THE LENS OF CIVIC IDENTITY: A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL FOR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

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Abstract

A key goal of higher education is to graduate citizens who are actively engaged in the process of democracy. Yet, it is a challenge to build a curriculum with this in mind. Herein, we describe a multi-year process of creating and supporting a movement to centralize undergraduates' civic identity development across the curriculum. The result is a new model that names specific developmental stages for students.

During this process, we worked on defining civic identity for our campus. In A Framework for Understanding Student Engagement and Outcomes, Schnaubelt et al. ask whether it's important to have a definition of civic identity, and what that definition might be. Our answer is that while a clear definition is critical, the term "civic identity" does not need to be explicit in that definition. Rather, civic identity can be the lens that focuses discussion: What does civic identity mean in the context of our ethos? At our institution, it means "fostering a just, equitable, and sustainable world." This work gave rise to an update to the college's Mission Statement, revisions to General Education requirements, and a common writing prompt across First-Year Seminars.

In turn, our model lent itself to assessment: How do we measure a student's capacity to engage across differences, and their development of democratic knowledge, habit, and skills? With foundational pieces built into First-Year Seminars, students engage with civic learning in their first semester, and the common writing prompt became a useful tool for assessment. In this article, we present data collected over four years of this work. This article provides a map as well as lessons learned to support other colleges' work to live into the call from A Crucible Moment (2012) to make civic learning an integral part of a college education.

Introduction

For democracy to thrive, citizens must be engaged participants. Higher education must provide opportunities to foster the growth of citizens through experience. In 2012, *A Crucible Moment* exhorted us to center civic learning and democratic engagement within undergraduate education, and to elevate students' development as citizens to the forefront of their college degree programs. Such a change would require significant action and

buy-in across campus—how might this centering of civic learning be brought about? The answer is that the process of change must itself include the civic learning and democratic engagement destined for the final product.

Democracy is participatory, and the process of democracy is often messy. When it comes to implementing democratic models, this presents a sort of paradox, or at least a discordance: much of higher education is deeply organized and hierarchical. The challenge for campus educators is to deeply weave opportunities for engaged citizenship into their curricula. Our campus used the development of *civic identity* as a guide for thinking about how we educate current and future engaged citizens.

Each person's civic identity is developed through the practice of engaged citizenship. The definitions of civic identity that were most foundational for our work included that of a *civic-minded graduate*: "a person who has completed a course of study and has the capacity and desire to work with others for the common good." (Steinberg et al., 2011) This aligns with the AAC&U's description of civic identity being found in a person who identifies "as an active participant in society with a strong commitment and responsibility to work with others towards public purposes" (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2009). The challenge is to provide opportunities for students to practice and develop their civic identities throughout the college experience—comprising not just the academic curriculum, but in the work of learning and community-building that takes place across and beyond campus (Hatcher et al., 2017). Civic identity requires "the integration of critical thinking and the capacity for empathy...deliberately chosen and repeatedly enacted" (Knefelkamp, 2008).

What process might a college follow as it endeavors to align its values, student experiences, and even its mission to such a developmental model of undergraduate education? Our institution is a small, private, residential, Liberal Arts college with about 750 undergraduates, located about 20 minutes outside of Asheville, North Carolina. Our focus on elevating civic identity within the context of our institution began nearly a decade ago, not long after *A Crucible Moment* (2012) was published. This article represents the story of the development and implementation of our model.

We began our process by envisioning a campus where "civic identity" was named as the educational outcome. We then engaged campus stakeholders through an iterative process. Two key tenets of civic identity described by Schnaubelt became both part of our process and our product: *Capacity to engage constructively across differences and Democratic knowledge and skills* (Schnaubelt et al., 2023). Through this practice, students and campus educators better understood and embraced college-wide civic learning outcomes. We were able to infuse civic identity only by practicing it, engaging constructively to generate buy-in across campus.

Our democratic process included groups of leaders (rather than a single individual director), and multiple iterations of soliciting and incorporating feedback. A key piece of feedback that we heard throughout the development of our model was that our campus did not want to use the term "civic identity." Rather, civic identity was a principle—a lens—for facilitating campus-wide conversations about education within and as a part of the democratic process.

Herein, we describe the development and implementation of this model. Ideas focused by civic identity have been incorporated in our institutional learning outcomes, the college Mission statement, General Education requirements, and a common student writing prompt in the First-Year Seminar. Annual retreats dedicated to

evaluating student responses to this prompt became an ongoing opportunity to discuss civic identity, maintain buy-in, and evaluate how students are developing their civic identities. We present data collected over four years of evaluating First-Year Seminar for outcomes related to civic identity.

Schnaubelt et al. (2023) asked about the importance of having a definition of civic identity. Creating our own definition of civic identity became the question that inspired this process. The language of civic-identity-infused outcomes will be distinctive for each institution or group that engages in this work, because that is a result of embedding democracy in higher education.

