



Policy *Perspective*

Texas Undergraduates Fail at Civics: ISI's American Civic Literacy Survey Results

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*This paper is the 2nd in
a series on the state of
higher education in Texas.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), a non-profit educational organization, commissioned the University of Connecticut's Department of Public Policy to administer a test on American civics to over 14,000 undergraduate students at 50 universities in Fall 2005. Baylor and West Texas A&M Universities were randomly selected for inclusion in the survey, while the University of Texas-Austin was selected due to its status as the flagship state university. The 60 multiple choice questions measure the extent to which American universities successfully teach America's history and institutions. Transmitting this knowledge to the rising generation illuminates and sustains the achievement of America's founding and its flourishing civilization.

Approximately 1,000 freshmen and senior undergraduates were randomly selected from the three Texas universities to take a basic test on America's history and institutions. On average, the students answered 49.3 percent questions correct, failure on a traditional scale. On average, the freshmen at the University of Texas-Austin, Baylor, and West Texas A&M scored 47.9 percent, which proved lower than the average of 51.7 percent for all 50 universities. The average score among seniors at these three Texas schools was 50.8 percent, once again proving less than the 53.2 percent score for seniors at all 50 colleges.

Texas undergraduates gained a trivial 2.9 percent of civic knowledge during their baccalaureates, and this estimated learning

was statistically no different than the average learning of 1.5 percent across all 50 colleges. The University of Texas at Austin enrolled the highest scoring Texas freshmen, while Baylor produced the most learning during the baccalaureate. Undergraduates at these three Texas universities were below the national average in the number of history, government, and economics courses taken during college, as well as in weekly hours of homework.

The average freshmen enrolling in the three Texas universities in 2005 scored 4 percent lower than the average freshmen at all 50 colleges. The average senior at these three Texas universities scored 2.4 percent lower than the average senior at all 50 colleges.

However, the average undergraduate at these three Texas universities enjoyed 1.4 percent more civic learning during the baccalaureate compared to average undergraduate learning at all 50 colleges. But this advantage in civic learning or civic value added was statistically no different than that for the remaining colleges.

The evidence suggests that several college policies would increase the average civic learning at the three Texas universities included in the survey. This would include increasing the number of civic courses available, attractive, and even required, especially courses in history and economics. Another measure would include a greater emphasis upon course quality or learning per course, since their students took an above-average quantity of civic courses, but performed closer to average in

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civic learning. Increased homework norms, that approach at least the national norm, would further increase learning per course at all three Texas universities. Finally, enrollment policies that increase the similarity of students' beginning civic knowledge at each university would also increase learning.

KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING IN TEXAS UNIVERSITIES

Table 1 shows that the average score for all 6,689 seniors across the country who took the test at all 50 universities was 53.2 percent questions correct. The average score for the 7,405 freshmen was almost identical at 51.7 percent correct. Hence, taken together, the 50 universities mostly failed to advance undergraduates from their very limited and beginning freshmen knowledge. The highest gain occurred in the area of the market economy (+3.7%), and the lowest in American history (+0.2%), and the difference between freshmen and senior scores in American history was so small to be statistically no different.

TABLE 1: OVERALL FOR 50 COLLEGES
AVERAGE PERCENT CORRECT ON AMERICAN CIVIC LITERACY QUESTIONS

Test Section	Freshmen	Seniors	Value Added
Overall	51.7%	53.2%	+1.5%
American History	58.3%	58.5%	+0.2%
Political Thought	50.5%	51.4%	+0.9%
America and the World	49.8%	51.5%	+1.7%
The Market Economy	46.8%	50.5%	+3.7%

Source: Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), American Civic Literacy Survey Results.

Tables 2-4 summarize the performance of the three Texas universities surveyed. Total average scores appear as well as the average scores within each of the four areas tested. While the University of Texas-Austin enrolled the highest scoring freshmen as measured by their mean score of 53.85 percent, Baylor University produced the largest civic learning during students' baccalaureates as measured by their average gain score of +2.53 percent.

TABLE 2: BAYLOR UNIVERSITY
AVERAGE PERCENT CORRECT ON AMERICAN CIVIC LITERACY QUESTIONS

Test Section	Freshmen	Seniors	Value Added
Overall	47.63%	50.17%	+2.53%
American History	54.28%	56.37%	+2.09%
Political Thought	47.36%	49.44%	+2.08%
America and the World	43.54%	45.94%	+2.40%
The Market Economy	44.27%	48.03%	+3.76%

Source: Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), American Civic Literacy Survey Results.

