

Educational Practices that Relate to Civic Gains & Voting Rates: Lessons from NSSE and NSLVE



Jillian Kinzie, NSSE & IU Center for Postsecondary Research
Nancy Thomas & Ishara Casellas Connors, Institute for Democracy
and Higher Education, Tufts Univ.



June 9, 2017

Higher Education's Civic Mission

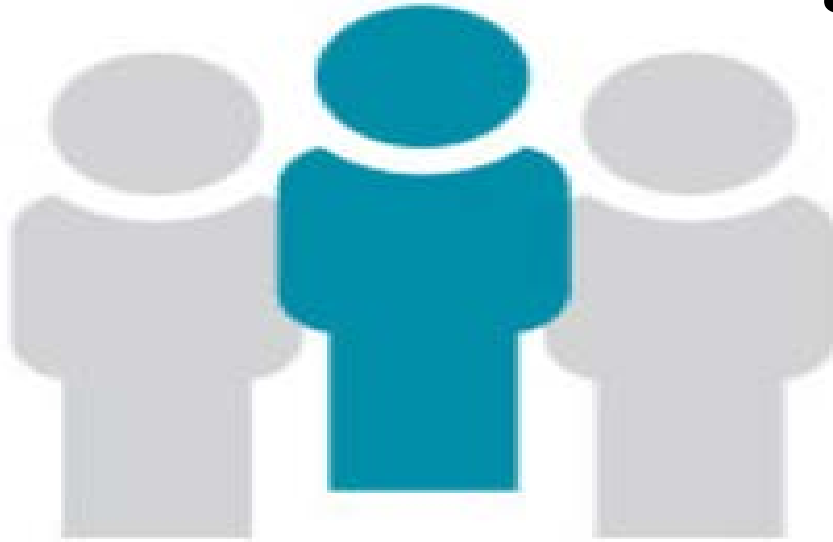
- **Strengthen and deepen civic learning**
- **Enhance civic engagement experiences**
- **Ensure students graduate prepared to be the informed, engaged citizens that our communities and democracy need**



**In what ways has the landscape for
political engagement changed over the
past few years?**



Crucible Moment: State of Civic Learning (2012)

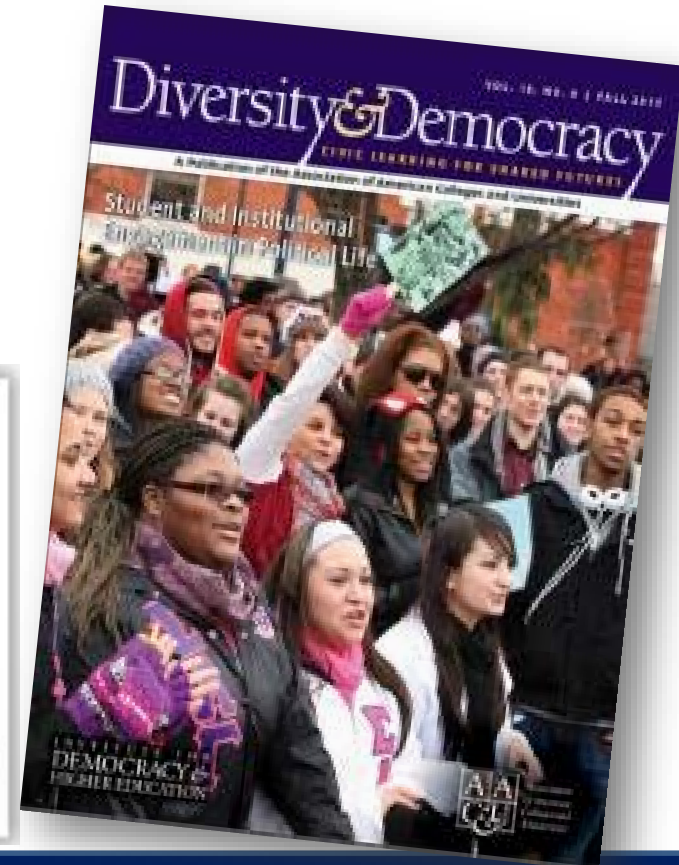
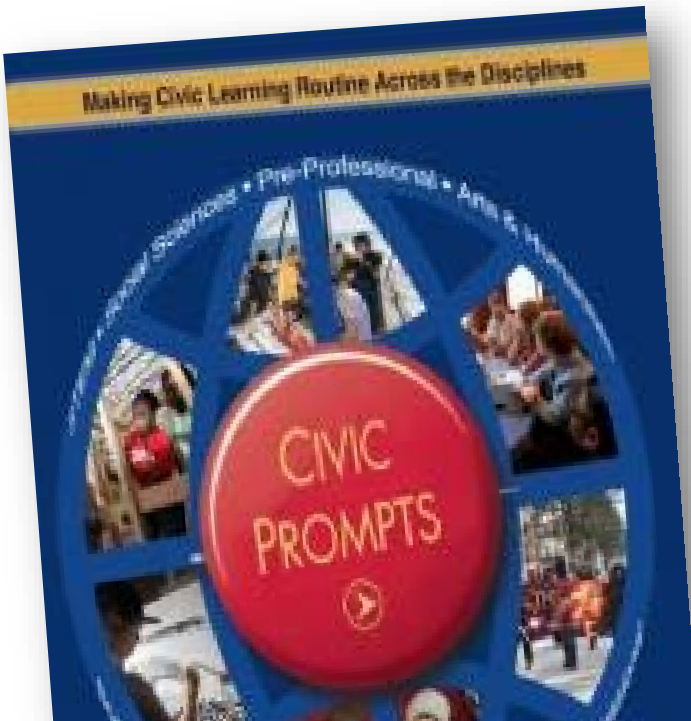


1 in 3 students

- **“strongly agreed” that faculty publicly advocate for students to become active & involved citizens**
- **“strongly agreed” their education increased their civic capacities**

Lots of Action Since Crucible Moment...

