

Office of Residence Life Educational Priority
Rationale and Related Issues Discussion

We will seek to clarify two concepts within the educational priority of citizenship

- ✓ *Adopted definition of sustainability*
- ✓ *Exploration of difference*

The concept of citizenship could be explored in many different ways from voting to civil disobedience. We hope to develop a program that will allow students to practice emerging citizenship roles through the following interconnected venues:

1. Sustainability

We don't seek to develop sustainability "expertise," rather we seek to stimulate exploration of civic engagement and citizenship by using the lens of sustainability through which to examine topics and issues. In this manner, sustainability related issues become the tangible construct from which to explore citizenship domains such as action, inaction, educated awareness, social benefit, and personal benefit.

Sustainability, like citizenship, requires some narrative to disclose the frame of reference. Citing the UD Academic and Student Affairs Sustainability Task Force, the following are offered:

Widely Accepted Definition of Sustainability: *Ability to provide for the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. (Source: 1987 Brundtland Commission)*

Definition of Sustainability in Higher Education: *If an institution is sustainable, there is an emphasis on critical activities that are ecologically sound, socially just and economically viable. Sustainable concepts are implemented in curriculum, co-curriculum, and research so as to prepare students to contribute to society as working citizens. Activities embody responsible consumption of food, natural resources and energy and treat its diverse members with respect without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Compiled from definitions from 1987 Brundtland Commission and University Leaders for a Sustainable Future).*

The topic of sustainability is of interest to the Office of Residence Life for a number of reasons. The use of sustainability issues as a major element of the residential education plan will give the students a solid point of reference to explore their own unique vision of citizenship roles. The shared living experience, ease at observing individual and collective impact, ease of exploring sustainable and unsustainable practices and policies on campus, and opportunity to explore multiple viewpoints in the residence hall make sustainability as a means to explore citizenship very attractive. Institutional, professional organization, student, and staff interest in the topic also leads to the viability of this topic. Furthermore, FYE Learning Outcome #8 ("students will identify a global concern that also affect them as members of the UD community and develop an action plan for becoming involved in activities that address that concern") appears to be an area that can be explored and furthered by a residential experience related to sustainability.

2. Exploring Difference

General exposure and celebration methods of diversity and difference have not proven to be successful educational strategies on their own. However, it is important to note that celebration methods have been cited as important means of support and recognition. It is recommended that the Office of Residence Life re-commit to demonstrating

a visible acknowledgement and celebration of themes including such holidays as National Coming Out Day, Latino Heritage Month, Martin Luther King Day, Veteran's Day, Black History Month, Jewish High Holy days, Easter, Christmas, and Ramadan.

Exploring difference is a key element under the sustainability lens for citizenship exploration. Issues of equity in society, poverty, and connections to global issues seem to offer more opportunities to help students make connections than the traditional oppression model of diversity education. There are a variety of avenues to explore difference and the need to balance difference through the sustainability lens. The idea of justice is also a critical term, not so much from the view of what a “good person” should do, but in terms of how inequity and injustice diminishes not only those suffering directly, but the entire global collective.

Our framework for diversity as it relates to citizenship is heavily focused on exploring diverse ways of thinking (FYE Learning Outcome #5 “students will use a real-world ethical problem to develop an understanding of their own and others’ concepts of justice”) and on international ways of being (FYE Learning Outcome #7 “students will develop a plan to take advantage of opportunities they have at UD to learn about the world and themselves from a global perspective”). The proposed learning outcomes also include an emphasis on learning to work with people different than oneself and on balancing diverse perspectives.

To quote AAC&U, “educating students for a global future is no longer elective” (Musil, 2006, p. 1). In fact, a study by the Association of American Colleges and Universities called to light the importance of global knowledge and engagement and identified it as an indispensable learning outcome for all students in all majors” (AAC&U, 2004).