TABLE 3: WEST TEXAS A&M
AVERAGE PERCENT CORRECT ON AMERICAN CIVIC LITERACY QUESTIONS

Test Section	Freshmen	Seniors	Value Added
Overall	41.03%	43.54%	+2.51%
American History	47.26%	49.86%	+2.60%
Political Thought	42.21%	43.32%	+1.12%
America and the World	36.45%	40.01%	+3.56%
The Market Economy	37.22%	39.83%	+2.60%

Source: Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), American Civic Literacy Survey Results.

TABLE 4: UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AUSTIN
AVERAGE PERCENT CORRECT ON AMERICAN CIVIC LITERACY QUESTIONS

Test Section	Freshmen	Seniors	Value Added
Overall	53.85%	55.82%	+1.97%
American History	59.20%	61.41%	+2.22%
Political Thought	53.00%	54.16%	+1.17%
America and the World	50.11%	53.14%	+3.04%
The Market Economy	52.39%	53.58%	+1.20%

Source: Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), American Civic Literacy Survey Results.

Table 5 (next page) compares the performance of these Texas universities with each of the remaining 47 universities outside of Texas. When juxtaposed to the remaining 47 universities, these three Texas universities proved remarkably similar in failing to significantly advance students' knowledge of America's history and institutions, being concentrated slightly above the middle-ranked college in terms of value added.

Taken as a group, these three Texas universities outperformed Johns Hopkins University in civic learning by 9.7 percent, and they also outperformed Yale University by 3.8 percent. However, Rhodes College outperformed these three Texas Universities in civic learning by 9.3 percent, and George Mason outperformed them by 2.7 percent.

TEXAS UNIVERSITIES' PERFORMANCE IN FOUR SUBJECT AREAS

Leaders of Texas colleges might argue that they specialize in one of the four subject areas and they should therefore be ranked by fulfillment of their mission. The rankings of these three Texas universities, however, do not change significantly whether based on overall value added to civic knowledge, or the value added in any of the four areas we tested. **Table 6** (page 5) shows how each college ranks in the four subject areas, with Texas universities highlighted once again. Compared to the ranking in overall civic learning, Texas universities ranked slightly higher in American history, but lower in learning about the market economy.

DID TEXAS UNIVERSITIES' ATTEMPT TO TEACH AMERICA'S HISTORY AND INSTITUTIONS?

Below-average civic course completions among Texas students partly accounts for Texas universities' mediocre performance in civic learning. Overall, first semester seniors at the 50 colleges surveyed had taken an average of 4.5 courses in the civic oriented courses of history, political science, and economics. Alternatively, seniors at the three Texas universities had taken an average of 4.4 of these courses.

While Texas seniors had taken slightly more history and political science courses compared to non-Texas seniors, they had taken fewer economics courses. This partly explains Texas universities' higher ranking in American history and lower ranking in the market economy. The University of Texas at Austin enjoyed the highest proportion of seniors reporting that they had taken at least one survey course in American history at 66 percent, as shown in column six of **Table 7** (page 6). But these survey courses in American