Prompts, through which faculty can increase student learning by defining discipline-specific civic lenses



Our Perspectives



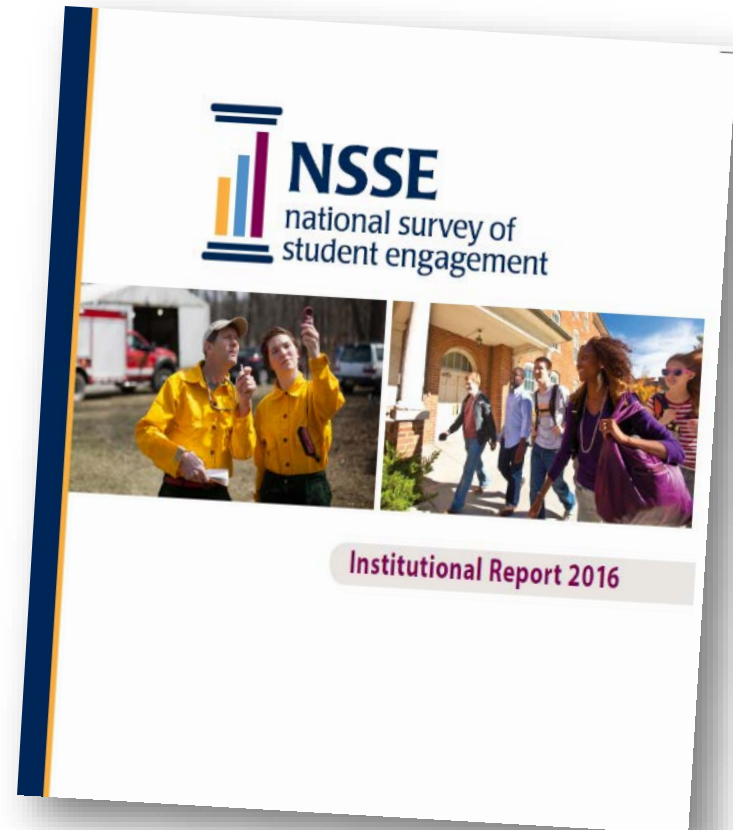
**Assessing Civic
Learning
Experiences**

INSTITUTE FOR
DEMOCRACY &
HIGHER EDUCATION

**Examining political
learning, discourse,
agency/action, and
equity**

Your Familiarity with NSSE

- Do you have NSSE results?
 - ***Bonus:*** *have you touched a report, reviewed the data?*
- Do you have NSSE Civic Engagement Module results?



National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

NSSE annually gathers valid, reliable information on the extent to which students engage in and are exposed to proven educational practices

- More than 1,600 bachelor's degree-granting institutions
- First-year and senior students surveyed

NSSE national survey of student engagement
THE COLLEGE STUDENT REPORT

0% complete

During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never
Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Come to class without completing readings or assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attended an art exhibit, play or other arts performance (dance, music, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asked another student to help you understand course material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explained course material to one or more students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worked with other students on course projects or assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gave a course presentation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Assessing Students' Civic Learning Experiences

Core NSSE items:

- Connected your learning to societal problems or issues
- Service-learning
- Community service hours
- Attending events that address important social, economic/political issues
- Discussions with diverse others
- Gains in being active, informed citizens; solving complex problems

Civic Engagement Module items:

- How often do students...get informed about civic issues, discuss issues of state and national importance, ask others to address local issues, or organize others on state and national issues?
- Are students making gains in being active, informed citizens? Contributing to the well-being of community? Helping people resolve conflicts? Leading groups that are inclusive & welcoming?

Service-Learning Results

NSSE 2016 – findings from 292,000 students at 512 U.S. bachelor’s degree-granting institutions

What percentage of students have had a course that included a community-based project (e.g., service-learning)?

First year students:

- a. 25%**
- b. 41%**
- c. 53%**
- d. 61%**



NSSE 2016: Participation in Service-Learning

- 53% of first-year students
- 61% of seniors

Not bad, right?

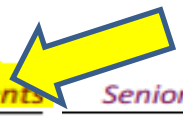
But participation varies by student & institutional characteristics



Variation by Student Characteristics

First-Year Students
Seniors (%)

	Service-Learning	Service-Learning
Sex		
Female	53	65
Male	53	56
Race/ethnicity or international		
American Indian or Alaska Native	61	64
Asian	55	64
Black or African American	58	67
Hispanic or Latino	58	64
Native Hawaiian/Other Pac. Islander	59	72
White	50	59
Other	86	0
Foreign or nonresident alien	69	72
Two or more races/ethnicities	53	59
Age		
Traditional (FY < 21, Seniors < 25):	54	64
Nontraditional (FY 21+, Seniors 25+)	45	56
First-generation^a		
Not first-generation	51	60
First-generation	56	62



Participation in Service-Learning by Institutional Characteristics

First-Year Students (%)

How is your institution compared to your type?

