



# Cultivating College Students' Civic Character in the University Setting

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# How do you define civic character at your institution?

Jamboard

# Overview

- Overview
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  - Tisch College of Civic Life
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- Assessment of Impact
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*Pictured: Kyrielle Lord, E24, Environmental Engineering at  
Mystic River Watershed Association (Medford)*





# Civic Character

- The word “civic” describes anything that helps people to act effectively together and accomplish self-governance (Hyun et al., 2024)
- “Civic Character” can be described as the set of dispositions and skills that motivate and enable an individual to effectively and responsibly participate in the public sphere to serve the common good (Berkowitz et al., 2008)





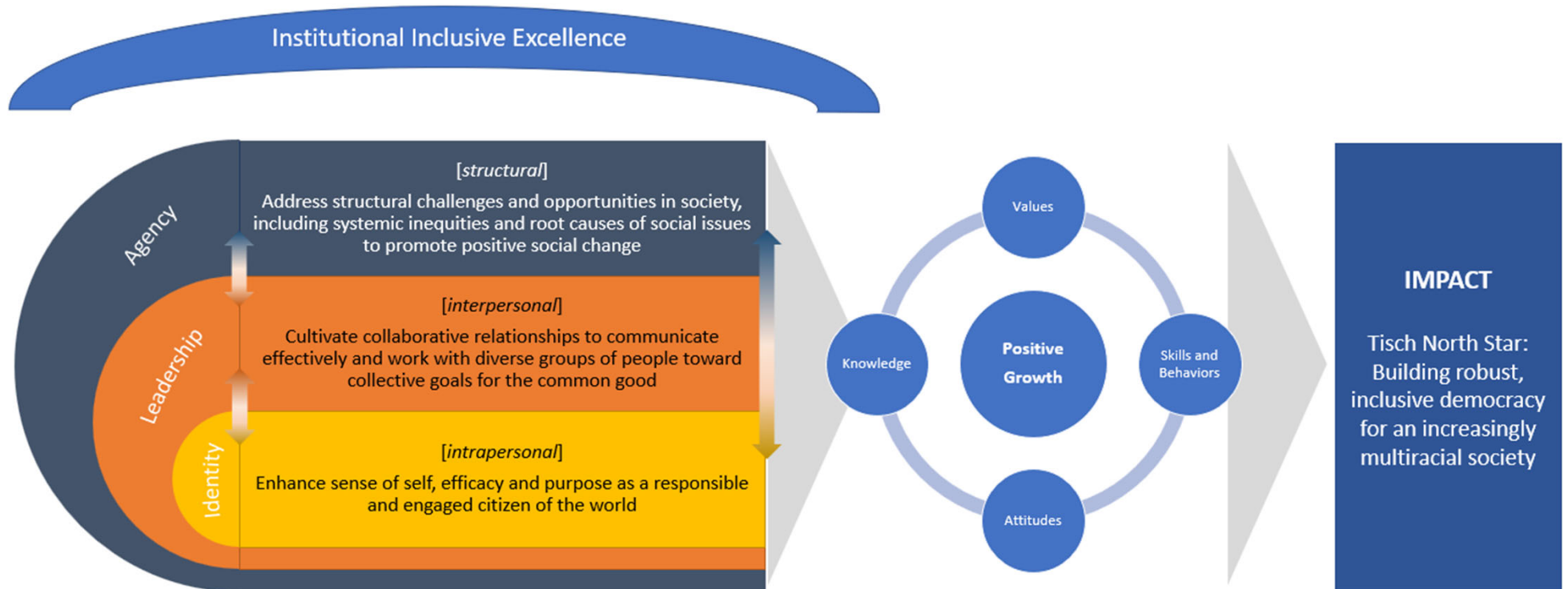
# Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life



## Mission:

To prepare students for a lifetime of engagement in civic and democratic life, to study civic life and its intersections with public and private institutions, and to promote practices that strengthen civic life in the United States and around the world.

