

# Championing and Expanding College Civic Learning: For *ALL* Students and A Democracy In Need of Repair

Carol Geary Schneider, President Emerita, AAC&U  
Senior Advisor, Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Coalition

Oregon State Higher Education Coordinating Commission  
August 8, 2024

[www.collegeciviclearning.org](http://www.collegeciviclearning.org)



## Our Topics:

### **The Big Picture: Democracy In Need of Repair**

- ★ Deep divisions in the U.S. and unchecked, aggressive authoritarianism abroad.
- ★ Policy Change is Needed.....

### **The Big Opportunity: Higher Education's Civic Mission**

- ★ The Role of State Systems in Connecting Civic Mission with Curriculum
- ★ The Multi-State Collaborative for College Civic and Democracy Learning (MSC)

### **What Should College Students Gain from Civic and Democracy Learning?**

- ★ The CLDE Learning Framework (A Preview from Forthcoming Report)
- ★ Clarifying the Multiple Goals for College CLDE
- ★ Full Participation Institutions – Key Leaders for MSC Initiatives

### **From Partial Participation to Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement (CLDE) Pathways for All**

## A Democracy in Need of Repair

**Americans of all ages think democracy is not working. Offered a choice of descriptions, only 14% chose: “Democracy works for me.”**

– *Civic Language Perceptions Project Data Dashboard, PACE (Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement) and Citizen Data (2024).* <https://PACEfunders.org/Language>

**Freedom House – which monitors democracy – points to 18 years of democracy regression around the globe – and lists U.S. democracy as “Free” but “In Decline.”**

– *Freedom in the World 2024.* <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2024/mounting-damage-flawed-elections-and-armed-conflict>

**Young Americans (under 30) are pessimistic about democracy (40%). About one quarter are “somewhat or very optimistic.”**

– *Institute for Citizens and Scholars: The Civic Outlook of Young Adults in America (2023).* <https://citizensandscholars.org/focus-areas/accelerate/civic-outlook-of-young-adults/>

# The Policy Context: Civic Purpose Was Central to Higher Education for Almost Two Centuries. But Today, Policy Priorities Center Access, Workforce, and Jobs, Almost Exclusively....

How One State's Policy Message Evolved:

*from*

Get a Degree, Get a Job, *Give Back*

*to*

Get a Degree, Get a Job, *Get Ahead*

## The Evidence: Civic Learning Has Great Benefits for Students (See handout p. 6 for 2022 synthesis of high-quality research).

### But, Too Many Students Miss Out Entirely

- ★ About 3 in 4 community college students did not take even one course that involves a community-based project. Seven out of 8 of part-time cc students took no civic-related courses.

*–Center for Community College Student Engagement 2022*

- ★ Forty percent of seniors in four-year institutions never took a course with a community-based project.

*–National Study of Student Engagement (2023)*

## The Big Opportunity: The Majority of “We the People” Now Enroll in Postsecondary Education

- ★ Today, a Decisive Majority of American Enroll in Postsecondary Education.
- ★ 52% of Adults Now Hold Degrees or Credentials (Lumina Foundation)
- ★ This Provides an Extraordinary Opportunity to Foster Civic Inquiry and Engagement
- ★ But, To-Date, for All the Attention Paid to Data and Evidence, States and Institutions Neither Track nor Report Students’ Participation in Civic Learning or What They Gain From It
- ★ Illustration: Your Handout, P. 6, Provides Impressive Evidence of How Students Benefit from Active Civic Learning. BUT the authors found only 53 High Quality Studies to Synthesize.

## Enter the Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Coalition (formed in 2021)



Imagine if every  
college student  
devoted time and  
talent to  
democracy's  
future!

## The CLDE Coalition:

The **Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Coalition** (CLDE Coalition) brings together **education and policy organizations** committed to making **civic learning and democracy engagement** a “Shared Commitment”

The coalition is led by the:

- **American Association of Colleges and Universities**
- **Campus Compact**
- **College Promise**
- **Complete College America**
- **State Higher Education Executive Officers**

The Coalition Also Works With Over **75 Partner Organizations**

[www.collegeciviclearning.org](http://www.collegeciviclearning.org) for details.



