Since 2008, I have been involved in research on the Public Discourse initiative in the Communication Studies Department.[[1]](#footnote-1) Working by myself and with co-researchers/authors, I have presented and published a number of research pieces documenting the effectiveness of Public Discourse in providing civic education, argument and critical thinking skills, communication skills, and leadership development. At national and regional conferences, Public Discourse, supported by research and student stories, has struck a chord. Many faculty members and departments in our field and in other fields have adopted the whole or pieces of Public Discourse, and Public Discourse is talked about in the discipline as the “Gustavus Model.”

Public Discourse students speak and write about civic transformation—that they learn to see themselves as citizens, that they now look for issues in their communities and work toward ways to address those issues, and that they feel both obligated and empowered to act. These inspiring and powerful narratives tell much about the student experience and how students see citizenship, civic engagement, their communities, and civic life. Two years ago, our departmental external reviewers identified Public Discourse as a flagship for the College and the discipline, and they encouraged us to explore ways for student voices to be entered into national conversations on citizenship and civic education.

This project answers that call through collecting, collating, and analyzing student and alumni narratives and by publishing a piece that can help frame and further national conversations about student engagement and civic education.

**Brief Description of the Proposed Project**

This summer, we will collect, collate, and analyze qualitative data, including focus group interviews of Public Discourse students, student reflection assignments, project portfolios, and alumni surveys. We will analyze the data for how students discuss citizenship, civic engagement, their roles in communities, and civic life. This work is perfect for student-faculty collaboration and, quite frankly, the extent and nature of the work requires a collaborator, particularly a student collaborator whose perspective can inform and help guide the process.

Anna Morton completed Public Discourse in Spring 2011. Consistent with over half of Public Discourse students, she has continued to work on her project beyond the semester; her Public Discourse experience took her to Rwanda this January to assist an orphanage in implementing a child sponsorship program. Anna has participated in our Public Discourse Night (in the first week of the semester, a panel of PD alumni present their projects to new PD students) and is presently completing an Independent Study, in which she is exploring course content and pedagogy as a teaching assistant for Public Discourse. Her experience and interests are perfectly suited for collaboration with me in exploring qualitative data, especially student responses to Public Discourse.

For this project, we will first collect the data—focus group interviews, reflection papers, portfolios, and surveys. Anna, in her role as a TA, will help with the focus group interviews this spring (we plan on eight). The focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Reflection papers and portfolios will be gathered from the four sections of Public Discourse and added to our current collection. Alumni surveys will be sent to students who completed Public Discourse in the first two years of the course (fall 2007-spring 2009). The surveys will ask questions from our original 2007-2008 survey on acquired skills and civic engagement as well as follow up with if and how skills acquired in Public Discourse are used in career and civic endeavors.

Anna and I will collate the data in a database for ease of tracking and future use. In our development of the database over the first three weeks of the project~~s~~, we will be preparing for our analysis of how Public Discourse students and alumni who have taken the course discuss citizenship, civic engagement, their role in communities, and civic life. In that process, we will determine which data sets we will analyze for our specific project.

Over the next four weeks, we will use qualitative data analysis software to assist in examining the data. Together, we will develop a shared coding schema that we will apply to the data, and we will examine participants’ experiences, gather key quotations, identify main themes, and position ourselves to spend the remaining four weeks completing a manuscript for publication.

**Clear Statement of Anticipated of Outcomes**

The outcomes of this project will be significant to our academic careers as well as the department and the College.

First, Anna and I will develop a manuscript for publication. That piece will be an important outcome for both of us, the discipline, the department, and the College.

Anna has an interest in being a professor. This semester, she is exploring teaching as a TA for Public Discourse; this summer would provide an opportunity to explore focused scholarly research. This particular research will expose her to significant national academic conversations, pedagogical practices, and student responses. Further, she will have a publication, which will position her well to be accepted at the top graduate programs in the country.

The database of qualitative Public Discourse data will be a tremendous resource for the department and future research by my departmental colleagues and I. Anna understands that any future research drawn from this database will need to bear her name. As Anna and I develop this database and start our analysis for this particular project, I expect that Anna will identify her own project(s), one of which she will explore next year as an honor’s thesis in communication studies. The database could also serve as a resource for her future master’s and doctorate work.