## Tisch College Student Programs' Evaluation & Assessment Framework



# Example Outcomes

	Civic Identity	Civic Leadership	Civic Agency
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops personal value set to guide actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appreciates diverse perspectives and experiences to inform collective actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilizes principles of social justice and equity in policy formulation</li> </ul>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recalls concepts, information and theories essential for human rights, justice and equality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies motives underlying individual actions.</li> <li>Applies scientific evidence, research and facts to influence individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applies civic knowledge to build just and equitable organizations</li> <li>Identify differences and commonalities among stakeholders</li> </ul>
Skills & Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thinks creatively to generate effective strategies that are just and equitable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively communicates ideas and concepts to others</li> <li>Articulates a clear and compelling vision for civic engagement work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluates change strategies against stated goals and objectives</li> <li>Builds coalitions across groups</li> </ul>



# Overview of Tisch Programs

CULTIVATING COLLEGE STUDENTS' CIVIC CHARACTER



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# Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life

Tisch College works with students across the University – between schools and on their journey to becoming active citizens.

Our courses, internships, and programs provide transformational learning experiences that inform how you view yourself and the world, shape your future, and enable you to become effective agents of change. We believe that all students should graduate from Tufts University prepared to contribute to civic life as informed, ethical, and engaged citizens, regardless of academic majors or career aspirations.

**There is a pathway for you at Tisch College.**



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# Selective Programs Designed to Foster Students' Character Development

- Leadership for Social Change
- Civic Semester
- Civic Studies
- Tisch Scholars
- Tisch Summer Fellows





# Leadership for Social Change

As a high school student, you can participate in an engaging and enriching two-week summer experience with Leadership for Social Change. With a lens toward advancing equity, inclusion, and participation in civic life, the program will equip you with the civic skills and knowledge to build connections, work collaboratively, and emerge as change agents who can inspire others.

**Eligibility:** High School/Pre-College  
**Application Period:** Spring



Scan the QR Code or contact Calvin Zhao at [calvin.zhao@tufts.edu](mailto:calvin.zhao@tufts.edu) to learn more.



## Student Reflection

"This program was so enriching! The faculty lectures opened my eyes to many topics that I had either not considered before or that I did not have a complete understanding of. I loved getting to hear a variety of perspectives... Also, the support from Tisch faculty, my peer leader and my TA was so helpful and amazing!"

# Tufts Civic Semester

Spend your first semester off-campus with Tufts Civic Semester, a transformational program that combines academic and experiential learning with a focus on community engagement and social and environmental justice. With programming focused on building a civic identity and civic skills for promoting equity and justice, you will return to campus with a network of deep friendships, a stronger sense of self, and a clearer understanding of how you want to have an impact during your time at Tufts and beyond.

Eligibility: First-year Students

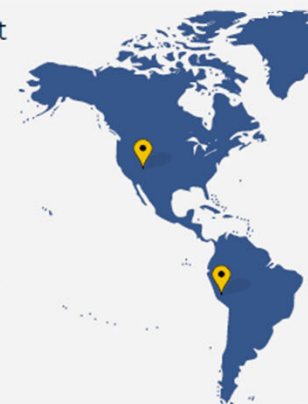
Application Period: Spring



Scan the QR Code or contact Jessye Crowe-Rothstein at [jessica.crowe\\_rothstein@tufts.edu](mailto:jessica.crowe_rothstein@tufts.edu) to learn more.

## Alumni Spotlight

"DO THIS. So many times we want to do amazing, impactful things but we don't for one reason or another. I've found a great community here, and I had the opportunity to do and learn so many things. I was worried with this being the first year that I was taking a big risk with participating, but I am so happy I did."





# Civic Studies



## A One-of-a-Kind Program

Civic Studies courses center around four tracks:

Thinking About Justice  
Social Conflict, Inequality, and Violence  
Civic Action and Social Movements  
Civic Skills

The Civic Studies program also supports minors in **Peace and Justice Studies** and **Entrepreneurship for Social Impact**.