Service-
Learning

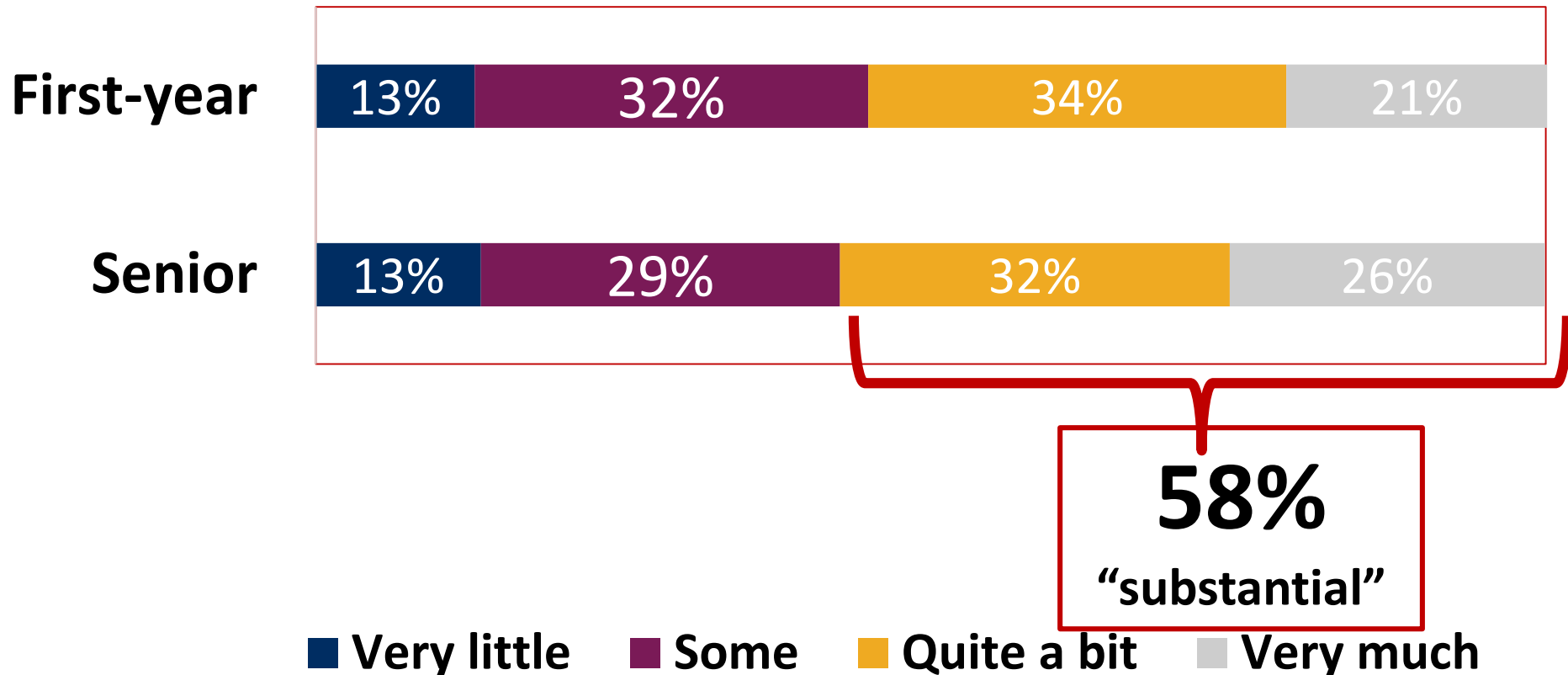
Carnegie Classification



R1: Doctoral Universities - Highest research activity	46
R2: Doctoral Universities - Higher research activity	51
R3: Doctoral Universities - Moderate research activity	60
M1: Master's Colleges and Universities - Larger programs	53
M2: Master's Colleges and Universities - Medium programs	57
M3: Master's Colleges and Universities - Smaller programs	60
Baccalaureate Colleges: Arts & Sciences Focus	54
Baccalaureate Colleges: Diverse Fields	62

Perceived Gain

How much have your experiences at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in being an informed and active citizen?



What do results suggest for practice?

- Are levels of participation in service-learning satisfactory?
- Is **variation** by student, institutional characteristics meaningful?
- How **explicit** are we about what the institution contributes to students' developing a sense of being an "active & informed citizen"? **What practices contribute to this educational gain?**



NSSE Civic Engagement Module

(adapted from AASCU Degrees of Preparation Survey)



Topical Module: Civic Engagement

Adapted from a pilot survey that was developed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, this module asks students to assess their conflict resolution skills and examines how often students have engaged with local or campus and state/national/global issues. The module complements questions on the core survey about service-learning, community service or volunteer work, and becoming an informed and active citizen. (Complementary FSSE set available.)

1. Select the response that best represents your ability to do the following:

	Poor 1	2	3	4	5	6	Excellent 7
a. Help people resolve their disagreements with each other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Lead a group in which people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Contribute to the well-being of your community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. During the current school year, whether course-related or not, about how often have you done the following?

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never
a. Informed yourself about local or campus issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Informed yourself about state, national, or global issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Discussed local or campus issues with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Discussed state, national, or global issues with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Raised awareness about local or campus issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Raised awareness about state, national, or global issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Asked others to address local or campus issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Asked others to address state, national, or global issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i. Organized others to work on local or campus issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j. Organized others to work on state, national, or global issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Think about the experiences you may have had with local, campus, state, national, or global issues. What about these experiences has been most meaningful to you? (5,000 character limit)

NSSE 2016 Civic Engagement Results

- **NSSE sample for civic engagement module:**
 - **First-year student: 10,000**
 - **Seniors: 14,000**
 - **47 institutions**



