



Teaching Citizens: Civic Education and the U.S. Public Service Academy

The U.S. Public Service Academy will offer students an academically rigorous curriculum that gives all students a strong foundation of civic education. As a national institution, the Academy will undertake a special responsibility to develop a core curriculum of civic education that can serve as a model for teaching effective citizenship and public leadership.

The Academy traces its lineage back to President George Washington's first State of the Union speech, when he first broached the idea of building a unifying national public college in the nation's capital. **To honor this heritage and prepare students for future civic leadership, all Academy students will be steeped in American History and Government, with a special emphasis on the role of the Constitution as the basis of public service.** Students will put their civic knowledge into action through leadership development activities and service learning courses that engage them with the world beyond the Academy.



The Academy's focus on civic education will help address a disconcerting lack of civic knowledge and civic engagement among young Americans:

- A University of Connecticut survey of 14,000 college students found widespread lack of civic literacy. Students were asked basic multiple choice questions about American history, foreign policy, economics, and government. Freshmen averaged 51.7% correct; seniors averaged only 53.2%.
- A National Youth Survey conducted by Circle for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at the University of Maryland revealed that only half of the 1,500 young people polled believe that voting is important, and only 46 percent think they can make a difference in solving community problems.
- The most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress test of civic knowledge found that only 25% of high school seniors had an "adequate" knowledge in civics and government; 35% of seniors had little or no knowledge at all.

(Sources: Carnegie Reporter, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Center for Civic Education)

At a time when "patriotism-lite" characterizes our country, the Public Service Academy would be a major step toward reinvigorating citizenship obligations.

Charles Moskos, Northwestern University

The Academy promises to offer students of all backgrounds and from all over the country the opportunity to experience the best in American higher education. With four years in a structured, service-oriented undergraduate program and five years of hands-on public service, these young leaders will have the experience, skills, and commitment to become strong leaders in their communities. **By structuring its academic program around a core of civic education, the Academy will create a corps of patriotic leaders dedicated to helping fulfill the ideals of our nation.**

U.S. Public Service Academy

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