Civic Studies is an academic exploration into movements to improve societies and create pathways for change. The process of change-making requires you — along with your communities, neighborhoods, friends, relatives, classmates, and others — to ask, “What should we do?” Those four words raise questions of individual and group identity, of shared and divergent values and norms for discourse, of relationship-and trust-building, of strategies for collective action, and more.

**Eligibility:** Undergraduate Students  
**Application Period:** Course Enrollment

Scan the QR Code or contact Sam Fried at [samantha.fried@tufts.edu](mailto:samantha.fried@tufts.edu) to learn more.





# Tisch Scholars



## Alumni Reflection

"Tisch always felt like a sort of grounding space within the larger university experience... the Tisch experience only enhanced and further contributed to creating a complete picture of what my career could be and should be and the spaces I wanted to work in."

The Tisch Scholar program is a multi-year curricular leadership development program. As a Tisch Scholar, you will work alongside a community partner organization to address social justice issues. You'll learn about an array of approaches to change-making and engage in critical reflection that will support your understanding of yourself and what is needed to improve society. You will do all of this while building and nurturing your community of Tisch Scholars.

**Eligibility:** Rising sophomores and juniors  
**Application Period:** Early spring semester

Scan the QR Code to learn more!



# Tisch Summer Fellows



## Fellowship Opportunities

Haley House (Boston)

Boston Healthcare for the Homeless

The Asia Foundation (DC)

United States Department of Agriculture

Wildlife Conservation Society:  
Bronx Zoo

and more!

As a Tisch Summer Fellow, you will gain career and professional competencies while enhancing the knowledge, skills and behaviors needed to make positive social change. Tisch Summer Fellows engage in an internship with a public, non-profit, or advocacy organization, build a network of alumni and other professionals, and connect with peers for intentional reflection to make the most of the summer experience.

**Eligibility:** All Tufts Students

**Application Period:** January

Scan the QR Code or contact Jenna Logue at [jenna.logue@tufts.edu](mailto:jenna.logue@tufts.edu) to learn more.



# How do you currently cultivate students' civic character at your institution?



# Assessment of Impact

TISCH SCHOLARS AND LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL CHANGE PROGRAMS



