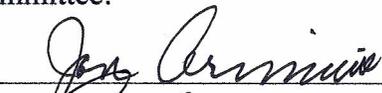


INSTITUTION COMMITMENT TO CIVIC LEARNING AT GEORGE MASON
UNIVERSITY

by

Kathryn S. McQuiston
A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
Interdisciplinary Studies

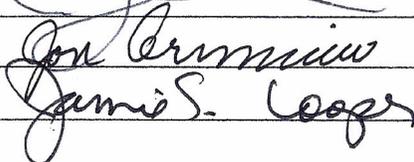
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Date: July 15, 2014 Summer Semester 2014
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

Institution Commitment to Civic Learning at George Mason University

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at George Mason University

by

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University of Missouri, 2006

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my loving husband, Sean. Your love and support are immeasurable and I could not have finished this without you!

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I would like to thank my family, friends, and colleagues for their love, support and encouragement through this long project. To my thesis committee- thank you for offering encouragement and helping me create this final product. I am inspired by each of you more than you know. Thank you for your dedication to education. Specifically, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Jan Arminio. I have learned so much from you through this process. Thank you for guiding me and teaching me along the way! I would also like to thank Dr. Jaime Lester and Dr. Julie Owen. Thank you both for reading through my drafts, providing insightful feedback, pushing me to write better, and serving on my committee. Thank you to my program advisor Dr. Todd Rose. Your guidance, support, and encouragement kept me going the last three years. I wouldn't be at the finish line without you! To my parents, who raised me with a love for education and taught me to chase my dreams! To my sister, who has always believed in me and encouraged me to push myself to the limits. To the rest of my extended family, I am so blessed to have such a wonderful support system. Thank you for cheering for me along the way. To my family at Mason, especially my OSI Family, you make Mason the wonderful place it is. Thank you for the opportunities to be successful. Finally, to my wonderful husband Sean. I love you more than I can put into words. You inspire me to be better every single day. Thank you for your encouragement and helping me along the way. You believed in me when I doubted my own abilities. Thank you for your support and being my partner in this amazing journey. I love you!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

George Mason UniversityMason
Leadership Education and Development Office.....LEAD
Living Learning Community.....LLC
New Century College.....NCC
Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Multicultural Education ODIME

ABSTRACT

INSTITUTION COMMITMENT TO CIVIC LEARNING AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Kathryn S. McQuiston, MAIS

George Mason University, 2014

Thesis Director: Dr. Jan Arminio

This thesis is a case study of George Mason University. This study examined the university commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement by conducting a content analysis on two sets of documents and then comparing those analyses. The first set of documents consisted of documents from the university. They included the vision statement, mission statement, the Mason IDEA, and the 2014-2024 strategic plan and are considered guiding documents of the university. The second set of documents came from campus initiatives that were purposefully selected because of how they relate to civic learning and democratic engagement. Through the content analysis I identified four categories that were present in each set of documents. The categories I identified are values, behaviors, experiences, and outcomes. Within each of those categories there were similar and unique concepts. The comparison analysis helps educators understand how

the university and those working within the university discuss and address civic learning and democratic engagement.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Background

Universities are complex, dynamic organizations (Bess & Dee, 2008); they often have many moving parts including multiple academic units and numerous other departments to serve the needs of students, faculty and staff. Additionally, colleges and universities operate in a “diverse and ever-changing environment with shifting values, varying states of economic prosperity, and obscure permutations of political power. Yet they have endured—constituting a remarkably resilient organizational form” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 2). Despite the challenging environments colleges and universities face, they have managed to endure and stay relevant. Colleges and universities are able to communicate who they are and what they represent through university guiding documents such as mission statements, vision statements, and strategic plans. These documents are often available to the public and can be accessed through universities’ websites.

Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005) wrote that university mission statements have the ability to set the tone for the university. Mission statements also communicate what the educational purpose is for the institution. The purpose can be based on religious, ideological, or educational beliefs, depending on the type of university (Kuh et al., 2005). The educational purpose also provides guidance for the institution “to all aspects of institutional life, including the policies and practices that foster student

success” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 25). Bess and Dee stated that college and university missions have evolved over time. The missions have expanded from “educating the elite for positions of community leadership to providing the primary vehicle for economic and social mobility to all strata of society” (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 2).

For many institutions, civic learning is an important part of their mission. Hartley and Hollander (2005) stated that historically, colleges and universities advocated for various conceptions of civic responsibility and adapted them to meet the needs of the times. Indeed, “Educating students morally and for good citizenship as well as intellectually is part of the mission statement of almost all higher education institutions and has been since their inception” (Kezar, 2002, p. 15). Checkoway (2001) stated American research universities were established with a civic mission to prepare students for active participation in democracy.

However, some institutions are shifting from this civic mission (Checkoway, 2001) and are more focused on careerism and workforce development (Mahatmya, Owen & Dugan, 2013; Sullivan, 2000). Sullivan (2000) argued, “It is noteworthy, then, that many professional fields have, like the academy, come to accent the marketability of their technical skills while de-emphasizing their contribution to civic life” (p. 25). He argued that professions do not seek to be accepted for their knowledge they provide or the functions they perform in the community, but rather skills they provide in the market (Sullivan, 2000). Furthermore, social well-being has become less important in professional fields and higher education, Sullivan argued that social contribution is measured by the market value of skills (Sullivan, 2000). Checkoway (2001) argued

“higher education can contribute to civic engagement, but most research universities do not perceive themselves as part of the problem or of its solution” (p. 127). This drift in mission has severe implications.

Civic engagement is a broad term without a consistent definition. It is often defined as service-learning or out-of-class activity, while other definitions provide more social context such as participation in activism, protests, voting, or volunteering (Rowan-Kenyon, Soldner, and Inkeles, 2007). Jacoby (2009) described it as a “big tent that allows individuals and initiatives representing a range of perspectives to gather beneath it for the purpose of creating a cohesive whole that advances responsibility for the common good,” (p. 10). For the purposes of this study, an inclusive use of the term civic engagement was used. All aspects of civic learning and democratic engagement were considered including civic engagement, democratic engagement, service learning, and community service.

If institutions have indeed moved further from their historic missions, might a more purposeful articulation of that mission improve relationships with its key stakeholders? As Boyer argued, “the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, and must reaffirm its historic commitment to what I call the scholarship of engagement” (Boyer, 1996, p. 11). Bringle and Hatcher (2000) argued that Boyer called for higher education to deliberately include more active community involvement. Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, and Stephens (2003) had a more complex view and higher expectations for college graduates and the universities from which they graduate,

If today's college graduates are to be positive forces in this world, they need not only to possess knowledge and intellectual capacities but also to see themselves as members of a community, as individuals with a responsibility to contribute to their communities. They must be willing to act for the common good and capable of doing so. (Colby et al., 2003, p. 7)

Colby et al. were trying to convey that student's college experience is more than what they learn in the classroom. Students are learning how to become members of society and of their local communities. Learning how to contribute and engage in civic action is part of the key components of civic learning and democratic engagement and contributes to the greater good of society.

Currently, the cost of higher education is at an all-time high with percentages of tuition increase far beyond the rate of inflation. This is causing parents and students to critically analyze their investment in higher education and students and parents alike are asking what is the "value added" of a college education (Ehrlich, 2000, p. iii).

Furthermore, there is increasing concern that higher education is becoming primarily a private good instead of a public good like it was in the past (Kezar, 2005; Sponsler & Hartley, 2013; Sullivan, 2008). Some argue that institutions of higher education are functioning as an industry rather than a social institution (Kezar, 2005). Selingo (2013) argued that the higher education system in the United States is broken. He claimed that for a decade institutions wasted time and resources and ultimately did not expose students to "a rigorous academic experience that would have prepared them for the working world, but instead were treated like customers to be pleased and placated" (2013, p. xvii).

Contrarily, in 1987, Boyer described American undergraduate colleges as a place where young people become more competent, more concerned, and more complete human beings through the experience of being an undergraduate. Does such an undergraduate college still exist?

In response to the growing concern over the lack of civic engagement in the United States, a document titled *A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy's Future* was published in 2012. *A Crucible Moment* was written at the request of the U. S. Department of Education and aimed to lead a national conversation that would ultimately result in “recommendations about strengthening students’ civic learning and democratic engagement as a core component of college study” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. vii).

The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement was created to guide the “year-long national dialogue and analysis through which *A Crucible Moment* is framed” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. vii). The task force was charged with evaluating the state of education for democracy in higher education and produced a report defining specific actions through which stakeholders “can make college students’ civic learning and democratic engagement a pervasively embraced educational priority and a resource for democracy” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. vii). The task force was made up of a coalition of individuals who already worked in the civic renewal effort that was happening in the higher education community (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012).

Colleges and universities have faced criticism over the years for failing to articulate their primary purpose (Thelin, 2004). But what is the purpose of higher education? Bess and Dee (2008) stated the various roles that colleges and universities have and how it has evolved and grown over time. Research universities connect with the industrial sector, land-grant institutions have significant responsibilities to serve the public in which they reside, and community colleges serve as a place for workforce training and developing education (Bess & Dee, 2008). Sullivan stated that liberal arts institutions mission is to “bring the humane and civic arts to bear upon the problems and concerns of the present (Sullivan, 2000, p. 20). Some argue that the primary purpose of colleges and universities is the development of citizens (Ehrlich, 2000; Sax, 2000).

Institutions are able to communicate through documents such as mission statements; however, there is often an inconsistency of mission and action. Moreover, in higher education it is extremely difficult to evaluate the quality of its "product" (Thelin, 2004, p. 361). How are outcomes measured? Who is evaluating? Oftentimes colleges and universities measure themselves on graduation rates based on a four or six year time frame or on how many of their graduates are employed after graduation. Other means to measure outcomes include how much debt students owe once they graduate or what is the average income of their graduates.

There is significant research about civic learning and democratic engagement as it relates to student development and the college student experience, but more needs to be known about university commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement. Accordingly, “Campuses that have developed successful civic engagement efforts are

ones where this work is inextricably linked to the core mission of the institution” (Sponsler & Hartley, 2013, p 5). How is the inextricable link demonstrated at a particular university?

Purpose of the Project

In July 2012 George Mason University (Mason) welcomed its sixth president, Dr. Angél Cabrera. Shortly after Dr. Cabrera’s arrival, Mason updated the university’s primary documents. Under Dr. Cabrera’s leadership the Mason IDEA was created. IDEA is an acronym that stands for Innovative, Diverse, Entrepreneurial, and Accessible; according to the university website, these are the four core characteristics of the university (Mason Idea, n.d). Following the creation of the Mason IDEA, the university’s vision statement was updated. On March 21, 2013, President Cabrera announced to the university that the Board of Visitors (BOV) approved the vision and the next step was to develop a strategic plan to guide the university through the next decade (Mason Vision, n.d.). On December 11, 2013, the new strategic plan was presented to the BOV and was unanimously approved. The ten-year strategic plan was published in a booklet and included the Mason Vision, the Mason IDEA, the university’s values and commitments and a twelve point strategic plan for 2014-2024.

The planning process for the Mason Vision and Strategic Plan seemed to be intentional and inclusive. Multiple working groups were created to help construct the new vision for the university, including Funding and Resources; Global Strategy; Mission, Values, and the Mason Graduate; Online Education and Executive Education; Program Innovation and Growth; Regional Strategy; Research; and Student Value and

Affordability (Mason, Vision, n.d.). According to the Mason Vision website, the working groups met throughout the semester of Fall 2012. These groups gathered information from a wide variety of sources including “external and internal reports and input from more than 3,000 members of the Mason community (Mason, Vision, n.d.).

Similar working groups were also established for the strategic planning process. The committees were as follows: the Strategic Planning Committee, Faculty Representatives from Colleges and Schools, Global, Distance Education, Diversity, Innovative Learning, Student Success, Research, and Wellbeing (Mason Strategic Plan, n.d.). In addition to the collaborative working groups, the university held town halls to get input from the university community.

The strategic planning committee produced a 12-point plan for the future of the university. Within those 12 points were goals for the students, for the community, for the faculty and staff, and for the world.



