

## 53. Political Engagement Project (PEP) Interview Protocols

### A. PEP Faculty Interview

**Brief Introduction & Permission to Tape:** *Thank you for sharing your time. We're using these interviews to try to learn more about your understandings of political engagement, teaching practices, and other things. I'd like your permission to tape our conversation so that I can refer back to it later if I miss something in my notes, is that o.k.?*

#### **Section I: Course/program goals & Definitions of political engagement**

1. Let's start with an overview. What would you say are your key goals for this course/program – the most important things you want students to learn or take away from their experience? In what ways do you hope your students will develop or change as a result of their participation in this course/program?

2. How do you define politics or political engagement for the purposes of the course/program – or how do you yourself think about what “counts” as politics? Is the very definition of politics an issue in your class?

#### **SECTION II: Students' responses to/experiences in course/program**

3. With respect to your main goals, in what share of students do you think your course/program has the effects you want it to have? How can you tell – what are some of the signs you look for?

4. Are there what you consider to be negative as well as positive changes in your students that sometimes take place?

#### **SECTION III: Challenges for promoting political engagement in undergraduates**

5. Many college students have experience with direct service work but have never taken an interest in politics. Do you see any relationship between community service and political engagement? Do you have any strategies for drawing on students' experience with direct service as a foundation on which to build more specifically political engagement?

6. Have you found any widespread obstacles to students becoming politically engaged? (some faculty, for instance, have mentioned that their students can be very cynical or, at the other extreme, very complacent)? If so, are there things that you do to try to help them move past those kinds of barriers?

7. In any situation with conflicting interests and complex power relationships, there can be a temptation to cut corners ethically. Does your **course/program** attempt to deal with the ethical dimensions of politics or political engagement – things like honesty, integrity, concern about the means as well as the ends of action, and so on? Are there things that you do to support and help develop the ethical values and integrity that students bring to their political engagement?

#### **SECTION IV: Role of focal goal in this course/program**

8. What does **(fill in focal goal)** mean to you exactly, in the context of your course/program? If it makes sense to take it apart into different dimensions or components, what are the most important of these components?

**Focal goals:**

*(politically engaged identity, or how people gain a sense of themselves as politically engaged);*

*(political efficacy or confidence, or how people gain a sense that they can contribute effectively to political processes)*

*(political discussion, deliberation, and decision-making, or how people learn to discuss and evaluate political issues)*

*(political skills and tools for political action, or how people learn to use skills that are needed for various kinds of political involvement).*

**Perceptions of student learning/development with regard to focal goal:**

9. What are the students like with regard to **(fill in focal goal)** when they join your course/program?

**How they pursue the focal goal:**

10. What are some of the specific things you do in the course/program to try to foster the development of this focal goal? Can you give some examples?

11. How well do those approaches typically work? In what share of students do you think your course/program has the effects on **(fill in focal goal)** you want it to have? How can you tell – what are some of the signs you look for?

12. What kind of feedback do students get and from whom?

**Challenges/constraints related to focal goal:**

13. What kinds of things make it difficult to get students to achieve this focal goal?

#### **SECTION V: Role of focal learning activities in this course/program**

14. Now let's turn to **(fill in focal learning activity with reference to specific activities used in course/program)**. What do you hope it accomplishes, what do you hope students get out of it?

**Focal learning activities/pedagogies:**

*Political placement (internship, service-learning, etc.)*

*Political action project (getting something done on campus or in the community)*

*Political simulation (Mock Congress, Model U.N., etc.)*

*Interaction with political speakers or mentors*

*Political discussion and deliberation*

15. How well does it typically work? How do you know? What kind of evidence is available to you?

16. Are there other things that you think (**fill in focal learning activity**) accomplishes (at least for some students) even if these are not the main reasons you use it?

**Challenges/difficulties/constraints related to focal pedagogy and other aspects of the course/program:**

17. What do you think are the most critical things for making sure this pedagogy works well or for confronting challenges involved? If it seems to be going off track what can you do to make it work better?

18. Are there other aspects of the course/program that are especially difficult to implement successfully? How do you recommend handling those challenges?

**Teaching practices (*if sufficient time*):**

19. Could you describe a memorable session of your course/program, or one that embodied for you the experience of your approach to teaching?

**SECTION VI: Documenting your approaches to the focal goal and learning activity:**

20. If you wanted to make it possible for someone at another university to try to foster (**fill in focal goal**) or use this (**fill in focal learning activity**) or to adapt/borrow some part your approach to these, what do you think they would need – what would be most helpful, even essential, for them to have or know about? Are there “artifacts” (like examples of student work or assignment sheets, etc) that would help others get a concrete sense of what you do and how you do it, especially related to the focal goal and pedagogy?

**SECTION VII: Conclusion**

**Personal motivation for doing this kind of work (*if sufficient time*):**

21. Given the time commitment and challenges involved, why are you personally motivated to do this kind of teaching? What are the personal costs? What are the personal rewards?

**Additional information:**

22. Is there anything we haven't covered that you think it's important for us to know about or understand about your course/program or your approach to political engagement?

**Thank you for your time.**