***Civic Learning***

**Definition**

Civic learning means acquisition of the knowledge, the intellectual skills and the applied competencies that citizens need for informed and effective participation in civic and democratic life; it also means acquiring an understanding of the social values that underlie democratic structures and practices.

* The knowledge component of civic learning includes an understanding of the United States, including its history and governmental traditions, other world societies, and the relationship(s) between and among these cultures and nations.
* The intellectual skills component refers to qualities of mind necessary to engage effectively in civic activities.
* The applied competencies component refers to the practical skills and capacities needed to engage effectively in civic activities.
* The values component refers to understanding the social and political values that are associated with democratic and civic institutions.

(Massachusetts BHE Policy on Civic Learning, May 2014)

**Rationale and Intent**

“Preparing graduates for their public lives as citizens, members of communities, and professionals in society has historically been a responsibility of higher education” (AAC&U Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric). Fitchburg State University has embraced this calling through its mission to foster “civic and global responsibility.” The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education has also called upon campuses to incorporate civic learning as an expected outcome for undergraduate students. This Civic Learning outcome and requirement is designed to ensure students will take courses that prepare them to be informed citizens contributing to a diverse society.

**Goal**

Fitchburg State University students will: Articulate the values associated with democratic and public institutions in the context of local, national, and global perspectives, and begin to develop practical skills and knowledge required for engaged citizenship to address issues such as social justice and inequality.

**Potential Course Objectives**

The objectives below are recommended as models for general education course syllabi. The list is not meant to be complete. Faculty should feel free to adopt these as course objectives, or they may develop their own.

* Develop familiarity with key democratic texts and universal democratic principles, and with selected debates—in US or other societies—concerning their applications
* Develop historical and/or sociological understanding of democratic and social movements for change, in the US and elsewhere
* Understand one’s sources of identity and their influence on civic values, assumptions, and responsibilities to a wider public
* Gain knowledge of multiple religious/ethical traditions and alternative views about the relation between these traditions and government
* Cultivate knowledge of the political systems that frame constitutional democracies and of political levers for influencing change
* Gain knowledge of rights and responsibilities of the individual citizen within wider community
* Integrate knowledge, skills, and examined values to challenge injustice and address its root causes
* Foster the capacity and commitment to work collectively with diverse others to address common problems
* Practice working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people’s lives and the sustainability of the planet
* Analyze and navigate systems (political, social, economic) in order to plan and engage in public action