Figure 1.1: 12 Point Strategic Plan

The goals related to the students were “innovative learning,” “accessible pathways,” and “return on investment.” The goals related to the community were “100,000 career-ready graduates,” innovation engine,” and community builder” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 10). The goals related to the faculty and staff are “well-being,” “diverse academic community,” and “support teaching and scholarship excellence” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 10). The goals for the world are “elevate research,” “research of consequence,” and “global learning platform” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 10).

These documents communicate to the public what the university represents and they serve as a guide for those inside and outside of the institution. The documents

communicate what the institution values and discloses how the university views its role in the lives of its students, faculty, and staff. For example, the vision of the university outlines the university's values, defines what a Mason graduate is, and identifies the goals to which the university is committed (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013.).

This study seeks to offer insight about how civic learning and democratic engagement is linked by discussion in George Mason University's guiding documents. How is it discussed? Where is it as an institutional priority? To what extent are civic learning initiatives institutionalized? To what extent do campus initiatives reflect the institutions commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement? This study will also compare the consistency of language in the university's guiding documents with selected initiatives that demonstrate aspects of civic learning and democratic engagement.

The initiatives chosen for the study are the following: Leadership and Community Engagement Living Learning Community (LLC); The Freedom and Learning Forum, hosted by the LEAD Office; Student Government; the 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration, hosted by the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education (ODIME); the Global Politics Fellows Program; and the Social Justice concentration in the Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Studies, in New Century College. These initiatives were selected because I wanted a variety of initiatives they met the criteria

By conducting a content analysis on Mason's guiding documents, including the university's mission statement, the Mason IDEA, the vision statement, and the strategic plan, I can better understand how civic learning and democratic engagement are

discussed. For this study, I am assuming these documents are valid guiding documents for the institution and not rhetorical in nature. Furthermore, I will research how these concepts are discussed to determine if they are institutional priorities. I will then explore the consistency of language across documents; comparing and contrasting Mason's guiding documents and the selected campus initiatives, to determine to what degree the university values and fosters civic learning and democratic engagement in selected campus initiatives, and explore how that reflects the institutions commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement.

CHAPTER TWO

As previously stated, much of the literature on civic learning and democratic engagement is about how students develop from their college student experience, but more needs to be known about university commitment to civic learning. Civic learning and democratic engagement is not a new topic in higher education. In fact, Colonial Colleges, some of the earliest institutions in the United States, were founded to ensure there would be future generations of civic and religious leaders (Sponsler & Hartley, 2013).

In recent years, higher education has faced increased scrutiny over its purpose and value. Outsiders question the value of higher education especially as the price tag continues to increase. Currently, higher education is being challenged by the public about its rising costs and asked constantly to defend its value. Sponsler and Hartley (2013) indicated a significant change in the role of higher education as it has shifted from a public good to a private good over the course of a few decades. Furthermore, today's young adults could be the most politically disengaged in American history causing them to be more likely to deemphasize the importance of citizenship (Checkoway, 2001; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, Rosner, & Stephens, 2000; Sponsler & Hartley, 2013). Colby et al. (2000) argued

In addition to political disengagement, contemporary critics have also decried a closely related phenomenon—the excessive individualism of contemporary American culture and its negative implications for our society. The consequences of this cultural climate include a growing sense that Americans are not responsible for or accountable to each other; a decline in civility, mutual respect, and tolerance; and the preeminence of self-interest and individual preference over concern for the common good. Goals of personal advancement and gratification dominate our culture, frequently at the expense of broader social, moral, or spiritual meaning. (2000 p. xxii)

Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, and Corngold (2007) argued that the role of higher education is critical as it prepares responsible, creative citizens that help to ensure the strength and evolution of our culture and democratic system. Additionally, Checkoway argued,

Communities in a democratic society require citizens who have ethical standards, social responsibility, and civic competencies. Communities in a diverse democratic society require citizens who understand their own social identities, communicate with those who are different from themselves, and build bridges across differences for a common cause. (2001, p. 129)

This literature review will explore civic engagement and institutions' responsibility to educate students about civic engagement. It will explore the varying ways that civic engagement is defined and practiced, including service-learning and democratic engagement. It will also evaluate the need for universities' primary

documents such as mission statements and strategic plans to articulate a commitment to civic engagement.

Civic Engagement

Civic learning has roots in the American education system. Although there are a variety of definitions for civic engagement, Ehrlich (2000) defined civic engagement and his definition is one that is widely accepted and used throughout the literature.

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make the difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi)

As revealed in the above definition, civic engagement is complex and there are multiple ways one can be civically engaged. Gorgol (2012) argued that the ambiguity around the meaning of the term affects the study and the practice of civic engagement. Jacoby (2009) stated that civic engagement means being involved in one or more of the following:

- Learning from others, self, and environment to develop informed perspectives on social issues
- Valuing diversity and building bridges across difference
- Behaving, and working through controversy, with civility
- Taking an active role in the political process

- Participating actively in public life, public problem solving, and community service
- Assuming leadership and membership roles in organizations
- Developing empathy, ethics, values, and sense of social responsibility, and
- Promoting social justice locally and globally (Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership, 2005, as cited in Jacoby, 2009, p. 9)

During the early years of American education, knowledge, morality, and civic action were interconnected and higher education was a means of promoting them as “mutually reinforcing aspects of preparation for life,” (Colby et al., 2003, p. 26). Finley (2011) stated, “true civic engagement goes beyond apolitical involvement in community (i.e. service-learning, volunteerism, community-based learning) and intentionally fosters forms of democratic skill building” (p. 4). She argued that when civic engagement is detached from politics and the civic process the focus becomes on the individual and not on the individuals impact on the bigger picture (Finley, 2011). Hence, what is the importance of political engagement?

Political Engagement

Colby et al. (2007) highlighted one aspect of civic learning and democratic engagement called political engagement. Political engagement omits the service component and focuses on the democratic process and the civic responsibility of individuals. Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, and Delli Carpini (2006) suggested, “The U.S. system combines elements of both civic and political participation. But the ‘proper’ balance is a delicate and changeable one—and dependent on one’s own values” (p. 52).

Colby et al. (2007) argued that with millions of students enrolled in higher education, political development is a lost opportunity because little is known about how much undergraduate students learn about politics. More than fifteen million Americans are enrolled in college, putting higher education institutions in a unique place to promote democratic competencies and participation (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007). Colby et al. (2007) stated that political engagement is overlooked for a variety of reasons but overall faculty do not want to be accused of political bias. Being an engaged citizen is more than being politically engaged. The authors of *A Crucible Moment* (2012) worked to start a national dialog around what it means to be an engaged citizen and how institutions of higher education need to make this an institutional priority.

Zukin et al. (2006) stated that voting is the most important aspect in the domain of political engagement. But also included in this purview are activities such as working for a candidate or party, convincing others to vote, or working to affect the making or implementation of public policies by officials as being a part of political engagement.

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) has data that shows that voter participation among young people has decreased in recent years; however Zukin et al. (2006) argued that youth might be participating differently. And while voter participation might be down, volunteering has actually increased (Gorgol, 2012).

Zukin et al. (2006) argued that although political and civic participation are different, the distinction is often unclear,

While civic engagement occurs largely outside the domains of elected officials

and government action, it can have important consequences for matters with which the government is also concerned (for example, public safety, homelessness, education, even national security). And since civic engagement often pertains to public matters and not solely to private questions, government may not be directly involved but may serve arbiter, facilitator, supporter, or enforcer of decisions and activities in the civic realm. (p. 52)

Another aspect of civic engagement is service-learning, this is discussed in the next section.

Service Learning

Often times the terms service-learning and civic engagement are used interchangeably. To confound matters more, in 1990 there were 147 different definitions of service-learning in the literature (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Jacoby (2009) described the challenges of defining civic engagement and described it as “a complex and polyonymous concept” (p. 6). In other words, the term has many meanings. Jacoby stated that many colleges and universities have changed the name of their community service or service-learning departments to “civic engagement” but have not changed the work that is actually done in these departments. This further complicates the understanding of civic engagement learning for the public and students alike.

The definitions for service-learning have varying degrees of emphasis placed on the service component, the learning component, or both. Service-learning differs from civic engagement because it lacks an emphasis on engagement in democracy (Finley, 2011). Service-learning is a combination of service and learning combined with

reflection on the service experience (Eyler & Giles, 1999; O'Connor, 2006). This differs from the traditional learning model in higher education of read, memorize and repeat (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Jacoby (1996) defined service-learning as “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning” (p. 5). Service-learning is experiential education that can be curricular or co-curricular. It often addresses human or community needs that can be focused on local neighborhoods or used more broadly to include the global community. Critical self-reflection of the experience is a primary component of service learning (Jacoby, 1996). Kezar and Rhoads argued that “linking student learning and faculty teaching to community concerns through activities such as services learning enables institutions to address larger community, state and regional needs and challenges students to give serious consideration to their roles as community members and as citizens in a democratic society” (2001, p. 153).

One practitioner of service-learning examined what she identified as the “underside of service-learning.” In her article, Jones (2002) acknowledged that not all students benefit from service-learning experiences because they are not emotionally ready for such an experience. She also acknowledged that service-learning programs might not be best suited for all students because there is a population of students who simply do not understand the concept. She disclosed that it is not only the students’ inability to understand but also the practitioner’s responsibility to recognize when a

student is not developmentally prepared; a challenge for faculty and institutions alike (Jones, 2002).

Incorporating service into the curriculum or service-learning became popular throughout the 1990s as a way to promote civic engagement at colleges and universities (Hartley & Hollander, 2005). Eyler and Giles (1999) attributed the surge in popularity to the modernized understanding of the way people learn best and to the changing need to make higher education more effective. Hartley and Hollander (2005) stated that service-learning promoted thoughtful understanding of complicated societal issues and met other instructional objectives by combining theory and practice in the context of active learning. Service-learning also provided a sustainable way of incorporating service into the curriculum, ensuring civic efforts “did not become marginalized by the academy” (Hartley & Hollander, 2005, p. 259). Bringle and Hatcher (2000) described service-learning as a “smart” choice for colleges and universities because of the increase in achievement in core educational outcomes.

Astin and Sax (1998) found that participation in service during the undergraduate years enhanced student’s academic development, civic responsibility, and life skills. They also found that the most important influencing factor in who participates in service was whether or not the student volunteered during high school (Astin & Sax, 1998). In their study, Astin and Sax found that “less than one third of students (29%) performed their work as part of a class or course (i.e. service-learning), fully 70% performed service as apart of some other collegiate-sponsored activity (probably under the auspices of

student affairs)” (p. 254). Therefore, service and engagement are occurring in other places outside of the classroom, a concept known as co-curricular learning.

Boyer discussed the importance of service and urged institutions to make service a mandatory part of every students’ college experience,

Today’s undergraduates urgently need to see the relationship between what they learn and how they live. Specifically, we recommend that every student complete a service project- involving volunteer work in the community or at the college as an integral part of his or her undergraduate experience. The goal is to help students see that they are not only autonomous individuals but also members of a larger community to which they are accountable. (Boyer, 1987, p. 218).

While it seems that service has become an integral part of student’s higher education experience, their participation in the democratic process is down. What are the consequences of having a disengaged youth in a democratic society? The authors of *A Crucible Moment* addressed this very issue.

A Crucible Moment

The authors of *A Crucible Moment* aimed to start a national conversation about how institutions of higher education should refocus the “mission to educate students for informed, engaged citizenship-an essential quality for all graduates” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. v). The document challenged institutions of higher education to “renew this nation’s social, intellectual, and civic capital” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 2).

A Crucible Moment defined what a civic-minded campus looks like using four key terms: civic ethos, civic literacy, civic inquiry and civic action. As defined in *A Crucible Moment* (2012), civic ethos is the way in which democratic values influence campus life, including practices, structures and interactions. Civic ethos is the “defining character of the institution and those in it that emphasizes open-mindedness, civility, the worth of each person, ethical behaviors, and concern for the well-being of others” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 15). Civic ethos also influences how the institution interacts and engages with outside communities, both local and global.