Institutional Change: Methods and Process

This work included three key phases, with significant overlap between them. First, a working group was assembled, and this group drafted a model for college-wide civic identity development. The model was refined through a democratic process of focus groups and other forums for discussion. Once substantial community buy-in had been generated, implementation began. An initial assessment of the model was conducted by evaluating first-year students' reflections on their civic identity.

Assembly of a working group focused on institutional outcomes

The work to amplify the idea of civic identity development within our college's educational model has itself followed a democratic process. This process has been welcomed and supported by administration, but leadership has always been in the hands of a team rather than an individual. A working group was assembled by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, but the group soon adjusted its system of organization. The group coalesced around a *de facto* steering group (the three authors, all of whose roles at the college have changed significantly since the outset), with support from many other leadership positions across campus (Figure 1).

This group was tasked with looking at institutional learning outcomes: How was the college defining (and as a corollary, assessing) our programs that supported learning? A key issue was the absence of common, college-wide language to discuss these outcomes, which led to insularity among departments and programs—and in turn led to confusion for students. The group's goal was to drop or combine some of the stated outcomes—or better yet, find a single keystone outcome to rally around. This led to the idea that "civic identity" be integral to the conversation about learning outcomes.

Gathering community buy-in and feedback

At various points in the developmental process, the Working Group asked for constructive feedback from the community on the draft model. The Steering Group (i.e., the authors of this paper) made a presentation to the

Primary steering group*

- Director of General Education (faculty member)
- Director of First Year Seminars (faculty member)
- Associate Dean of Community Engagement

Extended leadership team

- Associate Dean of Work
- Associate Dean of Student Life
- Associate Dean of Career Development and Advising
- Residential Life Area Coordinator
- Director of Student Activities
- Director of Spiritual Life
- Director of Institutional Research
- Director of Bonner Leadership Initiatives
- Director of Work Learning
- Director of the Institutional Research Board (faculty member)
- Director of Writing Across the Curriculum (faculty member)

*The three authors

Figure 1 The Civic Identity Working Group.

College President and Cabinet early in the process. Thereafter, focus groups were the most common mode of dissemination. Representatives from the Working Group (Figure 1) worked in pairs and trios to present it across campus to key stakeholders: academic departments, work-study supervisors, athletic teams, and residential programs (Figure 2A), using a common list of questions (such as in Figure 2B).

The initial recommendation of this group was that "civic identity" (or "civic identity development") was the language to use for the across-campus outcome. The committee began to seek ways to name civic identity in the curriculum specifically (such as making it part of General Education), and ways to use the tenets of civic identity to facilitate discussions (such as in the residence halls or as part of work-study groups). As a part of following this path, it was necessary to rely heavily on democratic processes. This became a way of opening a discussion around ways of how things like critical inquiry, compromise, and empathy were practiced across our institution.

Assessment and data-collection of first-year student reflections on civic identity

After adopting a model based on civic identity development, we conducted four years of assessment on student writings collected from First-Year Seminars. During the Spring semesters, we recruited people to be readers of student reflections, drawing from faculty, staff, and administrators. Typically, each reader was assigned 12–15 student reflections during a daylong retreat. Each reflection essay was read by at least two people, with as random

Campus Educator Focus Groups
- Student Life and Student Advising staff members
- First-Year Seminar Instructors

Student Focus Groups
- Student work-study crews
    - Building Services
    - Bonner Leaders
    - Chemistry / Biology / Environmental Studies
- Men's basketball team
- Student Life
    - Residence Halls
    - Student Government Association

A.

- Have you seen this model before? If so, where?
- Does/could this model help frame how you think about our college education program? What would help you make sense of it?
- Do you see the definition of *civic identity* being relevant to all aspects of our college: Academics, Work, Community Engagement and Student Life?
- How do students experience aspects of this model? Where do students experience it?
- If we adopt this model, where should it be communicated to students? In what way?
- If you saw this model as a prospective student (such as on the website), how would you respond?

B.

Figure 2 Sharing the Civic Identity Model. A) List of focus groups. B) Key discussion questions.

a distribution as possible among readers. Essays had gone through a process of deidentification over the previous months, including the removal of names of the author and any students mentioned. (Information about the First-Year Seminar, instructor, and community partner were left intact.)

Language from the AAC&U VALUE rubrics (2009) served as a key template for the rubric we developed to score the civic identity development demonstrated by the student author. Reviewers were asked to score each component of civic identity on a four-point Likert scale (1 = Foundational; 2 = Emerging; 3 = Proficient; 4 = Advanced). Reviewers scored each criterion independently (they could give one criterion a 1 and another a 4, if they deemed it appropriate), and they were required to use integers. The average of two or three scorers was saved in our assessment database (Martin et al., 2021).

