

To: Purdue University Senate
From: Senators Cheryl Cooky, Robyn Malo, Helen McNally, Deborah Nichols, Robert Pruitt, Jeff Rhoads, Dharmendra Saraswat, Jane Yalcilla

Subject: Establishment of the Special Committee on Civics Literacy and Engagement at Purdue University

Disposition: University Senate for Approval

References: University Senate Bylaws

Rationale: The sponsoring Senators bring to the Senate a recommendation to establish a Special Committee on Civics Literacy and Engagement. The committee will assist the Senate in 1) understanding the current state of civics literacy among Purdue University students, 2) determining the need for enhanced efforts to promote and assess civics literacy and engagement, and 3) identifying any tangible actions that should be taken to address this need. This committee will coordinate with the University administration and stakeholders across campus, on behalf of the Senate, and coordinate with relevant Senate committees. The Steering Committee recommends the creation of the Committee because of the specific expertise required to develop a proposal to address civic literacy concerns expressed by Mitch Daniels in his remarks during the January 2019 Senate meeting and because current standing committees with relevant purview, i.e. the Student Affairs Committee and the Educational Policy Committee, have full slates.

Committee Description: At a meeting on 1 April 2019, the Steering Committee recommended the Senate establish a special committee charged with developing a proposal in response to the civics literacy concerns by President Daniels. In March 2019, Senate Chair Natalie Carroll led a Town Hall meeting to discuss President Daniels' remarks to the Senate. In consultation with members of the Steering Committee, Chair Carroll also developed and distributed a campus-wide survey to assess campus opinion on issues surrounding a possible civics requirement. Both the Town Hall and survey elicited many responses (the campus survey had over 2000 responses, nearly half of which derived from undergraduates). Professors Phil Vanfossen and Robin Adams are currently compiling and analyzing the survey data. Purdue faculty with expertise in issues related to civics literacy, along with University administrators and Purdue student government representatives, presented at the Town Hall and their contributions will be invaluable moving forward. A number of Town Hall attendees identified existing resources on campus, suggested ideas, and asked questions that will be useful to consider in moving forward to address this issue. All of this information, input and expertise should be taken into consideration by the Special Committee. The Special Committee will consult with other standing committees, as well as the Steering Committee, as appropriate. This committee will report at each meeting of Senate during the 2019-20 academic year and develop a proposal to bring forward to the University Senate during the 2019-2020 Senate session. The Steering Committee requests a proposal to be voted upon by the University Senate no later than the April 2020 Senate meeting (for discussion at the March 2020

meeting). To conduct its business, the Steering Committee will appoint a chair who will work with the University Senate Nominating Committee to name members of the committee.