A Crucible Moment stated that civic literacy should be a goal for every student. For every student to be literate in civics they must learn the foundations of democracy including the principles and debates about it. Students must know the “historical struggles, campaigns, and social movements” that happened to achieve democracy (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p.15). Students must also know how to think critically and understand implications of issues to society and the world.

Civic inquiry is the practice of exploring the impact of choice. It is the concern over and in consideration of differing views. *A Crucible Moment* further defined civic inquiry as “the ability to describe and analyze civic intellectual debates within one’s major or areas of study” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 15). Lastly, a civic-minded campus makes civic action a lifelong practice. *A Crucible Moment* defined this term as a commitment to participate with

diverse people and “the practice of working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people’s lives and the sustainability of the planet” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 15).

To what extent do the mission statement and strategic documents at Mason describe an emphasis for a civic minded campus? To what extent do they include evidence of civic ethos, civic literacy, civic inquiry and civic action?

Mission Statements

Mission statements are common in higher education. They are required by accreditation agencies (Morphew & Hartley, 2006) and are often used as the foundation for building other documents including the university’s strategic plan or vision (Conway, Mackay, & Yorke, 1994; Davis, Ruhe, Lee, & Rajadhyaksha, 2007; Morphew & Hartley, 2006; Sponsler & Hartley, 2013; Velcoff & Ferrari, 2006). A university mission is a broad statement that describes the purpose of the institution (Kuh et al., 2005). Missions describe the current purpose of the university but can also be aspirational (Kuh et al., 2005).

Mission statements serve a variety of roles and communicate the university’s purpose to many different people. Velcoff and Ferrari (2005) stated that effective mission statements communicate organizational interests to employees, helping them be successful in the organization. Mission statements also offer a shared sense of purpose to all stakeholders (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). Potential students can access mission statements as a way to learn more about the university.

While mission statements are generally seen in a positive light and are something for the university to aspire to, others see them as generalized rhetoric without much meaning. Scholars and practitioners look at mission statements as “a collection of stock phrases that are either excessively vague or unrealistically aspirational or both” (Morphew & Hartley, 2006, p. 457). Critics also argue that mission statements provide no means to an end and establish the importance of being vague (Morphew & Hartley, 2006).

Since the inception of higher education, institutional mission statements have included educating for morality and good citizenship in addition to educating to increase intellectual development (Kezar, 2002). It is also an easily accessible document and sends a powerful message about an institution. Kezar and Kinzie (2006) stated “the mission of the institution is one of the most powerful articulations of the culture and usually relates to values and meaning for a campus and provides guidance for people to act” (p. 152). Creating an institutional mission is a critical process for an institution.

However, Sullivan argued that higher education has lost its sense of mission. Most discussions of mission reform are at the administrative or financial level and little discussion is around content or purpose of the mission (Sullivan, 2000). Sullivan argued that it is, “neglect of the question of purpose that has robbed the academy of collective self-confidence at just the moment it most needs to defend itself in increasingly bitter arguments about educational policy and finance” (Sullivan, 2000, p. 21). Determining how to accomplish a mission often occurs through a strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning has become commonplace in higher education. Rowley and Sherman (2001) discussed the wide variety of reasons institutions decide to enter the strategic planning process. They argued that sometimes the governing board of the university requires strategic planning especially if the campus is performing poorly in some area. They also noted that campus leaders would advocate for a new strategic plan especially if the university is deemed to be out of touch with contemporary practices. Furthermore, sometimes institutions engage in strategic planning simply so they can keep up with their peers (Rowley & Sherman, 2001).

Regardless of why institutions participate in strategic planning it is important that the plan is realistic and adds value to the institution. Mason recently completed its strategic planning process and the plan received approval from its Board of Visitors. This project aims to determine to what degree civic learning and democratic engagement are part of that plan. To make that determination, I will utilize a case study methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

The methodology I chose for this research is a case study. A case study focuses on a bounded system. Merriam (2009) defined a bounded system as “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 40). My intent was to ground my study within the bounded system of Mason. Also, this type of qualitative analysis was chosen because it provides a means for insight and discovery instead of hypothesis testing (Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2013) defined case study research as a “qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system” (p. 97). This study is open to discovering new insight into the contemporary phenomenon of enacting a strategic plan. Creswell stated that case studies vary by size and intent. Case studies can examine “one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire program, or an activity” (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). There are also three variations on intent; these are intrinsic case studies, collective case studies, and instrumental case studies (Creswell, 2013). My case study is an intrinsic case study because it is one that holds fundamental or unusual interest (Creswell, 2013).

To evaluate and understand civic learning and democratic engagement at Mason, I first conducted a content analysis on the guiding documents of the university. These documents included the university’s mission statement, the Mason IDEA, the vision statement, the strategic plan, webpages, course catalog and other documents. I then

coded additional documents from the six selected campus initiatives that indicated they practice civic learning and democratic engagement to compare them with the institution's guiding documents. Finally, a comparison of the two sets of documents was done to evaluate the consistency of language between the university and the campus initiatives.

Krippendorff (2013) stated that “texts mean something to someone, it is produced by someone to have meanings for someone else, and these meanings therefore must not be ignored and must not violate why the text exists in the first place” (p. 25). This statement is a crucial factor as to why this methodology is applicable and important to this study. This methodology examines the documents of the institution collectively to determine the meaning within each document.

Purposeful sampling was used for this case study research because according to Creswell, “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (2013, p. 156). The documents were intentionally chosen for this study. The *2014-2024 Strategic Plan* was newly released and I wanted to understand how the university viewed and discussed civic learning and democratic engagement at the university. Furthermore, the campus initiatives were specifically selected based on what I already knew about the initiatives, recommendations from colleagues within the university, and if there were documents available to include in my research. I purposefully selected three initiatives that had an academic component and three initiatives within University Life. The criteria that was set for selecting the six initiatives is as follows: documents must be available via the university website; address or

incorporate service, civic learning, or democratic engagement; and must be a part of an academic unit, University Life, or co-curricular program, sponsored by the institution.

According to Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) documents can confirm data and expose new perspectives. The object of this study is to expose the relationship between the university's guiding documents and existing initiatives on campus.

Site Selection

For this study I chose George Mason University, a four-year, public institution in Fairfax, Virginia, which is located in the greater Washington, DC metropolitan area. Fairfax, Virginia is a suburb of Washington, DC and has a high socioeconomic status. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning classifies George Mason University as a high research university (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.). It is clear to me and indicated in the new strategic plan that the university strives to be classified as a "very high research university" (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 24). In addition to the campus in Fairfax, the university has three other regional campuses: Arlington, Prince William, and Loudoun. In an effort increase its international education, Mason opened an international campus in Songdo, South Korea. The university is relatively young compared to others in the region. In 1972, at the recommendation of the Board of Visitors, it separated from its parent institution, the University of Virginia (UVA) and became an independent member of the commonwealth's system of colleges and universities (Mason History, n.d.).

The university serves approximately 33,000 students, including undergraduate and graduate students (Mason, Office of Institutional Research & Reporting, 2013). The

university has a diverse undergraduate population and is a reflection of the area in which it serves, the National Capital Region. In addition to its diversity, Mason is credited for another unique trait. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) there are no disparities among racial groups and graduation rates (NCES, n.d.). Whereas according to a 2010 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, nationally “On average, 60 percent of white students who start college have earned bachelor's degrees six years later. But only 49 percent of Hispanic students and 40 percent of black students do” (Gonzalez, 2010, p. 1).

Data Collection

As stated above, to examine and evaluate the documents from Mason, a content analysis was conducted. Krippendorff described content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their uses” (p. 24). According to Krippendorff, this research technique is a scientific tool that can create vision and enhance the researchers understanding of phenomena. Content analysis on Mason’s primary documents was conducted to gain insight and to evaluate the university’s commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement of its students. A second content analysis was conducted on the six selected campus initiatives to answer the questions: Where is civic learning and democratic engagement a priority? And to what extent are civic learning initiatives institutionalized?

For the purpose of this study, I conducted content analysis on two sets of documents. The two sets are identified as the university guiding documents and the selected campus initiatives. The analyses were done independent from one another and

then a comparison of the two sets of documents was completed later in the analysis process. I used Merriam's (2009) concept of category construction to code and analyze the documents. To begin data collection, I used the process of open coding. I reviewed the university's latest publication of the *2014-2024 Strategic Plan*; this includes the university's mission statement, the Mason IDEA, the vision statement, and the strategic plan. The documents were coded by making notations of data that is relevant to the study (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam, in the beginning the notations can be as expansive as possible, identifying any segment that might be useful; the notations can be any data that the researcher finds relevant to the study. Additionally, the notations can be a repeat of the words from the text, your own words, or a concept from the literature (Merriam, 2009). During the open coding, I used all three techniques for my notations.

The second content analysis was conducted on the selected campus initiatives. The initiatives chosen for the study are the following: Leadership and Community Engagement Living Learning Community (<http://sail.gmu.edu/program/living-learning-community>); The Freedom and Learning Forum, hosted by the LEAD Office (<http://lead.gmu.edu/leadership-programs/freedom-and-learning-forum/>); Student Government (<http://sg.gmu.edu>); the 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration, hosted by ODIME (<http://odime.gmu.edu/programming/mlk-commemoration/>); the Global Politics Fellows Program (<http://globalaffairs.gmu.edu/undergraduate/global-politics-fellows>); and the Social Justice concentration in the Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Studies, in New Century College (<http://ncc.gmu.edu/programs/LA-BA-INTS-SOCJ>). For a complete list of documents used in the content analysis see Table 3.1.

For the purposes of this study, I utilized comprehensive definition of civic learning and democratic engagement when I was coding the documents. I looked for words and phrases related to civic engagement, political engagement, and service learning. I also used the conceptual framework of the document *A Crucible Moment*, while I was coding the documents.

Table 3.1: List of Documents

University Guiding Documents
<p>2014-2024 Strategic Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mason Vision ▪ Our Values ▪ The Mason Graduate ▪ Commitments ▪ The Mason IDEA ▪ 12 Point Strategic Plan
Documents from the Selected Campus Initiatives
<p>Leadership and Community Engagement Living Learning Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and Community Engagement webpage • NCLC 295: Leadership and Community Engagement, Spring 2013, syllabus
<p>The Freedom and Learning Forum, LEAD Office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom and Learning Forum webpage • The LEAD Office webpages, including mission statement and commitments
<p>2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration, Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Multicultural Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Welcome page • MLK Video Project Submission Guidelines • Spirit of King Awards, webpage and submission criteria • MLK Day of Service webpage • Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Multicultural Education webpage, vision and mission statement
<p>Global Politics Fellows Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Politics Fellows webpage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course requirements • Application information • Program features • Internship requirements • Sample internship sites

- GLOA 495: Global Experiential Learning, course catalog information
- GOVT 434-001: Democracy- Global Perspective, Spring 2013, syllabus
- GOVT 445-001: Human Rights, Spring 2014, syllabus

Social Justice Concentration, BA Integrative Studies, New Century College

- Social Justice Concentration in the BA in Integrative Studies webpage
- Degree requirements (Catalog Year 2013-2014)
- NCLC 304: Social Movements and Community Activism, Fall 2011, course catalog information
- NCLC 304: Social Movements and Community Activism, Fall 2011, syllabus
- NCLC 305-001: Conflict Resolution and Transformation, Spring 2014, course catalog information
- NCLC 305: Conflict Resolution and Transformation, Spring 2014, syllabus
- NCLC 320: The Social Construction of Difference: Building Democratic Relations in a Diverse World, Fall 2011, course catalog information
- NCLC 320: The Social Construction of Difference: Building Democratic Relations in a Diverse World, Spring 2011, syllabus
- NCLC 334-002: Environmental Justice, Spring 2014, course catalog information
- NCLC 334-002: Environmental Justice, Spring 2014, syllabus
- NCLC 336-001: Poverty, Wealth, and Inequality in the U.S., Spring 2014, course catalog information
- NCLC 336-001: Poverty, Wealth, and Inequality in the U.S., Spring 2014, syllabus
- NCLC 337-002: Social Justice Consciousness and Personal Transformation, course catalog information
- NCLC 337-002: Social Justice Consciousness and Personal Transformation, syllabus
- CRIM 308-001: Human Rights and Justice, Fall 2011, syllabus
- GOVT 445-001: Human Rights, Spring 2014, syllabus
- SOCI 320: Socialist and Capitalist Globalizations, Fall 2013, course catalog information
- SOCI 320: Socialist and Capitalist Globalizations, Fall 2010, syllabus
- FRLN 385-001: Multilingualism, Identity/Power, Spring 2011, course catalog information

After all the documents were coded, I reviewed the pieces of data and began to put like concepts into categories (Merriam, 2009). Merriam described categories as "conceptual elements that cover or span many individual examples of the category" (2009, p. 181). Codes can be grouped based on "interpretation and reflection on

meaning”; this type of coding is known as analytical coding (Merriam, 2009, p.180). It is likely to have many categories and some may end up being used as subcategories. I repeated the above steps for my second set of documents related to the selected campus initiatives. The categories I identified in each set of documents are values, behaviors, experiences, and outcomes.

