rights.

3 What is the relevance of the question as it relates to the work of the department and/or division?

Executing high quality campus activities and events are a key activities of the Office of Student Involvement. In the past few years we have been particularly focused on producing activities and events that fill gaps in programming on campus and that focus on learning connected to our departmental, divisional and institutional learning outcomes. Now that we have a set of well-developed outcomes, and having Get Out the Vote initiatives housed in our department, we felt it was time to assess what learning was or was not happening as a result of participation.
**4 How does answering this question help your department?**

Answering this question helps the Office of Student Involvement understand if the programs we chose for Get Out the Vote actually contribute to what our students know about civic engagement and duty, political knowledge and the election season. Without asking this question, the department is really just guessing in terms of what programs we think are going to educate our students particularly during a major election year.

**5 How is the question linked to the Student Affairs Strategic Plan (2010-2013) and Vision Twenty18 goals?**

Our Get Out the Vote programming, and consequently the question we are asking in this assessment project, directly link up with the Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan Goal 1 and Goal 2. The rationale for Goal 1 states “The nature of learning is holistic; intellectual development is inextricably connected to psychological, emotional, social, civic and physical development.” The learning goals associated with Get Out the Vote reflect OSI’s commitment to making contributions to social and civic development. To not provide programming each fall, in connection with relevant local, regional and national elections, would be a missed educational opportunity. Goal 2 addresses broadening, diversifying and strengthening points of student engagement. Get Out the Vote programming provides a wonderful opportunity for Student Involvement to contribute to conversations occurring in classrooms, connecting with our political science, history, international business majors, and many more. Knowing that Student Involvement wants to make significant contributions to student learning, this project was designed to find out if we accomplished what we set out to do when we wrote the learning outcomes and designed the programming for Get Out the Vote.

**6 Provide any relevant research and/or literature that informs or contextualizes this project. Please summarize and cite this information. Do we know anything theoretically or empirically about this question?**

There are several citations that suggest we should provide opportunities to teach our students about civic engagement, civic duty and to be politically engaged. Here are two:

DePaul’s own strategic plan Vision 2018 states, when speaking about commitment to community “it (DePaul University) will deepen connections…to develop in students the ability to act as responsible global citizens”.


The Association of American Colleges and Universities, as a part of their commitment to ensure today’s college students obtain quality liberal education, states “As we move into a turbulent century, our nation’s democracy and our interdependent global community require a more informed, engaged, and socially responsible citizenry. Both educators and employers agree that personal and social responsibility are core elements of a 21st century education. A recent survey of AAC&U members confirms that many institutions are placing more emphasis on civic education by developing innovative educational practices that advance learning outcomes essential for responsible citizenship, at home and abroad”. The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. (2012). *A crucible moment: College learning and democracy’s future*. Washington DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
C Methodology

1 On what group(s) of individuals did the question focus (were particular groups intentionally excluded)?

Our assessment question focused on students who attended Get Out the Vote events from September 2012-January 2013. OrgSync swipe technology was used to track attendance at events so we knew who to reach out to for participation in this project.

2 What steps were taken to ensure consent of participants? How did you inform participants of their role in this assessment project? Was participation optional?

Participation in this project was optional. Multiple communications were sent to students inviting them to participate in the assessment project if they wished. Students who decided to participate in the study completed a consent form at the time of participation. Students were able to withdraw participation at any time, as outlined in the consent form. A copy of the consent form is included in the appendix of this report.

3 Was any identifying information about individual participants collected through this assessment? If so, what precautions were taken to keep this information secure (i.e. kept in a locked file).

No identifying information was collected, other than the student names and DePaul ID numbers through the OrgSync swipe technology. Those lists are password protected in OrgSync and only accessible to one staff member.

4 Describe the methods used to answer the question, as well as a description and size of the group initially invited to participate in the project.

Focus groups were used to answer our assessment question. There were a total of three focus groups held for students who voluntarily chose to participate. 74 unique students attended one or more Get Out the Vote programs and were invited, via email, to participate in a focus group. The group, by and large, was made up of students who we do not typically see at our events. Seven were men and two were women.

