



## ***The American Democracy Project Chair Reports on Meeting Highlights***

By Dr. Kristy Sheeler, Chair, Department of Communication Studies and Chair, IUPUI ADP Steering Committee



The [American Democracy Project](#) (ADP) is a national initiative of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, begun in 2003. The goal of the initiative is to graduate citizens who become actively involved in their communities. IUPUI is one of over 200 colleges and universities who have risen to the challenge.

The ADP national meeting was held in Orlando, FL on June 2-4, 2011 and the conference theme was "Beyond Voting: Active Citizenship in the New Era." You can find some of the conference highlights on the live [ADP blog](#). From my perspective, it was one of the more interactive conferences I've attended where we put our eCitizenship efforts into practice. For example, you could follow the meetings' activities on Twitter using the hash tag: #ADPS11. Participants captured live video and shared it on the [ADP YouTube](#) page and shared conference materials on the ADP national meeting wiki. Anyone could access the wiki by scanning the ADP QR code using a smart phone with a barcode scanning app. Check out the [ADP Facebook](#) page for more on the conference as well as the activities of ADP campuses nationwide.

My presentation was on the topic of citizenship and deliberation. I conducted a deliberative polling activity in my political communication class in the fall semester 2010. Normally deliberative polling is an activity that gauges the impact of deliberation on opinion formation through the use of pre- and post-deliberation surveys. Statistical measures indicate the change from pre- to post-surveys and whether that change is statistically significant. My study added to the statistical analysis by transcribing the deliberations. I wanted to know whether students could actually engage in productive deliberation on the topic of the responsibilities of citizenship in the 21st century.

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I learned that students have some difficulty when asked to deliberate, especially when the goal is not persuasion but creating a high information environment. However, when provided with the tools to deliberate productively, some students were able to change their communication behaviors for the better. The activity created an environment where students could practice talking politics and explore their personal opinions of what it means to be a citizen. Coming to the conclusion that being a good citizen means "being informed about politics and political issues" and that it is "important to increase political participation" and "to be informed about politics" may create an environment in which some students begin to practice their citizenship in different or more thoughtful ways.

IUPUI is a recognized leader in the ADP. Our former Executive Vice Chancellor, William Plater, attended and participated in the meeting. I had the honor of presenting with him the William M. Plater Award for Leadership in Civic Engagement to Vince Magnuson, Provost of the University of Minnesota, Duluth. It is the only award of its kind presented to university administrators who support civic engagement efforts on their campuses.

Outstanding keynote speakers included Erica Williams who spoke on becoming more inclusive in our civic engagement efforts, Russell Dalton who spoke on the ways that the Millennial Generation is differently engaged (not disengaged), and Andrew Rosenthal, Editorial Page Editor of the *New York Times*, who spoke on the purpose of newspapers in a democracy.

If you're interested in taking part in these great efforts on the IUPUI campus, or you're doing something in your own work that aligns with the goals of ADP, then get involved in the IUPUI ADP Steering Committee. We are working on many exciting events including Democracy Plaza debates and Pass the Mics, Constitution Day Activities, eCitizenship projects including an eDemocracy Plaza, and much more. For more information, contact Kristy Sheeler at [ksheeler@iupui.edu](mailto:ksheeler@iupui.edu).