Civic Abilities

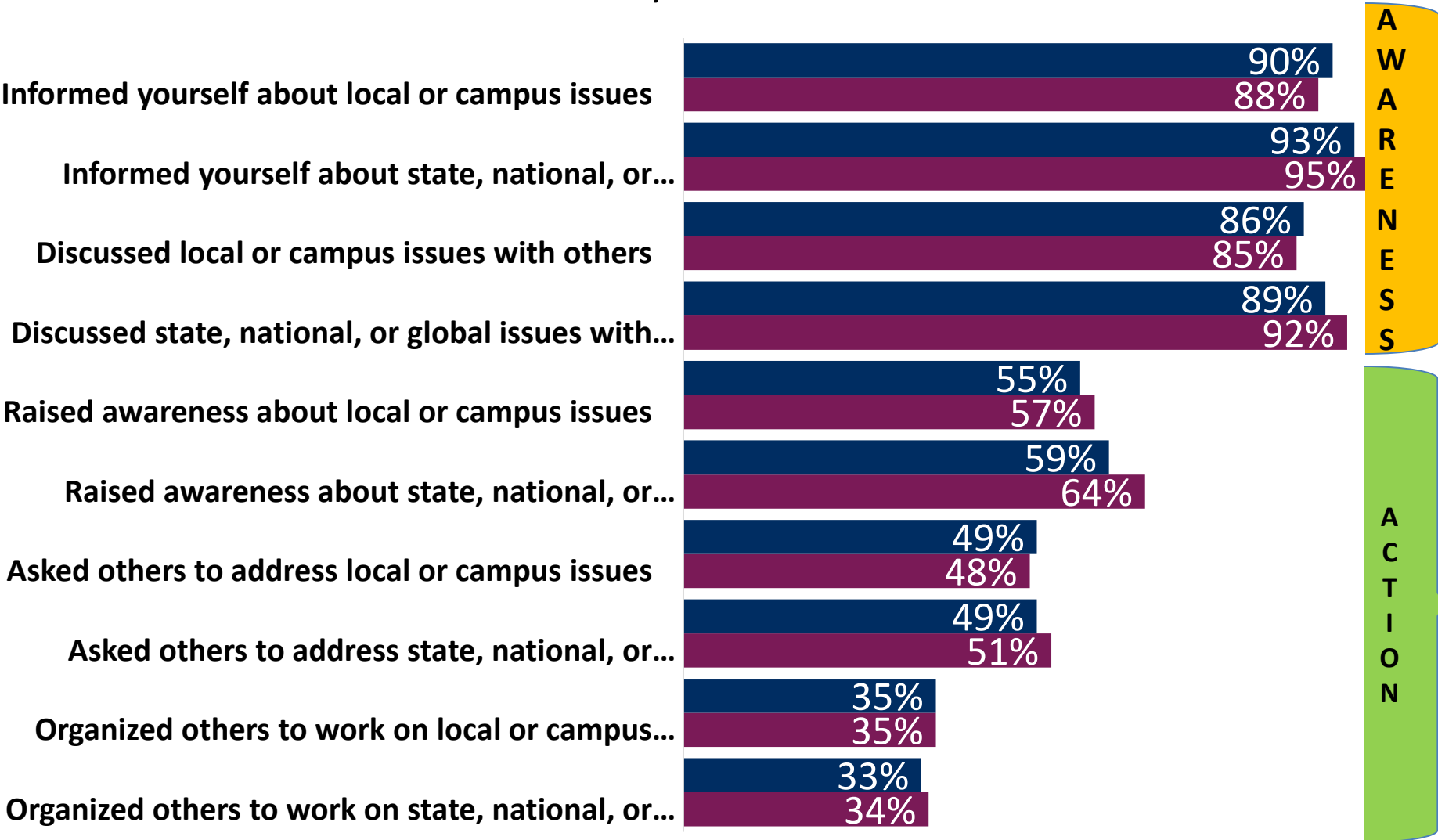
What ability do Seniors believe they develop the most*? * % reporting 6-7 (very good-excellent)

- a. Help people resolve disagreements
- b. Resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice
- c. Lead a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included
- d. Contribute to the well-being of your community

55%

Share of students who have participated in civic experiences

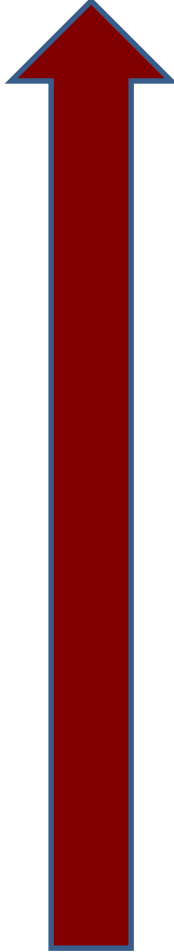
■ First-year ■ Senior



Relating civic activities and “substantial gains” in being an informed & active citizen



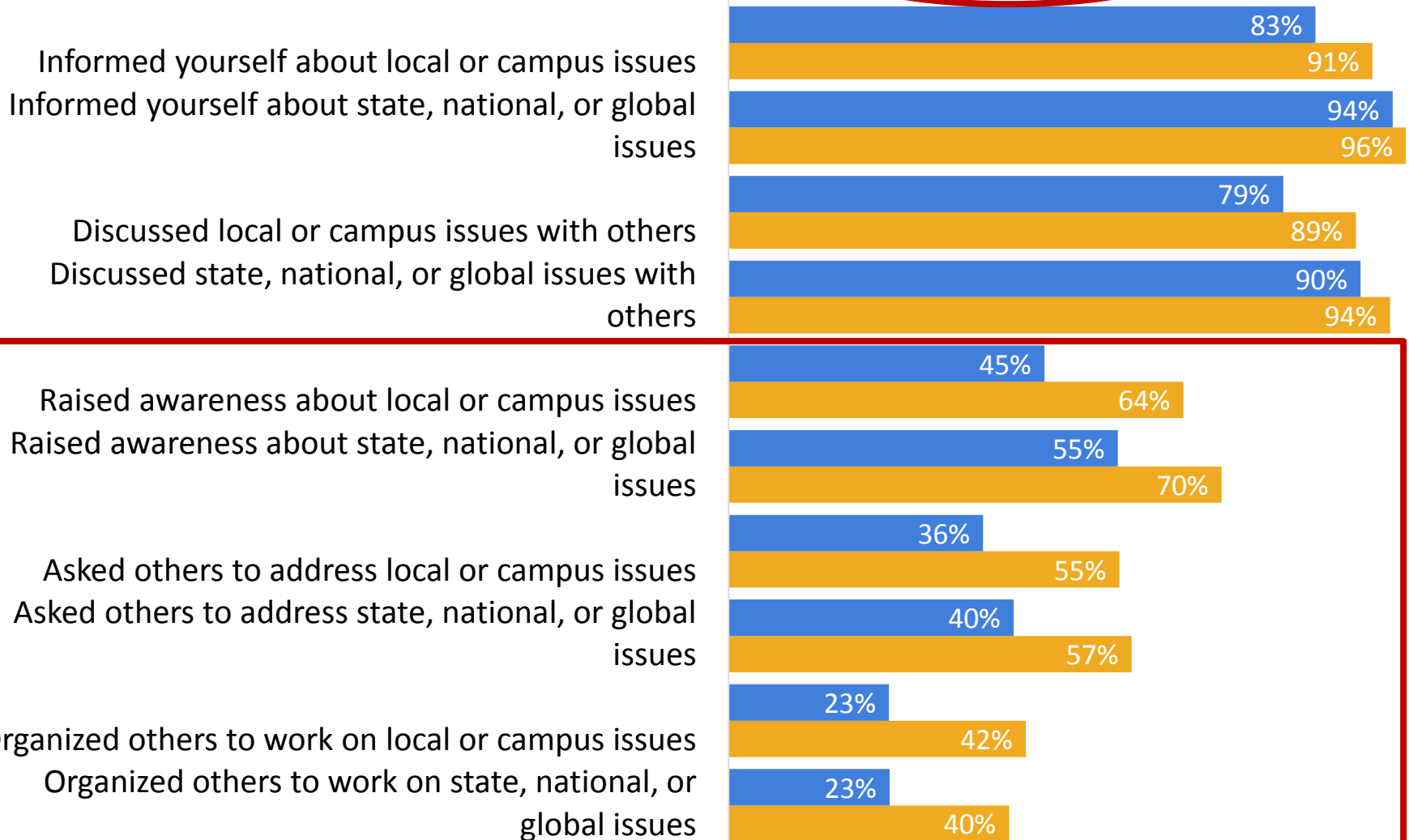
**More a student
participates in
civic engagement
activities (informing,
discussing, raising
awareness, asking
others, organizing
others...)**