TABLE 5: OVERALL CIVIC LEARNING BY COLLEGE

Rank	College	Freshmen Mean	Senior Mean	Value Added
1	Rhodes College	50.63%	62.23%	+11.60%
2	Colorado State University*	40.64	51.53	10.88
3	Calvin College	49.52	58.99	9.47
4	Grove City College	58.98	68.37	9.39
5	University of Colorado Boulder	39.70	48.58	8.88
6	Spring Arbor University*	39.47	47.76	8.29
7	University of New Mexico	38.70	46.86	8.17
8	University of Mobile*	40.58	48.08	7.50
9	Florida Memorial University*	24.44	31.23	6.79
10	Central Connecticut State University*	39.07	44.08	5.01
11	George Mason University	50.87	55.86	4.99
12	Youngstown State University*	37.63	42.51	4.88
13	North Carolina Central University*	28.94	33.71	4.77
14	Utah State University*	43.84	48.26	4.42
15	Lynchburg College*	43.33	47.33	3.99
16	Catholic University of America	45.88	49.10	3.22
17	University of Massachusetts, Boston*	42.52	45.50	2.97
18	Princeton University	66.03	68.78	2.75
19	Eastern Kentucky University*	31.41	34.14	2.73
20	Baylor University*	47.63	50.17	2.53
21	West Texas A&M University*	41.03	43.54	2.51
22	University of South Alabama*	39.68	41.70	2.01
23	University of Texas Austin	53.85	55.82	1.97
24	Wheaton College	59.69	61.64	1.95
25	Harvard University	67.81	69.71	1.90
26	University of Washington	48.32	50.13	1.80
27	Appalachian State University*	41.71	43.40	1.69
28	University of North Carolina	54.83	56.46	1.63
29	Capital University*	44.02	45.26	1.24
30	American University*	63.37	64.38	1.01
31	Stanford University	62.21	63.06	0.85
32	University of West Florida*	42.14	42.84	0.70
33	Washington & Lee University	63.61	63.85	0.24
34	Dartmouth College	67.87	67.99	0.12
35	University of Michigan	52.13	52.07	-0.06
36	Ithaca College*	48.79	48.57	-0.22
37	University of Chicago	64.53	64.25	-0.28
38	Mass. Institute of Technology*	63.91	63.53	-0.38
39	Williams College	69.04	68.38	-0.67
40	University of Florida	48.55	48.78	-0.77

Rank	College	Freshmen Mean	Senior Mean	Value Added
41	Wofford College	49.17	48.25	-0.92
42	University of Virginia	63.73	62.66	-1.07
43	Georgetown University	69.13	67.89	-1.24
44	Yale University	69.76	68.28	-1.48
45	University of West Georgia*	34.92	32.89	-2.03
46	Duke University	60.59	58.29	-2.29
47	Brown University	62.47	59.84	-2.64
48	Cornell University*	59.39	56.14	-3.25
49	University of California Berkeley	60.44	54.87	-5.57
50	Johns Hopkins University*	61.71	54.37	-7.34

Source: *Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), American Civic Literacy Survey Results.*

* Randomly selected colleges

history proved somewhat ineffective in significantly increasing their students' learning of American history.

Table 7 also shows the quantity of history, political science, and economics courses taken at each of the 50 colleges, with the colleges listed in order of their average civic learning. Baylor University distinguishes itself among Texas universities by their students take the fewest civic courses but simultaneously producing the highest civic learning, and this is evidence of higher course quality as measured by higher learning per course.

WHAT DO UNDERGRADUATES LEARN AND FAIL TO LEARN AT TEXAS UNIVERSITIES?

Each of the 60 civic questions included on ISI's civic literacy test was intended to test important knowledge. Working with a distinguished board of professors from around the country and outside reviewers, we identified 60 themes that appear in the first column of **Table 8** (page 9). This listing illustrates the range of ideas tested in American history (questions 1–17), American government and political thought (18–31), international affairs (32–47), and the market economy (48–60). The themes consist of basic civic knowledge or concepts, not obscure or arbitrarily selected knowledge.

Column two in Table 8 shows the average learning on each question across all 50 universities. Learning is measured by the percent correct among seniors minus the percent

correct among freshmen. Columns three through five show the civic learning on each question at each of the three universities surveyed in Texas.

Table 8 shows that Baylor undergraduates outperformed their counterparts at other universities in their learning of two economic themes. The largest advantage appeared on question number 54 concerning Keynesian thought. While the typical learning of Keynesian thought is 1.7 percent across the 50 colleges, it was 14.4 percent at Baylor. Baylor students also mastered the definition of free enterprise with a gain of 18 percent, while students at other universities gained only 6.9 percent on this item. The largest shortfall at Baylor compared to other universities consisted in the thought of Abraham Lincoln. While students failed to gain or lose any knowledge of Lincoln's thought at all 50 universities, freshmen actually outscored seniors by 10.6 percent on this item at Baylor, demonstrating "negative learning" of Lincoln at Baylor.

West Texas A&M University distinguished itself most in their students' learning of two history themes. On question 44, 19.4 percent of undergraduates at West Texas A&M gained knowledge about the Vietnam War, compared to only 0.5 percent at other universities. West Texas A&M also significantly outperformed other colleges on history question 13 pertaining to the Reconstruction period following the Civil War. Its worst performance in value added relative to other universities was question number 31 requiring students to conceptually identify the nature of society.

