



Executive Summary: Campus Conversations (Fall 2005)

In Spring and Summer of 2005 the Southwestern Pennsylvania Program for Deliberative Democracy was formed in partnership with Carnegie Mellon University and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh to improve regional decision-making through informed citizen deliberations. Among other forms of democratic dialogue, the Program utilizes the protocols of Jim Fishkin's Deliberative Poll® in order to indicate what the population of Southwestern Pennsylvania would think about a particular issue if it had time to become immersed in a deeply deliberative process (caae.phil.cmu.edu/caae/dp/).

Along with the development of a program for the region, a similar model of 'civic engagement' was inaugurated at the campus level. With support from the President's Diversity Advisory Council and the Coro Center for Civic Leadership, an initiative coined "Campus Conversations" was established along with a new 5th Year Grant titled the "Coro Fellowship in Local Democracy."

This report summarizes the activities of the Campus Conversations initiative during the Fall and Winter of 2005. These activities included the completion of the first ever deliberative poll conducted at the campus level and the development of a website to house and disseminate information about past and future events (<http://caae.phil.cmu.edu/cc/>). Relationship with the University Libraries were also developed to the point where the campus library now functions as a focal point of the Campus Conversations Project (and where Project PICOLA – Public Informed Citizen Online Assembly – will be deployed to augment these campus deliberations).

Our first deliberative poll took place on Saturday, November 19. We created materials on two broad issues that had specific relevance to Carnegie Mellon students. Those issues were the diversity of the campus community and campus moral values in private and public life (with an emphasis on the problem of illegal file sharing).¹

While our actual sample on the day of the event was small (we utilized extra volunteers to participate in the discussions), some preliminary results indicate that we are doing something important and the initial results of the poll back this up. On the qualitative

¹ The November 2005 Campus Conversation was the result of a multidisciplinary effort between the Southwestern Pennsylvania Program for Deliberative Democracy, the Coro Center for Civic Leadership, the English department's Professional writing program, the Eberly Teaching Center, the Diversity Advisory Council and Carnegie Mellon University Libraries.

side, measuring from left to right, our participants had a very positive impression of the event:

To what extent did you find participation in the deliberative poll:				
	not at all	a little	moderate	very
Engaging?	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.67%
Enjoyable?	0.00%	16.67%	55.56%	27.78%
Provide exposure to new or different points-of-view	0.00%	33.33%	50.00%	16.67%

Furthermore, analysis of the issues discussed reveal:

- Participants indicated significantly greater familiarity with issues surrounding diversity and copyright laws.
- Participants indicated significantly greater value in having interactions with diverse others.
- Participants viewed the effects of “clustering or hiving” on students’ social development as significantly less negative.
- Participants viewed the university’s policy on alcohol consumption as significantly less restrictive.
- Participants viewed illegally downloading copyrighted music as a significantly greater moral wrong.

Campus Conversations has had the benefit of a fair amount of media coverage. The *Tartan* ran two articles specific to Campus Conversations (copies of both are included in this packet) and press releases were published in both the *Pittsburgh Business Times* (Nov. 4-11, 2005 edition) and *Carnegie Mellon Today*.

In the Spring of 2006 we will complement our ‘random sample’ with a ‘convenience sample’ (a more direct recruitment of participants that will nevertheless maintain the demographic profile of the campus). We will also continue to raise campus awareness of this project through advertisements and other kinds of announcements (including briefings before campus groups).

The topic for our Spring poll (April 7th) will revolve around the controversies surrounding the David Horowitz’s “Academic Bill of Rights,” the reply by the American Association of University Professors, and the proposed version of this initiative that is currently being discussed on this campus.

Our Budget for fiscal year 2005 and 2006 is balanced and will remain so. Funding from both the Coro Center and Carnegie Mellon will be requested to cover Campus Conversations for another year (2006-2007) while Carnegie Mellon Alumni support is sought to underwrite this program in future years.