

Developing College of Agriculture Students to Become Civic Leaders

Kameron Rinehart, MS
Jason Headrick, Ph.D.

Davis College – Agricultural Education & Communications 15th Street Lubbock, TX 79409

740-505-2805

Kameron.rinehart@ttu.edu

Jason.headrick@ttu.edu

Developing College of Agriculture Students to Become Civic Leaders

Introduction/Need for Innovation or Idea

Civic involvement has steadily decreased in the last 50 years, and “brain drain,” a phenomenon that discusses the movement of human capital and loss of those with higher levels of education, continues to impact our communities (Giannoccolo, 2009; Salt, 1997). College of Agriculture graduates seek a sense of purpose and direction for their careers. The Civic Leadership Academy (CLA) aims to help agricultural students from the Lubbock region realize their potential to enact change and develop their communities, beginning with themselves. The program aims to develop participants' understanding of their leadership potential and demonstrate the merits of civic leadership through engagement and interaction with entrepreneurship, nonprofits, community development, and community-driven leaders and businesses. It also raises awareness of opportunities to impact communities utilizing strategic methods to produce long-term results.

How it Works/Methodology/Program Phases/Steps

A grant was received from the [FOUNDATION] to begin allowing students to explore civic leadership and community development. College of Agriculture students were asked to apply, and twelve students were selected from 48 applicants by a committee of agricultural education, communications, and leadership faculty. Participants have been introduced to the world of civic leadership and explored ways of engagement through the experiences of the program on a national, regional, and community level. The culmination of the experience asked participants to propose a project at the end of the program to encapsulate the civic leadership experience. It will carry out their project with a local community partner of the participants' choice. The program was developed using the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Astin, 1996; Komives & Wagner, 2016) and included:

- *Leadership Development.* The Academy students with leaders from across the ranks of Texas-based and Lubbock region-based businesses and industries. Throughout the process, participants engage in leadership development workshops to refine their own leadership styles.
- *Values Assessment.* Academy participants are encouraged to deepen their understanding of personal, corporate, and community values. By understanding the value assessment and development process, participants will better understand how to work through the intersection of competing values.
- *Community Development.* Field experiences and collaborations with community partners allow Academy participants to develop their understanding of civic leadership and engagement across multiple community levels.
- *Agricultural Foundations of Rural Areas/ Entrepreneurship.* Participants will gain an appreciation for the role of agriculture in the Lubbock region. They will interface with entrepreneurs, agricultural operations, small business entrepreneurs, and commodity representatives to understand the multi-faceted ways agriculture is incorporated into communities and how they can better leverage this into engagement and career plans.
- *Real-world Application.* After completing the workshops and field experiences, the Academy participants decide on a capstone project in the Lubbock region to invest time, leadership, and resources into using their training and experiences. They will demonstrate

how investing in the region can benefit the community while successfully demonstrating their civic leadership skills.

Results to Date/Implications

CLA has had an outstanding beginning. Throughout 2022, the inaugural class engaged with 22 [UNIVERSITY] faculty and staff, five workshop presenters from outside universities, 12 nonprofit agencies represented by 18 staff, 16 local and state government representatives (including the Mayor and a State Representative), and eight agricultural commodity and industry groups. Students report increased cognition of civic leadership and strategies to impact a larger community. Most report a better understanding of their leadership capabilities, which has transferred to student organizations on campus. CLA concluded the first year by engaging in workshops about international civic leadership and adaptive leadership and developing pitches to contribute a budgeted \$15,000 towards community-based projects. The projects include a college-wide day of service in the Lubbock community, the creation of a food pantry at a local school, and providing electric bikes for reliable transportation to a nonprofit focused on assisting recovering homeless, abused, and sexually trafficked individuals. The second year of CLA began in January 2023.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

The CLA is a program that has the capacity to change individual lives and have a real community impact. While funding was received from the [FOUNDATION], additional grants are being investigated. Continued funding will keep the CLA moving forward and impacting communities. Future plans for the CLA include expanding cohort membership, increasing community partners, collaborations, projects, and the program's endowment.

Community-based programming requires time, planning, and a strong network. After the Covid-19 pandemic, nonprofits seek new ways to engage with college students and the community. There are prime opportunities for faculty members within our disciplines to create collaborations and expand service learning for our students across agriculture and the community. Seeking new ways of collaborating with others across the community for service and civic projects to demonstrate to students their capacity to impact their college communities and the communities they call home and will settle in for the future.

Costs/Resources Needed

The proposed budget of the CLA for Year 1 was \$30,000. While this may seem high, many startup costs will not be repeated in supplemental years, including this year (2023) with the beginning of Cohort Two. Therefore, the initial cost is an investment in the sustainability of the program and long-term implications for the community. Resources needed will vary on the community and the network of scholars and friends of your program who could supply speakers, workshops, and related resources.

References

- Astin, A. W. (1996). Involvement in learning revisited: Lessons we have learned. *Journal of college student development*, 37(2), 123-34.
- Giannoccolo, P. (2009). The Brain Drain: A Survey of the Literature. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1374329>
- Salt, J. (1997) International movements of the highly skilled. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 3; OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, Vol. 3. <https://doi.org/10.1787/104411065061>
- Komives, S. R., & Wagner, W. (Eds.). (2016). Leadership for a better world: Understanding the social change model of leadership development. John Wiley & Sons.