Building an institution-wide developmental model based on civic identity

Our college's educational model integrates academics, community engagement, on-campus work-study, and student life. Many of our graduates have described a moment when the integration of the different aspects of our educational program "clicked" for them, and nearly all describe this moment as being part of their Junior

or Senior year. This represented a problem for retention as well as recruitment; while higher education can and should be challenging and complex, we wanted to describe our ethos in a way that would generate student buy-in during (or before) the first year. A working group was assembled by the Vice President of Academic Affairs to address this. There was initially a chair, but that person left the college and we self-assembled into the steering committee model shown in Figure 1. We persevered because the work was challenging, stimulating, and rewarding—we were helping to codify what we loved about higher education in general and our college specifically. Just as importantly, we truly enjoyed working together.

The working group's initial goal was to reduce the complexity of our stated college learning outcomes. In addition, we wanted to further integrate civic learning in our educational model, following the call in *A Crucible Moment* (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement and Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012). We determined that we needed to identify and codify a *single* collegewide outcome that aligned with the college ethos, encompassed the breadth of experiential teaching and learning, and provided a framework for conversation between all campus educators (faculty and staff alike). The working group landed on *Civic Identity* as that unifier. We were inspired by the IUPUI work describing a *civic-minded graduate* as "a person who has completed a course of study and has the capacity and desire to work with others for the common good" (Steinberg et al., 2011). We also incorporated the description from the Association of American Colleges and Universities of a person who identifies "as an active participant in society with a strong commitment and responsibility to work with others towards public purposes" (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2009). These definitions resonated deeply in our working group as descriptors for our successful students.

Generating the initial "Civic Identity Model"

Our working group felt that the term *Civic Identity* fit well with our existing model, and that it could be designated as the college-wide outcome we sought. Our intent, at the time, was to inculcate the term for use across campus. It seemed a good way to describe short-, medium-, and long-term educational goals with one another and to students. Furthermore, with an eye on reaccreditation, this common language would anchor an improved set of metrics for conducting educational assessment. To emphasize this, we began developing a visual scaffold that included our working definition of civic identity as the keystone statement (Figure 3).

Building this scaffold gave rise to two key questions about how we provided space for students to grow: 1) What were the different components that students were putting into this development, and 2) How many levels of growth were there? Finding answers to these questions that resonated for our institution required multiple drafts. Others will likely find different ways of answering these questions when developing their own model.

Our first question was how to divide civic identity into components that were distinct enough to be assessed but were not so many that our model became unwieldy. We wanted to name components such that every educator would point to a few of them and say, "My students practice this really well in my area" *and also* point to a few and say, "I don't focus on this; students grow here through the work of my colleagues." We settled on
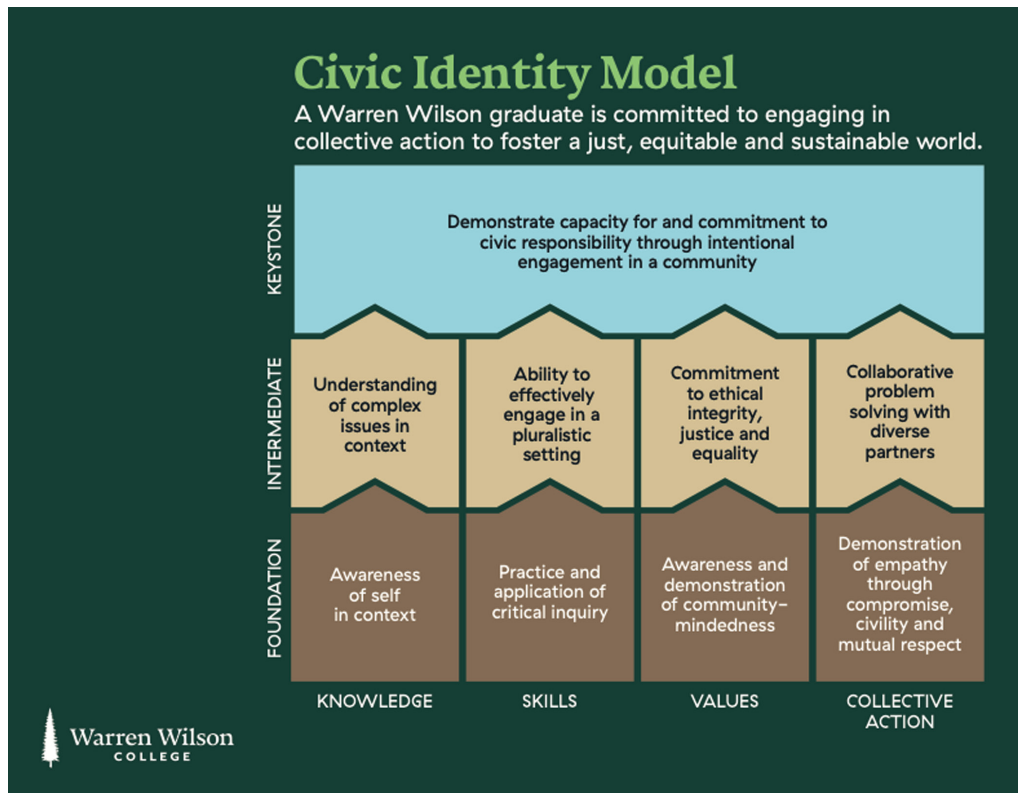
Figure 3 Initial Civic Identity Model Graphic.

four components: *Knowledge*, *Skills*, *Values*, and *Collective Action*, which grew from the framework outlined in *A Crucible Moment* (2012), in the AAC&U VALUE rubrics (2009), and other sources (Gelmon et al., 2001; Miller, 2007). These components encapsulate student experiences across classrooms, residence halls, work-study, and athletics; this was well-aligned with our existing ethos.

