

Community College Network for Civic Life (CCNCL)

Community colleges across the United States are developing programs to support citizens in creating healthy communities and fostering civic life. In exploring their civic responsibilities, community colleges have discovered that they are uniquely positioned to convene the public to discuss community issues; train citizens in community leadership; and provide expertise in developing community responses to issues;

The most difficult of these tasks is to convene the public and to provide an effective format that creates productive deliberation on the issues. Furthermore, if the deliberation is to be meaningful, it must also result in an agreement by the community to move collaboratively to address the issues. To aid colleges in this work, a collaborative effort is being undertaken: the Community College Network for Civic Life.

The Community College National Center for Community Engagement (CCNCCE) has a three year grant from the Corporation for National Service entitled Supporting Actions for Engagement (SAFE). As part of the SAFE project the CCNCCE has an agreement with the Center for Public Policy Education (CPPE) to provide moderator training in five areas of the country using the National Issues Forum model. Bernie Ronan from the Maricopa Community Colleges' Center for Civic Participation and Susan Adams from Yavapai College's Leadership Center have agreed to assist CPPE by coordinating this three year moderator training project. The Network is being created as a vehicle to implement this training project.

Activities to date:

- Regional teams of community college partners were conducted a one-day moderator training during the Fall of 2004 in five sites across the country.
- A one-day NIF-model moderator training curriculum was developed by project directors. This formed the basis of a Moderator Training Notebook, which included detailed information on the training curriculum as well as background materials on democracy, deliberation, effective moderating techniques, etc.
- Training teams convened forums in their region (Rocky Mountains, West Coast, Southwest/Midwest, Northeast, Southeast) after the one-day training, to enable trainees to immediately begin using the moderator skills they acquired in the one-day training. An NIF issue book, *America's Role in the World*, was used for this first year, to capitalize on topicality of this issue in the national election. (A Discussion Guide summarizing this Issue Book has been developed for use with these forums, and this Guide was also provided to the regional teams.)
- Regional teams convened in Phoenix on November 17-18, 2004 to review these activities, refine the training curriculum, and discuss how their colleges are actively working to address community problems using these deliberative methods. This constituted the first annual meeting of the Community College Network for Civic Life.

Proposed activities include:

- Continue developing the Community College Network for Civic Life (CCNCL) by developing a clearinghouse of issue framings and resources in addition to ongoing support among public deliberation practitioners.
- Work toward a common definition of civic engagement. Discussion among CCNCL participants in November, 2004, included the question of how to make meaningful distinctions between public policy, civic engagement, volunteerism and community action with the end goal of developing a common language for public deliberation by Network participants.
- Continued follow-up with moderator trainees including the possibility of engaging trainees in moderating forums and issue framing training.
- Refine the one-day NIF-model moderator training curriculum in order to conduct additional moderator training sessions prior to September 30, 2005.