D Findings/Results and Discussion

1. Describe the results

- There were 74 unique students who participated in one or more Get Out the Vote events and were invited to participate in this assessment project. A total of nine students participated in a total of three focus groups (a 12% response rate)
- Gender and year in school were the only demographic data collected. Seven males and two females participated. Two of the participants were juniors, seven were seniors. Although it was not formally collected, during the focus groups two participants shared that they were new transfer students (as of fall 2012) and one participant indicated he was an international student.
- The following themes emerged from qualitative data recorded and synthesized:

  - All participants attended the “Debate Viewing and Dialogues”. They found them to be the most appealing.
  - Participants came to the events with a great deal of prior knowledge and did not feel, overall, that attending Get Out the Vote events taught them anything they didn’t already know.
Participants uniformly commented that they felt they would have learned something new if the programs delved deeper into the topics that emerged from political platforms.

- The following quotes support the themes that emerged:

  - “I came in with a lot of knowledge about politics and candidate platforms, I wanted the programs to go deeper”
  - “I came into these programs already knowing a lot because I was really interested in the election and engaged already”
  - “I enjoyed the environment and community feel...but the programs did not necessarily add to my knowledge”
  - “Some of the other programs were very surface, I’m already politically active, delving more deeply into the topics at the events would have drawn me to (attend) more”
  - “I liked being able to attend an event with students who have a common interest in politics”

2. What did you learn from the assessment?

   Based on your analysis, what were the key findings? (Please provide in a bullet point format)

   - Overall, participants did not learn what they knew about civic engagement and voter responsibility because of their attendance at a Get Out the Vote event.
   - Participants chose to attend events because they were already very interested in politics and engaged in the election season, not because they were “beginners”. They planned to vote, knew which party they identified with and were looking for a community of others to engage with.
   - Participants generally connected the concept of civic engagement to responsibility and duty to be informed in your community, promoting your agendas and supporting others.
   - Participants generally connected the concept of voter responsibility to being aware of issues on the political spectrum, having knowledge about candidates, being registered to vote and actually voting.
   - Participants uniformly craved deeper engagement, some of their suggestions include: intentionally facilitated conversations at the Debate and Dialogues, student debates, and more speakers/lectures.

How, if at all, did the results surprise you?

Several students reported that they came to the programs with a very solid foundation related to the political candidate platforms connected to the 2012 presidential election and were already committed to voting and being civically engaged. A few students noted that they found the programs to be “too basic” and hoped for programming that would really let them dive in and critically analyze and discuss relevant election matters with peers, moderated by a faculty or staff member. Initially, this was surprising, but as it kept coming up it made sense. The students who tended to participate in the Get Out the Vote programs seemed to be really interested in civic engagement, political responsibility, and election platforms and were looking for more. In hindsight, our programs weren’t necessarily designed for students who were already really well versed.

What does this project contribute to the field or the Division of Student Affairs?

This project helps to confirm this generation of students’ engagement and interest in talking about the regional, national, and global matters we currently face. Our students aren’t necessarily highly involved in activism, but they have an interest to learn, discuss, and identify with a particular viewpoint and/or political party.
Were there specific challenges or limitations to the project (sample selection, response rate, data collection, etc.) that may have affected the results or use of the results?

The number one limitation and challenge of this project was the extremely low response rate. Eight email communications went out to students about participation in a focus group. Multiple time frames and campus locations were offered to accommodate varying student schedules. Incentives were also offered to all who chose to participate (lunch was served at the focus group and each participant received 2 AMC movie passes).

E Implications

1 Based on this project what actions will the department take to improve learning or engagement?

For future Get Out the Vote programs the department will need look at how to provide a mix of offerings that appeal to students who are just beginning to be politically engaged (first time voters, etc.) with programming that allows already politically engaged students to go in more depth via discussions, debates, and lectures. The department might want to discuss if the goal of Get Out the Vote is truly delivering knowledge, to directly contribute to student learning or if the goal is to create community during an election season. The department should discuss what the purposes of, or dual purpose of Get Out the Vote could and should be, knowing so many students come in reporting a decent base line of knowledge. Overall, the department needs to distinguish what is being delivered as far as learning is concerned and what is being created in terms of an environment to promote continued learning and building community for students to come together during an exciting time.

