

Bridgewater College QEP Academic Citizenship Executive Summary

Academic Citizenship is designed to shift the academic culture at Bridgewater College by helping students recognize themselves as empowered members of an academic community. Citizenship entails both opportunities and responsibilities, and the program defines what it means to develop an informed and civil voice that can actively participate in both scholarly and public forums. The plan fosters the skills needed to develop that voice, a BC Voice, and reinforces those skills by creating specific learning environments in which students participate in civil discourse to address complex issues, both societal and personal. As students develop the ability to understand and evaluate claims about what information and explanations should be classified as knowledge, they also learn to assert their own authoritative claims as part of the academic conversation. In the process, they participate in democratic deliberation. They discover the importance of open and respectful dialogue and can work cooperatively with those who hold different values and perspectives, thus learning how to responsibly use their voices in the public sphere.

The goals for the program and the plans for its implementation were developed through a three-year, campus-wide conversation that has exemplified the standards the program now seeks to encourage. Academic Citizenship enhances the environment that supports student learning by implementing programs to meet five goals:

- In their courses, instructors will use a common language to describe curricular and extra-curricular activities related to Academic Citizenship (e.g. instructors will identify civil discourse, perspective-taking, public reasoning, and self-authorship as key course objectives in addition to the disciplinary content of their courses).
- Instructors will use pedagogies and assignments that require students to responsibly interact with people and texts (e.g. listen respectfully to persons with different values and experiences, demonstrate attitudes of openness and mutual respect in the midst of disagreement, and seek clarification).
- Instructors will use pedagogies and assignments that require students to practice perspective-taking (e.g. articulate multiple viewpoints, gather evidence and clarify perspectives).
- Instructors will use pedagogies and assignments that require students to practice public reasoning (e.g. use public dialogue to gather and interrogate evidence, identify unstated assumptions, weigh competing viewpoints and make decisions).
- Instructors will use pedagogies and assignments that require students to use self-authorship (e.g. cultivate a unique voice, use that voice to articulate well-supported arguments, and reassess and adjust arguments in light of the viewpoints of others).

The program fulfills these goals through two complimentary initiatives:

- an annual pedagogy project wherein faculty members develop student-centered learning strategies which focus on building perspective taking, public reasoning, and self-authorship skills in their courses
- an annual theme called the Big Question to focus and invigorate campus conversations

The first initiative disseminates skills and the second puts those skills into practice. Program assessment includes direct measures using a rubric scoring of course portfolios designed to document course practices

and assignments, as well as indirect measures such as the NSSE survey data and the CLA exam to assess perspective taking and public reasoning skills.

Academic Citizenship carries out Bridgewater College's mission to "educate and develop the whole person" by asserting that informed, collaborative and civil dialogue is a productive way to get students more engaged in their education and in the construction of their own worldviews.