Finally, the University of Texas-Austin distinguished itself most on history question number two. Their students gained 13.5 percent in their ability to identify the Puritan religious tradition, compared to a loss of this ability by 0.6 percent at other universities. It also distinguished itself on government question number 23, requiring the identification of the court case establishing the power of judicial review. Its worst performance relative to other universities was on economic question number 53, requiring students to identify the concept of a public good. On average, students at other universities gained 2.8 percent on this question, while students at the University of Texas-Austin "lost" 11.7 percent of knowledge of a public good.

TABLE 6: CIVIC LEARNING BY CIVIC THEME AND BY COLLEGE
(COLLEGE RANK IN PARENTHESES)

Overall Rank	College	American History	American Politics	International Affairs	Market Economy
1	Rhodes College	+8.9% (5)	+12.4% (1)	+15.3% (1)	+11% (3)
2	Colorado State University	10.1 (3)	9.8 (3)	11.9 (2)	12.2 (1)
3	Calvin College	13.2 (1)	8.0 (5)	7.2 (7)	9.1 (6)
4	Grove City College	9.2 (4)	6.2 (8)	10.6 (3)	11.7 (2)
5	University of Colorado Boulder	10.8 (2)	6.5 (7)	9.3 (5)	8.4 (11)
6	Spring Arbor University	8.9 (6)	10.5 (2)	5.6 (10)	8.4 (10)
7	University of New Mexico	6.7 (9)	6.1 (9)	10.3 (4)	9.7 (5)
8	University of Mobile	4.1 (12)	8.8 (4)	7.5 (6)	10.7 (4)
9	Florida Memorial University	8.8 (7)	6.8 (6)	5.9 (9)	5.2 (19)
10	Central Connecticut State University	7.2 (8)	2.0 (21)	5.2 (11)	5.2 (21)
11	George Mason University	2.5 (18)	2.1 (19)	7.1 (8)	8.6 (9)
12	Youngstown State University	4.2 (11)	4.3 (12)	3.1 (22)	8.6 (8)
13	North Carolina Central University	6.0 (10)	4.7 (10)	3.9 (17)	4.3 (25)
14	Utah State University	4.0 (13)	4.0 (14)	3.2 (20)	6.6 (15)
15	Lynchburg College	0.7 (24)	3.1 (15)	4.9 (12)	8.1 (12)
16	Catholic University of America	1.9 (21)	2.3 (17)	3.9 (18)	4.7 (23)
17	University of Massachusetts, Boston	-0.20 (27)	1.2 (24.5)	4.2 (14)	6.9 (14)
18	Princeton University	1.6 (22)	4.0 (13)	2.1 (26)	0.8 (43)
19	Eastern Kentucky University	-0.8 (30)	2.8 (16)	4.0 (16)	5.8 (17)
20	Baylor University	2.1 (20)	2.1 (20)	2.4 (25)	3.8 (29)
21	West Texas A&M University	2.6 (17)	1.1 (27)	3.6 (19)	2.6 (33)
22	University of South Alabama	1.5 (23)	-0.2 (36)	2.9 (24)	2.9 (31)
23	University of Texas Austin	2.2 (19)	1.2 (24)	3.0 (23)	1.2 (41)
24	Wheaton College	0.1 (25)	1.1 (26)	2.0 (27)	5.2 (20)
25	Harvard University	-1.5 (32)	4.6 (11)	0.8 (30)	3.6 (30)
26	University of Washington	3.0 (14)	0.8 (30)	-0.7 (36)	4.7 (22)
27	Appalachian State University	3.0 (15)	-2.1 (41)	4.4 (13)	0.5 (44)
28	University of North Carolina	2.7 (16)	1.3 (23)	0.9 (29)	1.5 (39)
29	Capital University	-0.3 (29)	-2.4 (42)	4.2 (15)	4.1 (26)
30	American University	-1.3 (31)	0.9 (29)	3.1 (21)	1.7 (38)
31	Stanford University	-2.4 (38)	2.1 (18)	1.5 (28)	2.6 (32)
32	University of West Florida	-0.2 (28)	1.6 (22)	-0.2 (35)	2.1 (36)
33	Washington & Lee University	-1.5 (33.5)	-1.3 (38)	0.6 (32)	3.8 (28)
34	Dartmouth College	-1.9 (36)	0.1 (34)	0.2 (33)	2.1 (37)
35	University of Michigan	-1.8 (35)	-1.3 (37)	-1.6 (41)	5.4 (18)
36	Ithaca College	-.02 (26)	0.2 (32)	-2.1 (42)	1.1 (42)
37	University of Chicago	-2.8 (41)	0.3 (31)	-3.3 (47)	7.9 (13)
38	Mass. Institute of Technology	-2.5 (39)	-0.1 (35)	-2.5 (45)	4.7 (24)
39	Williams College	-2.9 (42)	1.1 (28)	0.0 (34)	-0.4 (46)

