

## Civic Prompts

Communication department to develop stronger community connections

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COMMUNICATION MAJOR BECCA BARTON PARTICIPATING IN AN INTERNSHIP WITH SEMESTER IN THE CITY

UNH [communication department](#) faculty will come together in October to look at ways in which they can better connect students to civic-minded and community engaged volunteer, internship and/or career opportunities.

According to Jennifer Borda, associate professor and chair of communication, faculty will inventory their efforts to link students and the curriculum to community partners and review

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opportunities for the curricula to include more civic-learning connections.

The strategic meeting is funded through a mini-grant recently awarded to the department from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), underwritten by the Endeavor Foundation's Civic Prompts: Civic Learning in the Major by Design initiative. The AAC&U argues that a diverse democracy depends on higher education to do its full part to prepare students to be thoughtful, open-minded, responsible and informed citizens and workers in their communities and beyond. UNH was one of 24 departments across the nation to receive this grant to advance civic learning and social responsibility.

"Educating for democracy is more critical than ever, and the AAC&U is proud to support the departments and institutions receiving grants for their commitment to advancing liberal education in the major as a foundation for fostering civic engagement," says AAC&U President Lynn Pasquerella in a press release.

According to Renee Heath, a senior lecturer in the communication department who applied for the grant, the university's communication curriculum already focuses on conflict mediation, dialogue, team work, persuasion and public problems and democratic deliberation. This grant will help faculty collaborate on curricular planning that promotes civil discourse, as well as enhances student connections throughout the community. It also builds off the mission and success of the department's civil discourse lab, which was founded in 2017 to serve as a hub for pedagogy, research and community engagement focused on public participation, civil conversations, dialogue and deliberation.

"We've already started cultivating relationships with alumni and building university partnerships," Heath says. "We are looking at identifying pathways to professional careers relevant to the skills

and knowledge students acquire in the communication major so that students are better prepared for the jobs they hope to get when they leave. We need to think beyond what happens in our walls, share the connections we all have and look at where we can develop those.”

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