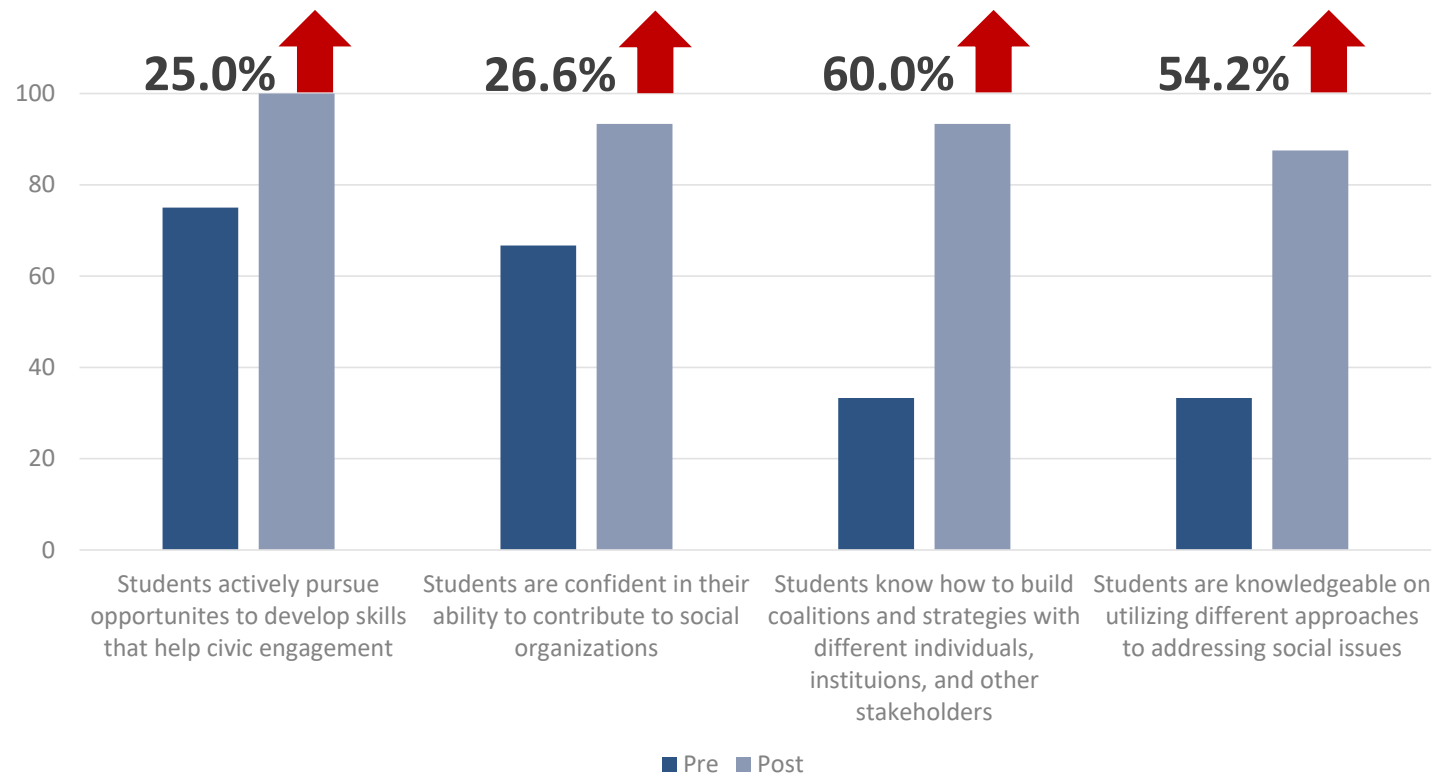
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# Tisch Scholars Evaluation Timeline

