further. Finally discussants mulled over the possibilities and advantages presented by multicourse participation in simulations. The viable solution would the establishment of a teaching/simulations lab connected with cross-curriculum opportunities.

Lessons Learned: Resources and Recommendations

Overall the 2008 workshop reiterated some of the former S&RP track themes. The discussion lead to serious questions and possible solutions on how S&RP can and should be factored in merit evaluations for those faculty who engage in them. Last year discussants explored how such faculty could receive more FTEs while students could receive more credit hours for S&RP engagement when taking teaching and class loads into account. The possible solution could be the creation of simulation learning labs to supplement coursework (*PS*, July 2007, 583). This year Neal Allen (College of St. Benedict and St. John's University) suggested that perhaps the APSA Standing Committee on Teaching and Learning could initiate a committee or research project to explore the topic of "Developing the Dedicated Lab in the Political Science Curriculum." The purpose would be to conduct departmental surveys to gauge if existing teaching/simulations labs exists, and if so, what are the criteria in relation to student/faculty FTEs? The results of such a survey could be a mechanism by which the profession can advocate for learning labs in other institutions.

As reported last year, to achieve these goals faculty engaging in S&RP must work to develop institutional standards for what simulations should accomplish through more collaboration on S&RP models, best practices within and across universities, as well as the organization and sharing between conferences via list servs, web blogs, and web site links. The suggested recommendation in 2007 was the creation of a list serv that linked the faculty engaging in S&RP within the discipline (*PS*, July 2007, 583). This initiative has come to fruition with the creation of a political science S&RP web site by Douglass Telling (Framingham State College): http://mysite.verizon.net/dtelling/Simulations%20Home%.

Note

*Special thanks to the many workshop discussants who contributed additional written comments for this summary.

Track Seven: Core Curriculum/General Education

—Kweku Ainuson,
Clemson University
—Stacy G. Ulbig,
Sam Houston State University

Meeting Our Challenges with Innovative Tools

The Core Curriculum/General Education track comprised a wide range of institutions, different areas of expertise, and levels of teaching. Institutions represented were both private and public, and four year colleges and community colleges. Participants were made up of seasoned and experienced teachers, novice teachers, and graduate students. Presenters described their innovative teaching techniques and how they could be effectively employed both inside and outside the classroom. Presentations gave rise to the discussion of various teaching methods and how to tailor the techniques to fit specific needs. In the ensuing discussion one thing became apparent. The goal of the successful teacher is to engage students in a number of ways.

At the most basic level we wish to impart a knowledge base by engaging students in the class material. More generally we seek to make connections between our classroom activities and the larger civic world around us by engaging students in politics and public affairs. Additionally we aspire to enable students to view themselves as active world citizens by engaging them with their own internal self-image. Finally we encourage students to positively interact with those around them by engaging each other. In achieving these levels of engagement, two more specific tasks emerged during our conversations. First, many of us stressed the importance of imparting basic knowledge and skills. Second, our group felt it was important to strike the appropriate balance between specific facts and larger concepts. As last year's track participants pointed out, political science courses can "teach several key skills, including critical thinking, independence, citizenship, global awareness, and the importance of recognizing and respecting alternate viewpoints" (Boomgard et al. 2007, 576).

In seeking to achieve these goals, we came to recognize that we often face a number of perceived dichotomies. Most of us face the challenge of teaching both non-majors and majors in the same classroom. We are confronted by the task of conveying a general knowledge base to non-majors while simultaneously laying the foundation for continued study of political science by majors. We grapple with the task of imparting knowledge to students who have little interest in the material, while at the same time providing political science majors with a rewarding experience that fuels their interest in the subject. Similarly we are often faced with the decision of teaching breadth versus depth. Should we be concerned with covering only the most basic information about most topics or should we focus on communicating a comprehensive understanding of a subset of topics? At the same time we struggle to teach substantive knowledge and build critical skills. We often find ourselves quizzing students on basic factual knowledge on objective exams at the expense of assignments that build more advanced critical thinking and communication skills. Finally we often feel a tension between institutional requirements and the classroom experience. Institutional imperatives such as teaching more students for fewer dollars and measuring learning outcomes often collide with a fruitful and productive classroom environment.