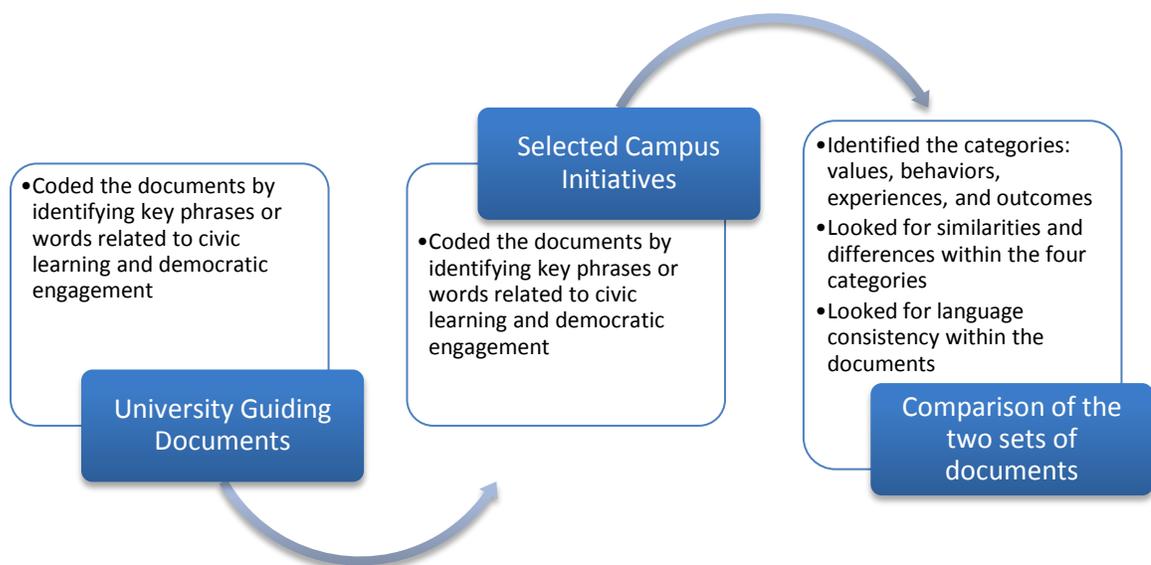


Figure 3.1: Data Collection and Analysis Process

Data Analysis

Once the two sets of documents were coded and their content organized into categories, I created a network of the conceptual elements (Merriam, 2009). Merriam suggested visualizing how the categories work together in a meaningful way. Hence, the data was organized topically to create a database of the research categories. These

categories were then examined using the conceptual perspective of the document *A Crucible Moment* to determine to what degree Mason is a civic-minded campus. This perspective aids in evaluating the research question of to what extent the university values civic learning and democratic engagement.

Once I identified the four categories, I organized my data within the four categories. I did this for each set of documents. After the data was placed in the corresponding categories, I determined what similarities and differences appeared in the data within the two sets of documents. This comparison between the data present in the university guiding documents and the selected campus initiatives helped identify in what ways civic learning and democratic engagement are discussed. I identified the similarities and differences in those discussions. A tertiary analysis was done to determine the consistency of language in the university guiding documents and program initiatives by comparing the two sets of documents. In addition to evaluating the consistency of language in the university guiding documents and the documents of civic learning and democratic engagement initiatives, I evaluated the institutionalization efforts of the university by using criteria set forth in *A Crucible Moment*.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research is the document *A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy's Future*. Ellinger and Yang (2011) stated that using theory adds value to the research by creating a meaningful foundation. They described theory as “a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a rational view of phenomena by explaining or predicting relationships among those

elements” (Ellinger & Yang, 2011, p. 118). *A Crucible Moment* provides a foundation for this research because it is current and relevant to the discussion about civic learning and democratic engagement.

The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement was invited to “complement our society’s commitment to increased college-going and completion with an equally strong and multi-front effort to ensure that postsecondary study contributes significantly to college students’ preparation as informed, engaged, and globally knowledgeable citizens” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. vii)

The document analysis used the elements identified in *A Crucible Moment*: civic ethos, civic literacy, civic inquiry and civic action, as guides when coding the documents from Mason. These terms were used as indicators as to how civic-minded the university is.

Trustworthiness and Limitations

To ensure this study is trustworthy, peer reviews were conducted. Alterations made in the findings based on the peer review including changes to the placement of data in categories. Once brought to my attention, I agreed this better reflected the data.

This study is limited because it is focused on one institution during a specific moment in time. This study was conducted under time constraints related to completion of the semester. Furthermore, different results might have been found if the strategic plan had been in place longer. The strategic plan was released in December 2013 and I began collecting data for this study in January 2014. I purposefully selected specific initiatives

based on criteria listed in the methodology; choosing different initiatives might yield different results. There were initiatives that were considered for this research but did not meet the criteria. For example, I looked into using an initiative from Mason's study aboard programs in the Center for Global Education; however, there was not sufficient documentation available to conduct the analysis.

I selected Student Government as one of my campus initiatives, because it fit the criteria listed in the methodology section. Additionally, I thought it would be an appropriate initiative to demonstrate the democratic engagement aspect of civic engagement; however the documents proved to prescriptive in nature in regards to procedures and did not describe the values of Student Government or how those values are accomplished. Additionally, specific initiatives were not discussed in the documents that were available. Therefore, five initiatives will be discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

The purpose of this study was to explore how Mason addresses civic learning and democratic engagement in its guiding documents and then further explore to what extent civic learning and democratic engagement is institutionalized in selected campus initiatives. A case study methodology was used to understand the university guiding documents and documents from five selected campus initiatives at George Mason University. Mason was selected because under new leadership, the university revised its mission statement, vision statement, and completed a new 10-year strategic plan. To better understand the above statement I used the following questions for this study: How is civic learning and democratic engagement discussed in university documents? Where is it an institutional priority? To what extent are civic learning initiatives institutionalized? To what extent do campus initiatives reflect the institutions commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement?

As I reviewed the data from the guiding documents, four categories emerged from the documents I coded. The four categories are values, behavior, experiences, and outcomes. These four categories were also present in the documents from the selected campus initiatives. The findings are presented below using each of the four categories as a section. First, I present the data from the university guiding documents and then the selected campus initiatives. Then I present a final section comparing the two sets of data

showing the similarities in the two sets of documents using the four categories. These four categories contribute to civic learning and democratic engagement at Mason.

Table 4.1: Categories Present in Documents

Category	Definition	Examples
Values	Core ideals that the university or initiative believes in and is part of its foundation	<p>University Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible • Citizenship • Democracy • Diversity • Global • Well-being <p>Campus Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy • Diversity • Equity • Social Justice
Behavior	An expectation of action that the university or initiative has set for its students, but can also be an expectation for the students to have for the university	<p>University Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activism • Community Builder • Entrepreneurial • Inclusive • Innovative • Integrity • Open-minded <p>Campus Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activism • Inclusive • Integrity • Involved with local community • Open-minded • Reflective • Supportive
Experiences	Examples of the types of first-hand knowledge and participation students would have at Mason	<p>University Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-curricular • Collaborative

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential • Global <p>Campus Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-curricular • Collaborative • Experiential • Global • Inclusive Learning Environment • Living Learning Community • Public Service • Service
Outcomes	Learning or development that students would achieve by being a part of the university community or participating in the selected campus initiative	<p>University Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activists • Citizens • Career Readiness • Cultural Awareness • Global Understanding • Lifelong learning • Problem Solver • Well-rounded scholar <p>Campus Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activists • Citizens • Career Readiness • Cultural Awareness • Ethical Leadership • Global Understanding • Socially Conscious Leaders • Student Development

Categories Present in the Documents

Values, behaviors, experiences, and outcomes were identified as the four categories that emerged in the content analysis. The data was placed in one of the four

categories based on the definition of the word and how it was used contextually in the document. Some of the data could fit into more than one category so I had to determine where it fit best for this study. For the purpose of this study values is an identifier for the core ideals that the university or initiative believes in and is part of its foundation. While these may not be the only values present, they contribute to civic learning and democratic engagement at Mason. The category behavior represents ways of acting. This category is an expectation that the university or initiative has set for its students, but also seems to be an expectation for the students to have for the university. The third category is experiences. Throughout the documents there were literal examples of the types of experiences students would have at Mason. The fourth term is outcomes. The university guiding documents and the documents from the six campus initiatives each laid out specific outcomes that the students would achieve. The results of the content analysis show four categories that contribute to civic learning and democratic engagement being present at Mason.

These four categories are interrelated and the relationship of the categories can influence the other categories. The values present often are described by behaviors that are expected. For example, the value accessible is described as “an open and welcoming community” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 4). Open and welcoming are terms that appear in the later category, behaviors. Behaviors allow for certain experiences that can ultimately lead to the desired outcome. The relationships between the categories will be explicitly explained in the subsequent pages.

Values

The values that were present in the university guiding documents are accessible, citizenship, democracy, diversity, global, and well-being. The value accessible was present throughout the 2014-2024 Strategic Plan booklet. It is one of the four core characteristics from the Mason Idea. In the Mason Idea accessible is described as “an open and welcoming community” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 4). The value of citizenship appeared as the first descriptor of the Mason Graduate, indicating that producing an “engaged citizen” is a priority of the university (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 6). The value also appears in the commitments section stating “We will prepare our students to thrive in the global context by infusing global awareness, citizenship values...” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 7). The value global was dominant throughout the 2014-2024 Strategic Plan. The twelfth goal of the strategic plan is to become a “global learning platform,” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 26). Throughout the text of this particular goal were terms like “global mindset,” “fosters global learning,” and “global presence” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 26). However, a more ambitious goal has been set for the university, “This is why our vision and strategic plan insist on defining our goal as striving to be the best university *for* the world” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 9). Mason also strives to become a “model well-being university” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 20). Well-being is the final value present in the guiding documents. Based on the strategic plan, it is evident that the university wants to ensure that those who are a part of their community are appropriately compensated, in terms of monetary rewards and benefits. The values of democracy and diversity will be discussed later in this chapter.

The values that appeared in the six campus initiatives are democracy, diversity, equity, and social justice. Equity and social justice had a strong presence in the 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration, hosted by ODIME and social justice was understandably present in the Social Justice concentration in the Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Studies, in New Century College. For example, for the 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration, two awards known as the “Spirit of the King” are given out each year, one to a student and one to a member from the faculty or staff (Mason MLK DAY, 2014, ¶1). The criteria for each award is slightly different, however the criteria for the faculty or staff member is someone “who has made an exceptional contribution to the development of an inclusive learning environment through his/her programming, advising, student leadership development or other work that involves advocacy and social justice” (Mason MLK DAY, 2014, ¶4). Additionally, it was present in the criteria for the *Martin Luther King Day: The Meaning of the Dream Video Contest* (Mason MLK Day Video Project, 2014). An award that was established to help students “gain a better understanding of social justice and civic engagement, increase opportunities for co-curricular and experiential learning, and promote a sense of belonging and community at Mason” (Mason MLK Day Video Project, 2014, ¶1). The value of equity was also present in the Leadership and Community Engagement LLC. For example, one of the course competencies is to “understand how actions are shaped by multiple forces, including values, and economic and social inequity” (Mathison, 2013, p. 1). The values of democracy and diversity will be discussed later in this chapter.