The second question centered on the idea of scaffolding: civic identity is a developmental pursuit (Constance Flanagan & Peter Levine, 2010; Knefelkamp, 2008); but how many levels would there be, and where would they lead? An initial idea was for four levels, i.e., Freshman–Sophomore–Junior–Senior. One issue with this was size: four developmental levels were too many, particularly through the lens of assessment. Furthermore, levels corresponding to the years of college do not embrace the diversity of incoming students: while some students matriculate at a truly foundational level, many arrive with skills and wisdom beyond that classification. We therefore settled on three levels termed *Foundation*, *Intermediate,* and *Keystone*. The *Keystone* level comprises all of the individual components: students incorporate disparate learning elements to create something new.

With these decisions, along with the intent that the model be outcomes-based to facilitate evaluation, we created language for each element. We called it the "Civic Identity Model," and we worked with the college's graphic designer to adapt it into an image that we could share with a wider college audience (Figure 3).

We shared this model, primarily through focus groups (Figure 2), and the responses we received were very constructive. The biggest concern, raised by students in particular, was that the language felt inaccessible: it needed to be more concise and approachable. When we shared the model, we brought a glossary, and one astute student

pointed out that students were not going to go and read a glossary in order to understand something! A key piece of positive feedback was that all areas of campus resonated with the phrase, "foster a just, equitable, and sustainable world" that was a part of the subtitle for the Civic Identity Model shown in Figure 3.

A key takeaway from our focus group work was that while the model was promising, we were trying to serve too many audiences with a single visualization of the model. Many felt the language was esoteric; others worried that the language wasn't detailed enough to be used for the assessment needed for reaccreditation. Thus, we adapted. We created a "forward-facing" image with pithier language, appropriate for students and anyone newer to our educational model, and promoted the "just, equitable, and sustainable world" phrase into the keystone statement (Figure 4). We also developed an "under-the-hood" document (not shown; available on request) that parses details of each sub-outcome. The under-the-hood descriptors draw extensively from AAC&U VALUE rubrics (2009), and these helped us to underscore that the keystone outcome was the result of a student synthesizing their experiences from across the college.

Infusing civic identity into the college's Mission Statement

Serendipitously, soon after our focus groups concluded, work began on an update to the college's Mission Statement. This was a prime opportunity to revisit civic identity through conversations across the college, from students to the Board of Trustees, and the work on the civic identity model was now at the forefront of the conversation. As with the focus groups, the phrase "civic identity" was too esoteric to draw wide support for inclusion in the mission statement. While there was a strong consensus that the college's educational principles fit with this term, it did not resonate as a descriptor. Stakeholders wanted a way of describing civic identity that reflected our specific take on this work. For our college, the keystone statement (blue in Figure 4) is what garnered consensus.

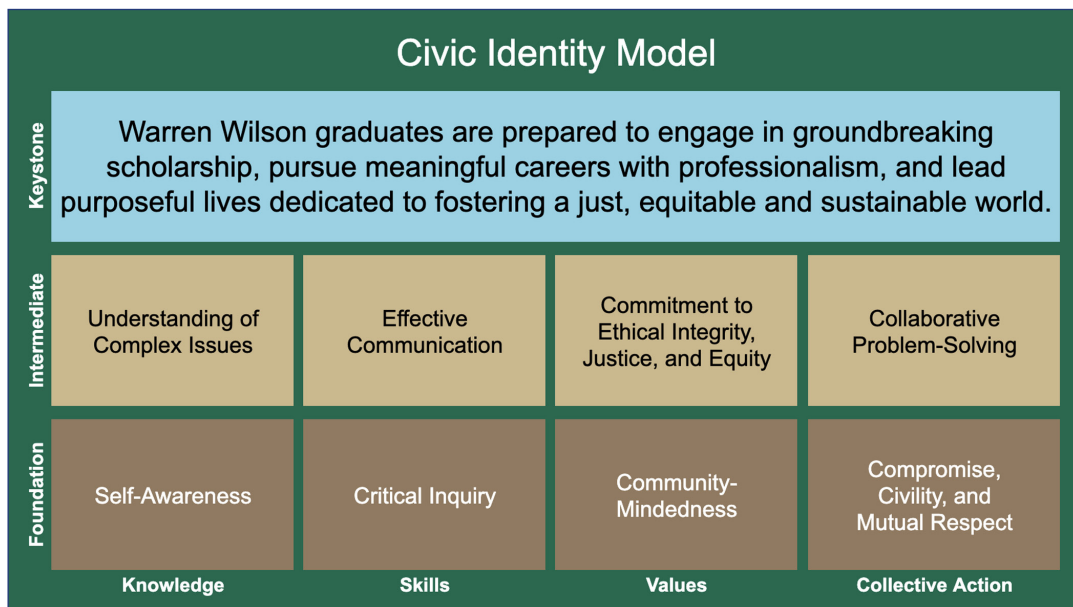| Civic Identity Model			
Keystone — Warren Wilson graduates are prepared to engage in groundbreaking scholarship, pursue meaningful careers with professionalism, and lead purposeful lives dedicated to fostering a just, equitable and sustainable world.			
Intermediate — Understanding of Complex Issues	Effective Communication	Commitment to Ethical Integrity, Justice, and Equity	Collaborative Problem-Solving
Foundation — Self-Awareness	Critical Inquiry	Community-Mindedness	Compromise, Civility, and Mutual Respect
Knowledge	Skills	Values	Collective Action

