

Political Engagement Project
Ferris State University
Preliminary Report and Campus Plan
October 27, 2006

PEP Mission Statement: Ferris State University offers a unique opportunity for the challenge of creating a population of politically engaged college graduates. Our primary charge is to inculcate the ideas of a politically engaged populace throughout the curriculum, in a manner that creates in students a sense of "having a stake" in the political institutions of the society. This pedagogy will be included in many non-traditional arenas and beyond the expectations of general education course requirements. A second charge of our activities will be to record, analyze and report on the effectiveness of this endeavor over a three year period.

Objectives: The major distinction of the Political Engagement Project Course (PEP) at Ferris is that it does not require creation of a new course or the complete overhaul of an existing course. Rather, PEP requires only that at least one of the course objectives will serve to improve student political engagement in relation to regular course content by exposing students to real events and players in a political arena. Examples of relevant activities include, but are not limited to: guest speaker series, attendance at governmental meetings, travel to events away from campus, utilization of current media resources in addition to or in place of texts, etc. At a minimum, a PEP course would include relevant assignments that account for about 25% of the course grade although some courses will include more. To qualify:

1. The course must be enhanced in some way (i.e., include new component(s) beyond readings, lectures, and/or discussions) that address PEP objectives such as
 - a) to increase knowledge and understanding of democratic process
 - b) to develop skills in political deliberation and critical judgment
 - c) to motivate students to become politically engaged
 - d) to relate course discipline to political engagement and/or public policy

2. Students in the course activity must directly "encounter" the political process by
 - a) attendance at appropriate governmental meetings
 - b) relevant guest speakers in class
 - c) field research about a political issue
 - d) in-class simulations
 - e) travel to events away from campus
 - f) experiential activities (e.g., interviews)
 - g) assignment of students to mentors in the field

3. Students must have the opportunity to reflect upon/process those activities using
 - a) journals
 - b) essays
 - c) blogs
 - d) oral reports or speeches or group presentations
 - e) academic papers

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4. Instructors must provide for outcomes assessment, beyond the standard Student Assessment of Instruction, such as
 - a) analysis of student work to show achievement of learning objectives
 - b) PEP survey instrument
 - c) student satisfaction surveys
 - d) student anecdotes
 - e) instructor feedback via survey or focus group

Participants: The Political Engagement Project at Ferris is one pillar supporting the campus American Democracy Project led by Professor Connie Meinholdt (a second pillar is Academic Service Learning). PEP is organizationally housed in the Academic Affairs Division under Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Harris. Leadership for the PEP initiative has been assigned to:

- Dr. Anthony Baker, Associate Professor Social Sciences, Co-coordinator
- Dr. Richard Griffin, Professor Social Science, Co-coordinator
- Dr. William Potter, Dean of University College, Administrative Liaison
- Nina Davis, Administrative Assistant in University College, Logistical Support

In the inaugural semester, a total of 29 faculty have stepped forward to teach 29 different courses (45 course sections) to nearly 1,200 students. The complete roster of faculty is available at: <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/ADP/PEP/faculty.htm>. These instructors represent 7 colleges and 17 departments. A complete listing of courses for fall is at: <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/ADP/PEP/Courses.htm>.

Planning and Logistics: The Division of Academic Affairs has allocated a generous budget for PEP that supports faculty development, a stipend for participation, and a supply and expense line to pay for course activities and travel to ADP and PEP workshops. In addition, the VPAA has assigned .5 released time to each of the co-coordinators for the academic year as well as a .25 load for work to be completed during the summer. The total budget for these programmatic aspects in 2006-7 is listed below:

Released-time for Coordinators:	\$14,905
Faculty Training Stipend	\$20,000
Faculty Participation Stipend	\$25,000
Snowbird Travel	\$12,285
S&E	\$ 2,500
Administrative Support Overload	<u>\$ 3,000</u>
Total	\$77,690

The Dean of University College provides administrative support for PEP at no additional charge. His administrative assistant has accepted an overload assignment for support services including communications, budget control, requisitions, computer support, and website creation and updates.

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Faculty Development: From the beginning, the Political Engagement Project at Ferris was designed to be faculty driven. Professional development for those instructors who expressed an interest in participating in the Political Engagement Project has included the following.