Behaviors

The behaviors that were present in the university guiding documents are activism, community builder, entrepreneurial, inclusive, innovative, integrity, and open-minded. Throughout the guiding documents these behaviors were present, informing students about how they were expected to behave and ways they could expect to be treated by others and by the university. The sixth goal outlined in the strategic plan is titled “community builder” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 18). This is an example of an expectation that the university is setting for itself, and thus everyone who is a part of the community. The strategic plan states the university will “contribute to the cultural vitality of our community through regional partnerships and commitments to the arts, athletics, and community engagement” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 18). This is an expectation of how the university will interact with the community; therefore it is a way for those associated with the university are expected to behave.

Entrepreneurial is a key concept that is a part of the Mason identity and it is one of the core characteristics of the Mason IDEA. It is stated in the strategic plan that “in order to achieve these goals we will need to be even more entrepreneurial in how we generate new resources...” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 9). A concept closely related to entrepreneurial is innovative. It is another behavior that was present throughout the university guiding documents; additionally, it is also one of the core characteristics of the Mason IDEA. The fifth goal of the strategic plan is to become an “innovation engine” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 17). The strategic plan calls for everyone at the university to be entrepreneurial through innovation,

Our work in driving innovation and entrepreneurship in our region must be

grounded on a strong entrepreneurial culture among our faculty and students.

Our goal to develop robust programs support student entrepreneurs and to develop inventor-friendly systems to attract and support faculty entrepreneurs. (2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 17).

The above statement is a bold position to take. Challenging an organization to change its culture hits the very core of the institution. Bolman and Deal (2003) stated, “culture is the glue that holds an organization together and unites people around shared values and beliefs” (p. 243). If the notion of an “entrepreneurial culture” is not a shared value, then this statement could divide people in the university instead of unite them (2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 17). The behaviors activism, inclusive, integrity, and open-minded will be discussed later in this chapter.

The behaviors that were present in the campus initiatives were much more specific and they include activism, integrity, inclusive, involved with local community, open-minded, reflection, and supportive. Additionally, the behavior of engaged was identified in a variety of ways including actively engaged, civically engaged, community engagement, engages with diverse points of view, and meaningfully engaged. The term activism also was used in a variety of ways, including advocacy and political activism. There are a number of behaviors present in the campus initiative documents, which indicates they are behaviorally focused.

The Leadership and Community Engagement LLC seeks to find students who like to be “involved with the local community” (Mason LLC, n.d., ¶3). On the organizations website it explicitly says, “do you enjoy getting involved in the local community to make

a positive difference” (Mason LLC, n.d., ¶3). While it is not obviously telling people how to behave, it is trying to recruit people who like to participate in that way, people who already behave that way and people who want to find an outlet on campus.

Reflection was present in three of the selected campus initiatives, Leadership and Community Engagement LLC, 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration, and the Social Justice concentration in the Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Studies. Part of the 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration included an Evening of Reflection. The Evening of Reflection was an event to commemorate Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and reflect on his life and legacy. The evening included an awards ceremony for those who encapsulated the “Spirit of the King” (ODIME, n.d.). “Reflection” was also a significant part of the courses available in the Leadership and Community Engagement LLC and the Social Justice concentration in the Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Studies. NCLC 295, NCLC 304, NCLC 305, and NCLC 337 all include reflective writing assignments in the syllabus. NCLC 337 in particular had a significant amount of reflective writing. Students were assigned almost weekly assignments to reflect on various topics. One example of the type of reflective assignments students were given is a “consciousness journal” (Gorski, 2014, p. 2). The purpose of this assignment was described to the students as a way,

To help you become more aware, more conscious, of social phenomena and your responses, or lack of response, to them. In what implicit, or not so implicit ways do you see injustice playing out around you?... You will keep a Social Justice Consciousness journal in which you record reflections, observations, self-

challenges, self-congratulations, a-ha moments, and other meanderings on these related questions. (Gorski, 2014, p. 2).

The behavior of support was present in two of the initiatives Leadership and Community Engagement LLC and the 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration. “Supportive community” and “networks of support” were the specific words used by each initiative, respectively. Both initiatives were offering environments, in which students could feel supported, perhaps, a place where students can feel vulnerable.

As stated previously, the behavior of engaged came up in a variety of ways including actively engaged, civically engaged, community engagement, engages with diverse points of view, and meaningfully engaged. The behavior engages diverse points of view was present in the Social Justice concentration in the Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Studies, in New Century College. In at least two of the syllabi that were reviewed for the program included that language. Both syllabi had a diversity statement that stated, “we believe that faculty, staff, and students play a role in creating an environment that engages diverse points of view” (Cromwell, 2014, p. 6; Rader, Pascarella, & Barnard, 2011, p. 3). The professors from these courses have set clear expectations for how students should behave in class. “Meaningfully engaged” was mentioned on ODIME’s website, the office that hosted the 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration (Mason ODIME Vision & Mission, n.d., ¶2). The office’s mission statement stated, “We serve as a resource to members of the Mason community who seek to strengthen their capacities to meaningfully engage and interact with people with different identities that their own...” (Mason ODIME Vision & Mission, n.d., ¶2). The

behaviors activism, inclusive, integrity, and open-minded will be discussed later in this chapter.

Experiences

The experiences that were present in the university guiding documents are co-curricular, collaborative, experiential learning, and global. All of the experiences that were present in the university guiding documents were also present in the campus initiatives. There were also additional experiences outlined in the campus initiative documents including inclusive learning environment, living learning community, service, and public service. The first goal of the 12-point strategic plan is called “innovative learning,” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 12). Throughout the one page of text are numerous examples of practices the university plans to incorporate for the students to experience. This includes, “service-learning” opportunities, “experiential learning,” and “global experiences” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 12). Although specific examples of each of these experiences are not present, perhaps the foundation is laid for various units across the university to interpret the plan and implement such practices. The experiences co-curricular, collaborative, experiential learning, and global will be discussed in-depth later in this chapter.

The term inclusive learning environment was present throughout the five initiatives. This experience will be discussed later in this chapter when the behavior inclusion is also discussed. The Leadership and Community Engagement LLC is a specific example of a living learning community at Mason. There are a variety of LLC’s at Mason, each with a unique focus. The Leadership and Community Engagement LLC

focuses on a range of social issues and addresses them through community service, advocacy, and political action (Mason LLC, n.d). Service is another type of experience that was present throughout the campus initiative documents. The Leadership and Community Engagement LLC participates in numerous service opportunities including, volunteering and service trips and are considered “leaders in community service” (Mason LLC, n.d. ¶7). Although it appears to be heavily service oriented, they also experience public service in the LLC. While the terms service and public service seem similar, in these documents they clearly have different meanings. Service includes community projects; service projects, meeting a community need, and could include service-learning activities. Public service has to do with civic engagement and participating more democratically, including political activism, voting, or campaigning. The Leadership and Community Engagement LLC addresses social issues through “advocacy and political action” (Mason LLC, n.d). The experiences co-curricular, collaborative, experiential learning, and global will be discussed later in this chapter.

Outcomes

The outcomes that were present in the university guiding documents were activists, career readiness, engaged citizen, global and cultural awareness, life long learning, problem solver, and well-rounded scholar. Mason wants to produce graduates who are “well-rounded scholars” committed to “lifelong learning” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 6). Solving global problems is also a commitment made in the university vision. The outcomes activists, career readiness, engaged citizen, and global and cultural awareness will be discussed later in this chapter.

The outcomes that were present in the campus initiatives were activists, career readiness, engaged citizens, ethical leadership, global and cultural awareness, socially conscious leaders, and student development. The outcomes ethical leadership, socially conscious leaders, and student development were all present in the Freedom and Learning Forum. The LEAD office's website stated the office,

Works collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff to provide leadership development, training, and development for students at all levels of leadership development. We believe that every student has the potential to be a leader and we help students develop as effective, ethical leaders..." (Mason LEAD, n.d., ¶1)

Additionally, the office's mission statement stated they "encourage student to become socially conscious leaders" (Mason LEAD Mission, n.d., ¶1). The LEAD Office served its mission and purpose by hosting the Freedom and Learning Forum. This initiative gave students a learning experience that could prompt their development and refine their leadership skills. The outcomes activists, career readiness, engaged citizen, global and cultural awareness, and individual growth will be discussed later in this chapter.

Shared Values, Behaviors, Experiences, and Outcomes

As described in the Chapter 3, the final step of my analysis is to compare the two sets of documents to evaluate the consistency of language in the university guiding documents and the five campus initiatives. This information will be presented by first identifying which values, behaviors, experiences, and outcomes were shared between the two sets of documents. Then I will discuss the difference in the word usage and contextual meaning.

Shared Values

When I compared the two sets of data there are two values that were shared between the two sets of documents: democracy and diversity. Mason prides itself on being a diverse institution.

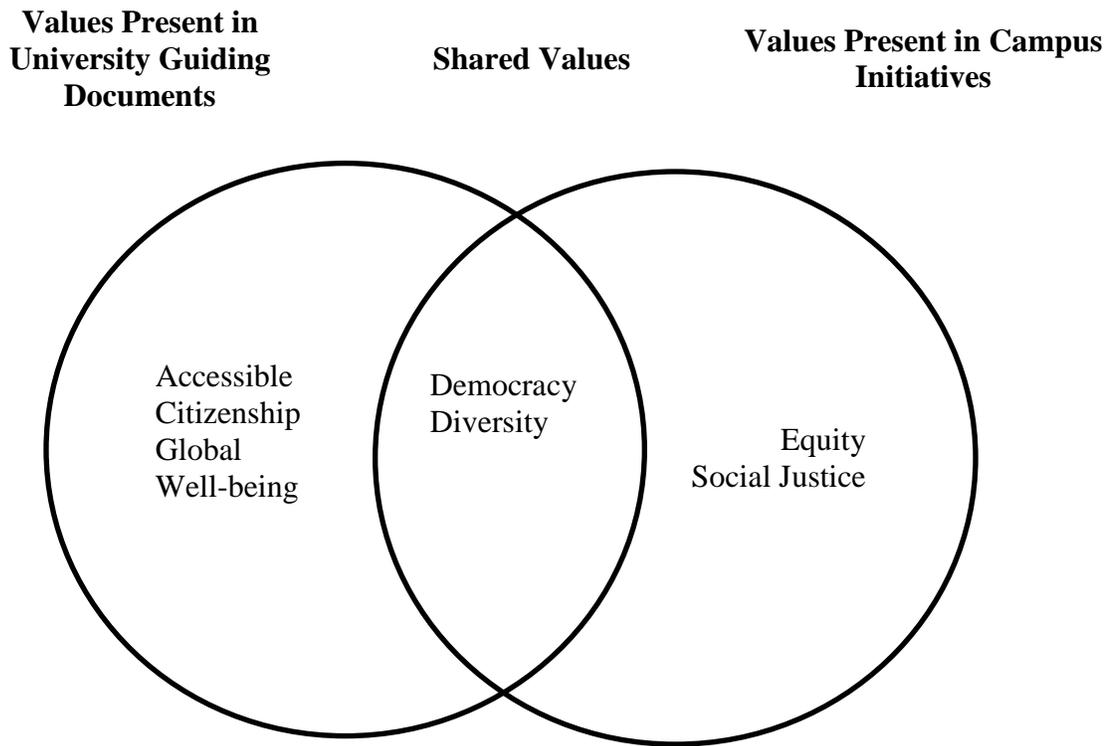


Figure 4.1: Values Present in Documents

In the opening page of the 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, Dr. Cabrera addressed a letter to the university’s Board of Visitors. In the letter he stated, “Universities must provide opportunities for more and more diverse students to succeed; they must produce talent to drive productivity in a new economy and engaged citizens to sustain a thriving democracy...” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 1). This was the first

indication that democracy was seen as a value to the university. In subsequent pages, the Mason graduate was described as “committed to democratic ideals” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 6). In the campus initiatives it was also seen as an important value. In the Global Politics Fellow program democracy is a concept covered in the courses. In one of the required courses, GOVT 434, Democracy in Global Perspectives, democracy is presented as the “most enduring value in the last hundred years” (Ghosh, 2013, p. 1). The course teaches the value of democracy and offers historical as well as global perspectives.

