

Civic Intelligence Research & Action Laboratory

An Evolving Evergreen Proposal

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Introduction

The Civic Intelligence Research Action Laboratory (CIRAL) is a proposed Evergreen program that integrates theory and practice in an ongoing way. This proposal recommends that an Evergreen program devoted to the theory and practice of civic intelligence be established and be offered every quarter for at least two years, but ideally could be counted on to be offered for, say, the next 10 years.

The CIRAL could be structured in many ways

A key element of the program is its sustained, multi-quarter orientation

- Knowledge is constructed / and we create resources
- Integration with community often takes time (and community work grows over time)
- Students form large part of the ongoing intellectual inertia (and institutional memory) who can help acculturate new students (each quarter builds student knowledge and skills)
- Faculty members will always be there to guide intellectual / research side and promote student progress

The Civic Intelligence Research Action Laboratory (CIRAL) is a proposed Evergreen program that integrates theory and practice in an ongoing way. This proposal recommends that an Evergreen program devoted to the theory and practice of civic intelligence be established. It is the type of real-world “lab” with student leadership that is often reserved for graduate students.

A significant part of the program would be devoted to working with people and organizations in and outside of the region. The program would be offered every quarter for at least two years, but ideally could be counted on to be offered for, say, the next 10 years. Students could elect to take the program multiple times.

Some Definitions

Informally, *civic intelligence* refers to how *smart* collectivities are in relation to their problems.

Civic intelligence is a form of collective intelligence that focuses on shared problems. It addresses civic ends through civic means.

Although we know that civic intelligence exists, this fact is **not explicitly acknowledged** and hence not something that we can readily examine or improve.

Some Assertions

Today more than ever, *civic intelligence* is needed to address the problems we now face.

Civic intelligence is distributed throughout society — not just among those with money and power

Although we know that civic intelligence exists, the capacity that exists may not be adequate for our pressing needs.

Civic intelligence — its understanding and development — could serve as a paradigm for activists *and* researchers.

Civic intelligence is necessary — but not sufficient.

Civic Intelligence is not a Brand New Topic

Social Intelligence, Community Inquiry (John Dewey)

Social Learning (many authors)

Civic Community (Jane Addams)

Civic Capacity (Harry Boyte, Xavier Briggs)

Public Work Politics (Center for Democracy & Citizenship)

Civic Innovation (Carmen Sirianni & Lew Friedman)

Open Source Intelligence (Robert Steele)

World Brain (H.G. Wells)

Civilizational Competence (Piotr Sztompka)

+ *Social Enterprise / Entrepreneurism / Innovation, etc.*

Goals

- Encourage lifelong education
- Help build citizenship skills
- Help integrate the community and the academy
- Help integrate theory and practice
- Explore and promote *social* innovation
- Help prepare for 21st century challenges

Why is this significant?

- Focuses on inseparability of research and action
- Mapped to “real” issues without sacrificing research and rigorous inquiry
- Persistence over time; Learning over time — each quarter builds student knowledge and skills, responding to “real” issues in “real time”
- Student-managed to a large degree; Learning to work in groups and networks
- Test — and establish validity for — new models of higher education. Undergraduate real-world labs

Scope of the Lab

Students Work on Research Issues

- Reading and viewing pertinent work
- Writing, discussing, analyzing issues
- Annotating pertinent work and making it available
- Developing hypotheses and theories about civic intelligence and methodologies for exploring civic intelligence
- Building a case for the scholarly aspect of the program
- Publishing articles and otherwise documenting the work

Scope of the Lab (cont.)

Students Work with Outside Groups

- Assisting, advising, and developing tools and resources for community and other civil society endeavors
- There should be a variety of projects in-work at any given time.
- The location in the lifecycle of the projects should also vary; we should have some relationships just beginning, some more mature, and some ending
- Some should be local and some should be global; some of the projects should be at Evergreen
- We should foster relationships with other Evergreen centers, etc.

Scope of the Lab (cont.)

Students Help Manage the Program

- Developing own curriculum (etc.) (This includes creating resources such as workshops, annotated bibliographies, workshops, pertinent readings and films)
- Outreach to other groups and institutions
- Organizing and managing tasks and resources
- Inviting and hosting outside speakers
- There would be time within class that would be devoted to theory / research as well as pragmatic issues
- Organize service learning or other events

Scope of the Lab (cont.)

Role of the Faculty

- Developing overall framework and goals for individual quarters
- Liaison with administration
- Guide overall intellectual and practical tasks
- Intervening when necessary on projects
- Organizing and managing tasks and resources
- Inviting and hosting outside speakers
- Oversight
- Evaluating student progress

Implementation Information

- 1-3 faculty per quarter (25-75 students) (*one faculty member pledged already!*)
- EWS only (probably) initially -- but possibly a hybrid
- Faculty members could be drawn from many disciplines (social sciences, sciences, humanities)
- Some faculty members would have to stand by to take contracts

Challenges

Possible Show Stoppers

- Insufficient enrollment
- Insufficient faculty interest
- Program not allowed

Other Possible Problems and Concerns

- Costs of running program (e.g. students abroad)
- Integrating daytime and EWS programs (other campuses?)
- Balancing research and action
- Integrating new people into program
- Autonomy of new people vs. total integration in ongoing projects
- Centripetal vs. centrifugal tensions
- How to manage the "classroom component" -- some would claim this isn't necessary
- How to make sure that students meet general requirements (e.g. they can't avoid math or art or the humanities)

Purpose to Learn

Understand underlying circumstances that affect the ability to comprehend and address challenges.

Learn how social change takes place.

Address the particular "challenges of our era and the mechanisms that are now governing it."

Build knowledge of "lexicon, theories, issues, ideas, and data."