Overall Rank	College	American History	American Politics	International Affairs	Market Economy
40	University of Florida	-2.5 (40)	-1.6 (40)	-0.8 (37)	2.4 (34)
41	Wofford College	-3.4 (43)	-5.1 (48)	-2.5 (46)	8.8 (7)
42	University of Virginia	-3.6 (44)	-3.2 (46)	-2.3 (43)	6.4 (16)
43	Georgetown University	-5.5 (45)	-2.5 (43)	0.7 (31)	3.9 (27)
44	Yale University	-1.5 (33.5)	0.1 (33)	-2.4 (44)	-0.9 (47)
45	University of West Georgia	-2.4 (37)	-3.4 (47)	-0.9 (38)	-1.1 (48)
46	Duke University	-5.8 (46)	-3.0 (45)	-1.6 (40)	2.2 (35)
47	Brown University	-6.1 (48)	-2.8 (44)	-1.4 (39)	1.5 (40)
48	Cornell University	-5.9 (47)	-1.5 (39)	-5.5 (49)	-0.1 (45)
49	University of California Berkeley	-8.7 (49)	-6.7 (50)	-3.4 (48)	-3.0 (49)
50	Johns Hopkins University	-10.9 (50)	-6.1 (49)	-6.9 (50)	-4.6 (50)

Source: Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), American Civic Literacy Survey Results.

TABLE 7: MEAN CIVIC COURSES TAKEN BY FIRST SEMESTER SENIORS AT EACH COLLEGE
(COLLEGE RANK IN PARENTHESES)

Overall Rank	College	Total Courses	History	Political Science	Economics	Percent of seniors who took at least 1 survey course in American History	Percent of seniors who took at least 1 course in Western Civilization
1	Rhodes College	6.72 (5)	2.81 (5)	2.02 (6)	1.89 (6)	35% (21)	27% (32)
2	Colorado State University	4.97 (13)	2.26 (12)	1.50(16)	1.21(21)	47 (12)	46 (17)
3	Calvin College	4.41 (21)	1.99 (18)	1.29(29)	1.13 (23)	20 (35)	63 (6)
4	Grove City College	6.24 (8)	3.26 (3)	1.51(15)	1.48 (13)	27 (27)	90 (1)
5	University of Colorado Boulder	4.36 (22)	1.85 (21)	1.21(32)	1.30 (18)	43 (18)	36 (22)
6	Spring Arbor University	2.13 (50)	1.29 (45)	.44 (50)	.40 (49)	44 (17)	35 (24)
7	University of New Mexico	4.05 (28)	1.95 (19)	1.11(35)	.99 (32)	30 (22)	50 (13)
8	University of Mobile	4.98 (12)	3.00 (4)	1.08(36)	.91 (40)	65 (2)	60 (8)
9	Florida Memorial University	2.15 (49)	1.08 (48)	.74 (45)	.33 (50)	52 (8)	37 (20)
10	Central Connecticut State University	3.05 (45)	1.81 (23)	.71 (46)	.53 (48)	58 (5)	51 (11)
11	George Mason University	6.89 (4)	3.35 (2)	1.99 (7)	1.55 (12)	62 (4)	76 (3)
12	Youngstown State University	3.26 (43)	1.13 (47)	.80 (40)	1.32 (16)	25 (31)	17 (45)
13	North Carolina Central University	4.04 (29)	1.80(24.5)	1.20 (33)	1.04 (27)	49 (11)	57 (9)
14	Utah State University	3.57 (37)	1.55 (35)	1.03 (37)	.99 (33)	45 (15)	30 (29)
15	Lynchburg College	4.33 (23)	2.16 (14)	1.23 (31)	.93 (37)	30 (23)	65 (5)
16	Catholic University of America	4.27 (24)	1.73 (28)	1.48 (18)	1.06 (26)	26 (29)	25 (35)
17	University of Massachusetts, Boston	4.00 (30)	1.60 (32)	1.37 (27)	1.03 (29)	40 (20)	43 (18)
18	Princeton University	5.67 (11)	1.89 (20)	1.89 (8)	1.88 (7)	15 (43)	07 (50)
19	Eastern Kentucky University	2.79 (47)	1.44 (38)	.80 (41)	.56 (47)	51 (9)	48 (15)
20	Baylor University	4.13 (27)	1.62 (31)	1.48 (19)	1.04 (28)	46 (13)	28 (31)
21	West Texas A&M University	4.63 (18)	2.06 (15)	1.61 (12)	.96 (34)	64 (3)	51 (12)

