



Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities

For Immediate Release

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New Project--“Civic Inquiries and Actions in the Disciplines”--Seeks to Expand the Impact of Civic Learning Within Chicago Area Colleges and Universities

Grant from The McCormick Foundation Will Expand Work of the Chicago Civic Learning and Democratic Action Collaborative

Washington, DC—January 29, 2014—The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) announced today that it has received a grant from The Robert R. McCormick Foundation to expand the work of the Chicago Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Action Collaborative. The Collaborative was originally launched in 2012 to advance the civic agenda embedded in the national report, [*A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy’s Future*](#) released at the White House in cooperation with the US Department of Education. Fourteen colleges and universities, including the multi-campus City Colleges of Chicago, will have been engaged in the Chicago Action Collaborative during its 2012-2014 time span.

While the first phase focused on “Creating Civic-Minded Institutions,” this second phase will focus on expanding civic learning’s footprint in colleges and universities by working with faculty to advance “Civic Inquiries and Actions in the Disciplines.” Underscoring that civic learning should not be regarded as discretionary for college students, the current grant addresses a recommendation in *A Crucible Moment* to “define within departments, programs, and disciplines the public purposes of their respective fields, the civic inquiries most urgent to explore, and the best way to infuse civic learning outcomes progressively across the major” (32).

“When faculty members adopt a civic lens as they advance knowledge within their disciplines, students can better understand how to use their areas of specialization to address issues that affect the welfare of the broader public both locally and globally,” says Dr. Caryn McTighe Musil, AAC&U’s Senior Scholar and Director of Civic Learning and Democracy Initiatives. Project director McTighe Musil further explained, “It better equips students to make informed, civically responsible decisions in the workplace as well as in their communities.”

Participants in this project will work together to:

- Map different strategies for integrating civic learning and democratic engagement in three main academic domains: 1) arts, humanities, and social sciences; 2) STEM disciplines; and 3) pre-professional majors such as business, allied health, and education;
- Produce and refine curricular templates for infusing civic learning in a variety of disciplines;
- Develop and participate in faculty development workshops based on the curricular templates;
- Develop new ways to assess students' civic learning across departments.

The following seven institutions will be involved in this faculty-oriented phase of the Chicago Action Collaborative in partnership with Illinois Campus Compact:

City Colleges of Chicago
Governors State University
Lewis University
Northern Illinois University
North Park University
Roosevelt University
University of Illinois at Chicago

Through this initiative, AAC&U will also produce a set of disciplinary templates and tools to promote civic inquiries and actions across a range of majors and specializations—all of which will be available to colleges and universities through AAC&U's online campus toolkit.

See http://www.aacu.org/civic_learning/index.cfm for more information about the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Project.

About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,300 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, research universities, and comprehensive universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education and inclusive excellence at both the national and local levels, and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org

About The Robert R. McCormick Foundation

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is committed to fostering communities of educated, informed and engaged citizens. Through philanthropic programs, Cantigny Park and museums, the Foundation helps

develop citizen leaders and works to make life better in our communities. The Foundation was established as a charitable trust in 1955, upon the death of Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is one of the nation's largest foundations, with more than \$1 billion in assets. For more information, please visit www.mccormickfoundation.org/.