- First, following campus-wide notices about this program, the leadership team sponsored three informational meetings for interested faculty in the first week of May. Approximately 35 instructors attended at least one of these sessions where the co-coordinators shared the PEP mission, objectives, and procedures.
- Second, in mid June, eight faculty attended the PEP planning meeting at Snowbird and so were involved from the outset in the process of developing this program. The inclusion of that many faculty helped to lay a sound foundation for the future since nearly one-fourth of the eventual participants had received a broad view of this initiative.
- Third, a day-long professional development workshop was held on August 24 for the 32 faculty who had indicated willingness to be PEP instructors. At this session, following a welcome address by Vice President Michael Harris, the PEP co-coordinators reviewed the mission and objectives of PEP, helped faculty identify appropriate course activities and assignments, and arranged for Professor Randall Jelks, Professor of History at Calvin College and author of *African Americans in Furniture City*, to share his experience and expertise on engaging students in the community. In addition to the planned professional development objectives, this event also initiated a sense of camaraderie among participating instructors. This was important given the wide array of disciplines involved.
- Fourth, the co-coordinators have sponsored a series of bi-weekly “Roundtable” discussions so that PEP faculty can discuss the Educating for Political Engagement manuscript, identify the need for logistical support, and share their PEP experiences. Two roundtable sessions are scheduled every other week so that all PEP faculty can participate, regardless of other course and committee obligations. Roundtable objectives include:
 1. to become familiar with current literature on the teaching of political ideas
 2. to create a community of politically engaged educators
 3. to develop education strategies through debate and sharing of experiences
 4. to promote Political Engagement Program activities across campus
 5. to create politically engaged classroom content for a national audience provided by the New York Times

Moreover, the roundtable discussions appear to be reinforcing the camaraderie that emerged from the initial training event in August. Prospective PEP instructors are also attending the roundtables as they plan to offer courses during next spring or fall.

- Finally, one of the PEP faculty has developed a WebCT resource that faculty can use to post student work, connect to helpful links, access PEP forms, e-mail other PEP instructors, or even conduct on-line chats. The WebCT tool is yet another example of the way in which this faculty community has taken shape.

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First Semester Programming: As noted above, the implementation of the Political Engagement Project has exceeded expectations with 29 faculty and nearly 1,200 students (more than 10% of the Big Rapids campus enrollment) participating in the first semester. Because Ferris State University elected to apply PEP across its broad curriculum, there are courses at the introductory, advanced, and professional school levels representing seven different colleges and 17 different degree programs. Moreover, PEP is collaborating with the existing American Democracy Project and with a variety of Student Life offices to achieve a rich array of co-curricular programming options.

With regard to campus-wide events, Political Engagement faculty and students have attended the lecture by William Strauss on September 12 (350 in attendance); a screening of former Vice President Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth* on September 21 (797 in attendance); a panel discussion about the immigration issue on September 27 (nearly 90 in attendance); and Constitution Week/voter registration activities during September 11-15. Other events include a *Vote Slam* on October 18 and a PEP Election Fair on October 31. These latter events are intended to raise student voter awareness about the candidates and ballot initiatives in Michigan for the 2006 election and will rely on active involvement by PEP faculty and students for success. Professor Sandra L. Alspach has organized a public speaking contest for students co-sponsored by PEP, the Communication Honor Society, and the National Forensics Honorary for November 7 and 8. Issues must focus upon the political arena. The Political Engagement Project leadership team has planned an Election Night Watch for November 7 that will allow students to hang out and watch election results for Michigan and for the nation and to hear analysis by campus experts on the political scene. Finally, one Ferris student is a candidate for the state legislature. We are inviting that student to share his experiences in a public forum with his peers after the election is over.

Events of general interest like those described above are posted on the PEP Calendar of Events at <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/ADP/PEP/calendars.pdf>. In addition to the web calendar, PEP events are advertised through classroom announcements, the daily campus-wide notices, printed flyers and brochures, the Torch, and campus television, radio and web calendars. Fall semester events and activities have already received excellent coverage by the student newspaper and by FYI, the University newsletter.