## *A Multi-Year Mixed Methods Study*



## During their first year



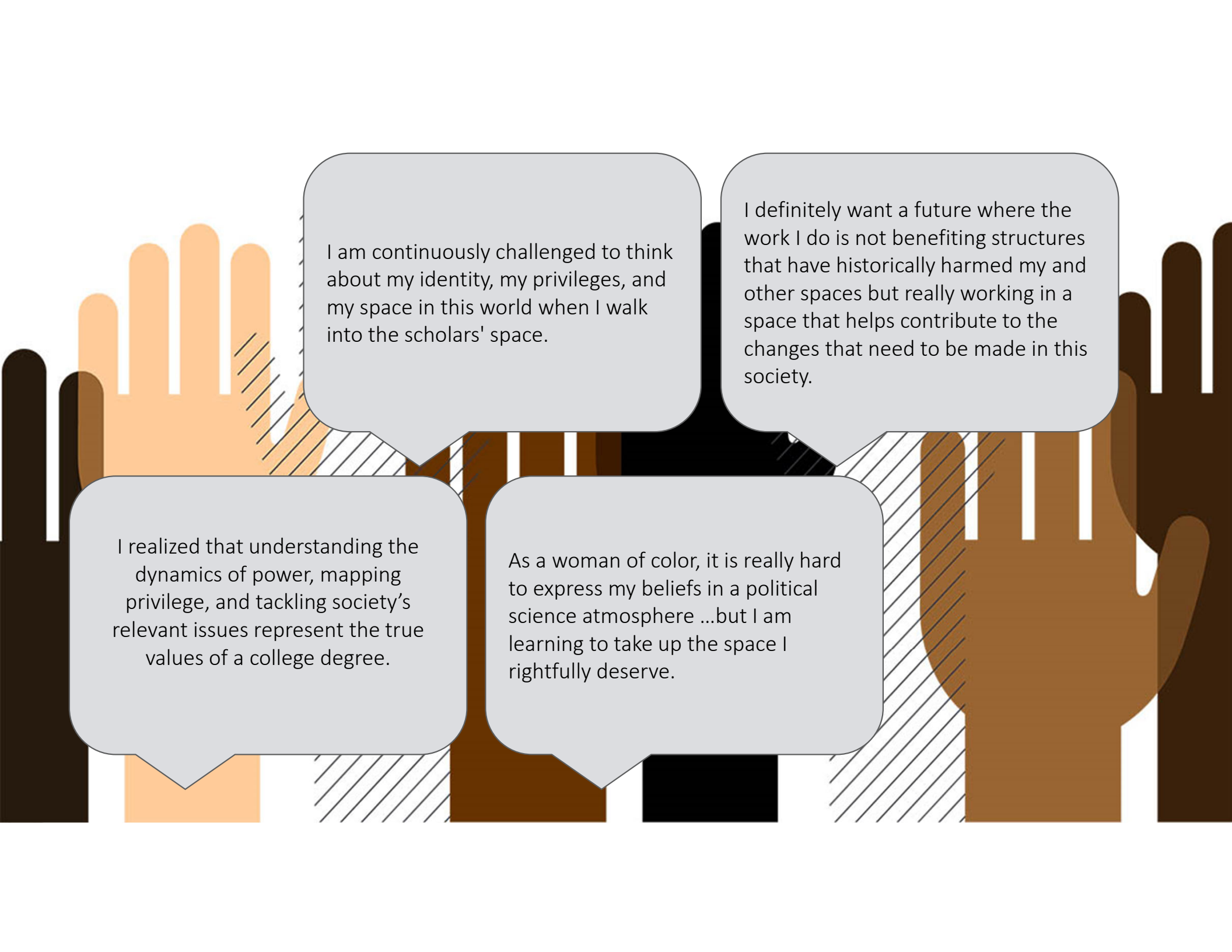
# Through evaluation, we also learned

For example,

- 31.3% of students mentioned that they socialized with people who had different beliefs (from 25%)
- 6.3% of students mentioned that they had guarded interactions with people from different backgrounds (from 0%)
- 56.3% of students mentioned that they had meaningful discussions about race/ethnic relations with people from different backgrounds (from 58.3%)







I am continuously challenged to think about my identity, my privileges, and my space in this world when I walk into the scholars' space.

I definitely want a future where the work I do is not benefiting structures that have historically harmed my and other spaces but really working in a space that helps contribute to the changes that need to be made in this society.

I realized that understanding the dynamics of power, mapping privilege, and tackling society's relevant issues represent the true values of a college degree.

As a woman of color, it is really hard to express my beliefs in a political science atmosphere ...but I am learning to take up the space I rightfully deserve.