The research and the database will provide a foundation for my future scholarly work in citizenship and civic education. It will also inform my teaching, Public Discourse, and the completion of a Public Discourse text, which is a project for next year. Further, this research will help inform departmental discussions on civic education, curriculum, and strategic planning.

This research is a first step in a larger project to document the narratives of Public Discourse, especially those surrounding citizenship and civic education. I will pursue publishing that larger project with the Kettering Foundation.[[2]](#footnote-2) Depending on how much we accomplish this summer with the database and the coding, Anna will definitely be a co-author of at least one chapter and credited in others.

Finally, this research also will further the national recognition of the department and the College and places us in conversations about student engagement and civic education.

**Likely Placement for Publication**

The manuscript will be completed by the end of the summer and submitted to *Communication Education*, the preeminent education journal in communication studies. Anna’s work on this project will position her as the second author on the publication. A extended project, in which this research is a piece, will be submitted to the Kettering Foundation for publication.

**Anticipated Research Completion Date**

June 4-June 15 (2 weeks) Database development

June 18-July 13 (4 weeks) Data analysis and preparation for writing

July 16-August 10 (4 weeks) Writing/editing

August 15 Final manuscript

**Collaborators:**

Leila Brammer

I am a professor in the Communication Studies Department. After completing my doctorate at the University of Minnesota, I published a book and articles on civic advocacy in social movement, particularly the woman suffrage/women’s rights movement of the nineteenth century. Since the development of Public Discourse, I have focused my scholarship on examining course outcomes, which I have published and presented, alone and with others, at national and regional conferences. As a result of my work with Public Discourse, I have been invited by the Kettering Foundation to participate in conversations about deliberation in the classroom, and by the Center for Democracy at Merrimack College to help determine core competencies for civic education. As identified by others, the next step in Public Discourse research is working with the qualitative data and publishing pieces that demonstrate the outcomes students experience and help inform current conversations about student engagement and civic education. Most significantly, this project would be significant foundation for my future scholarly work in citizenship and civic education and of utmost importance to the department in our scholarly work, strategic planning, and teaching.

This particular project requires a well-suited collaborator and provides an opportunity for me to engage in student-faculty research. Previously, for two summers, I advised students working on project through the former Partners in Scholarship program. In my scholarly work as a rhetorical theorist, I have rarely had a project suited for this type of collaboration, and I welcome the opportunity to invite a student into this research and, frankly, the research will benefit from being informed and furthered by a student perspective.

Anna Morton

I am currently a junior Communication Studies and French double major, Music minor at Gustavus. My parents were Gusties in the 1980s, and I am proud to and enjoy discovering new insights about the world and the people that inhabit it here where my parents lived for four years.

My interaction with Public Discourse began during the spring of 2011. I loved the course, and my civic engagement project focused on developing a specialized child sponsorship program for an orphanage in Rwanda. During January-Term 2012, I lived in Rwanda for three weeks and invested my time in providing vision and structure to an already existing but poorly planned child sponsorship program. I am continuing to work with the leaders of that program by developing long-term plans and communication strategies for the program.

Last semester, I completed two semester-long research projects—one for Leila Brammer’s Rhetorical Criticism course, and one for Martin Lang’s Communication and Gender course. I learned how to research and how to analyze data effectively. Both professors provided very positive feedback, particularly for my ability to clearly synthesize important research details and write eloquently.

I am a teaching assistant for Professor Leila Brammer’s Public Discourse class this semester. I participated in Public Discourse Night by sharing my Public Discourse story, attend class, help workshop, hold a weekly office hour, and will teach a class. This provides a solid foundation for research regarding Public Discourse. As I continue to pursue opportunities at Gustavus and beyond, I am confident that the research experience gained from this project will enhance my knowledge as a student and person and will open doors for further study and future opportunities.

**Public Discourse Publications and Presentations**

Publications:

Brammer, L. R. & Wolter, S. M. (2008).Public Discourse: Experiential Training for Citizenship*. International Journal of Learning, 15* (7), 307-314.

Brammer, L. R. & Wolter, S. M. (2009). Individual Community Action: An Experiential Practicum in Argument and Civic Engagement. In D. Worley (Ed.), *Best practices in experiential and service learning in communication*.