**The higher the
likelihood of
achieving
outcome of
being an
informed
citizen**

Share of seniors who participated in civic engagement experiences by service-learning

■ No Service-Learning ■ Service-Learning



Some Conclusions

- Many students experience service-learning, and “basic” civic experiences (becoming informed, discussing issues)
- FY students report modest civic abilities, seniors a little more – *how might these outcomes be made more explicit?*
- Less than half experience higher-level civic activities (asking others to address, organizing others)
- Students who **do civic engagement activities** report greater gains in being an informed & active citizen.

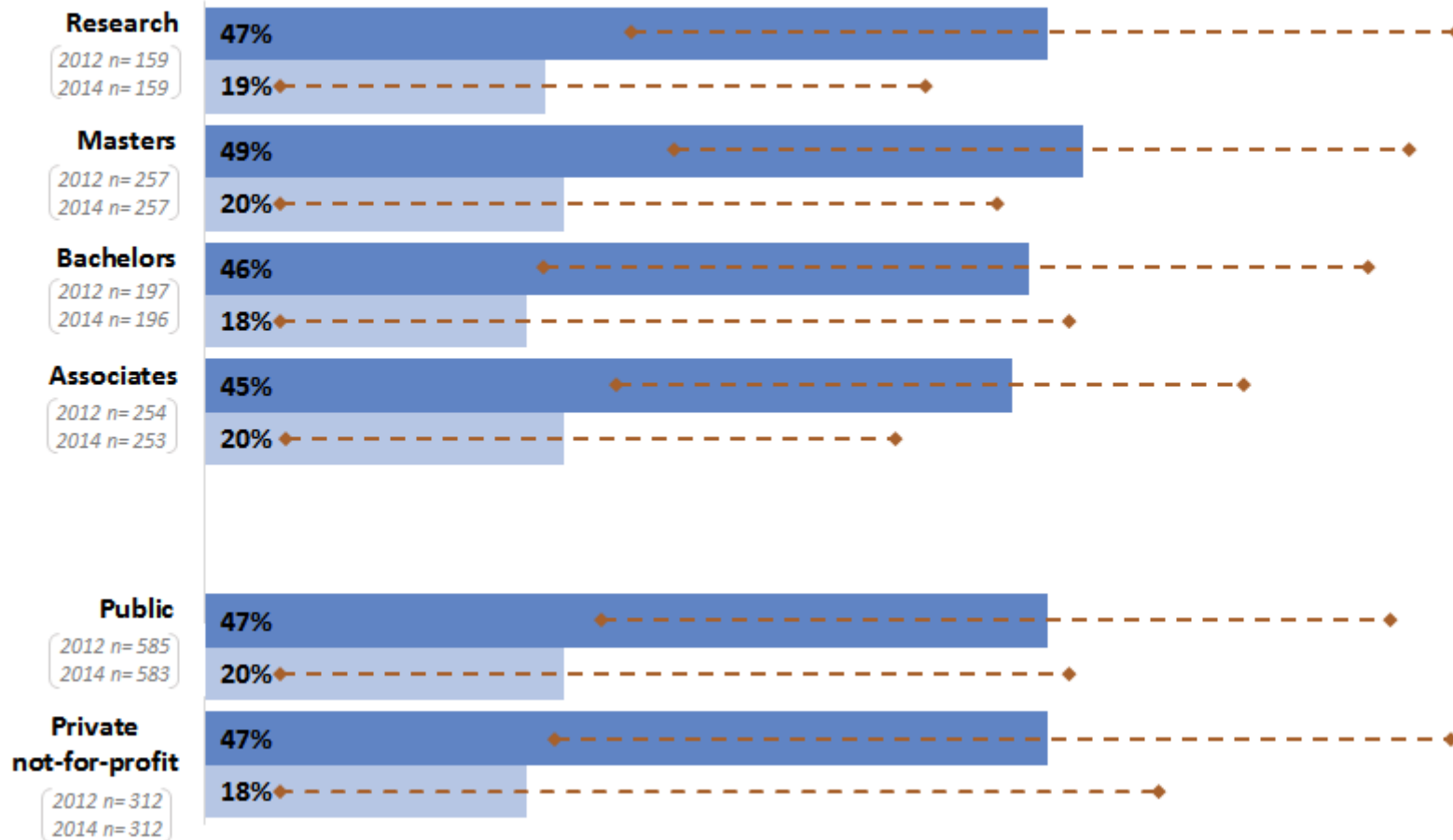


What does this suggest for practice?