"Improve your own approach to learning:"

Ensuring that your educational needs are met

Improving the educational environment for yourself and others

"[Realize] one's own power and social imagination for the future."

Purpose to Collaborate

Learning to work as a group to help each other thrive.

Finding ways to build group resilience in the face of challenges.

Building a learning community through seminars and group project.

Creating a self-organizing community with little direction or oversight.

Providing the opportunity to learn by doing.

Seeking external support from people and organizations outside of the classroom.

"[Building] capacity for groups and societies to respond intelligently - effectively and equitably - to the challenges they face."

Help societies adapt to changing conditions as a collective instead of as individuals.

Purpose to Define New Norms

Striving to bridge the gap between:

- The academic community with the public.
- Thought and action
- Research and practice
- Abstract and concrete

Performing metacognition to determine what social strategies and techniques are successful, and determining how to improve upon models for representing the world and the work you do.

Engaging in projects that last more than 1 quarter, and spending summers in action.

"[Integrate] social imagination, memory, cognition, learning, and engagement."

Benefits to Focusing on Civic Intelligence

For the individual

Better listening skills

Ability to ask questions and make comments that further discourse

Ability to integrate the perspectives of others with ones own view

Better emotional intelligence

Learning how to go with the flow.

Gaining the experience of and familiarity with learning through practice

Gaining an awareness group dynamics

Gaining confidence in working in an ambiguous process

Ability to encourage and support creativity in others

Benefits to Focusing on Civic Intelligence

For a community

- Better ability to identify problems
- Better ability to collectively solve problems
- Better ability to put aside differences
- Group Meta-cognition
- Recognition of ability to take an active part in chance
- Increased involvement in community
- Integrates thought and action, research and practice

Why is CIRAL Needed?

There are major issues facing the planet, and many approaches to resolving them have been unsuccessful.

Collective intelligence addresses the common interest in the process of serving the common good.

Civic Intelligence provides a theory that helps "motivate and inform positive social change."

We can use metacognition to "incorporate, critique, modify, and build upon prior civic intelligence theory."

CIRAL will help us to recognize and measure civic intelligence when it happens.

We can also use metacognition to learn from films, written case studies, and our own experiences.

This helps us build leadership models and approaches to listening, learning, and teaching.

Why is CIRAL Needed?

Build longer relationships. This would benefit the community and the student experience.

Continue year-round. Communities don't take the summers off.

Be permanent. For one thing, students with more experience on a project can help inform others with less

Incorporate the community work into academic / research work in a more regular and coherent way

Maintain several relationships at a time. At any given point, some relationships may be young, some maturing, and some in the process of stopping.

How can CIRAL sustain a culture of Civic Intelligence? ?

We don't have all of the answers but these are some thoughts and ideas we've discussed:

All or most CIRAL participants will actively engage in a common curriculum at the beginning of their CIRAL journey.

Students will begin their class immediately engaging in group simulations and games relating to Civic Intelligence and practicing metacognition to reflect upon and quickly refine the intelligence of the collective.

These practices will enable students to integrate, and cultivate Civic Intelligence in their daily lives and carry it to others, especially to future CIRAL participants and partners.

CIRAL participants build within themselves and as a collective, a solid foundation of Civic Intelligence before they engage in real-world situations in the larger community. Strategic and intentional praxis becomes a crucial part of current and future work.

All research and action conducted by CIRAL and its participants will be recorded / captured through journaling, audio, video, web sites, mobile apps, other multimedia—any way possible really.

These records will be stored in an organized, easy to search database, archive, library, etc—the name doesn't matter as long as it is functional and used frequently.

Capturing as much as possible of students' own (and sometimes others) independent and group contract work from the very beginning, through growth and change and through final processes of the contracts will be come standard practice.

This empowers the momentum of Civic Intelligence to continually build.

Transformative Space Issues

Off-campus space

Transcending traditional use of classroom space

Procedure for fund-raising/accepting public interest grants

Establishing protocol/covenant for:

- Student support
- Mediation of plagiarism disputes
- How credit shall be awarded

Core Class Activities

Skill-building workshops

Hosting guest lectures

Weekly guided readings

Journal keeping

Seminar sessions

Wiki training/editing

Many Student led Initiatives

Emerging Topics

Possible Partnerships

Center for Community Based Learning and Action (CCBLA)
Local and global non-profit organizations
Students and faculty of other universities, both in the area and across the country
Local schools

Stakeholders

Current students in Patterns of Intelligence
Future students of CIRAL
Students who want to get involved

- Student group

Evergreen faculty
Evergreen administration
Evergreen alumni
Evergreen Alumni Entrepreneurs Association
News media
Donors

Student Think Tank

A club that supports CIRAL

Interest meeting to be held in Jan. 2012
Will publish white papers documenting civic intelligence
Will host events to promote civic intelligence and the CIRAL project
Could be responsible for database cataloging CIRAL work and other examples of civic intelligence

A CIRAL Handbook

Instructive for new participants
Resource for everyone
Grows over time
Should include the following:

- How projects are initiated
- The culture of shared leadership and shifting responsibility
- Lab practices

Cultivating a Culture of Civic Intelligence in CIRAL Handbook

Establish group values and norms early on
Give students opportunities to see their own civic intelligence grow

- games, scenarios, seminars

Incorporate the pattern language into multiple points in the curriculum
Integrate Student Think Tank and CIRAL

Status and Next Steps

- Hoping to work with CCBLA and Sustainability and Justice Planning Group
- Worked on plan and resources, spring 2010 and spring 2011
- 12 credit option of Civic Intelligence and Collective Action working on this now
- Social Imagination and Civic Intelligence planned for next year
- It is said that the Evergreen community will soon be rethinking some of the ways it addresses its core values and missions....