In 2005, Mason was named the most diverse university in the nation by the *Princeton Review* (Walsch, 2005). At the time, 127 countries were represented at Mason. And of the 28,874 students, 1,710 were classified as international (Walsch, 2005). Today, there are 1,979 international students out of the 33,917-student body (Mason IRR, 2013). Because Mason is situated closely to Washington, DC, the university attracts students from the diverse metropolitan region as well as students from around the world who want to be close to the nation’s capital. This diversity is expected to grow. Mason recently signed a joint venture with the organization called INTO. The organization’s website describes INTO as a global, education partnering organization (INTO, n.d). The partnership is designed to expand Mason’s international recruitment (Redden, 2013). Mason becomes the fifth US institution to sign with INTO, but the first in a major metropolitan region (Redden, 2013). In addition to the diversity brought by the international student population, Mason also has a high diversity rate among its domestic students. Domestic diversity is more difficult to decipher because in the data that is

separated by race it is not clear if both domestic and international students are included or not. Additionally, it is not uncommon for domestic students to identify with their parents' or family's country of origin, further diversifying the student body and making it more difficult to track. Mason also appears to be religiously diverse as well.

In the 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, the book outlines the university's core values. Listed second is "Diversity is our strength" (p. 5). The value is elaborated by stating, "We include and embrace a multitude of people and ideas in everything we do and respect difference" (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 5). Diversity is also one of the core characteristics of the Mason IDEA, wherein diversity is described as "We bring together a multitude of people and ideas in everything we do. Our culture of inclusion, multidisciplinary approach, and global perspective make us more effective educators and scholars" (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 4). It is clear that diversity is something the university values; it is seen as a defining characteristic that the university continues to strive for.

Similarly, the five campus initiatives value diversity as well. Although, it seems to be described differently it is still an important value. Diversity was interpreted in other words that were present in many of the initiatives including multiculturalism and difference. Diversity was significantly present in two of the campus initiatives, the Leadership and Community Engagement LLC and the Social Justice concentration in the Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Studies, in New Century College. For each initiative there were syllabi available for review. However, four stand out in particular for the value of diversity; one syllabus for the Leadership and Community Engagement LLC, course

NCLC 295 and courses NCLC 304, NCLC 305, NCLC 320, for the Social Justice Concentration. In each of these syllabi there is a diversity statement and although each is not identical, they send a similar message. The four courses are all from New Century College (NCC), below is the current diversity statement from the college,

New Century College, an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and disability.

- We value our diverse student body and desire to increase the diversity of our faculty and staff.
- We commit to supporting students, faculty and staff who have been the victims of bias and discrimination.
- We promote continuous learning and improvement to create an environment that values diverse points of view and life experiences.
- We believe that faculty, staff and students play a role in creating an environment that engages diverse points of view.

We believe that by fostering their willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, our students will gain competence in communication, critical thinking and global understanding, aware of their biases and how they affect their interactions with others and the world. (Mason NCC, n.d., ¶1)

It is important to note, that although all of the syllabi referenced above are from NCC, not all courses that were reviewed for this research project within NCC included a diversity statement.

Diversity was also present in the Freedom and Learning Forum. For the 2014 event the guest leader was Rangina Hamidi. She was brought in to speak about her experiences as the president of the first women's private enterprise in Kandahar, Afghanistan (Mason Lead, Freedom & Learning Forum, n.d.). This event is an example of bringing in diverse points of view to learn from. The examples of diversity in the campus initiatives signify the values of the institution being put into practice.

Shared Behaviors

When I compared the two sets of documents I gleaned four common behaviors activism, inclusion, integrity, open-minded. As stated above, behaviors represent ways of acting. This term is an expectation that the university has set for its students, but also seems to be an expectation for the students to have for the university.

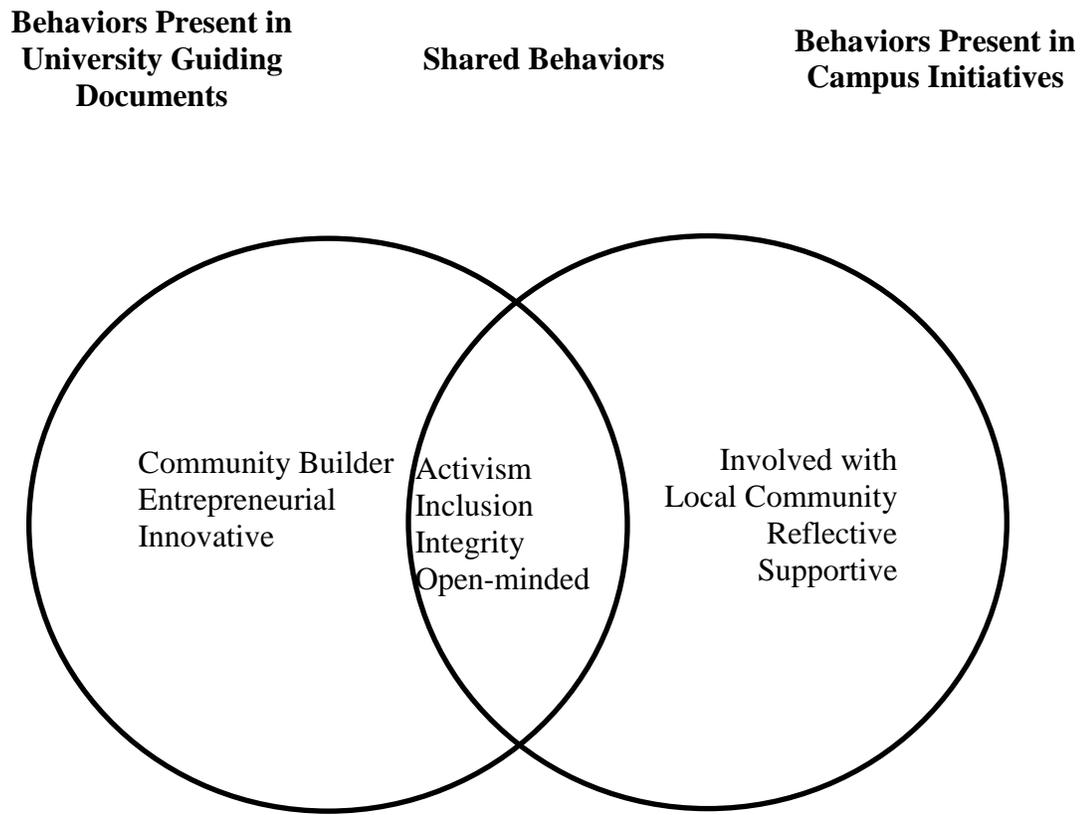


Figure 4.2: Behaviors Present in Documents

Traces of behavior that suggest activism were found in the guiding documents. Within the Mason IDEA is the core characteristic of entrepreneurial and within the description is “we educate students to create, as well... become agents of positive change” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013 p. 4). Additionally, there were a number of examples of showing concern for the greater good, which could also be interpreted as activism. Activism was similarly found in the documents for the campus initiatives. In the 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration, the “Spirit of the King” awards that were described earlier in this chapter encourage faculty and staff to advocate for equality (ODIME, n.d.). The Leadership and Community Engagement LLC also

encourages advocacy as one of the many ways the students learn how to enact social change.

Inclusion and open-minded were dominant behaviors throughout all of the documents that were examined. These were both selected as behaviors because of how they were described in the context of the document. In both sets of documents words such as open and welcoming were used to describe the atmosphere in the university, the classrooms, and student life. Because of this inclusive behavior, inclusive learning environments were present as experiences for students. This is an example of how the categories are interrelated. The diversity statement from NCC, which was stated above, includes language encouraging inclusive behavior and experiences. NCC is “an intentionally inclusive community...this class assumes that all opinions, thoughts, and ideas deserve respectful hearings from others” (Muir, 2011, p. 3). Similar language was present in the syllabus for course NCLC295 from the Leadership and Community Engagement LLC and courses from the Social Justice concentration in the Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Studies, NCLC 305, and NCLC320. Additionally, students were asked, and in some ways perhaps challenged to be open-minded in the classroom setting. In two syllabi for the Social Justice concentration in the Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Studies, students were asked to have an open-mind. By creating an environment in the classroom that “values diverse points of view” and “engages” with those diverse ideas (Cromwell, 2014; Rader, Pascarella, & Barnard, 2011)

Integrity is another shared behavior between the two sets of documents. In the strategic plan, this behavior was unequivocally listed as a core value within the

university. The document calls for all those affiliated with the university to practice ethical behavior, “We act with integrity. We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards as educators, scholars, students, and professionals” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013 p. 5). The Lead Office aids in applying the above statement to practice by encouraging students to develop as ethical leaders (Mason LEAD, n.d). Through the Freedom and Learning Forum, students have the opportunity to hear first-hand experiences of leadership and “connect with some of today’s most creative thinkers who can challenge our thinking and actions around our mission to create a more just, free, and prosperous world” (Mason Lead, Freedom & Learning Forum, n.d., ¶3.).

Shared Experiences

As stated above, all of the experiences that were present in the university guiding documents were present in the initiatives. The experiences co-curricular, collaborative, experiential learning, and global were addressed in the new strategic plan. The five selected campus initiatives are specific examples of these types of learning experiences.

Co-curricular and experiential learning are terms that have similarities and can be used interchangeably. In the university guiding documents, the strategic plan called initiatives to “provide opportunities for experiential and integrative learning” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, p. 12). Additionally, the plan called for initiatives to create opportunities for students to “take part in a meaningful global experience” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, p. 12). While the plan did not provide specific ways for these experiences to occur, it is clearly set as a priority for the institution.

**Experiences Present in
University Guiding
Documents**

Shared Experiences

**Experiences Present in
Campus Initiatives**

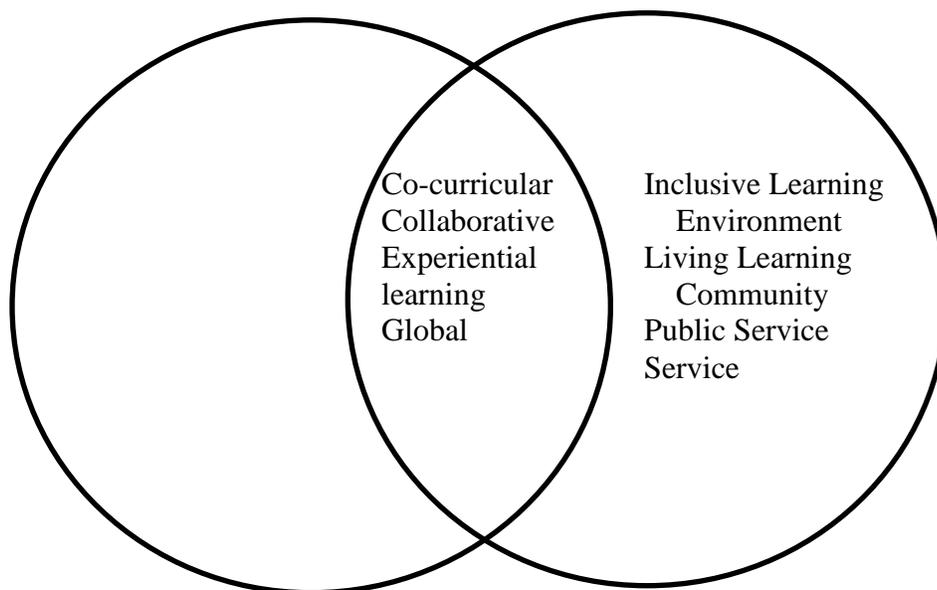


Figure 4.3: Experiences Present in Documents

The campus initiatives that were reviewed for this study are some examples of how Mason implemented programs for students to have such experiences. The Leadership and Community Engagement LLC is one example of an initiative that uses co-curricular and experiential learning. The syllabus for NCLC 295, Leadership and Community Engagement, the requisite class for the LLC, stated that, “NCC highly values learning from experiences. In this course, these experiences are valued as highly as assigned readings. “You cannot successfully engage in the learning community without

attending the events...” (Mathison, 2013, p. 3). This is also an example of service-learning, although the 2014-2024 Strategic Plan does not use that language. This initiative combines service and learning and requires students to reflect on what they have learned and experienced (Eyler & Giles, 1999, Mathison, 2013, O’Connor, 2006).