Throughout our conversations the members of this track offered a number of strategies for managing these numerous, and often seemingly irreconcilable, goals. We hope that by sharing a number of the approaches presented and discussed we might encourage others to think creatively about navigating the turbulent waters of teaching classes in the general education/core curriculum area, and to share their survival tools with the rest of us. As practitioners one important issue that confronted us was how to overcome the challenges outlined above. As a group we felt that we could better achieve our goals if we utilize effective and creative teaching methods, better align our assessment with our goals, and approach our challenges as reinforcing rather than contradictory.

Use Good Tools

Our goals can be reached by effectively presenting the materials to the students, engaging the students by encouraging participatory learning both inside and outside the classroom, and by developing critical thinking skills so students will be able to make sense out of their experiences in the classroom and apply them effectively to understand important issues confronting society. Our track participants explored a number of different methods for achieving these goals, including classroom presentation methods, out-of-class participation

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exercises, and development of critical thinking skills.

We explored a number of classroom presentation methods that help to engage students on a number of different levels. One presentation method that was considered particularly useful by this track was the use of PowerPoint presentations in the classroom. The use of PowerPoint is relatively common in the classroom and its use now transcends all disciplines in colleges. However, as experiences in this track showed, it is only when PowerPoint has been applied skillfully and effectively that students can really benefit from it. Many students tend to lose concentration and descend into boredom by just looking at slide upon slide in their classrooms. Incorporating breaks in the monotony of slides is therefore very important in getting student to be more engaged and thereby more willing and able to learn the information being presented. One researcher (Myles L. Clowers, "Using PowerPoint to Teach the American Government Survey Course") showed that incorporating humor into the slideshow has been successful in getting students to stay focused and get involved. With the widespread use of the Internet, it is relatively easy to find relevant and pertinent humorous Internet links or pictures to go with PowerPoint presentations. It was further noted that even incorporating simple illustrative pictures into PowerPoint slides was very effective at improving classroom engagement. Students exposed to PowerPoint lecture presentations containing simple, colorful images were more likely to report that they understood concepts better and were more likely to show an interest in the subject matter than students who viewed text-only lecture visual presentations (Stacy Ulbig, "Engaging the Unengaged: Using Visual Images to Enhance the 'Poli Sci 101' Experience of Non-Majors"). Similarly the use of personal response systems was shown to increase student engagement in the classroom; students reported higher classroom satisfaction when they utilized this classroom technology (Kweku Ainuson, "Effectiveness of Personal Response Systems as a Classroom Technology Tool at Clemson University"). Additional gains can be made when these computerized response systems are used in conjunction with interactive in-class exercises. For example students might be asked to answer a quiz question using the response system technology, but they should do so after having small group discussions about the appropriate answer. Such exercises engage students with the material and each other in a manner that they find appealing. Interestingly another researcher suggested that different modes of instruction can yield equally good results. Knowledge gains from online instruction were shown to be comparable to those that occur in a traditional classroom setting, and that similar gains are garnered from instruction at community college and a major state university (Jane Bryant, "American Government Across Time, Space, and Location").

Moving outside the classroom we discussed a number of ways to engage students with others and get them to make connections between these outside activities and their classroom learning experience. We discovered that students responded positively when required to engage in a number of different political activities to fulfill class requirements, with students showing a willingness to engage in seemingly high-cost activities such as political protest (Lindsey Lupo and Rebecca Brandy Griffin, "Political Participation Exercises as a Means to Teach Civic Skills, Engage Students and Recruit Majors"). Outside the classroom students' political skills, motivation, and networking abilities were all enhanced through the use of such participation exercises. Inside the classroom gains in substantive knowledge were most greatly attained when the out-of-class exercises were explicitly discussed in the classroom setting. Thus such exercises can serve to engage students in a number of ways—with the material, with the civic world, and with each other. Similarly collaborative writing projects can be utilized to bring students into a dialogue with each other outside the classroom (Daniel E. Smith, "The Value of Collaborative Writing in Introductory Political Science Courses: A Case Study"). Students who interacted with each to produce class writing assignments appear to feel more positively about their critical thinking abilities and make significant gains in substantive knowledge. Thus it appears that out-of-class participation exercises can have a positive impact on in-class performance and satisfaction with the classroom experience.

