Civic Intelligence Research Action Laboratory

An Evolving Evergreen Proposal

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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 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)

- EWS only (probably) initially

- 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
- 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)

Conclusions

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 accretes (builds 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)

Note
Faculty members will always be there to guide intellectual / research side and promote student progress