Figure 4 An updated, simplified visual that incorporated community feedback.

After some tweaks and wordsmithing, this description was approved and now anchors civic identity in our Mission (Figure 5).

Reflecting on this experience led to a key realization for our team: the name "civic identity" did not matter the way we thought it did. In this vein, we make the following recommendation for others engaged in this work: use civic identity as a means—a lens—to focus educational goals and engage in the democratic process. Having a definition of civic identity is important, and that definition of civic identity should be adapted to resonate with the ethos of the institution.

Implementation and assessment of the civic identity model across campus

With a definition of civic identity more clearly established, the work to implement it continued; we wanted students to connect their learning activities in disparate-seeming areas of college (academics, athletics, work-study, student life) to their transformation into engaged citizens. No single area should or could do all of them; it was only through the gestalt that a student achieved the keystone outcome. Our academic requirements needed to have clear touchpoints. There also needed to be clear—and complementary—touchpoints in other areas, such as in community engagement, work-study requirements, and Student Life. We began identifying how different areas of our educational model contributed to the Figure 4 model; this is diagramed in Figure 6.

> Warren Wilson College's distinctive approach to education intentionally integrates academics, work, and community engagement to cultivate curiosity, empathy, and integrity. We empower graduates to pursue meaningful careers and **lead purposeful lives dedicated to a just, equitable, and sustainable world**.

Figure 5 The college Mission Statement with the civic identity-directed components in boldface.

		Knowledge	Skills	Values	Collective Action
Intermediate	**What**	Understanding of Complex Issues	Effective Communication	Commitment to Ethical Integrity, Justice, and Equity	Collaborative Problem-Solving
	Where	• Community Engagement • General Education Requirements: Environmental Responsibility, Intercultural Perspectives, Social Justice	• Major • General Education Requirements: Writing Across the Curriculum • Student Conduct / Student Life • Work-Study	• Community Engagement • General Education Requirement: Social Justice • Student Conduct / Student Life	• Community Engagement • Capstone Thesis • Work-Study
Foundation	**What**	Self-Awareness	Critical Inquiry	Community-Mindedness	Compromise, Civility, and Mutual Respect
	Where	• First-Year Seminar • General Education Requirements: Liberal Arts Breadth courses • Student Life • Work-Study	• First-Year Seminar • Major courses and Capstone Thesis • General Education Requierments: Liberal Arts Breadth courses • Work-Study	• First-Year Seminar • Community Engagement • Student Conduct / Student Life	• First-Year Seminar • Student Conduct / Student Life • Work-Study

Figure 6 Key contributions by different areas of the college towards civic identity development.

Implementation in General Education

Part of the process included determining how to intentionally incorporate academics in some of these areas. We were concomitantly engaged in a redesign of General Education and First-Year Seminar, so these pieces became integral in our new model. (At the time, Langdon Martin was Director of General Education and Annie Jonas was Director of First-Year Seminar.) Civic Identity-designated courses were adopted as part of our General Education requirements. These also included First-Year Seminar requirements that were built around Foundation-Level Civic Identity principles (Figure 6).

As part of the General Education program, all students needed to take three courses with a "Civic Identity" designation, which could come from fulfilling requirements around social justice, intercultural perspectives, environmental responsibility, and/or service learning. As preparation for this, students needed to engage with civic identity in their First-Year Seminars. These courses already included integral community engagement components, and we hoped that integrating civic identity would facilitate deeper student engagement as they progressed. In addition, this provided an opportunity to assess student development.

Assessment of civic identity in First-Year Seminars: A common writing prompt

Another key impetus for our work had been to facilitate assessment; what aspects of civic identity development were reaching students? Our plan was to adapt the model (Figures 4 & 6) as a multidimensional tool for assessment. We began with our First-Year Seminar program during Fall 2017. At our college, First-Year Seminars are semester-long, 4-credit courses that meet during the Fall, each with a unique disciplinary lens designed by the faculty instructor. Even prior to this work, courses have integrated community-engaged service and a significant writing component, with instructors receiving training and support for incorporating both of these. That year, instructor training was also infused with ideas for introducing students to the idea of civic identity. This provided the basis to engrain assessable civic identity student outcomes.

