



News Release

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WESTERN FOCUSES ON IMPROVING STUDENTS' CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

St. Joseph, Mo. —Aug. 5, 2003—Missouri Western State College has joined a national initiative, the American Democracy Project, to increase the number of undergraduate students who will be engaged in meaningful civic actions. The college is one of 146 participating institutions chosen from the members of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU).

“Western’s participation in the American Democracy Project is part of our campus “Citizen-Scholar” project where we are developing programs to increase students’ participation in voting and other organized activities to improve society,” said Dr. David Arnold, vice president of academic and student affairs. “Our national challenge is that even young people who are leaders in community service are skeptical that civic activities and organizations actually make a difference in the world we live. At Western, we want students to apply their learning to the challenge of engaging in democratic work as an integral part of solving societal ills.”

The Project addresses America’s decreasing rate of participation in civic life - voting, advocacy, and other forms of civic engagement. The Project activities include:

- Creating a national conversation among campuses about the theory and practice of civic engagement.
- Developing institutional commitment through the involvement of senior administrators, faculty, staff and students by addressing institutional mission and purpose; and focusing on civic engagement as a learning experience for undergraduates.
- Initiating new projects, courses and teaching strategies, and extracurricular programs.
- Measuring civic engagement of undergraduates on participating campuses, and assessing the influence of greater civic engagement.

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- Disseminating successful civic engagement models to an audience of higher education institutions and policy makers.

“Being a partner in the American Democracy Project will enable Western to prepare its students better for active roles as citizens in the communities where they will live after graduation,” said Dr. James Scanlon, Western’s president.

AASCU and *The New York Times* are partners in the Project that begins this summer with extensive programming at AASCU’s Academic Affairs Summer Meeting. Chief academic officers from participating institutions will work together to develop strategies for campus engagement and change. Tom Ehrlich, senior scholar at Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, will be the principal speaker and conference leader.

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Missouri Western State College is a four-year public institution providing a blend of traditional liberal arts and professional degree programs. The college offers student-centered, high quality instruction that focuses on experience-based learning, community service, and state-of-the-art technology. Western is located in St. Joseph, Mo. and is committed to the educational, economic, cultural and social development of the region it serves.