INSTITUTE FOR
DEMOCRACY &
HIGHER EDUCATION

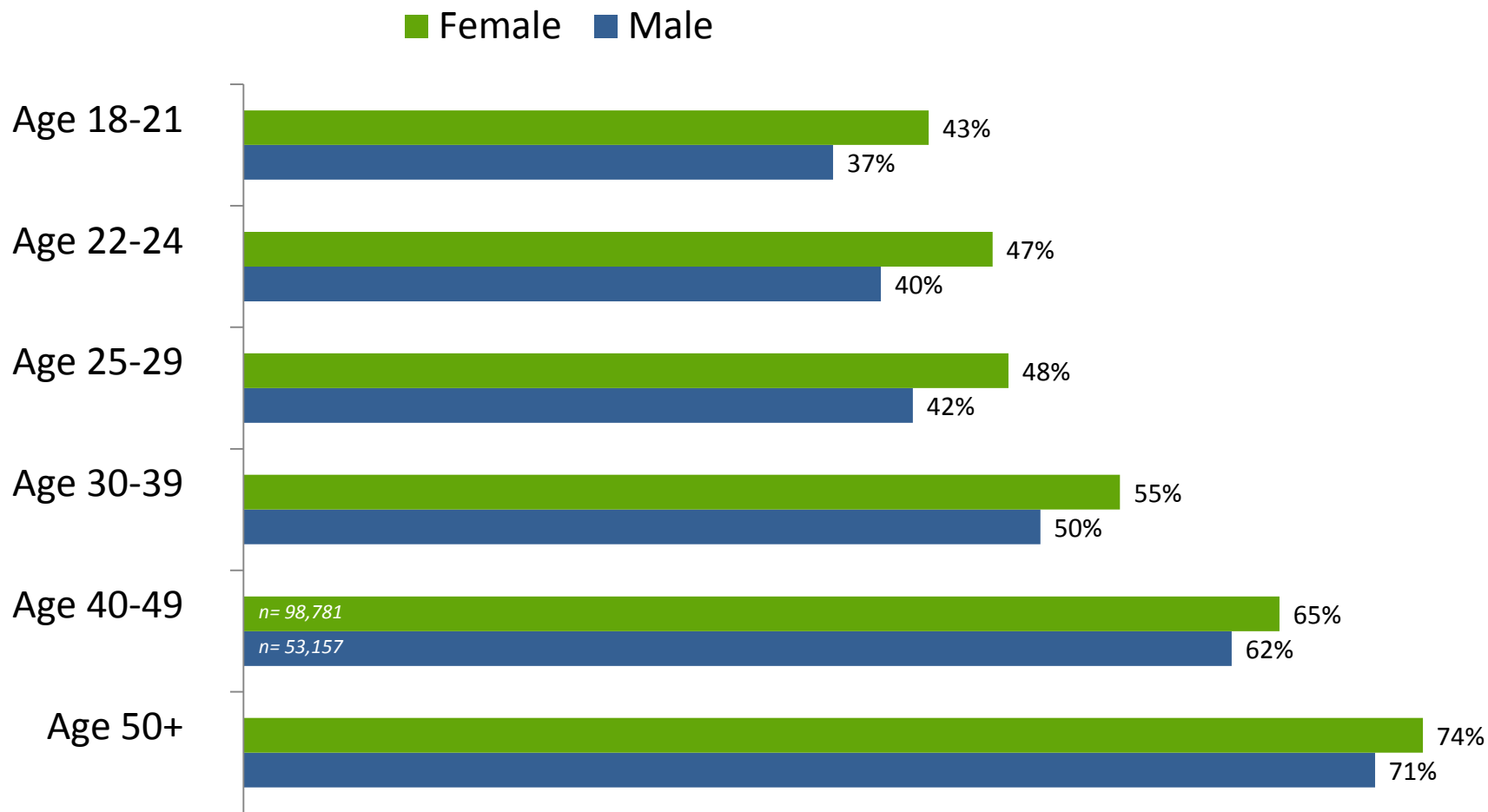
Average Voting Rates of NSLVE Institutions

■ 2012 ■ 2014 | min. ◆ max.

