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Civic Intelligence Lab, Spring 2016

Civic Intelligence Symposium review.

This is a general review of the process that brought us to the symposium last Saturday. It is my sincere hope that this is just the first of many of these events. There were two distinct issues that challenged us in preparing for this. First of all, we/I had never planned an event such as this and underestimated the pieces that were required to fall into place to make this event happen. And, secondly it was put on by students, which was a strength and a weakness.

I will review various aspects of the symposium and provide my observations. These are my thoughts and I will try to get additional input from the class in the upcoming weeks;

Planning

This type of event should have been generally locked in at a minimum three months in advance, and ideally six months. The format, topics and speakers should be part of this initial process. The allows for time to advertise and build participation. I would recommend starting the process in the Fall and finalizing it in early Winter at the latest. Start with the goal of the event and work backwards.

The flyer was great, but needed to be done by the end of the Winter quarter to be effective. It also needed to be sent out to multiple sources and organizations. Our limited distribution limited our audience and exposure.

Building audience

I would suggest targeting specific past students. They are critical to the success of the symposium. I so appreciated the ones who made it and if there were more it would be so critically beneficial. If I was to suggest a theme for next symposium it would be something similar to “Living a life of Civic Intelligence” or “Daily Civic Intelligence”.

I would also recommend pairing up with other weekend classes that have a similar focus and securing their participation. Obviously TESC would be most likely, but maybe reaching out to other area schools. Besides getting more forum participants, it would also expose other students to the ideas of civic intelligence. I see civic intelligence as being a connector for other ideas and concepts, and I would like to share this with others.

Food

I felt Julian and Anthony did a good job providing food for the event. Especially without knowing the number of participants. I think that having food available in some capacity is very beneficial to an event such as this. Food is connection.

Facility

The room was great for our purpose. The modular ability of the room was great for our purpose. We had 30+/- people at the event and the room would have handled another 20+ before hitting functional capacity. As this event gets larger we will need to look at other options to accommodate this type of interaction and not fall back to a lecture style.

Forum Format

In speaking with a few of the students, they liked the time allocated to the world café', about 20-30 minutes. It allowed for discussion and thought to get going, but didn't belabor the point. They wanted more time for the panel discussions. One hour was not enough. The really great discussion was starting to flow at the one-hour mark and it was cut short by our time table.

Another part of future forums can include input from past students that can't attend the forum. I think the idea of reaching out to past students who are not in the area, and even those who are, and interviewing them to determine how they are practicing civic intelligence would be a great topic. The interviews could be captured via video or text and shared with the symposium. My guess is that amazing work is being done by past students and it would be so powerful to be able to share it.

I think the open space sessions were well received and gave people the opportunity to engage after lunch. My only thought is that the sessions should be maybe 20 minutes long, but that is just a thought.

I also like the idea of a meaningful maps workshop. It could take many forms, but would allow input and action to produce a map.