A third set of tools we discussed focused on helping students make the connection between the classroom and the "real world" by strengthening critical thinking skills. We discovered that a deeper substantive knowledge might be attained by foregoing the traditional textbook in favor of a series of writing assignments related to core class concepts (Andrew Steinfeldt, "Teaching American Government without a Textbook Revisited"). By building critical thinking and writing skills, students were able to gain a more thorough understanding of key concepts. Similarly intensive writing and rewriting exercises in introductory classes helped students relate class concepts to the larger political world (Lillian J. Lopez and Patrick F. McKinlay, "Serving the Greater Good: Delivering General Education Outcomes in a Small Liberal Arts College"). Importantly such exercises are most effective when students are given frequent feedback. Thus it is important to provide timely and adequate feedback at every stage of the writing process. Further, feedback in various forms, such as in class discussions, written comments, and electronic feedback through systems such as BlackBoard, were all shown to be beneficial.

While we felt that all these tools showed promise, each of us was acutely aware that all tools are not for everyone. We must each work within the context of our own institutions, tailoring these teaching approaches in ways that fit our own realities. Those of us teaching at institutions with small enrollments might be able to make more use of intensive, repetitive writing assignments, while those of us facing larger classes might find the presentation tools more effective. Similarly the value of these various approaches very much depends on how they are used. Out-of-class exercises are of little use if not connected to the classroom in a meaningful way. Personal response systems in the classroom are of limited use if they are not used in conjunction with more interpersonal activities. Finally not all tools do all things. Some methods help more with knowledge gain, some with skill building, and others with civic engagement. Each of us must find the right mix of teaching strategies that can deliver the outcomes we desire within the institutional structures we inhabit.

Align Assessment and Goals

In addition to incorporating innovative teaching methods that fit our institutional needs, we also felt we should strive to align our assessment measures with our goals. We are often called upon to conduct assessments that focus predominantly on student retention of basic factual knowledge, yet this is only one, and perhaps not the most vital, of our goals. Students may be able to score well on assessments that focus on short-term factual recall, but may benefit far more in the long run from the stronger grasp of larger concepts, stronger academic skill set, and personal growth that we often attempt to impart. Our nascent conversations on this topic centered on ways we might better gauge our success at meeting these higher-level goals. At the most basic level we felt the need to develop evaluation instruments that tapped students' conceptual knowledge,

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core skills, and perceptions of the civic world and their place in it. We offer little in the way of guidance on this point, but hope that future conference participants will take up questions related to this task.

Reinforcing vs. Contradictory Challenges

In our discussion we came to realize that perhaps the most effective way to meet the challenge of engaging students in core curriculum classes was to fundamental change our view of that challenge. We entered our sessions seeing conflict between teaching both non-majors and majors in the same classroom, between teaching breadth and depth, between teaching substantive knowledge and important skills, and between institutional requirements and classroom environment. As we discussed the innovative teaching methods our presenters offered, we realized that these challenges do not have be seen as inhibitors. Teaching non-majors does not have to prevent teaching majors, teaching a depth of knowledge about some topics does not have to take a backseat to covering a breadth of topics, substantive knowledge and skill building do not have to be separate, and institutional imperatives and classroom goals do not have to collide. Instead of seeing these dichotomies as contradictory, we came to realize that we are better served viewing them as harmonious. For instance we can utilize classroom presentation methods to meet both the institutional imperative of teaching more students with fewer resources while at the same time creating an inviting and interesting classroom environment. We can use skill-building exercises to impart substantive knowledge. We can teach a breadth of subjects while allowing students to pursue out-of-class activities that allow a depth of knowledge on particular topics. We can hold the attention of non-majors while simultaneously giving our majors a fulfilling experience. Rather than seeing our goals as inhibitors to one another, we realized that they are better approaches as catalysts.