Overall Rank	College	Total Courses	History	Political Science	Economics	Percent of seniors who took at least 1 survey course in American History	Percent of seniors who took at least 1 course in Western Civilization
22	University of South Alabama	3.56 (38)	2.03 (16)	.62 (47)	.92 (38)	56 (6)	61 (7)
23	University of Texas Austin	4.62 (19)	2.38 (8)	1.33 (28)	.91 (39)	66 (1)	28 (30)
24	Wheaton College	3.31 (41)	1.33 (43)	1.40 (24)	.58 (46)	18 (39)	53 (10)
25	Harvard University	6.35 (7)	2.34 (9)	1.64 (11)	2.36 (2)	10 (48)	24 (37)
26	University of Washington	3.45 (39)	1.32 (44)	1.02 (38)	1.12 (24)	27 (28)	22 (40)
27	Appalachian State University	4.82 (15)	2.40 (7)	1.47 (20)	.95 (35)	45 (14)	69 (4)
28	University of North Carolina	4.78 (16)	2.22 (13)	1.49 (17)	1.07 (25)	44 (16)	46 (16)
29	Capital University	3.60 (35)	1.50 (36)	1.37 (26)	.73 (44)	27 (26)	35 (23)
30	American University	7.36 (3)	2.02 (17)	3.45 (1)	1.89 (5)	25 (30)	26 (33)
31	Stanford University	4.17 (26)	1.41 (41)	1.52 (14)	1.24 (19)	19 (36)	22 (38)
32	University of West Florida	3.27 (42)	1.74 (27)	.77 (44)	.76 (43)	56 (7)	49 (14)
33	Washington & Lee University	6.49 (6)	2.33 (11)	2.11 (4)	2.05 (4)	22 (34)	31 (27)
34	Dartmouth College	4.72 (17)	1.68 (29)	1.45 (22)	1.59 (11)	19 (38)	16 (46)
35	University of Michigan	3.60 (36)	1.60 (33)	1.00 (39)	1.00 (30)	19 (37)	19 (43)
36	Ithaca College	3.35 (40)	1.43 (39)	1.23 (30)	.69 (45)	30 (25)	21 (41)
37	University of Chicago	6.04 (9)	1.77 (26)	1.87 (9)	2.40 (1)	15 (45)	34 (25)
38	Mass. Institute of Technology	2.41 (48)	.68 (50)	.54 (48)	1.19 (22)	10 (47)	09 (49)
39	Williams College	4.55 (20)	1.18 (46)	2.05 (5)	1.33 (15)	15 (44)	18 (44)
40	University of Florida	3.14 (44)	1.05 (49)	.79 (43)	1.30 (17)	30 (24)	19 (42)
41	Wofford College	3.80 (34)	1.80(24.5)	.53 (49)	1.48 (14)	25 (33)	85 (2)
42	University of Virginia	5.77 (10)	2.33 (10)	1.68 (10)	1.77 (9)	25 (32)	31 (28)
43	Georgetown University	7.47 (2)	2.51 (6)	2.87 (2)	2.09 (3)	09 (50)	32 (26)
44	Yale University	8.25 (1)	3.78 (1)	2.68 (3)	1.79 (8)	16 (42)	25 (36)
45	University of West Georgia	2.99 (46)	1.34 (42)	.79 (42)	.86 (42)	49 (10)	37 (21)
46	Duke University	4.88 (33)	1.67 (30)	1.58 (13)	1.64 (10)	09 (49)	13 (47)
47	Brown University	4.17 (25)	1.83 (22)	1.45 (23)	.90 (41)	16 (41)	13 (48)
48	Cornell University	3.82 (33)	1.42 (40)	1.19 (34)	1.21(20)	18 (40)	22 (39)
49	University of California Berkeley	3.95 (31)	1.57 (34)	1.39 (25)	.99 (31)	42 (19)	40 (19)
50	Johns Hopkins University	3.90 (32)	1.49 (37)	1.47(21)	.94 (36)	14 (46)	25 (34)

Source: Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), American Civic Literacy Survey Results.