Collaborative was another shared experience. However, while evidence of this experience was present in both sets of documents, the way it was present differs. In the values statement within the 2014-2024 Strategic Plan booklet, the university is a “positive and collaborative community that contributes to the well-being and success of every member” (p. 5). The document expressed that a collaborative community is an important experience for everyone at the institution. Collaborative was an experience that was seen in practice by the LEAD Office’s Freedom and Learning Forum. This is an initiative that “allows for the campus community to engage in an interactive dialogue series with the University President, Dr. Angel Cabrera and extraordinary thought leaders from around the world” (Mason Lead, Freedom & Learning Forum, n.d., ¶1). This is a collaborative initiative between the university president and a non-academic unit on campus, which brings together multiple resources for student development and experience.

The last shared experience discussed in this chapter is global. Global and globalization were common words used throughout the university guiding documents. The guiding document set an ambitious goal for all students to have a global learning experience. Again, the document does not dictate how this will be done, but only that it is a goal. The university initiatives provided more specific ways students could achieve a

global experience. The Global Politic Fellows program is one of the ways students who are interested in global affairs, can gain practical experience as well as relevant knowledge of the field. This selective program allows students to “delve deeper into the issues of the world” (Mason Global Affairs, n.d., ¶3). The required courses from this program offer a range of learning, from an historical context of global history to GLOA 495, Global Experiential Learning, which is a requisite internship program (Mason Global Affairs Courses, n.d.).

Shared Outcomes

The shared outcomes between the two sets of documents are activists, citizens, career readiness, cultural awareness and competencies, and global understanding.

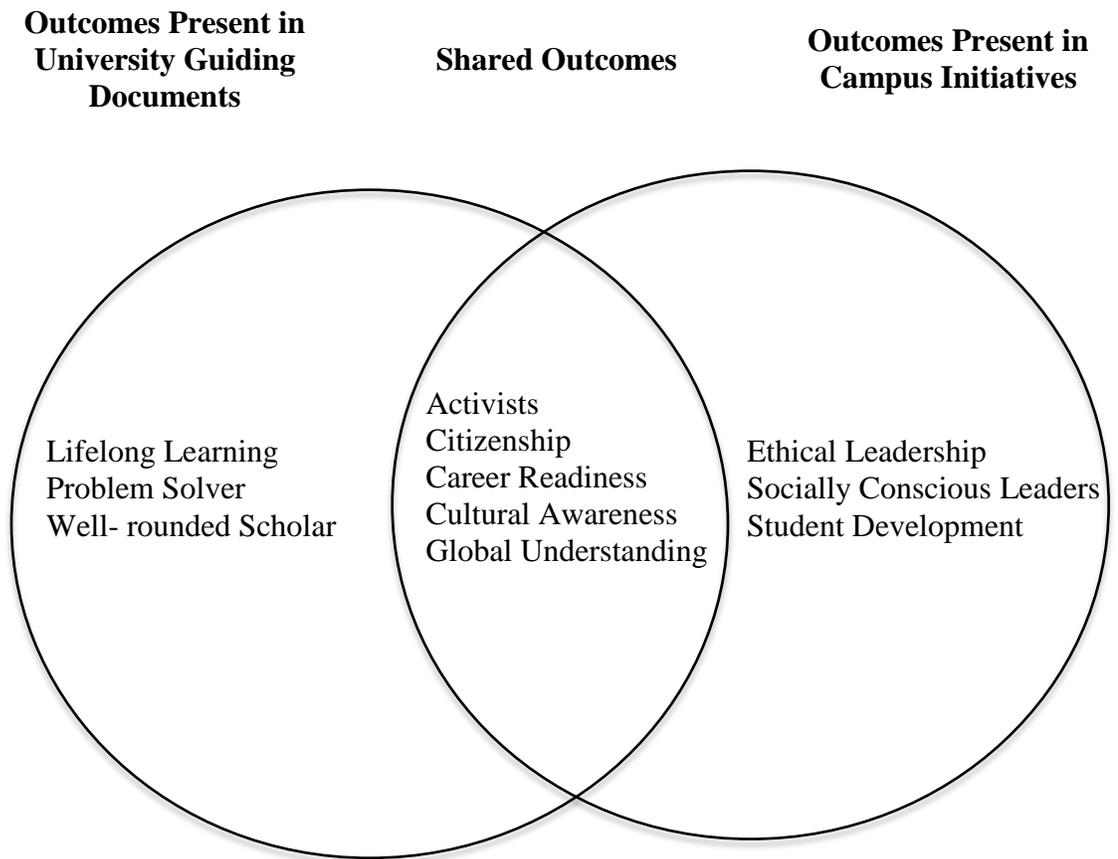


Figure 4.4: Outcomes Present in Documents

These shared outcomes were present throughout all of the documents that were reviewed. As stated above there were traces of behavior that implied activism throughout the documents and because of these behaviors, the outcome of activist was identified. This is another example of how the categories are interrelated. The Mason IDEA stated that the university strives to produce “agents of positive change” who can “make a difference in the world” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 4). Graduating students who have learned how to act like an activist and make a change in the world is a

goal of the university. The campus initiatives share this goal and it is present in the Social Justice concentration. One of the courses, NCLC 304, Social Movements and Community Activism studies how social change happens in our society. One of the goals for this course is to “identify, and critique the multiple and varied strategies people use to implement social change” (Muir, 2011, p. 1).

Another common outcome identified in the documents is citizenship. The university and the units responsible for the selected initiatives understand their role in the lives of the students and know that in addition to what students learn in the classroom they are also creating citizens for the community, country, and world. The first words in the statement describing the Mason graduate are “an engaged citizen,” signifying its importance to the institution (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 6).

Additionally, the strategic plan stated, “we want to help our students succeed professionally and grow as engaged and productive citizens committed to building a better society” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 9). The Leadership and Community Engagement LLC is an exemplary example of the outcome citizens from the selected initiatives. On the website, the described benefits of being a part of the LLC include, “gain the confidence and skills that you need to succeed as active citizens and leaders in community service on and off campus” (Mason LLC, n.d., ¶6).

Career readiness was prominent shared outcome between the two sets of documents. Career readiness was present in the university guiding documents because the university wants to produce graduates who are ready to be engaged in the workforce. The fourth goal of the strategic plan is to have “100,000 career-ready graduates” (Mason,

2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 16). Surprisingly, career readiness was present in all of the campus initiatives except for the 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration.

Career readiness was a significant outcome present in the Global Politics Fellows program. The program has an internship requirement. The courses for the program are specifically designed to allow student more time to have a more “substantive internship,” working 20-25 hours, three days a week (Mason Global Affairs Internship, n.d., ¶1). This gives students “enhanced learning opportunities... networking opportunities to learn more about a potential career field” (Mason Global Affairs Internship, n.d., ¶1).

Cultural awareness and global understanding are another example of shared outcomes. Much of this has to do with the value of diversity that is also shared between the university guiding documents and the campus initiatives. The vision for the university stated “we will prepare our students to thrive in a global context by infusing global awareness” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p 7). Furthermore, the strategic plan stated the one of the initiatives for the twelfth goal is to “cultivate a global mindset in our student body, faculty, and staff” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 26).

ODIME’s mission statement stated “ODIME engages the various Mason constituents in awareness and exploration of the diversity of our campus community, identity development, and global and cultural competencies” (Mason ODIME Vision & Mission, n.d., ¶1). The office’s website stated that it serves this mission by,

Strengthening the connections with University Life and other campus partners who work with and on behalf of international students to collaborate on areas of

mutual concern; and strengthen cultural understanding across areas of difference, including national/international background, language, and all areas of identity.

(Mason ODIME Vision & Mission, n.d., ¶9)

Additionally, the LEAD office works to “develop global and cultural competencies” through its initiatives, the Freedom and Learning Forum (Mason Lead, n.d., ¶1).

Consistency of Language

Although there were a number of similarities within each of the categories, the tone of the language was not often consistent between the two sets of documents. One major difference I discovered between the two sets of documents was that the 2014-2024 Strategic Plan booklet used language that seemed to be more business oriented. It often came across as if it were more of a business, rather than an educational institution. Using terms more common in the business industry such as “return on investment” (ROI) (p.14), “innovation engine” (p.17), “sound investment” (p.7), and “research of consequence” (p. 25) (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013). The campus initiatives did not use those kinds of words in any of the documents that were reviewed.

Now that I have discussed the categories present in the two sets of documents and compared their similarities, in Chapter 5, I will discuss the specific research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE

As the results in the previous chapter show, there are some similarities in the two sets of documents from Mason. After conducting the content analysis on the guiding documents from Mason, I found there is evidence that civic learning and democratic engagement are discussed in the primary documents. Since the campus initiatives were intentionally selected, the findings suggest there are pockets of units within the university that have made civic learning and democratic engagement a priority; however, there is not enough evidence at this time to determine if it is institutionalized at Mason. For example, civic learning and democratic engagement are discussed throughout the strategic planning booklet. The document used terms such as citizenship, community builder, democracy, and respect for difference. This shows evidence that developing students sense for a greater purpose is important to the institution. Specifically, the document described what a Mason graduate should be, “the Mason graduate is an engaged citizen” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 6).

While there is evidence of civic learning and democratic engagement at the university, it is also important to note where the university is lacking in this area. For example, I found very little evidence of politics in my findings. Politics and the democratic process were not evident in any of the documents I examined. Another part of civic learning and democratic engagement that was not present was reciprocity. As

stated in Chapter Three, reflection and reciprocity are key components of service learning. And while reflection was present in the campus initiatives, it was not present in the university guiding documents.

Where is civic learning and democratic engagement an institutional priority?

To address the research question, where is civic learning and democratic engagement an institutional priority, I will revisit the content analysis completed above. The content analysis showed that all the experiences that were discussed in the university guiding documents were present somewhere in the five selected initiatives. This demonstrates that experiences such as co-curricular, collaborative, experiential learning, and global are in fact institutionalized in the campus initiatives selected for this study. However, there is not enough evidence to show these are institutionalized throughout the entire university. The Global Politics Fellow program, housed in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is an excellent example of institutionalized experience. According to the program website, this program offers students the opportunity to “delve deeper into the issues the world faces today... and offers students great insight into a future career” (Mason, Global Affairs, n.d., ¶3). In this short excerpt I see evidence of experiential learning, global understanding, and career readiness. An internship is one of the requirements for this program. This hands-on job training allows students important, real-world learning opportunities that cannot always be achieved in a classroom. However, this is a very selective initiative, with a small reach on campus. The program accepts a small cohort of about 20-30 students each year (Mason, Global Affairs, n.d., ¶3).

Two of the campus initiatives selected for this study came from New Century College (NCC) that is housed within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Mason. The two initiatives are the Leadership and Community Engagement LLC and the Social Justice concentration in the Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Studies. On the NCC website, eight competencies in which students are expected to “pursue excellence” are described and three of those competencies directly relate to civic learning and democratic engagement and were evident in the two selected initiatives that came from NCC (Mason NCC Competencies, n.d., ¶1). Group collaboration is one of the competencies that students are expected to pursue while participating in NCC programs. Specifically, students are expected to “be inclusive and value the diversity of the group” (Mason NCC Competencies, n.d., ¶5). This was evident in the results; diversity is one of the values present and inclusion is one of the behaviors. Students are also expected to engage in global understanding as part of the NCC competencies. Global understanding requires students to appreciate diverse perspectives and “analyze the complexity of the interconnectedness of local and global communities politically, economically, socially, and culturally (Mason NCC Competencies, n.d., ¶6). This competency was also evident in the results. Having a global experience is something that appears to be institutionalized at Mason. The final competency that demonstrates civic learning and democratic engagement is called civic engagement. NCC describes civic engagement as “practice based on an informed understanding of communities and the roles and responsibilities of individuals within those communities” (Mason NCC Competencies, n.d., ¶7). The language of civic engagement was less prevalent in the university guiding

documents, but this learning competency uses similar language of the common definition of civic engagement mentioned in Chapter 1,

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make the difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi)

The teaching done in New Century College seems to embrace the above definition of civic engagement. Additionally, NCC consistently describes itself as an inclusive community and they have a diversity statement that is included on its website and in some of the course syllabi. In addition to their commitment to civic engagement, they also value service-learning. Reflection activities were present in a number of course syllabi that were analyzed, indicating they are committed to a service-learning type atmosphere.