While an introduction to civic identity development was part of the training for instructors, they were not required to use this phrase verbatim in their course, and most did not. Through activities and assignments, first-year students received exposure and training that touched on all four of the Foundation-level components of our civic identity model: Self-Awareness; Critical Inquiry; Community-Mindedness; and Compromise, Civility, and Mutual Respect (Figures 4 & 6). Working with a community partner made this particularly effective.

For assessment purposes, a common end-of-semester writing prompt was developed. Students were assigned a 3–5-page critical reflection that offered an opportunity to describe their developing civic identity. The general prompt (Figure 7A) was designed to elicit reflection on all four of the Foundational-level civic identity outcomes. Instructors were given this prompt during their training; they could use it verbatim or to adapt it to their course. Example adaptations (from AJ's and LJM's courses) are shown in Figure 7B.

These student essays were frequently thought-provoking. As one would expect, student responses varied widely in length, quality, and clarity. Nevertheless, by and large the responses were sincere, insightful, and enjoyable to read. A representative excerpt from a strong student essay is shown in Figure 8.

A selection of student responses to this prompt was read by campus educators and assessed using a rubric focused on civic identity development. This evaluation took place at annual retreats, which became opportunities for deeper conversation and reflection on civic identity. The retreats became one of the most valuable and rewarding ways we have engaged with civic identity on our campus in recent years. At each retreat, we gathered with a dozen or more staff and faculty from across campus to read and score the first-year students' written reflections. The retreat became a wonderful forum for community-building and collaborative discussion of civic identity. Retreats were held annually in May, typically about one to two weeks after Commencement.

How will your knowledge of a topic or issue **along with your engagement in the community** impact your personal actions related to community going forward?

- *Consider communities that you are a part of and have learned from both on campus and off campus in your response.*
- *Consider your next steps for engaging with the issue you learned about and getting involved in the community.*
- *Consider how you have changed as a result of your participation in this course both inside and outside the classroom. How will this influence your future behaviors?*

A.

How will your knowledge of <u>language and literacy</u> along with your engagement in the <u>Isaac Dickson</u> community impact <u>how you approach writing projects and community engagement going forward?</u>

How will the knowledge you developed in this course, along with your engagement with the Dr. John Wilson Community Garden, impact your personal actions moving forward?

B.

Figure 7 The First-Year Seminar writing prompt. A) General writing prompt and sub-questions. B) Two course-specific modifications made to the general prompt.

When I think of all that I've done in this one semester I'm shocked. It fuels a passion that I've always had quietly burning. It calls to the little part of me that was squished away by the "reality" of life, yet this is reality and it's my life. I identify myself with so many communities and see myself serving all these people. Not for them but with them, together in a partnership and that is how I define community.

—First-Year Student, December 2020

Figure 8 Representative paragraph from a first-year student reflection

Planning the retreat is a significant undertaking (Martin et al., 2021). Retreats were in-person in 2018 and 2019, and we switched to an online format in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. At the beginning of the retreat, we held a training session to build community, facilitate a discussion around definitions of civic identity, and standardize interpretation of the rubric. The discussion was invariably lively, and it served to build a deeper appreciation for civic identity development across the college. Evaluators then worked independently to score each student's reflection on the four foundation-level criteria shown in Figure 4. They used a 4-point Likert-scare for each criterion (1 = Foundational; 2 = Emerging; 3 = Proficient; 4 = Advanced), and each reflection was read by at least two readers with scores averaged (Martin et al., 2021). Additional information about this process is available by request.