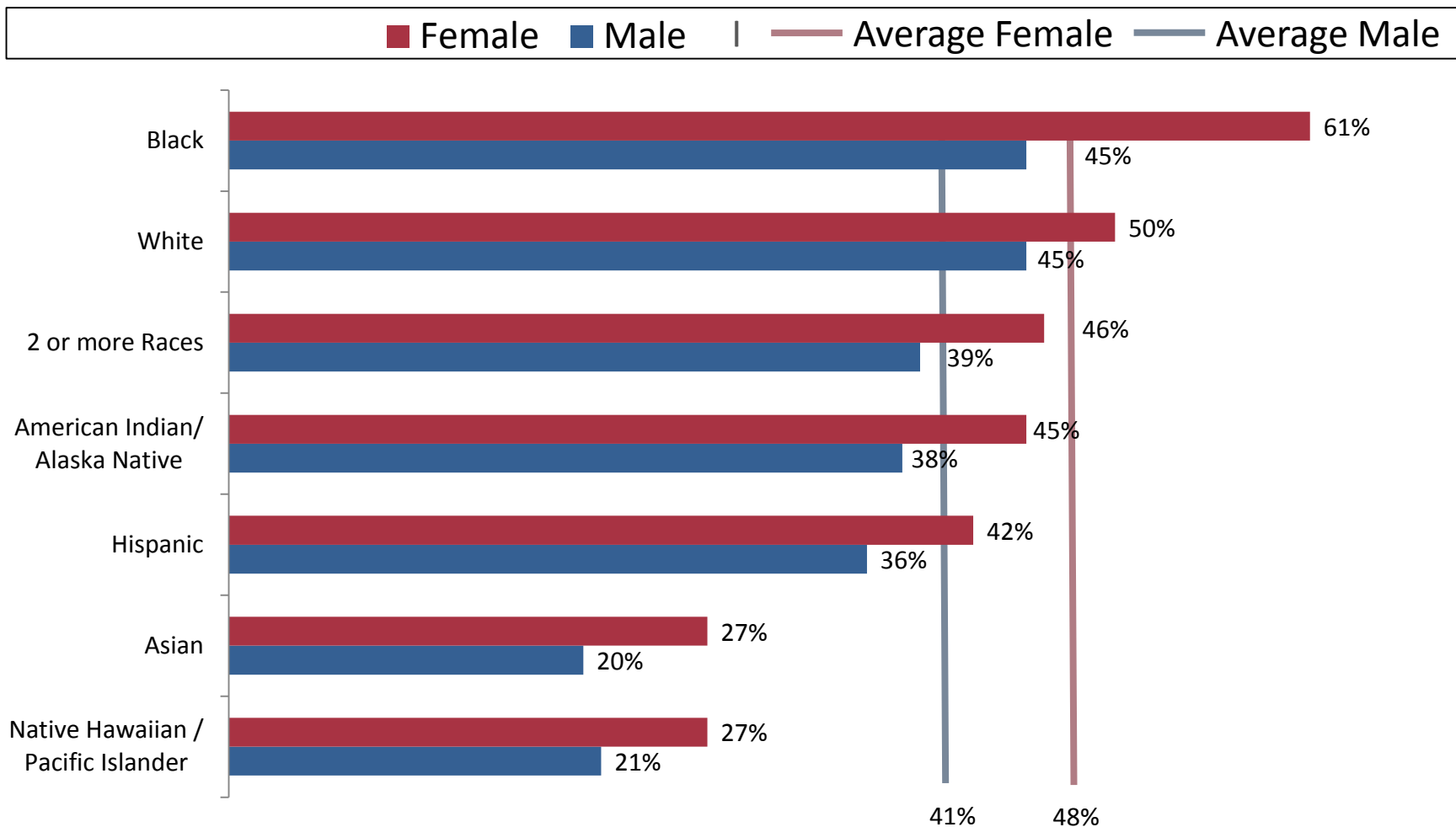


Source: Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) | National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

National Student Voting Rates by Age and Gender in 2012

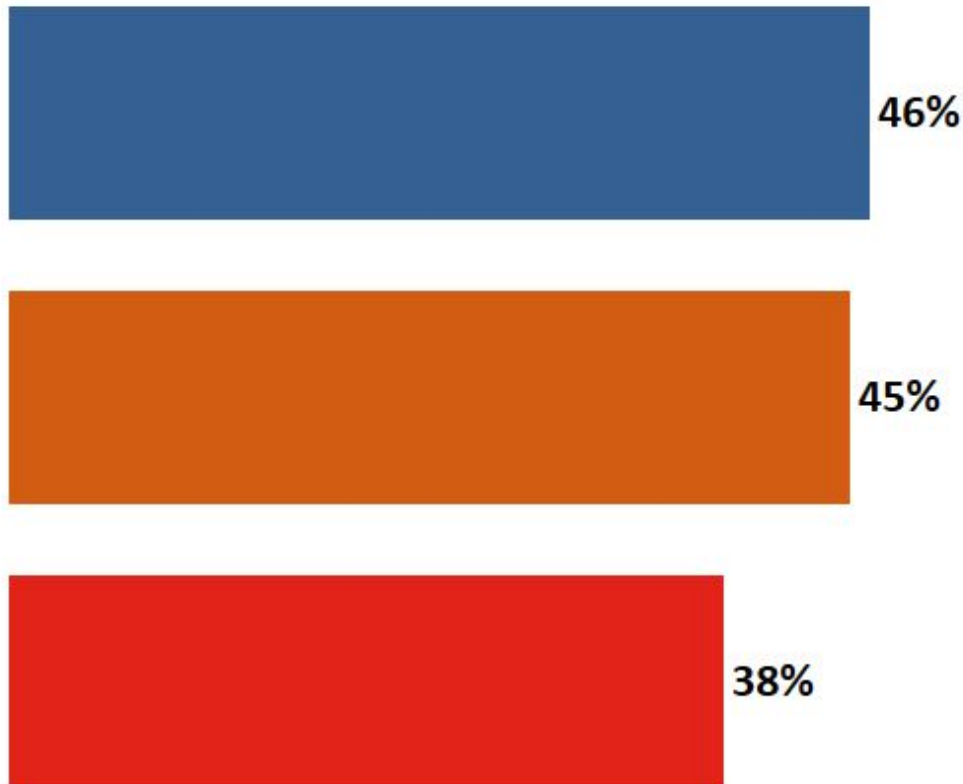


National Student Voting Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Gender in 2012



Source: Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) | National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

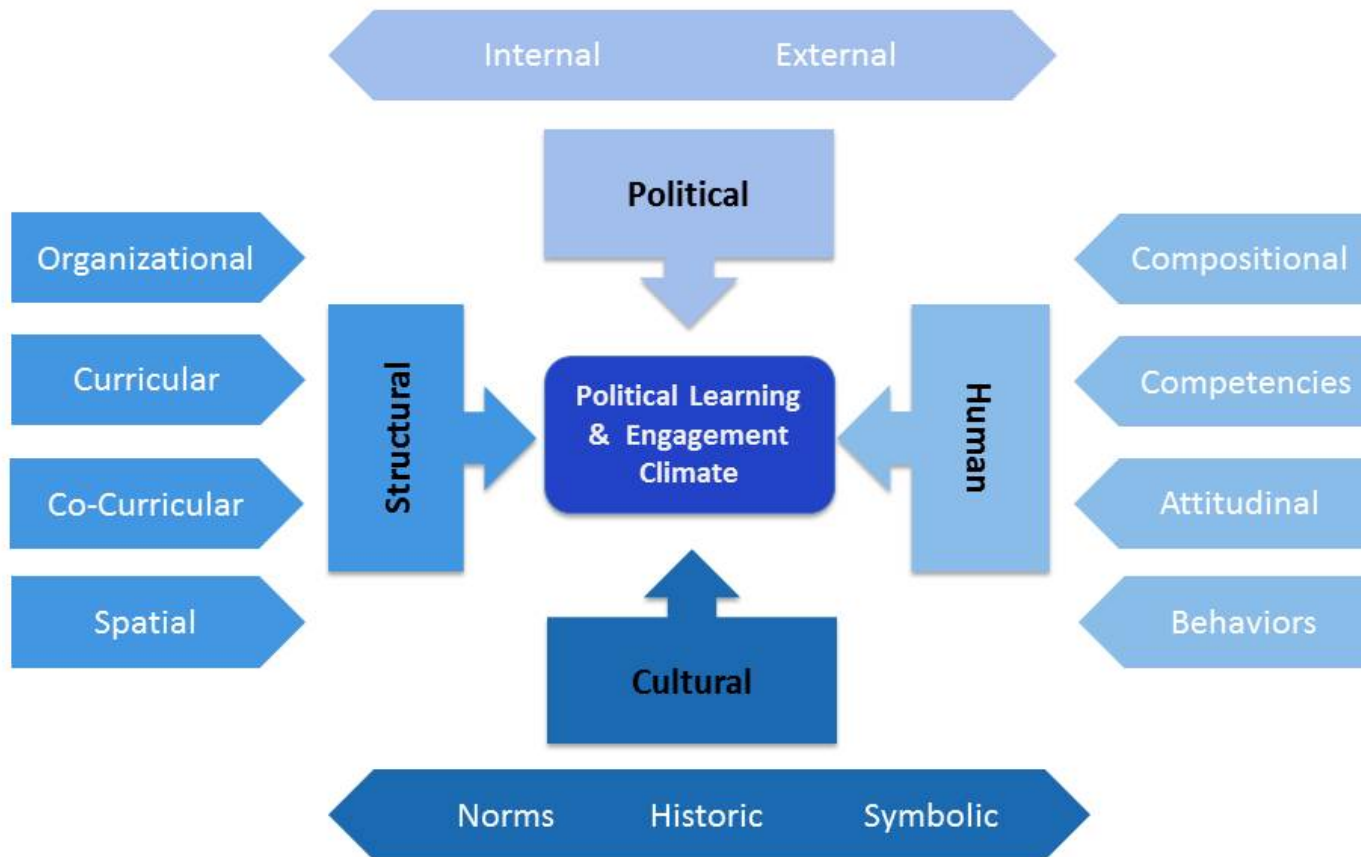
National Student Voting Rates by Area of Study in 2012



