


*Climate Policy
Engagement: The
crucial gap in higher ed
and community
sustainability*



“ *In order for a democracy to work for its citizens, there must be open communication between elected officials and their constituents [...] Therefore, universities should feel obligated to not only educate their students about voting in elections, but also to teach other ways for students to voice their opinions through civil discourse.*”

- *Lucien Wallace, Student, Worcester Polytechnic Institute.*



Essential Skills

- Teaching students skills to participate in governmental policy decisions that affect their lives.
- Learn the skills at the core of higher ed:
 - Critical thinking
 - Writing
 - Communication
 - Teamwork/Collaboration

(Cress 2012)



“Students [and community members] can learn valuable professional communication skills by talking to policy makers. It's our future at stake. We need to learn how to protect it through policy”

- Vivian Sang-Me Kim, student, University of Michigan

A watercolor illustration of a wind farm. The scene is set at sunset or sunrise, with a vibrant sky in shades of orange, yellow, and red. Several wind turbines are visible, their blades and towers rendered in soft, painterly strokes. The foreground shows a green field with some brushstrokes, suggesting grass or vegetation. The overall style is artistic and atmospheric.

Facilitating connection

- Action-oriented education for democracy challenges and changes students [and others] into pro-active citizens.
- Prepares people for active, engaged life of full participation in the economic, government, and community organizations that frame their lives.

(Robinson and Hurd 2020)



Benefits: Higher-level Learning outcomes

- Students learn more! (Gallini and Moely 2003)
- Skills learned during action-oriented education for democracy are the real world systems change skills desired by employers (Rowe and Hiser 2015)



Voting is essential for overall change but it can only go so far - change and progress happens with engaging local representatives and policy issues.

- Jenny Kim, student

A watercolor illustration of a mountain landscape. The scene features a prominent mountain peak in the background, a winding road that leads towards the mountains, and a small lake in the foreground. The colors are soft and blended, with shades of blue, green, and grey. The overall style is artistic and painterly.

Bridging the Gap

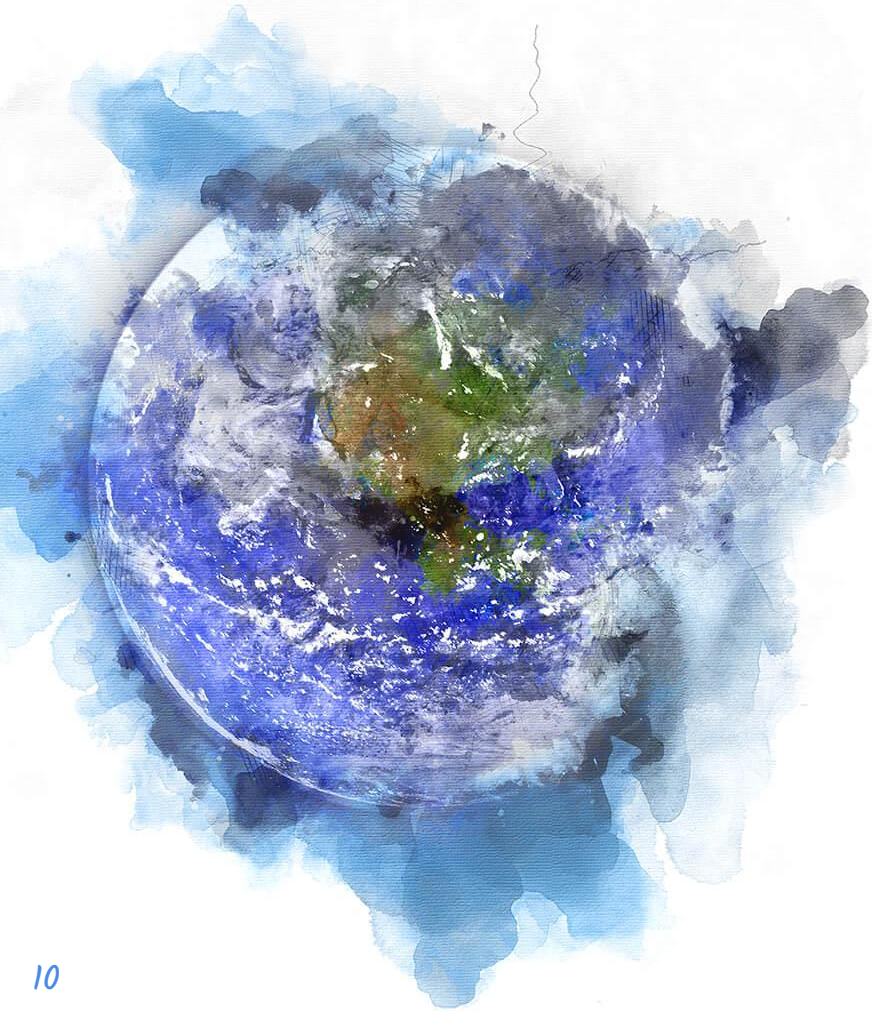
- Rather than lobbying for particular candidates, education for democracy brings real constituent views to policymakers
- Teaching the skills of democracy highlights the fundamental right to contact elected officials and participate in democracy.
- Inform policy makers with the facts from higher education



In conclusion, Sustainability Policy Partners create climate solutions and a healthier democracy

Students need to be shown that our voice has impact, far more than just our vote. An engaged democracy need engaged citizens.

- Logan, student



Takeaway- Different for each audience:

Monthly calls?

New student SPP fellows

Marketing (AASHE, listservs,
handshake) to get new
student fellows

Webinar (AASHE, DANS,
HEASC cosponsored) to get
new campuses/campus
champions

A watercolor illustration of a mountain landscape. The scene features a large, dark blue mountain peak in the background, a smaller green mountain in the middle ground, and a bright blue lake in the foreground. A winding road or path is visible on the right side of the mountains. The overall style is soft and artistic, with visible brushstrokes and a mix of colors including blues, greens, and greys.

Bridging the Gap *cont.*

- Improve society while building employability skills
- Combining intellectual and practical skills connects the local to the global
- Educating students for democracy connects the classroom to the community