

## **Civic Education the University of Virginia**

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### **UVA Mission Statement**

“The University of Virginia...serves the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world by developing **responsible citizen leaders and professionals**; advancing, preserving, and disseminating knowledge; and providing world-class patient care.” (1.1, “Purpose”)<sup>1</sup>

### **Code of Virginia: “Courses of study to be taught” at the University of Virginia**

“The following courses of study shall be taught at the University: the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish, Italian, German, and Anglo-Saxon languages; the different branches of mathematics, pure and physical; natural philosophy, chemistry, and mineralogy, including geology; the principles of agriculture; botany, anatomy, surgery, and medicine; zoology, history, ideology, general grammar, ethics, rhetoric, and belles lettres; and **civil government, political economy, the law of nature and of nations, and municipal law.**” (§23.1-2203)<sup>2</sup>

**Civic Engagement at a Glance** (one of six “strategic areas” of UVa Academic Outreach)  
*organized from “least” to “most” oriented around undergraduate civic education*

- **Weldon Cooper Center:** data analysis on demographics, economics, energy; some training programs for students, public servants, executives
- **National Security Policy Center:** research and policy engagement on national security initiatives; limited number of undergraduate courses on national security problem-solving
- **Karsh Institute of Democracy:** non-partisan institute dedicated to research and support of global democracy; funds faculty lines, research “labs” and working groups related to democratic initiatives; limited student engagement opportunities.
- **Miller Center:** non-partisan institute for research on American presidency, public policy, political history; student internships and fellowship programs
- **Center for Politics:** hub for undergraduate-focused programming and activities on national politics and civic engagement; internships, career panel, Youth Leadership, debate forums
- **Public Service Pathways:** undergraduate non-degree program with seven “pathways”; completion results in “presidential public service scholar” on transcript

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<sup>1</sup> “University Code of Ethics and Mission Statement,” <https://www.virginia.edu/statementofpurpose>, accessed March 28, 2024. Result of revised Board of Visitors Mission Statement on November 15, 2023; approved by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia on January 14, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title23.1/chapter22/section23.1-2203/>, accessed March 28, 2024.

## **Karsh Institute of Democracy: Civic Educational Opportunities**

### (1) Annual Graduate Seminar

Year-long graduate seminar available to any MA, PhD, or “Bridge” student at the University of Virginia. Seminar is often co-taught by Karsh-affiliated faculty. Fall semester is a “traditional” graduate reading seminar developed on a central but interdisciplinary theme (e.g. “Democracy and Literacy”). Spring semester provides resources (\$1000/ student) to pursue a research or outreach project of the students’ design, with a reception or public event to present findings to the UVa community at the end of the year.

### (2) Virginia College Civ Leaders Program

Five-week summer seminar for enrolled undergraduate students “interested in policy and/or the public sector.” No prior coursework or work experience in specialty topic required. Designed for 15-20 students, with stipends of \$1000 made available to each. 15-18 hours /week of combined in- and out-of class time commitment; readings, speaker series, class visits by practitioners and non-profit leaders. 2024 theme: “healthcare leadership and public policy.”

### (3) Research “Labs” and “Working Groups”

Interdisciplinary clusters of faculty and students collaborating on a central research project or programming (e.g. “Paradoxes of Ancient Citizenship”). Most (but not all) employ graduate-level researchers or assistants. One example that currently includes significant collaboration with/ hiring of undergraduates include:

- **Sound Justice Lab:** “research, advocacy, and creative practice” around legal failures and erasures in global democracies. Several interactive projects (podcasting, symposia, music archives, radio shows, film projects) that include undergraduates.

(4) Talking Across Difference: events, programming, classes, and research projects designed “to foster open dialogue among people with varying” ideologies. Heavy emphasis on undergraduate engagement: student mock debates, dinner dialogue, student legal forum, documentary film projects. This initiative serves largely to “capture” in a coordinated framework several student-led *and* institutional initiatives around political discourse and (largely) public speaking training.

### **Key successes**

- growing visibility with UG and GR students on grounds, especially following the major “Democracy 360” event in October 2023.
- robust funding for multiyear projects and series (emphasis on sustained growth) that facilitate hiring and training students from all disciplinary backgrounds and interests.
- serious integration of humanistic inquiry/ research and public outreach, practitioners.

### **Some challenges**

- policing (mostly by A&S departments) of development of and recruitment for new classes for both graduate and undergraduate
- identifying faculty interested in both teaching and mentoring students within the framework of Karsh Institute

**(Brand new!) Public Service Pathways**

Established Fall 2022 to incentivize and channel undergraduate students from years 1-4 towards public service, in service to UVA mission to “cultiv[ate] a public service mindset.” The Pathways do not constitute a degree program (and do not therefore complete with departments). They instead provide a very low credit-hour commitment with significant mentoring and access to faculty and practitioners from across the University.

**Basic timeline**

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
exploratory, no official requirements  (designed so as not to gatekeep late-comers or transfer students)	exploration of 2-3 chosen public service pathways  one required class	students select single pathway to pursue  (first run, 2024-25)	students complete public service project in pathway  (first run, 2025-26)
onboarding (optional) events  - designated lectures - sign up for newsletter - community engagement 101 workshop - virtual components: handshake account and pathwayU personal values assessment	- all students must complete UNST 1410: “Democracy and Public Service”  - students select one additional workshop (“Ethical Approaches to Community Engagement” or a Service-Learning course  - attend lectures/ events in selected pathways		

**Pathway Options:**

- Diplomacy and Security
- Education
- Global Sustainability
- Public Arts
- Justice
- Public Health
- Public Interest Technology

**Core competencies emphasized:** civic identity, civic commitment, community context, civic communication, ethical action, collaboration.

**Early Lessons**

- benefits of housing under the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
- importance of integrating other service organizations/ programs at UVA
- heavy administrative/ execution burden on relatively few faculty and staff; difficulty of recruiting tenure-stream faculty (no incentive structure)