Brammer, L. R. & Wolter, S. M. (2009). Engaged citizenship: Public Discourse as a Foundational Communication Course. *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education, 1,* (1).

Brammer, L.R. & Wolter, S. M. (submitted February 2012). Assessing Student Response to Public Discourse, an Introductory Course In Public Speaking, Argument, and Civic Engagement. Submitted to *Communication Studies*.

Presentations:

Brammer, L. R. & Lang, M. J. Reimagining Curriculum: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility. Presented at the AAC&U Arts & Humanities Conference: Toward a Flourishing State, Providence, RI, November 2011.

Brammer, L. R., Wolter, S. M., & Lang, M. L. Engagement as Transformative Education: Developing Voice in a Semester-Long Practicum in Citizenship. Presented at the National Communication Association Annual Convention, New Orleans, LA, November 2011.

Brammer, L R. Reinvigorating Democratic Education: Public Discourse and Engaged Citizenship. Presented at the American Democracy Project National Meeting, Orlando, FL, June 2010.

Brammer, L. R. & Wolter, S. M. Leadership Development in Communication Studies Courses. Presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association Convention, San Francisco, CA, November 2010.

Brammer, L. R. & Wolter, S. M. Communication Apprehension and Public Discourse. Presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association Convention, San Francisco, CA, November 2010.

Brammer, L. R. & Wolter, S. M. Experiential and Service Learning: A New Resource for Communication Instructors. Panelist at the annual convention of the National Communication Association, Chicago, IL, November 2009.

Brammer, L.R. The Case for Public Discourse. Position paper for the Brigrance Colloquy on Public Speaking as a Liberal Art. Center for Inquiry, Wabash College, April 2009. http://www.liberalarts.wabash.edu/brigance-colloquy/

Brammer, L. R. & Wolter, S. M. Assessing Response to Public Discourse, an Introductory Course in Speaking, Argument, and Civic Engagement. Presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association, San Diego, CA, November 2008.



**Presidential Faculty/Student Collaboration Grant**

**BUDGET INFORMATION**

**Faculty Stipend** ($300 per week, up to $3,000 for a maximum of 10 weeks)

**Student Summer Stipend** ($400 per week, up to $4,000 for a maximum of 10 weeks)

**Student Summer Campus Housing** ($60 per week, for a maximum of 10 weeks)

**Total Budget Maximum** ($8,100 for all categories)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ITEM** | | | **AMOUNT** |
| **Equipment (e.g., transcription machine, camera, cassette recorder – but not to include computer hardware)** | | | **$ 200** |
| 1:Transcription machine | Cost: 220 | |  |
| 2: | Cost: | |
| 3: | Cost: | |
| **Materials (e.g., books, printing, software, lab supplies)** | | | **$ 690** |
| 1: Express Scribe | Cost: 40 | |  |
| 2: NVivo—data analysis software | Cost: 650 | |
| 3: | Cost: | |
| **Travel Costs (cannot include conference travel, see** [**http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php**](http://gustavus.edu/finance/travel.php) **for allowable travel expenses)** | | | **$** |
| Airfare: | | |  |
| Mileage: Number of miles\_\_\_\_\_ @ $0.55/mile | | |
| Lodging: | | |  |
| Meals: | | |  |
| **Stipends & Housing** | | | **$7000** |
| Faculty Stipend | | $300 per week, up to $3,000 for a maximum of 10 weeks |  |
| Student Summer Stipend | | $400 per week, up to $4,000 for a maximum of 10 weeks |
| Student Summer Campus Housing | | $60 per week, up to 10 weeks |
| **TOTAL EXPENSES** | | | **$7890** |
|  | | |  |
| **AMOUNT REQUESTED** | | | **$7890** |

**Have you applied for, or received funding from, another source to help support this project?**

I submitted an RSC grant for a portion of this project. If awarded the Collaboration Grant, I would not accept an RSC grant if awarded one.

1. Public Discourse is an innovative foundational communication studies course in applied public argument with a civic engagement practicum [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Kettering Foundation supports a variety civic education initiatives and publishes research on outcomes of civic education. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)