NCC seems to embrace all aspects of civic learning and democratic engagement. NCC also seems to clearly understand the vast variety of definitions for civic learning and democratic engagement as well as service learning. Based on the content analysis done for this study, it is not clear if NCC is the institutional leader in civic learning and democratic engagement. In other words, is NCC influenced by the university to be the leader in civic learning and democratic engagement or has NCC taken on this responsibility at the university? More research into the structure of NCC would need to be done in order to answer this question.

To what extent are civic learning initiatives institutionalized?

All of the initiatives used for this study are optional. So only students who opt into these various programs are experiencing the institutionalized experiences described above. Although, there are other initiatives that were not chosen for this study available to students that could have similar values, behaviors, experiences, and outcomes related to civic learning and democratic engagement. Therefore, there is not a clear way to guarantee that every student has some type of civic learning and democratic engagement experience.

To what extent do campus initiatives reflect the institutions commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement?

It is clear, based on the evidence presented in the previous chapter that the university is committed to diversity and democracy. These values were present throughout all of the documents analyzed for this study. The university guiding documents have made these values a priority. Diversity is even included as one of the core institutional characteristics. The initiatives reflect the institutions commitment to diversity and democracy.

A Civic Minded Campus?

The document *A Crucible Moment* described what a civic-minded campus would look like. The authors established four key terms for their descriptions. The terms used were civic ethos, civic literacy, civic inquiry, and civic action. These terms were previously defined in the literature review. Civic ethos is the way in which democratic values influence campus life; civic ethos is also influential on how the institution interacts and engages with outside communities, both local and global. (The National

Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Civic literacy was listed as a goal for every student. And in order for every student to be literate in civics they must learn the foundations of democracy including the principles and debates about it. Civic inquiry is the practice of exploring the impact of choice. Civic action is defined as a lifelong practice that requires both the “capacity and the commitment both to participate constructively with diverse others and to work collectively to address common problems” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 15). These key terms are closely related to the four categories I found during my document analysis values, behavior, experiences, and outcomes.

Based on my content analysis, is Mason a civic minded campus? To discern this question, I will use the four key terms from *A Crucible Moment* and see if these terms are present in the categories that were discussed in the previous chapter. Civic ethos is present in all four of the categories, values, behaviors, experiences, and outcomes. Civic ethos is demonstrated at Mason through its democratic values. The values of democracy clearly speak to civic ethos as defined in *A Crucible Moment*. Furthermore, this was a shared value between the two sets of documents, indicating to me that democratic values on campus are present at the university level and in practice in the initiatives. Additionally, the university guiding documents specifically address the well-being of others. Since civic ethos also has to do with how the institution interacts and engages with outside communities, both local and global, I would say that Mason meets this criteria as well. Civic ethos is seen in the behaviors and experiences that call students to serve through volunteering and activism. The university sees itself as a “community

builder” and wants to “contribute to the cultural vitality of our community through regional partnerships and commitment to the arts, athletics, and community engagement” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 18). Mason sees itself as a pillar within its community. Furthermore, Mason has vowed to become a university for the world, indicating the level of global engagement the university hopes to achieve.

Civic literacy is the next indicator of a civic minded campus. This was not something that was seen throughout the four categories during the content analysis; however, there were some indications that civic literacy is in fact present at Mason. The notion of “historical context” was present in the university guiding documents as well as in the campus initiatives, most significantly in the documents related to the 2014 Martin Luther King Commemoration. Some of the context within the documents was “interpretation of Martin Luther King’s dream” (Mason MLK Day Video Project, 2014, ¶2). Additionally, the university takes great pride in the namesake of the institution, George Mason. Mr. Mason is credited as one on the United States’ founding fathers and was one of three dissenters who did not sign the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, he authored the Virginia Bill of Rights, which served as a model to the United State’s Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution (Mason, about. n.d.). Mr. Mason’s desire to question conventional thinking is credited for the academic culture at the university,

In some ways George Mason’s life and historical role are captured by our academic culture: our commitment to question the conventional thinking of our day; our responsiveness to the needs of society we are part of; and our

commitment to building a freer, more just world. (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 9).

Civic inquiry is also difficult to extricate from the content analysis although aspects of the definition were present. In *A Crucible Moment*, civic inquiry is partially defined as, “the deliberate consideration of differing points of views...” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 15). This most closely relates to the behavior of “engaging with diverse points of view” a behavior that was encouraged in the campus initiatives; however, this is the only aspect of the broader definition that was present in any of the documents. Therefore, Mason does not meet this benchmark.

Civic action was present through the value of diversity. *A Crucible Moment* defined civic action as,

The capacity and commitment both to participate constructively with diverse others and to work collectively to address common problems; the practice of working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people’s lives and the sustainability of the planet; the ability to analyze systems in order to plan and engage in public action; the moral and political courage to take risks to achieve a greater public good. (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 15).

The behaviors described in the above definition are similar to the behaviors described in the two sets of documents. These behaviors include actively engaged, activism, community builder, open-minded, and political action.

As demonstrated in the above analysis, it seems that Mason is most successful in civic ethos. While not all of the four points to a civic minded campus were thoroughly met, there are numerous indications that Mason is on the right track to become a civic minded campus. Because none of the initiatives are required of students, the students' experience is dependent upon what they decide to partake in. For some students, Mason is a civic minded campus, but for others who do not participate in these optional programs, it may be seen as a less than civic minded.

CHAPTER SIX

The purpose of this study was to explore how Mason addresses civic learning and democratic engagement in its guiding documents and then further explore to what extent civic learning and democratic engagement is institutionalized in its campus initiatives. This intrinsic case study was designed to understand Mason and its inherent qualities as they relate to civic learning and democratic engagement. The case study was exploratory by design.

Recommendations and Implications

As noted in the previous chapter, in accordance with the criteria stated in *A Crucible Moment*, Mason has created a foundation for becoming a civic-minded campus. The university is most successful in meeting the first criteria of civic ethos. The following recommendations are based on the remaining criteria set forth in *A Crucible Moment*: civic literacy, civic inquiry, and civic action. The authors of *A Crucible Moment* set the bar high and acknowledged that requiring a civics course was not enough, “we are calling on colleges and universities to adopt far more ambitious standards that can be measured over time to indicate whether institutions and their students are becoming more civic-minded” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 14).

According to *A Crucible Moment*, civic literacy should be a goal for every student (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012).

However, based on the findings from this study, the initiatives that were researched are not required for every student. It is not clear if there is such a requirement at Mason, if it is, it was not observed during this research process. The first recommendation, based on this research is to set a requirement for all students to understand civic learning and democratic engagement. This requirement could be curricular, co-curricular or an out of class experience. However, as stated in *A Crucible Moment*, “the central work of advancing civic learning and democratic engagement in higher education must, of course, be done by faculty members across disciplines, by student affairs professionals across divisions, and by administrators in every school and at every level,” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 31). It is crucial for university administrators, student affairs practitioners, faculty and staff to work together to set this as a priority for the institution. Furthermore, this is an excellent opportunity to create partnerships in the community, which aligns with one of the points in the strategic plan to become a “community builder” (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 18).

The next criterion for a civic-minded campus is to “integrate civic inquiry within majors and general practice,” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p.14). This criterion calls for civic learning to be intertwined into academic departments and programs. The second recommendation is for each department at the university to identify opportunities where it can “infuse civic learning outcomes progressively across the major,” (The National Task Force on Civic

Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 32). While this recommendation is ambitious for all departments across campus to meet, this is one way to ensure that all students are experiencing civic learning and democratic engagement. Furthermore, it aligns with the university's goal to become "a university for the world" (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 9). The practice of civic inquiry calls to "incorporate civic inquiries that include global knowledge and engagement across diverse groups within and among countries as a context for expanding knowledge about citizenship, social responsibility, and collective public problem solving," (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 32). The university will need to conduct an assessment on the colleges and departments across the university to evaluate whether and to what degree this goal is already being met. Then the university will need to develop a plan to implement civic learning outcomes where they do not already exist. This implementation will take time especially for units that do not already participate in civic learning.

The final requirement for a civic-minded campus is "civic action as lifelong practice" (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 14). As stated in the previous chapter, Mason meets part of this requirement in its value of diversity; however, just because the university has diverse populations, including race, ethnicity, and religion, does not mean that these diverse populations interact with one another. Although there is evidence to suggest this is encouraged within some of the campus initiatives, it was not widely demonstrated throughout the analysis. The third recommendation for the university is to encourage and provide

opportunities for populations to interact with one another. Additionally, *A Crucible Moment*, calls for colleges and universities to “model institutional citizenship by employing democratic processes and practices...to construct local and global generative partnerships that are scaled up to address urgent issues and that offer sites where all partners can participate actively as citizens in shaping their worlds,” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 33). Thus, the university should demonstrate civic action for the students, faculty and staff. The university can do this by demonstrating that it can work collaboratively when faced with challenges.

These three recommendations align with the conceptual framework that was chosen for this study, *A Crucible Moment*. Although Mason has set the foundation for becoming a civic-minded campus it has not accomplished this. However, the above recommendations would help the university achieve the status of civic-minded and they also align with the latest 10-year strategic plan. Furthermore, if the university commits to becoming a civic-minded campus, it contributes to the overall civic education of this country and could serve as a model for other institutions. *A Crucible Moment*, suggests, “investing in this broader vision promises to cultivate more informed, engaged, and responsible citizens while also contributing to economic vitality, more equitable and flourishing communities, and the overall civic health of the nation,” (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 14).

Future Research

The new strategic plan has only been in place for one semester. There has not been sufficient amount of time for reaction or buy in from the various units, both

academic and non-academic. The university has laid out an ambitious 12-point strategic plan to guide campus leaders through the next decade. Within the 12-point plan the university has set some very impressive goals for itself. These goals include becoming the university for the world, producing 100,000 career-ready graduates, and achieving Carnegie very high research classification (Mason, 2014-2024 Strategic Plan, 2013). These goals are likely all attainable, but I think the success of these goals is dependent on how academic and non-academic units align with the institution. From the findings, I am also wondering about the resources that the university will need to achieve the above goals particularly as it also aims to become a research intensive institution. Will that take away resources from civic learning and democratic engagement initiatives? Additionally, how do leaders at the institution interpret such competing priorities?

As the various campus units produce their new strategic plans it will be important to note where the different units align with the university and where they do not. An important opportunity for future research is to examine how the various colleges within Mason align themselves with the university's strategic plan and in which ways they do not. Furthermore, it would be appropriate to revisit this study in a few years after the strategic plan has been in place to track how campus initiatives have evolved based on the changes to the strategic plan and what is being done differently because of the plan.

For this study, I used a big bucket definition of civic learning and democratic engagement and included aspects of service-learning initiatives, democratic engagement and civic engagement. Using a more rigid definition of civic learning and democratic engagement for the analysis would likely yield different results. Additionally, that type

of analysis is likely to shed more light on which aspects of civic learning and democratic engagement the university is implementing.

Another way to revisit this research would be to add interviews with students, faculty, and staff who participate in these initiatives. Additionally, interviews with university leadership could shed light on how civic learning and democratic engagement is a priority at the institution. Interviews or focus groups could offer researchers insight on what students gain from participating in these initiatives. Do the students feel like they have achieved the same outcomes as the initiatives intend? What experiences are linked with what outcomes? What learning gaps are missing?

Conclusion

There is evidence showing that George Mason University values civic learning and democratic engagement as indicated in the university guiding documents as well as the selected campus initiatives. The university is positioned to become a civic-minded campus, however that is dependent upon future changes recommended here.

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