Other program-related activities have included the required administration of the pre-assessment survey to the 1,186 students enrolled in PEP course sections during the first two weeks of the semester. The results of that survey are currently being processed and analyzed. A post-assessment survey will be completed in the same classes at the end of fall semester and we hope to have preliminary results ready to share in January. In addition to the assessment work, a faculty member and three students from the Ferris Television and Digital Media Production major have initiated work on a DVD documentary that will chronicle the campus-wide and course-specific events from fall semester.

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Course-specific Political Engagement Project activities and assignments have been rich and varied, as was the intent of our multi-disciplinary approach to this program. Examples are listed below:

PEP FACULTY AND COURSES

Douglas Haneline – ENGL 250: English 2

Students learn the skills of doing academic research, reasoning, arguing, writing and editing from assignments, which include reflective electronic journal entries and research papers and focus upon the Civil Liberties of freedom of expression, separation of church and state, technology and privacy, and the war on terrorism. *Students engage in debates on these topics in class and attend PEP speakers and PEP sponsored activities.*

Connie Meinholdt – PSCY 325: Social Psychology

Students are engaged in "social influence" assignments. Examples include running a voter registration table in the university's library, hosting a campus wide *Vote Slam* event designed to inform young voters about the candidates for statewide offices and the initiatives on the 2006 November ballot in Michigan, and organizing a letter writing campaign to U. S. soldiers stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Christine Bailey – PLSC 221: Political Parties

Students are engaged with local high school teachers in preparing their Spring classes for a Quiz-Bowl style program based upon previous social studies Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) questions.

Elizabeth Wilson – COMM 365: Intercultural Communication

Students are engaged in a *United Nations simulation* in which sixteen nations are represented. The nations are attempting to obtain resolutions on two issues: nuclear proliferation and women's reproductive rights.

Richard Griffin – PLSC 251: Public Administration

Students groups are engaged with local political and bureaucratic leaders in preparing reports on community issues as identified from current issues of the local newspaper. The reports include selection of a Chief of Public Safety, mismanagement at a nursing home, bureaucratic operations of public transportation, closing of a state youth prison, substance abuse in the community and on campus, and operations of water treatment facilities.

Susan Hastings-Bishop – RMLS 427: Corporate Fitness

Students will provide a three hour fitness and wellness workshop the Girl Scouts of Michigan Trails local troops (girls ages 11-15) which will include fitness and exercise, nutrition, and monitoring of heart rate and blood pressure activities.

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Karen G. Nash – BLAW 301: Managing in the Legal Environment

Students *compare editorials for the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times and write a position paper on a political issue of their choice, plus a letter to the editor on the same issue.*

Matt Wagenheim – RMLS 121: Introduction to Leisure Services

Students write a paper outlining various aspects of the political process in Michigan, including how a bill becomes a law, the *identification of state representatives and committees that impact the provision of leisure and recreation services in Michigan*, and how best to have their voice heard within the state political system.

Elizabeth Ferszt – ENGL 321: Advanced Composition

Public documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, public ideas, such as concepts of citizenship, and public policy, such as the immigration debate are examined. *Students write several short pieces for a politically aware portfolio which covers issues such as national identity, family type, a personal declaration, and global economics.*

Donna Smith – COMH 121: Fundamentals of Public Speaking (Honors Class)

Students will *engage with local high school political science classes in presenting in panel form a speech dealing with affordable energy and fuel consumption.* Additionally, students will *participate in the PEP Election Fair with a debate presenting the con side of the five proposals on the 2006 November Michigan elections ballot.*

Neal Patten – COMH 121: Fundamentals of Public Speaking (Honors Class)

Students will *participate in the PEP Election Fair with a debate presenting the pro side of the five proposals on the 2006 November Michigan elections ballot.* They also will *engage with local high school classes through presentations dealing with affordable energy and fuel consumption.*

Neal Patten – COMM 390: Political Communication

Students also *engage in the ballot proposal debates at the PEP Election Fair* and are required to *write a letter to the editor of the newspaper of their choice on a political topic which they chose.* Students *engage in writing a media diary that follows the coverage of a political issue across a wide array of media outlets.*

Judith Hooper – READ 176: College Critical Reading

Students will *engage by developing a mock political advocacy campaign relative to the issue modern meat production in America* focusing especially upon current agricultural practices as they relate to a framework of ethics and animal welfare. The goal is to empower students through advocacy engagement.