Assessment Results of First-Year Seminar Civic Identity Artifacts

Data from the assessment of first-year student essays are shown in Figure 9 and Table 1. These data represent the four Foundation-level criteria (Figure 4) of civic identity development in Warren Wilson College students at the end of their first semester. Figure 9 shows the distribution of scores (averaged for two or three readers) for the 87 artifacts written in December 2020; these data were collected at the May 2021 retreat. Table 1 shows the average scores for each of the four criteria over the four years of data collection.
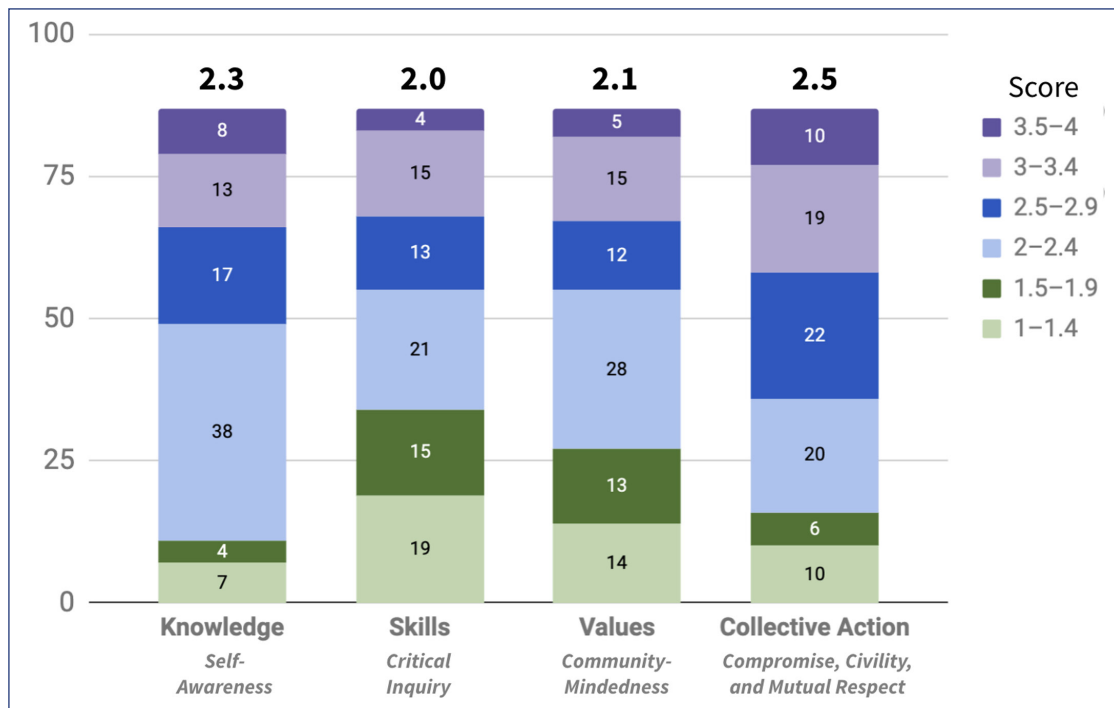

Figure 9 Data from the Spring 2021 Assessment of Civic Identity Artifacts (n = 87). The bold-face numbers above each bar represent the average score for each criterion; the small numbers in each bar represent the number of artifacts receiving that specific score.

Table 1
Average Scores (on a 1–4 scale) for each Criterion over Four Years

Academic Year	Knowledge *Self-Awareness*	Skills *Critical Inquiry*	Values *Community-Mindedness*	Collective Action *Compromise, Civility, and Mutual Respect*
2017–2018 (n = 40)	2.0	1.7	1.8	2.2
2018–2019 (n = 77)	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.5
2019–2020 (n = 85)	2.3	1.8	2.0	2.3
2020–2021 (n = 87)	2.3	2.0	2.1	2.5

When we began this work, our hope was that students would achieve an average of at least 2: *Emerging* for each criterion. While we were on the low end of this in the first year (AY 2017–2018, Table 1), scores improved the following year and held fairly steady thereafter. We attribute this primarily to improved campus awareness and training around civic identity; there were also minor adjustments from the initial prompt that may have helped the student writers focus their thoughts. We also note the trend that scores in the Knowledge (Self-Awareness) and Collective Action (Compromise, Civility, and Mutual Respect) criteria were consistently the two highest, exceeding our expectations of at least a 2 average (Figure 9 and Table 1). We conclude that these two aspects of students' civic identities are most strongly developed at this stage, although the reasons for this asymmetry are worth further investigation. In all areas, students seem to be progressing towards engaged citizenry.

These data will be part of our next reaccreditation report. We look forward to comparing these to future data collected through the civic identity lens and looking at more advanced student outcomes.

Additional Assessment: Student Voting Rates and Graduate Surveys

Other methods of assessing our students beyond their first year, as well as our graduates, are ongoing. For example, given the significance of the democratic process as part of civic identity, our Institutional Research office has looked at student voting rates since we began our intentional civic identity work. They have collected data through our participation in NSLVE [the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement]. In 2014, 70% of our voting-eligible students were registered to vote, and 29% of that group cast a vote in the 2014 election. This represents an overall Voting Rate of 21%. In 2018, the next mid-term election year, 85% of our voting-eligible students were registered, and 65% of those students cast a vote: our overall Voting Rate jumped to 55% of our student body.

These increases were in line with national trends of other NSLVE schools, which saw a Voting Rate increase from 20% in 2014 to 39% in 2018. Thus, while the national Voting Rate increased by 19 percentage points, our Voting Rate increased by 34 percentage points: a much larger jump. This increase correlates well with our campus-wide discussions of civic identity. We do not have yet have data on our 2022 voting rates, nor do we have

information that would enable us to draw conclusions about causation, but the trends are clearly what we would like to see.

We have also begun looking at alumni outcomes using data gathered from our periodic HEDS [Higher Education Data Sharing consortium] surveys. Based on these data, there is a high correlation between the outcomes of recent graduates and behaviors we would expect from students who have a well-developed civic identity. For example, from surveys in the past five years, 93% of our alumni reported that their education prepared them "quite a bit" or "very much" for *social and civic engagement*, compared to the national average of 60%. Likewise, 69% of our alumni *participate in community service* "often" or "very often," compared to a national average of 28%. Finally, our graduates are more than twice as likely (6.1% compared to the national average of 2.4%) to participate in Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, or similar national service following graduation.