2 What implications does this project have for other departments at the university or Student Affairs as a whole?

Knowing that the Student Leadership Institute coordinates voter registration efforts, we might gather data from voter registration applications to determine who first time voters are and target some programming to them specifically. Additionally, staff in the Center for Intercultural programs may want to be apprised of our findings knowing how tightly coupled political platforms are to social justice and cultural contexts. Simply knowing that the Office of Student Involvement is doing this kind of programming could open the door to rich partnerships that we’ve only scratched the surface on.

3 If you secured IRB approval for this project how do you intend to use the data beyond writing the department assessment report?

IRB approval was not secured for this project.

4 How will the results of your project be shared with participants and other key stakeholders?

The results of this project will be shared and discussed with Office of Student Involvement staff at the department’s annual summer retreat. Participants will be emailed a pared down copy of the report, inclusive of content that would be most interesting to students.

5 What follow up studies or future projects might help further assess this topic? Is your department planning to conduct any of the follow-up studies suggested?

I don’t believe any extensive additional study of this topic needs to be conducted in terms of what students are learning from our current Get Out the Vote programming. I do, however, believe Student Involvement staff needs to spend time benchmarking what other institutions are doing around the topics of civic
engagement, political responsibility, and election year programming. Learning from our peers may help to shape a richer learning experience for our students.

Appendix

“Get Out the Vote: DePaul Votes 2012” List of Events

This departmental initiative took place over the course of fall quarter and culminated with a Presidential Inauguration viewing:

- Featured Speaker: Georgette Norman “Democracy is a Verb” (co-sponsorship with CIP)
- 3 “Coffee and Conversation” election season facilitated dialogues
- Movie screening “The Campaign”
- 4 debate viewing parties followed by facilitated dialogue
- “Know the Issues” A visual presentation for the DePaul community to learn the presidential candidate’s position on key issues.
- Dinner on DePaul: Government and Politics (dinner and conversation with DPU alumni who work in government and politics, sponsored by Alumni Relations
- Election Day Coverage/viewing and facilitated discussion
- Presidential Inauguration viewing and facilitated discussion

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Project Title: Get Out the Vote Initiative 2012

Staff Facilitators: Tanya Vandermoon and Amy Mynaugh

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a focus group to help inform the Office of Student Involvement about your experience participating in Fall 2012 Get Out the Vote programs at DePaul University. You are being asked to participate because you attended one or more of the following events:

- Movie Screening of “The Campaign”
- Coffee and Conversation (election season dialogues)
- Featured Speaker: Georgette Norman “Democracy is a Verb”
- Debate viewing parties and facilitated dialogues
- Know the Issues (visual presentation for presidential candidate platforms and key issues)
- Dinner on DePaul: Government and Politics

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in this focus group.

Purpose:
The purpose of the focus group is to gather information about your experience participating in one or more of the Get Out the Vote programs listed above.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate in the focus group, you will be asked to respond to a series of questions. Your responses will be recorded by a scribe and an audio device. You are encouraged to respond openly and honestly to the questions asked of you, although you should only respond to questions you feel comfortable answering.
Risks/Benefits:
There are no known risks involved in participating in this focus group although discussions concerning politics may be sensitive for some individuals. Benefits may include improvements to future programming regarding civic engagement, local and national elections, and voter education.

Confidentiality:
Your name will not be associated with your responses in the focus group reports. We will compile a report of basic themes and share it with you prior to finalizing it. The information gathered in today’s focus group will only be shared with members of the DePaul Community in the form of a final assessment report.

Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this focus group is voluntary. Even if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from participation at any time during this session without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:
If you have questions about the focus group after you leave today you can contact:

Amy Mynaugh  
Assistant Director Student Involvement  
amynaugh@depaul.edu.

