



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

DR. HEATHER JO MASHBURN, ASHLEY VINSON | APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

BUILDING CIVIC LITERACY AND ENGAGEMENT: REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

ABSTRACT:

The presenters will provide an overview of the Civic Literacy Initiative (CLI) at Appalachian State University, launched in Summer 2024. CLI promotes a nonpartisan, civically engaged, and informed campus community through three pillars: Freedom of Speech, Voter Education, and Dialogue across Difference. This session explores the impact, challenges, and strategies for integrating student-led, data driven civic literacy programming into higher education, empowering students to navigate complex conversations, enhance democratic engagement, and build strong community ties.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Floods and Droughts: Too much of one thing, not enough of another. How complimentary partnership can fill the gaps.

Gauging the Waters: Using research and assessment to course correct or gain deeper insight.

BIO:

Dr. Mashburn provides leadership and strategic direction for all co-curricular community engagement, undergraduate leadership programming, and civic literacy efforts on her campus, emphasizing mutually beneficial partnerships that foster student purpose and transformative impact. With more than 15 years of experience in higher education, she has worked extensively in community engagement, leadership development, international travel, risk management, student conduct, and scholarship programming. Heather Jo is trained in multiple dialogue formats and holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership.

Ashley Vinson has worked professionally in Civic Engagement and Voter Education since June 2020. Her experience includes roles at both a small private institution and a large public institution, as well as work in a state capital city and a smaller rural city and county. Through these positions, Ashley has developed connections with numerous nonpartisan nonprofit voter engagement organizations across North Carolina and has built strong relationships with County Boards of Elections. Currently, she serves as an Associate Director within the Office of Community-Engaged Leadership, where her primary focus is on Civic Literacy programs and initiatives. Additionally, Ashley holds a certification in Constructive Dialogue and a master's degree in Student Affairs Administration.