TABLE 8: AVERAGE CIVIC LEARNING BY QUESTION†

Question Theme (*denotes a NAEP question)	50 Colleges	Baylor	West Texas A&M	Texas Austin
1. Jamestown Colony	-1.00%	+9.49%	+4.96%	-9.74%
2. The Puritan Religious Tradition	-0.60	+0.40	-5.38	+13.51
3. Form of the U.S. Government	-1.00	.82	7.80	4.20
4. George Washington's founding role	+1.20	2.47	8.34	.58
5. The American Revolutionary War	-4.20	-.09	-5.74	-7.70
6. The Inalienable Rights enumerated in the Declaration	+1.20	-3.32	-5.55	-6.23
7. Chronology of major historical events	-2.90	1.24	-5.98	-2.01
8. Origin of the doctrine of separation of church and state	+2.00	2.94	8.23	5.75
9. Outcome of the War of 1812	-2.60	-6.93	4.92	3.62
10. The Thought of Abraham Lincoln	0.00	-10.62	.72	1.18
11. Timing of the Civil War	+2.90	6.04	11.07	.77
12. The New Deal	+2.60	4.98	3.14	1.30
13. Reconstruction*	-2.60	-8.96	10.07	4.29
14. Women's suffrage	-1.00	7.22	-5.00	-2.65
15. Roe v. Wade	+5.60	.22	2.62	11.00
16. Brown v. Board of Education	+3.10	10.97	-1.18	7.59
17 World War II	+2.90	11.57	8.34	6.88
18. Declaration of Independence	+0.30	-.23	-1.11	5.83
19. Plato's Republic	+3.20	-4.58	7.52	-4.12
28. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.	+3.20	6.56	6.27	4.08
29. Classical thought and relativism	+5.60	7.30	6.56	4.24
30. The Bill of Rights	+0.90	10.17	-3.74	-12.32
31. The nature of society	+0.20	-12.41	-10.94	1.05
32. Thomas Paine and <i>Common Sense</i>	-1.60	2.11	-8.61	-2.87
33. Enumerated Powers	-3.70	-7.53	-2.51	1.15
34. President Washington's foreign policy	-9.30	-14.27	-3.62	-2.80
35. Monroe Doctrine	-8.00	-10.10	3.84	-2.57
36. Traditional Just War Criteria	+2.70	9.88	-6.86	7.98
37. NATO	-1.50	-1.67	-3.41	-5.28
38. Alternative forms of government	+5.60	3.62	12.68	4.07
39. Alexis de Tocqueville (<i>Democracy in America</i>)	+4.80	-.31	6.41	4.09
40. The United Nations	+4.80	.22	7.17	.77
41. The Cold War and the USSR	+6.10	7.33	10.86	9.25
42. The Kennedy Administration	+1.40	.28	.17	2.26
43. Concept of balance of power	+4.80	9.46	6.60	4.85

TABLE 8: AVERAGE CIVIC LEARNING BY QUESTION[†]—continued

Question Theme (*denotes a NAEP question)	50 Colleges	Baylor	West Texas A&M	Texas Austin
44. The Vietnam War	+0.50%	3.17%	19.37%	3.56%
45. The Cold War	+2.00	5.71	2.02	5.51
46. Saddam Hussein	+7.20	10.13	10.34	9.80
47. Persian Gulf War 1991	+10.90	19.20	8.81	7.66
48. Inflation and the value of money	+8.70	7.86	2.12	9.59
49. Free Enterprise defined	+6.90	17.99	7.36	6.74
50. Source of Market Prosperity	+4.90	4.07	2.74	4.57
51. Gross Domestic Product (GDP)*	+5.60	-2.21	5.96	1.97
52. Definition of business profit	+5.70	10.02	.36	6.52
53. Concept of a public good	+2.80	.46	-1.59	-11.75
54. Keynesian economic thought and policy	+1.70	14.42	7.69	2.53
55. Income distribution in America	-1.00	-.83	-7.87	-3.77
56. Gains from trade*	+7.30	4.55	5.95	7.65
57. Law of Demand*	+3.00	-1.52	-.69	-9.55
58. Monetary policy*	-1.80	-10.11	-3.33	1.92
59. Tax Policy	+8.10	16.65	18.75	3.19
60. Federal Budget	-3.20	-6.63	-2.27	-7.57