Campus Compact



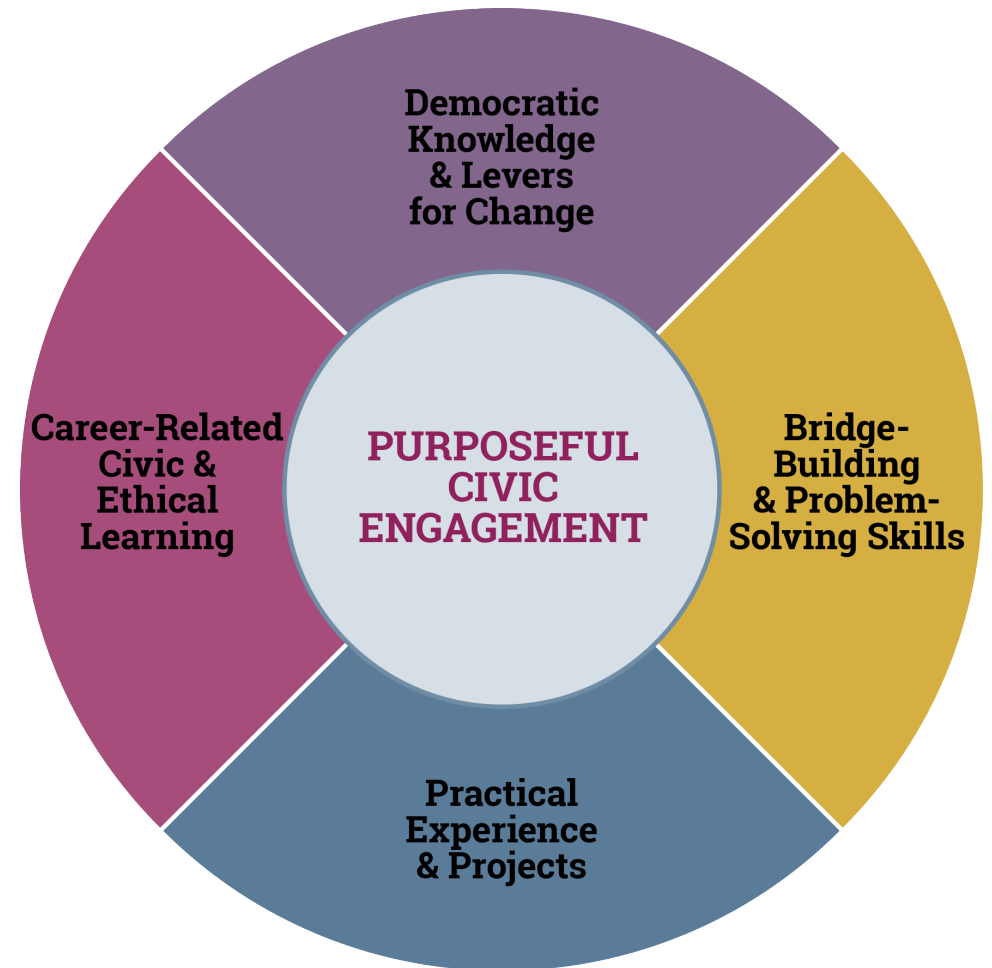


## State Systems as Key CLDE Partners: The Multi-State Collaborative for Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement (MSC)

- ★ The Multi-State Collaborative (MSC) is a Key CLDE Coalition “Scaling” Partner – and HECC has joined the MSC.
- ★ While different MSC systems use different approaches, ALL affirm that college civic learning should be part of each student’s studies—including career and technical programs and studies.

(See handout, p. 3, for more on MSC priorities for action.)

## A New Tool for MSC Leaders to Use: THE CLDE Framework for College Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement



## New Resources for MSC Leaders to Use:

### Every Student, Every Degree: College Civic Learning for Today's Students and Tomorrow's Democracy



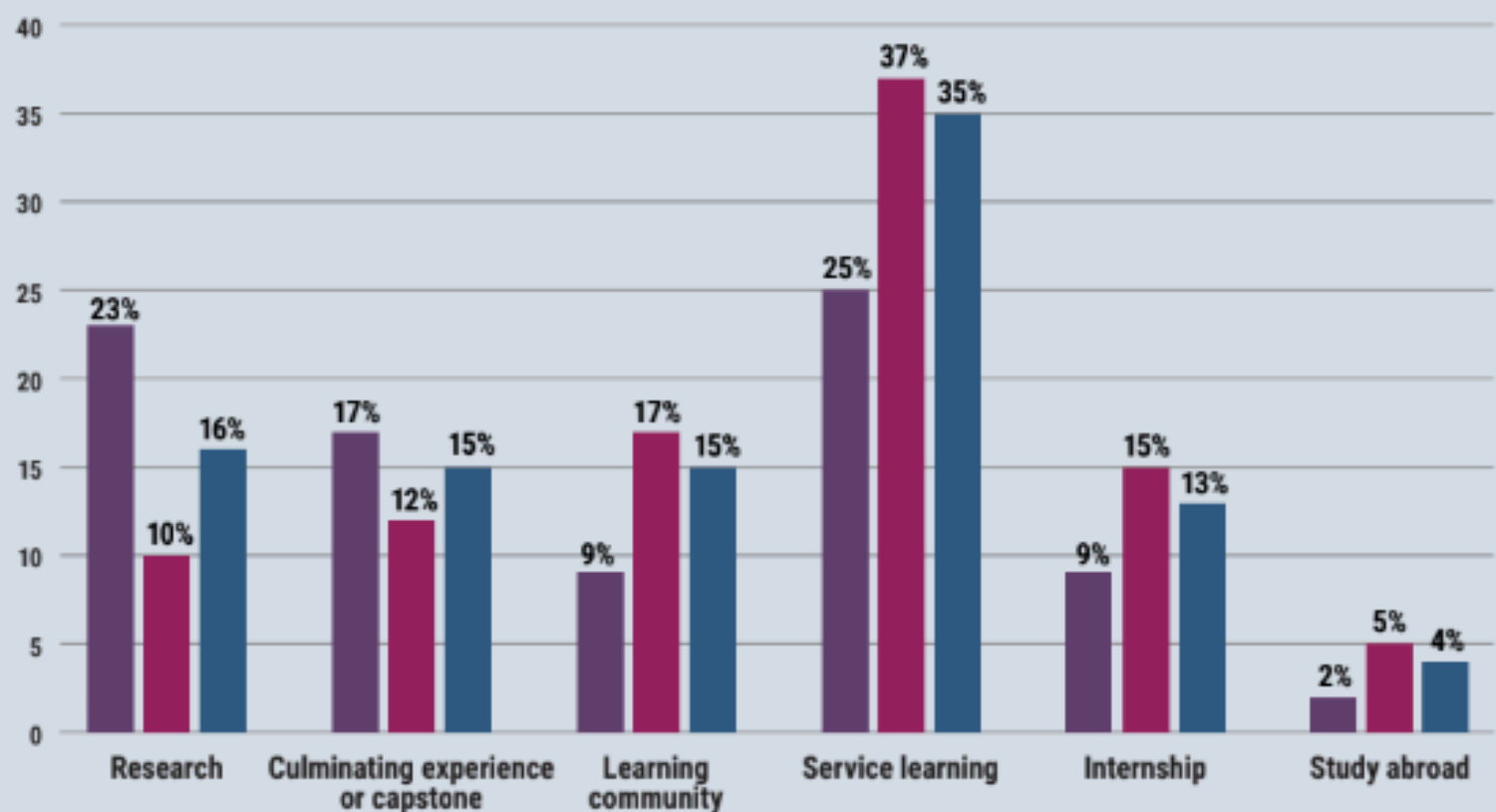
For release September 4, 2024. Registration for the launch webinar opens August 7. System and campus teams can attend without charge.

FIGURE 6

## High-Impact Practices (HIPs) – Particularly Service Learning – Boost Academic and Practical Skills

Students' participation in HIPs results in significant gains in both academic and practical skills. Students get the most dramatic boost when they take courses that include a community-based project (service learning).

### Service Learning Provides Academic and Practical Learning Gains



**Academic learning gains** include:

- Writing clearly and effectively;
- Speaking clearly and effectively;
- Thinking critically and analytically; and
- Analyzing numerical and statistical information.