Sandra L. Alspach – COMM 201: Public Presentation Practices

Students *present informative speeches on conflicts that have changed political leaders' careers, informative speeches on community issues, and persuasive speeches dealing with public policy and the political process.*

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Lucy Ngho – PHAD 502: Social Issues in Pharmacy Practice

Students *engage with guest speakers who represent a food bank in Grand Rapids, Michigan and a homeless shelter in Kalamazoo, Michigan*, who introduce students to issues of health and factors that affect health. *Students will further engage with the community at service learning sites in both communities.*

Lynn Chrenka – ENGL 150: English 1

Students are required to *write a critical review of the gubernatorial debate* focusing upon each candidate's management and performance of the debate and the debate's usefulness as a tool for voters' electoral choice. The goal is to educate students that civil dialogue is a significant part of the democratic process.

Diane Fleming – EDCD 380: Foundations of Advocacy

Students engage through the *creation of informational brochures on Early Childhood Education issues which they then pass out to parents and local organizations*. Students have also *written letters to the editors of newspapers and to state and national legislators and attended speeches given by leaders in the area of Early Childhood Education*. Students *will engage in a 20 hour advocacy project with a local agency to impart knowledge and impact public policy in the area of Early Childhood Education*.

Marcia Parry – HCSA 474: Planning & Promotion in Health Care

Students are engaged in *developing a feasibility study for determining the viability of opening a crisis line for the Ferris State University community*. The identification of potential community and campus advocates and barriers are being identified with a focus on "making it happen."

Virginia Hines – EDUC 303: School Work & Society

Students *researched and discussed Michigan ballot proposal concerning public educational funding*, developed and *submitted questions about the proposal to Republican and Democratic Party candidates engaged in televised gubernatorial debate*, visited urban schools and *attended a school board meeting to experience the process of local political control of the educational system*.

Brenda Vasicek – ENGL 413: Literacy: Issues and Conflicts

Students *attended the Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE) conference where they engaged in dialogue with educators and politicians about current educational issues*. They also *attended the PEP Election Fair to observe and participate in the Michigan election issues debate*.

Joyce Brownell – ENGL 150: English 1

Students will *attend the play "Working" and develop questions based upon the play*. A *local published novelist will then speak to the class concerning the political rhetoric of the play*.

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Edward Brayton – CONM 412: Construction Contracts

Students are engaged through reading and attending a PowerPoint presentation about the “U. S. Formation” documents, specifically the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Constitutional Amendments. *Students search the documents for ancient principles and for answers to a set of practice problems. They are also tested on the types of laws, the maxims of the law, and the hierarchy of the law. Finally, each student writes an essay using the 28 principles of freedom.*

Planning for Spring Semester: As noted above, several prospective PEP faculty are attending the Roundtable sessions this fall. In addition, many of the fall semester instructors plan to teach the same course or a new course in the spring. Meanwhile, the PEP Co-coordinators have also been busy during the fall semester identifying new colleagues for this program. At this time, we believe that we will have at least 20 faculty teaching next semester.

Event planning is largely course dependent, but the PEP instructors will certainly take advantage of the events already scheduled for Martin Luther King, Jr. Week and for the ADP Presidents’ Week.

Moreover, Ferris will send a team of six PEP faculty and staff to Stanford to the January meetings. Vice President Harris, Dean Potter, PEP Co-coordinators Baker and Griffin, ADP Coordinator Connie Meinholdt, and PEP Instructor and WebCT guru Michael Berghof are scheduled to attend that event.

Assessment Activities: At the present time, the Ferris Political Engagement Project team has planned to conduct assessments of program activities as described below:

1. Effectiveness Measures
 - a. Number of faculty involved
 - b. Number of courses and sections offered
 - c. Number of students enrolled
 - d. Attendance at PEP sanctioned events
 - e. Review of media coverage in the Torch, the Pioneer, and others
2. Learning Outcomes Measures
 - a. Pre-assessment results
 - b. Post-assessment comparisons
 - c. Instructor feedback from analysis of relevant assignments
 - d. Instructor feedback from focus group discussions
 - e. Student feedback from focus group discussions