Education	55%
Misc Professions	52%
Humanities	50%
Health Professions and Related Sc..	47%
Social Sciences	47%
Communication, Journalism, and ..	46%
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	46%
Psychology	45%
Liberal Arts and Sciences, General..	45%
Trades	44%
Agriculture, Agriculture Operation..	43%
Business, Management, Marketin..	43%
Visual and Performing Arts	43%
Technologies/Technicians	41%
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	41%
Physical Sciences	41%
Computer and Information Scienc..	39%
Parks, Recreation, Leisure and Fit..	38%
Mathematics and Statistics	37%
Engineering	36%

Campus climate for political learning

Figure 1. Campus Climate for Political Learning & Engagement in Democracy Conceptual Framework



- ✓ Social cohesion, strong student faculty relations
- ✓ Diversity and equity as intentional practice
- ✓ Pervasive political discussions
- ✓ Student voice and agency
- ✓ Student activism and electoral engagement



Strong social cohesion among diverse student populations

- ✓ Strong interpersonal relationships, particularly student-faculty
- ✓ A clear commitment to student well-being on the part of the faculty and students toward each other
- ✓ Compositional diversity used as an educational asset



Pervasive political discussions



- ✓ Classroom discussions
- ✓ Prepared faculty and students
- ✓ Balanced academic and expressive freedom

Student agency, power, and shared responsibility



- ✓ Students with positional authority
- ✓ Students respected for their views, with or without positional authority
- ✓ Strong student government association



- ✓ Traditional political participation, election season “buzz”
- ✓ Issue activism and organizing, with or w/o government
- ✓ Nimble institutions, supportive faculty

Structural Frame – cross cutting		
Organizational	Curricular	Co-Curricular
<p>A written social justice/equity mission</p> <p>Compositional diversity (ideological, social, lived experiences)</p> <p>Programs for student well-being</p>	<p>Faculty development in discussion-based teaching of politically charged topics</p> <p>Common courses with political themes and civic, cultural, and intergroup dialogue skills as learning outcomes</p> <p>Internships and service learning experiences with political organizations or issue-advocacy groups</p>	<p>Physical spaces where groups can find empathy and settings free of discrimination</p> <p>Disciplinary clubs, involving faculty, for policy conversations</p> <p>Community dialogues on institutional norms</p>

Cultural			
	Social Cohesion	Diversity	Political Discussion
Norms	<p>Sense of shared responsibility for each other's welfare and learning, a culture of caring, stewardship of place</p> <p>"Students-first" attitudes by faculty; teaching as the primary mission</p>	<p>Shared commitment to social justice and equity as a learning outcome</p> <p>Thoughtful integration of new populations and ideas into existing structures and norms</p> <p>Openness to diverse populations and perspectives; attention to privilege and the needs of nontraditional or historically marginalized students</p>	<p>Discussion as a way of interacting, learning, and making decisions</p> <p>Commitment to free and open speech and dissenting or unpopular perspectives</p> <p>Thoughtful balance of academic freedom and free speech</p> <p>Classroom norms of respectful but candid exchange of ideas, complete airing of diverse perspectives.</p>

Political		
Internal	Student Agency	Political Engagement (In Elections)
<p>Students with positional authority in institutional policy and decision making</p> <p>Alliance developed between students and external political influences (e.g., legislatures, trustees, parents, taxpayers, media, local nonprofits)</p> <p>Shared, collaborative governance</p> <p>Free speech and academic freedom</p>	<p>Institutional agency</p> <p>Student leaders training student leaders</p> <p>Proactive thinking about how to respond to student activism</p> <p>Local political problem solving and ballot initiatives, running for office</p>	<p>Celebrations, funs, music, food</p> <p>Faculty involvement across the curriculum</p> <p>Voter registration and education locally</p> <p>Election courses</p> <p>Debate watches</p> <p>Political issue forums, using dialogue</p> <p>Give students power to navigate attitudes of local election officials toward student involvement in elections</p>

What Happened When we Combined NSSE and NSLVE?



- Combined institution-level voting & engagement data
- **Preliminary results indicate little difference in voting outcome between institutions with high vs. low engagement**
- But, institutions whose students reported **including diverse perspectives in courses** had higher voting rates (Bergom & Ro, 2017)

Your Reactions:

- Did anything surprise you?
- Is there anything we did not capture?
- Is there something you're doing on your campus that influences student civic-political engagement that we did not capture?

What's Next:

- Are there things we should be measuring that we're not?
- Are their actions or interventions that we may have missed?
- What tools and resources do you need?