Statement of Consent:
Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this focus group. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

____________________________________________
Participant’s Signature

Date ____________

____________________________________________
Staff Facilitator’s Signature

Date ______________
FOR THE FACILITATOR:

Pass out half sheets and consent forms as participants arrive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Purpose:</th>
<th>The purpose of this focus group is to gather information about your experience participating in one or more of the fall 2012 Get Out the Vote programs.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Topics:</td>
<td>The following topics will be addressed throughout today’s focus group:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>a) Defining civic engagement and voter responsibility.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) Impact of Get Out the Vote Program participation on a student’s ability to define civic engagement and voter responsibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) Impact of Get Out the Vote Programs on a student’s understanding of the key issues and presidential platforms of the fall 2012 election season.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d) Feedback related to future Get Out the Vote programming at DePaul</td>
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FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

Thank you all for coming today. My name is Amy, and I will be facilitating today’s discussion, and this is Carrie, who will be helping me by recording your responses in writing and via an audio device. We will be spending the next hour talking about some of your experiences participating in Get Out the Vote programs during the fall quarter. (Point out the list of programs on the flip chart or dry erase board)

We would like to hear from everyone today if possible, especially any stories or anecdotes that you feel comfortable sharing with the group. We will be using the information to better understand the ways in which Get Out the Vote programs at DePaul expose students to civic engagement and voter responsibility. All of your responses will remain confidential and the findings from this focus group will not contain names or any information identifying individuals with specific comments. Please look at the consent form and sign it if you agree to the terms. Are there any questions before we begin?

[Address questions if any are raised]
[Collect signed consent forms, allow students to keep a copy for themselves]

We are going to cover three main areas today. First, we are interested in understanding how each of you defines civic engagement and voter responsibility. Next, we want to learn more about the ways in which Get Out the Vote programs may have contributed to your knowledge about civic engagement and voter responsibility as well as your knowledge of the major platforms of the 2012 election season. Finally, we want to learn if there are any suggestions you may have for future Get Out the Vote programs.

Introductions

I would like to start today’s focus group by having each of you introduce yourself to the group. Please let us know your name, year in school and what Get Out the Vote program or programs you attended.

Goal Area 1: Definitions of Civic Engagement and Voter Responsibility

How do you define the term civic engagement?

a. Probe: What words come to mind when you hear the term civic engagement?

b. Probe: What stories/examples come to mind when you hear the term civic engagement?
How do you define voter responsibility?

c. Probe: What words come to mind when you hear the words voter responsibility?
d. Probe: What stories/examples come to mind when you hear the words voter responsibility?

**Goal Area 2: Impact of Get Out the Vote Programs on Your Understanding of Civic Engagement and Voter Responsibility**

I would like to turn your attention now to your participation in Get Out the Vote programs. Think back to the programs you attended, in what ways (if any) did participation in one or more Get Out the Vote programs contribute to what you know about civic engagement and voter responsibility? If possible, can you link your learning to specific programs or examples?

a. Probe: What, specifically, have you learned about civic engagement and/or voter responsibility as a result of your participation in Get Out the Vote programs?

**Goal Area 3: Political Platforms and Key Issues for the 2012 Election Season**

I would like to switch gears and talk about political platforms and key issues for the 2012 election season.

a. In what ways, if any, did your participation in Get Out the Vote programs contribute to your knowledge of political platforms and key issues during the 2012 election season?

b. Was there a specific key issue or platform topic you learned because you attended a Get Out the Vote program?

c. Did you take any specific action as a result of learning this new information?

*Provide a brief summary of the big ideas presented in focus group thus far.*

**Goal Area 4: Suggestions for Future Get Out the Vote Programming**

Lastly, I would like to get some feedback from you about future programs for our Get Out the Vote initiative. In what ways can we improve or add to Get Out the Vote programming in the future?

a. Probe: Are there any specific program ideas you have for our Get Out the Vote initiative?
b. Probe: What kinds of programs would help you to better understand the concepts of civic engagement and voter responsibility?
c. Probe: How can Get Out the Vote programs better educate you about political platforms and key issues?)

Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts with us today. We appreciate your time in helping us better understand the impact of Get Out the Vote programming, what you’ve learned, and how to shape programming for the future. We plan to share our results once they are compiled with each participant electronically sometime during the spring quarter.