Our college has begun asking more specific add-on questions as part of the HEDS surveys to better understand how our alumni to specifically engage in the democratic process. Example questions are shown in Figure 10. This is still a very preliminary initiative, so while we do not yet have data regarding alumni responses, these questions represent one way to track and understand how graduates demonstrate their civic identities.

Conclusions and Ongoing Work

We have described the development of a civic identity model for educating and promoting student engagement (Figure 4). The term "civic identity" was critical for grounding our initial work in existing literature and the call in *A Crucible Moment*, but it did not itself become the rallying cry that we had expected. We were surprised by initial pushback: on our campus, the term "civic identity" did not stick as a moniker. While the draft model and the concepts resonated, the phrase itself didn't work for many in our community. A few complained that the term "civic" made the focus sound too narrow, relating only to the local community rather than a wider national

How significant a role does the service experiences you had at Warren Wilson College play in your continued engagement in your community?

In what ways and how often have you engaged in your community in the past two years?
- o Through my work
- o Served on a board of an agency or organization
- o Sought information about current social and political issues
- o Communicated my opinion about a cause (e.g., blog, email, petition, spoke at a public meeting)
- o Worked on a local, state, or national political campaign
- o Demonstrated for a cause (e.g., boycott, rally, protest)
- o Helped raised money for a cause or campaign
- o Performed volunteer or community service work
- o Voting
- o Other (please specify)

Figure 10 Questions related to civic identity recently added on to our college's HEDS survey of alumni.

or international sense of engagement; others were reminded of unengaging high school "Civics" classes. There were lots of people who just said the phrase wasn't catchy enough.

Instead, civic identity became a lens that allowed stakeholders to see how their educational work connected to other areas of the college, and which facilitated discussion about how to bring this work to a wider audience. For our institution, civic identity is "engaging in collective action to foster a just, equitable, and sustainable world" (Figure 5). The success of our model can be described through what Schnaubelt et al. describe as Building Blocks One and Two: Our model provides opportunity for students to engage constructively across differences (Building Block One), and to practice Democratic Knowledge, Habits, and Skills (Building Block Two) (Schnaubelt et al., 2023). Furthermore, it was through using these tenets that we built consensus for the model. This work was successful precisely because of its democratic nature: focus groups, regular discussions, and leadership from large and small partnerships rather than a single individual. Elevating civic identity required practicing civic identity.

Our model also incorporates each of the four Core Commitments described by Schnaubelt et al. At present, the fourth commitment (Communitarian Mindset) seems the area in greatest need of strengthening on our campus. It is easier to engage constructively across differences when one sees those differences as coming from someone from the same community—such as the same college. Even so, we continue to struggle on our campus with issues around diversity, equity, and inclusion, despite a stated commitment to these things. Furthermore, as we try to define "community" at the national or global level, the communitarian mindset becomes much harder still. It is difficult to empathize with someone who has significantly different political views than oneself, yet that is what a communitarian mindset requires us to do. Future work must seek ways to practice empathy in this way.

Our model provides opportunities for assessment of student learning. Conducting assessments helped to bring together a broad cohort of campus educators who were interested in discussing and practicing the civic identity model. We have intentionally built civic identity development into our General Education curriculum, beginning with an emphasis in First-Year seminars. We developed a writing prompt for first-year seminar students to describe their civic identity development, and responses are read by a cohort and assessed for evidence of civic identity development. Analysis of four years of these data (Figure 9 and Table 1) show that students' strongest developments are in regard to Knowledge (self-awareness) and Collective Action (compromise, civility, and mutual respect).

Following our years-long work to elevate the civic purposes of our institution, we have looked at data including voting rates and graduate survey questions (Figure 10), with clear indications that our alumni are civically engaged. However, we have not developed a more direct assessment for measuring civic identity development in seniors. There is strong potential for such an assessment, which could include asking seniors to respond more directly about their civic identity development as part of a senior capstone project reflection. but there are not yet any concrete plans for implementation.

Currently, Warren Wilson College is rolling out a further revised General Education program that was designed to embed civic identity even more deeply in courses across the college. Now, rather than offering a subset of "Civic Identity-designated" courses, all introductory courses fulfilling distributional requirements

will infuse aspects of civic identity (curiosity, empathy, and integrity) in design and practice; these descriptors also flow directly from the civic identity update to our Mission Statement (Figure 5).

Looking back, we realize that the years of the messy democratic process led to what feels like a more powerful, aspirational, and across-campus response to centralizing civic purposes in the curriculum. As we implement these new requirements while navigating the rapidly shifting landscape of higher education, we expect that the civic identity lens will continue to be a vital tool. We hope that our experiences and lessons learned are instructive to other institutions as we work together to reclaim the civic purposes of higher education.

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