

MTSU Faculty and Students Present at the 2013 American Democracy Project Conference

August 8, 2016

Beginning in 2003, the American Democracy Project (ADP) is a multi-campus initiative whose goal is “to produce graduates who are committed to being knowledgeable, involved citizens in their communities.” The organization is made up of 250 colleges and universities that host initiatives such as “voter education and registration, curriculum revision projects, campus audits, special days of action and reflection (MLK Day of Service, Constitution Day), speaker series, and many recognition and award programs.”

The 2013 American Democracy Project and Democracy Commitment National Meeting took place June 6th-8th at the Marriott City Center in Denver, Colorado. The conference focused on the theme “21st Century Citizens: Building Bridges, Solving Problems” which discussed college graduates’ need for “educational experiences and civic skills.”

The Experiential Learning (EXL) Program at Middle Tennessee State University prepares students for future careers through hands-on experiences and opportunities in course curriculum. The American Democracy Project is a major component in EXL Civic Engagement and History courses, thus the EXL program sponsored travel of MTSU faculty and students for this year’s American Democracy Project Meeting. Among these MTSU speakers and presenters were Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership Laura Blackwell, History Major Robert Devenish, Social Work Major Brendon T. Holloway, Organizational Communication Major Brandon Loso, Philosophy Major Joshua Moore, Assistant Professor of Education Terry L. Goodin, and Associate Professor of Biology Kim Cleary Sadler.

The following presentation descriptions for MTSU’s faculty and students were provided in the conference’s official program (<http://www.aascu.org/meetings/adptdc13/FullProgram.pdf>):

- **Students "On the Hill:" College Students Engaging in Legislative Advocacy Relevant to Their College Majors and Future Careers**

This presentation makes the case for college students to engage with state policymakers on issues relating to their college major and future employment. With knowledge of legislative processes, how to communicate with legislators and attitudes of civility and nonpartisanship, students can be well-prepared to be civically engaged in state policymaking.

Presenter: **Laura Blackwell Clark**, Assistant Professor, Middle Tennessee State University

- **Vets on Campus: Evaluating Military Veterans’ Civic Engagement as University Students and How ADP Can Help**

Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) student veterans were polled on their attitudes and engagement, both on campus and in the community, toward understanding the impact of the military on civic life. This presentation examines how MTSU’s vets program supports our veteran students and how ADP can help.

Presenter: **Robert Devenish**, History Major (Junior), Middle Tennessee State University

- **Gender Identity and Attitudes on Campus: Fostering Awareness and Generating Dialogue through ADP**

Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) students were surveyed and faculty members were interviewed on their attitudes regarding gender identification and transgender students on campus. Hear where MTSU currently stands on gender identification and transgender issues, and how ADP can help.

Presenter: **Brendon T. Holloway**, Social Work Major (Sophomore), Middle Tennessee State University

- **ADP and SGA: Building Bridges across University Structures**

The American Democracy Project and Student Government Association are two vital collegiate organizations whose mission is to promote community involvement and civic engagement on college campuses. Through collaboration and more-extensive involvement, Middle Tennessee State University strives to graduate more civically engaged citizens.

Presenter: **Brandon Loso**, Organizational Communications Major (Senior), Middle Tennessee State University

- **Student Organization Mutualism and Cooperation: Improving Communication and Collaboration through Better Data Collection**

Developing accessible data-collection software is a structural baseline toward enhancing civic collaboration across campus. The speaker reflects Middle Tennessee State University's ADP efforts to integrate disparate databases into an integrated system to properly capture the civic work of all members of our university community.

Presenter: **Joshua Moore**, Philosophy Major (Senior), Middle Tennessee State University

- **From the Classroom to the Community: Using Problem-Based Learning to Cross the Bridge**

In today's economy, students, parents and public officials want education to relate directly to personal income. This "vocational" approach places pressure on college professors who want to encourage critical thinking and problem solving. Problem-based learning, with its emphasis on the solution of community problems, allows college professors to do both.

Presenter: **Terry L. Goodin**, Assistant Professor of Education, Middle Tennessee State University

- **Building Community and Interdisciplinary Bridges in General Education Courses through Ecological Restoration Projects**

The more things change, the more they stay the same: a silent biological threat to our natural heritage is the loss of native plant species. To introduce civic engagement and applied experiences in biology, the speaker's large enrollment non-majors biology course incorporates ecological restoration participation as a course requirement.

Presenter: **Kim Cleary Sadler**, Associate Professor of Biology, Middle Tennessee State University