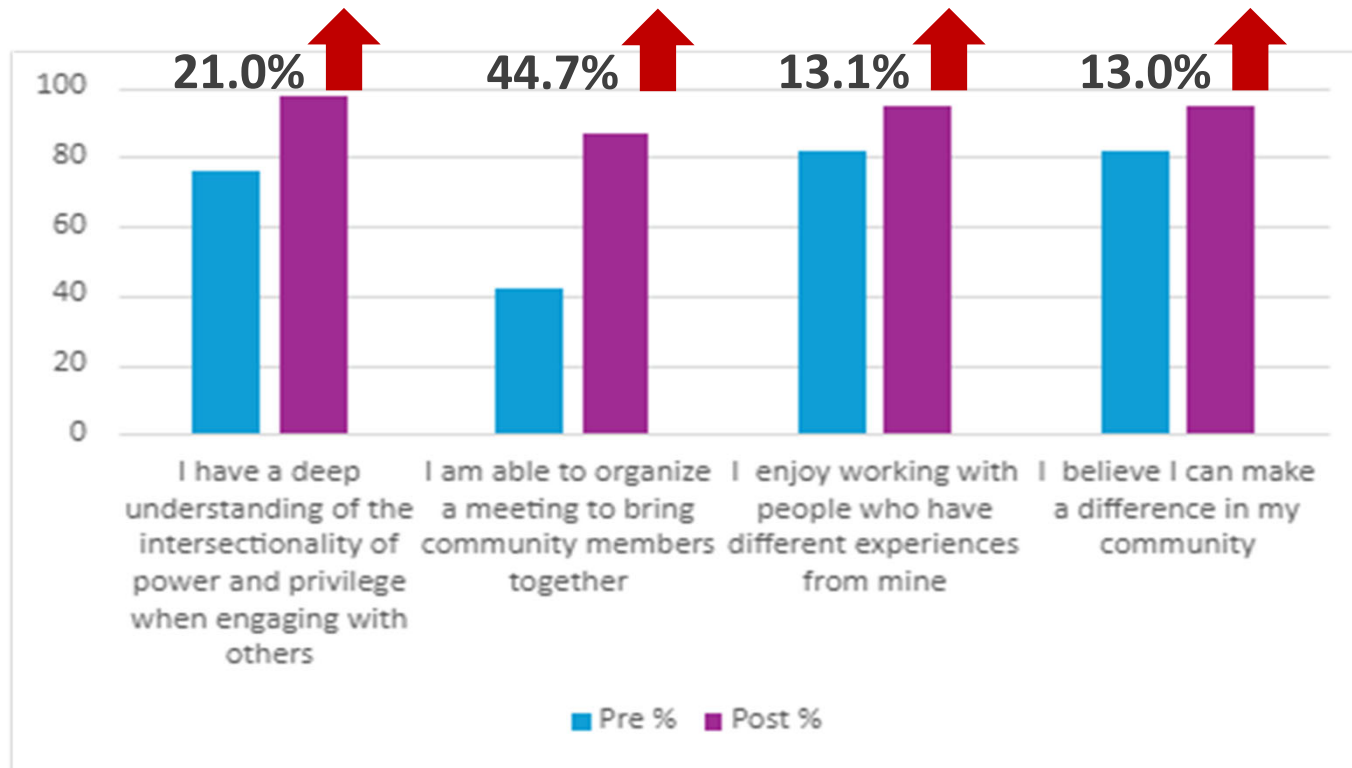
# Leadership for Social Change



After a two-week program, **100%** of students agreed that “by working with others in the community, I can help make things better” and believed being involved in community issues was their responsibility.

This high post-programmatic civic agency trend remained consistent for **five consecutive years**.

## After the program



# One Year Later

- “Some of the most useful skills I received from the LSC program were researching and presenting. Additionally, gaining the knowledge of the power of speech and community were especially important. Community work surrounding heavily on my local multilingual learner community on education equity. As a result of having the experiences of the program, I am now able to quickly research the issues and current solutions that have been put in place. Additionally, my presentations are now more informed and being very informative.”





# One Year Later

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- “I think the most useful skills that I gained from the LSC program were understanding the importance of listening to different people and being able to have a conversation with someone who you don't agree with. The only way to make change is to understand everyone and their perspective. That everyone, no matter what they believe, deserves to be heard. Today, I still think about how important it is to be respectful to everyone and fight for what you believe in.”



# Future Steps



- Validate civic character (civic identity, civic leadership, and civic agency) and community impact measures
  - This will help to provide a more comprehensive view of how colleges/universities can more effectively build civic character not only within their student bodies but also within their surrounding communities
- Pursue a longitudinal study of civic-related programming to explore developmental “civic pathways” or trajectories of students’ civic character development

# Food for Thought

- How are you currently assessing civic character at your institution?
- What frameworks have you found useful for evaluation?







# Questions & Comments



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