**Practical learning gains** include:

- Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills;
- Working effectively with others;
- Developing/clarifying a personal code of values and ethics;
- Understanding people of other backgrounds;
- Solving complex real-world problems; and
- Being an informed and active citizen.

**Overall learning gains** are the combination of academic and practical learning gains.

Source: Valentine, J., Price, D., & Yang, H.; DVP-PRAXIS LTD (2021). [High-impact practices and gains in student learning: Evidence from Georgia, Montana, and Wisconsin](#). Lumina Foundation.

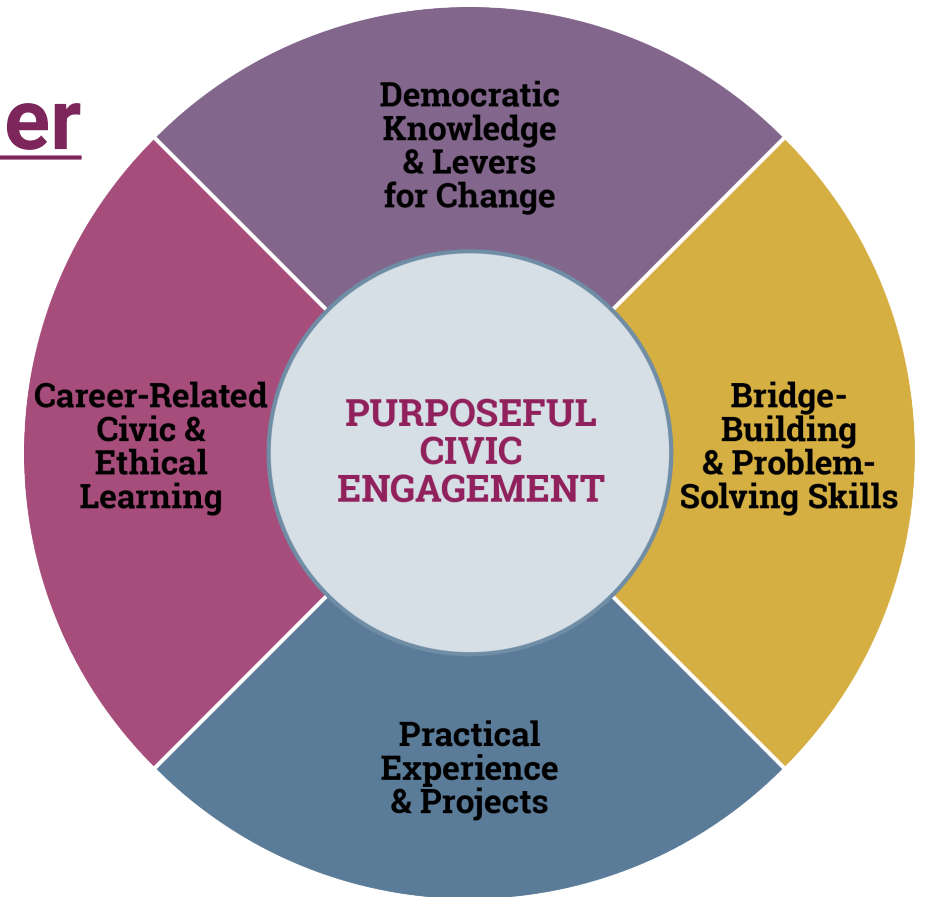
## What Should Students Gain from Civic and Democracy Learning?

A CLDE Coalition Landscape Analysis Found Multiple Meanings and Purposes Across Institutions and States...

- ★ Identity, Voice, Belonging, Civic Purpose, Social Power
- ★ Courses on Constitutional Democracy, Core Texts
- ★ Action Projects: Service Learning and Work on Community Challenges—at Home and Abroad
- ★ Needed Skills: e.g., Productive Engagement Across Difference, Collaborative Problem-solving....