Reference

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Track Eight: Civic Engagement I

—**Timothy S. Meinke,**
Lynchburg College

Helping Undergraduates Become Engaged Citizens

Political science has always pondered questions of civic engagement. Socrates described and defended his intimate engagement with Athens in the *Apology* and Aristotle argued in the *Politics* that it was only through engagement with the polis that humans could set forth and discuss notions of justice. Stephen Leonard (1999) and Hindy Schachter (1998) pointed out in earlier volumes of this journal that at the end of the nineteenth century the "founding fathers" of modern academic political science were motivated by ideas of improving citizens through civic education. And this has continued to be a focus for the American Political Science Association (APSA) through collaborative efforts such as the 1996 Task Force on Civic Education for the Next Century or, more recently, tracks during the association's Teaching and Learning Conference.

The Civic Engagement I track at the fifth annual conference combined the thoughts and experiences of over 30 political scientists, at different stages of their careers and from a variety of institutions around the world. This group introduced themselves by answering the fundamental and elusive question: what is civic engagement? As would be expected, they provided a variety of rich responses but a few general themes emerged. Engaged citizens in a democracy are those who actively participate in governance; therefore, it would be best if they had an understanding of the public good and were willing to act to preserve that good. These citizens recognize their responsibilities and realize their potential contributions to the multiple communities in which they are members. To be engaged in this way a citizen needs to be aware of the complex political systems they participate in and have a clear understanding of the problems they face.

After this introduction the group moved on to consider in greater depth the skills that undergraduates need to develop if they are to become engaged citizens. Four of the papers presented focused on developing courses and teaching practices that help students develop these skills. Daniel Shea's survey of 343 professors teaching introduction to American government courses revealed that these classes can be powerful vehicles for helping students overcome the apathy that often overwhelms citizens in a modern republic because over 800,000 undergraduates take such courses a year. Patrick McKinlay presented a class developed for freshmen that employs an interesting mix of normative readings on citizenship and ethics with a simulation on poverty "to ennoble rather than enable … students to consider what they value and why." In the same session Dari Sylvester studied an upper-level class designed to help students synthesize theoretical understandings of policymaking with experiences from a service learning project with the Community Partnership for Families of San Joaquin County. This design allows students to experience the complexity of the political system after they are given a theoretical foundation to understand those experiences. Edward and Marie Yager highlighted the need for collaboration across disciplines by describing the benefits of using a model of coaching to help students move beyond a sense of volunteerism.

During the second session presenters discussed the importance of promoting student engagement with the broader international community. Allison Rios Millett McCartney presented a case study of a civic engagement research internship course in which students learn about the UN and international issues and then use that knowledge to run a model UN program for a local high school. Shoichiro Ishibashi and Chieko Kitagawa Otsuru discussed the results of a similar seminar facilitated by undergraduates with the goal of promoting civic engagement among Japanese junior high school students. They found that the seminar developed positive attitudes towards engagement among the junior high students by involving them in a public policy issue that was important in their lives, the unlawful parking of bicycles in Japanese cities. Concluding the session Ketevan Geguchadze found that the use of simulations was effective in teaching democratic values and citizenship skills to students at Batuni State University in Georgia.

A strong group of papers highlighted the value of using election activities to promote not just voting but broader civic engagement among undergraduates. Both the studies by Kara Lindaman and Ruth Charles and by Terri Susan Fine and Aubrey Jewett found that classes requiring students to participate as poll workers on Election Day are effective in developing a sense of engagement among all types of students. Arthur Sanders reported on using internships with campaigns during the recent Iowa

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