Source: Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI), American Civic Literacy Survey Results.
[†]Learning equals average percent correct among senior minus that for freshman.

EXPLAINING THE PERFORMANCE OF TEXAS UNIVERSITIES

Numerous college policies and student characteristics influence a student’s civic learning, as demonstrated through multiple regression analysis. For example, when controlling for numerous variables, more scholastic effort—as measured by average weekly hours of homework—uniquely increases civic learning. Seniors enrolled at universities outside of Texas completed an average 13.7 hours of homework per week, compared to 11.2 hours for seniors enrolled in the three Texas universities. The mean hours of homework was highest at the University of Texas–Austin, second at Baylor, and lowest at West Texas A&M.

Other factors, however, dominated this homework influence since Baylor students learned more American civics than students at the University of Texas–Austin, while completing 17 percent fewer hours of homework than University of Texas–Austin students. For instance, students learn more when they are paired with college peers who have similar

levels of knowledge. This similarity in students’ civic knowledge allows professors to better match their instruction with students’ academic preparation. Otherwise, instruction is too easy and redundant for those more advanced students, who begin the course with civic knowledge well advanced from their college’s median student knowledge. At the same time, instruction is too hard for students beginning the course with knowledge well below the median.

Applying this general relationship to Texas universities, the average Texas college student begins college with peers having higher variance in their beginning civic knowledge, compared to a student’s peers at universities outside of Texas. This reduces the civic learning in Texas universities from that which it would otherwise be. Baylor had the highest variance in civic knowledge among their enrolled freshmen, while West Texas A&M had the lowest among the three Texas universities surveyed.

However, Texas universities were relatively more successful than other universities in reducing this variance in its stu-

dents' civic knowledge as their students proceeded through the baccalaureate. Baylor was most successful among Texas universities in reducing this variance and thereby increasing students' civic learning.

Finally, Baylor seniors tended to be better supported in their civic learning by having a larger proportion of parents who were married and living together, compared to students at University of Texas-Austin and West Texas A&M. While additional family variables also influence students' civic learning, additional college curricula and governance variables also prove influential in accounting for the remaining variation in individual student learning and colleges' average civic learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence suggests that several college policies would increase the average civic learning at the three Texas universities included in the survey. Since Baylor students took a below-average number of civic oriented courses, Baylor would be advised to increase its civic learning by increasing the number of civic courses available, attractive, and even required, especially courses in history and economics.

Alternatively, University of Texas-Austin and West Texas A&M universities need to focus more upon course quality or learning per course, since their students took above-average quantity of civic courses, but performed closer to average in civic learning. Learning per course increases by offering courses that cover more important themes such as those outlined in ISI's civic literacy test, for example, as opposed to more idiosyncratic themes that might cover faculties' research interests.

Increased homework norms, that approach at least the national norm, would further increase learning per course at all three Texas universities. Finally, enrollment policies that increase the similarity of students' beginning civic knowledge at each university would also increase learning, even while the number of courses and homework hours remain the same. Additional and more general recommendations appear in the general report *The Coming Crisis in Citizenship*. ★

About the Author

Dr. Gary Scott is a Senior Research Fellow at the Texas Public Policy Foundation and a Senior Research Fellow in Civic Literacy at ISI, where he is currently directing a research study of colleges' effectiveness at teaching civic subjects. Before joining ISI in February 2003, he served nine years as an associate professor of economics and graduate program director at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas.

His publications include a 1997 book "Learning Capital" and his more recent "Equal Educational Opportunity and the Significance of Circumstantial Knowledge" appearing in the British journal *Education Economics*. He earned his Ph.D. in economics at the University of Notre Dame in 1993.

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