## The New CLDE Framework Draws These Multiple Purposes Together

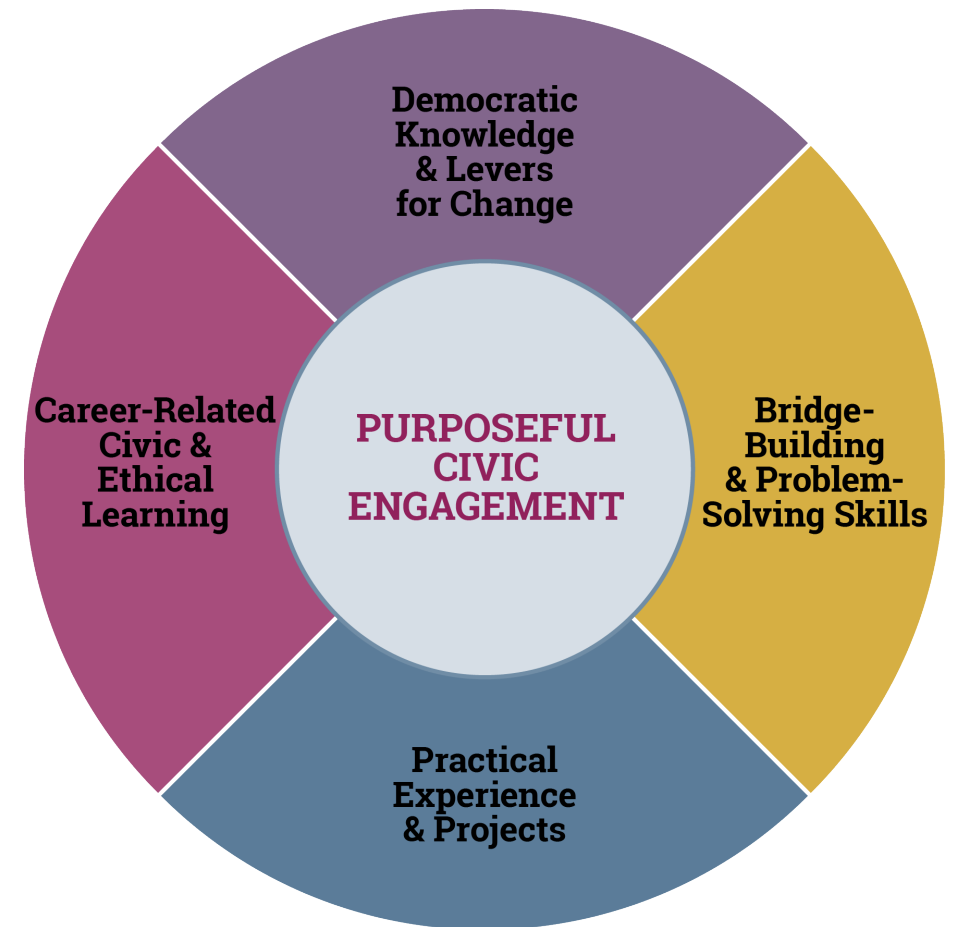
- ★ Students' own journeys stand at the center
- ★ Students reflect on their identities, experiences, societal roles, civic purpose
- ★ They make their own choices about civic engagement—in careers as well as civil society
- ★ (See handout pp. 4-5 for details)



# CLDE Learning – From First to Final Year

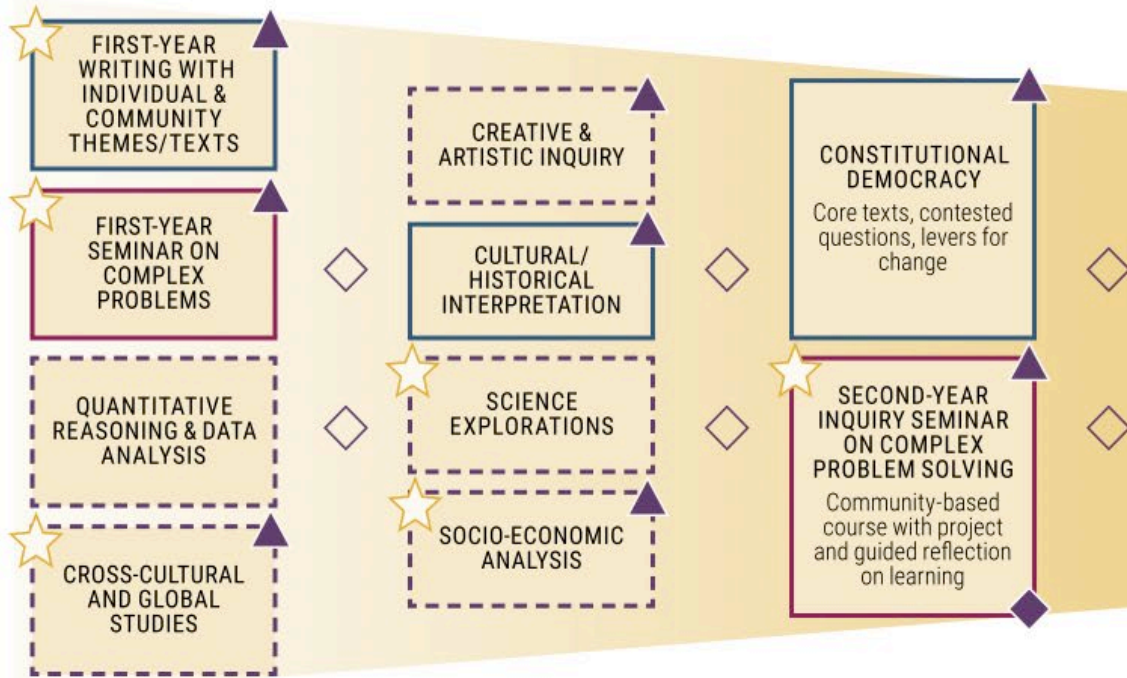
## The CLDE Framework:

- ★ Centers Democracy—U.S. and Global (Too Often Democracy Is *Assumed* Rather than Explored)
- ★ Connects Engagement Across Difference With Creating Solutions to Significant Problems
- ★ Values Practical Experience – And Collaborative Learning From Those Practical Experiences
- ★ Connects Civic and Ethical Inquiry to Students' Career Plans and Workplace Experience

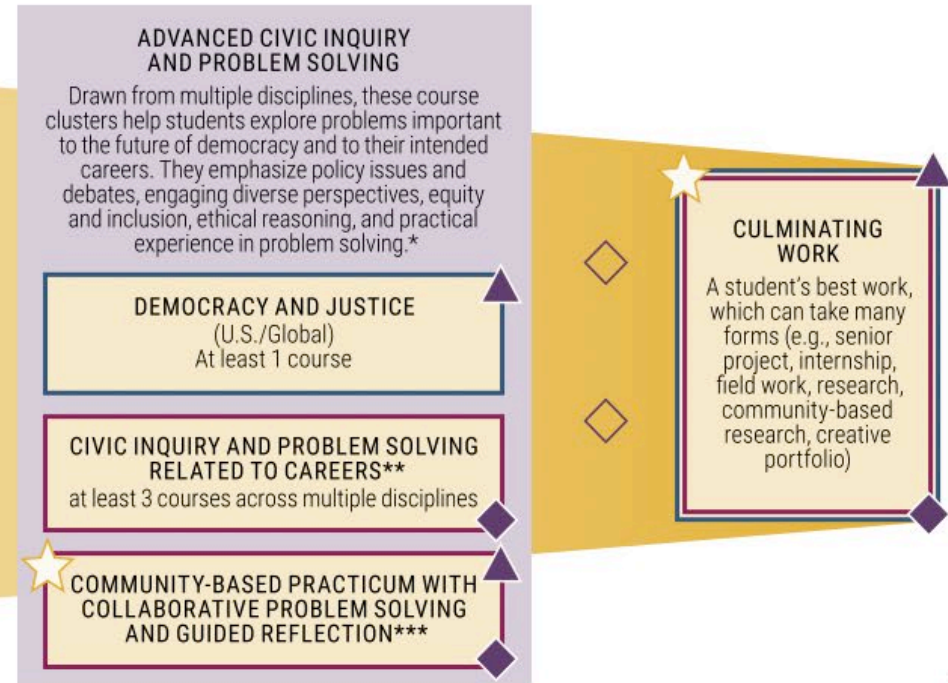


# Sample Four-Year Guided Pathway

## Core Learning for an Interconnected World



## Problem-Centered Course Clusters

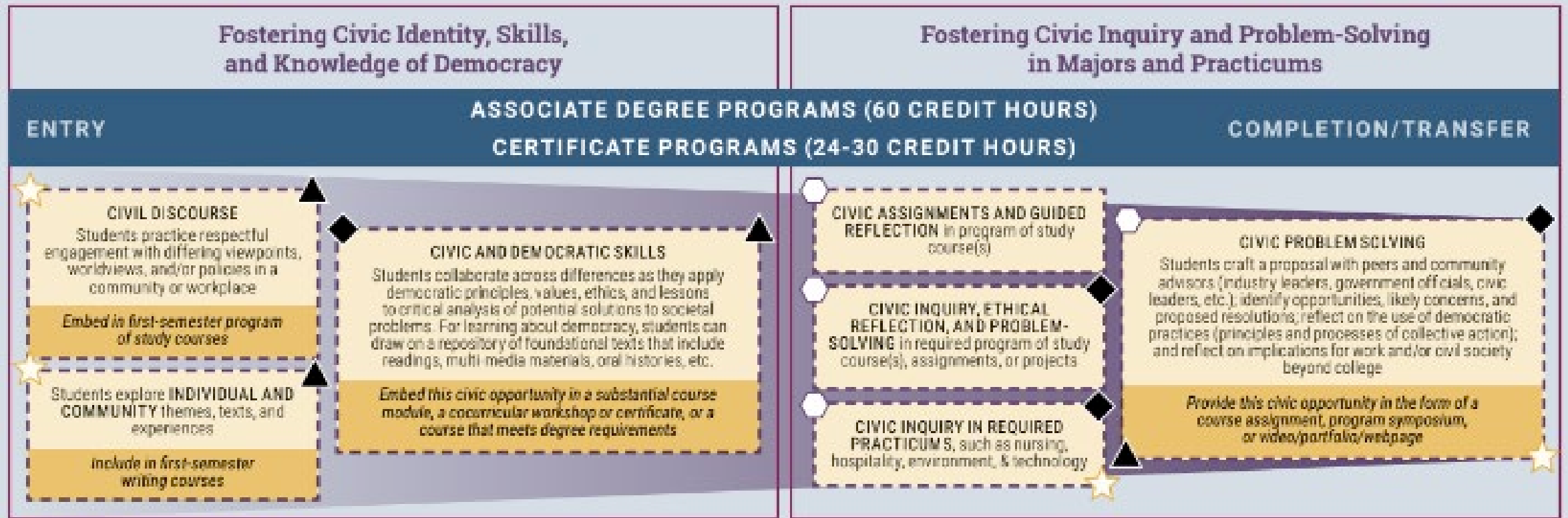


E-PORTFOLIO SHOWS STUDENT'S WORK ON CIVIC AND SOCIETAL PROBLEMS OVER TIME AND DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH-VALUE SKILLS

See handout p. 5 for details



# Sample Community College Guided Pathway



See handout p. 6 for details

# Using the CLDE Learning Framework

HECC now prioritizes streamlining student pathways.

The CLDE Framework provides a point of departure for HECC members to **embed CLDE topics in program pathways**, including career programs.

Faculty, staff and students can assess their institution's existing CLDE strengths, set priorities for expanding and strengthening CLDE, and develop your own distinctive pathways for connecting CLDE and career preparation across-the-curriculum, and with community partners.

## A Final Note: Initiative Fatigue Is Real. To Avoid it, MSC-CLDE Leaders Can Partner with Current Campus Priorities, e.g., Student Success, Guided Pathways, and More.....

- ★ Engaged Civic Learning Correlates with Increased Persistence and Completion—Across All Groups (See handout p. 6)
- ★ Building on This Evidence, Complete College America (CCA) **wants to Expand the Meanings** of Student Success to Include Career and Civic Readiness
- ★ “**Student Success**” Can Begin to Mean **Future Ready**—Both for Democracy and for Careers, including Career-Related Civic and Ethical Learning
- ★ **Watch for a Forthcoming CCA Report on Student Success and Democracy Success.** And Plan to Combine Forces with Leaders in Student Success, Career-Readiness, and Diversity/Inclusion/Belonging Endeavors

To learn more about CLDE and the  
Multi-State Collaborative, write:

[info@collegeciviclearning.org](mailto:info@collegeciviclearning.org)

Join our mailing list at:

[www.collegeciviclearning.org/contact](http://www.collegeciviclearning.org/contact)



**THANK YOU!**

