



CSU Center for Public Deliberation

First Annual Report Fall 2006-Summer 2007



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This report details the activities completed in the first year of the CSU Center for Public Deliberation (CPD). For more information on the CPD, go to www.cpd.colostate.edu, or contact Martín Carcasson at mcarcas@colostate.edu or (970) 491-5628.

The report is organized into three sections:

Section 1: Background (page 1)

Section 2: 2006-2007 Activities (page 3)

Section 3: Future Activities (page 10)

Section 1: Background

The CSU Center for Public Deliberation officially began operations in August of 2006, under the direction of Martín Carcasson, assistant professor in the Department of Speech Communication. The official mission statement of the CPD is, “To promote the development of a vibrant deliberative democracy in Northern Colorado.”

The CPD has three primary goals:

To Enhance the Local Civic Culture

- Increase citizen participation in community problem solving
- Decrease the sense of polarization, cynicism, and frustration with politics
- Help develop a civic habit of relying on deliberation to address local concerns

To Expand Collaborative Decision-Making

- Promote interconnections between local government and citizens
- Expand and improve the role of the public in decision-making processes
- Help incorporate deliberative techniques in local institutions

To Improve Civic Pedagogy

- Study and improve methods of developing citizenship skills at all levels (K-12, higher education, citizen education)
- Promote the inclusion of deliberative concepts and activities in curricula

The tag line used on the front of the CPD pamphlet and website perhaps best captures the overall purpose of the CPD: *Dedicated to enhancing local democracy through improved public communication and community problem solving*

Topic: Center for Public Deliberation

Different kind of politics benefits community

This past summer, I established the Center for Public Deliberation at Colorado State University (www.cpd.colostate.edu). Its purpose is to enhance local democracy through improved public discussion and community problem solving. The CPD is nonpartisan.

Working from a communication studies perspective, CPD faculty and students focus on the deliberative process, not necessarily its product. Deliberation is an approach to politics in which citizens, not just experts or politicians, are deeply involved in public decision-making.

Working with facilitators who utilize a variety of deliberative techniques, diverse groups of citizens come together and consider relevant information from multiple points of view, listen to one another in order to uncover points of common ground and understand what people truly value, consider the underlying tensions and tough choices inherent to most public issues and ultimately seek to come to some conclusion for action in the form of a reasoned public judgment.

Deliberation requires safe, respectful places for citizens to come together, good and fair information to help structure the conversation and skilled facilitators to guide the process. The CPD is dedicated to providing these three key ingredients to Northern Colorado.

The benefits of deliberation can be valuable. Problems become community issues, rather than governmental ones. After being exposed to a broad variety of views and a rigorous process, public decisions are often better.



Martin Carcasson
Soapbox

Those who disagree with the decision often still respect its legitimacy if they were involved in the process and felt they were heard. Participants also earn the intrinsic rewards of practicing and honing their democratic skills, and are more likely to be involved again in the future.

The concept is not new. The CPD is a local representative of a growing "Deliberative Democracy Movement," anchored by organizations such as the National Issues Forum (www.nifi.org) and the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (www.ncdd.org).

I started the CPD because, like many of you, I am frustrated with the cynicism, polarization and negativity tied to our political system and how people subsequently talk about political issues. The gap between what I teach in my classes about public debate and discussion and what my students experience, especially during campaigns, is far too wide.

Pundits from both sides of the political spectrum too often talk past each other, preach to their own choirs, misrepresent their opponents, oversimplify complicated issues and focus on politically rewarding issues rather than the publicly important ones. Such communication only fuels apathy and polarization.

What the CPD hopes to do, starting in our community, is help

change the environment and expectations so that such tactics are not as effective or frequent. The CPD will focus on local and state issues — where the public can more easily connect with lawmakers — but will also host conversations about national and international topics.

Thus far, reaction from Northern Colorado political leaders and community organizations has been encouraging, but it won't be easy. Deliberation, after all, is hard work. Attracting a broad diversity of opinions to public meetings is especially difficult. The time commitment is significant. Deliberation tends to go against the grain of human nature and the reward structure of our political system. But, like many other difficult but healthy tasks, deliberation can become a habit for a community. The more often it is relied upon, the easier and more natural it can become.

In the end, nurturing this community habit is our goal. Although we may never fully become a "deliberative democracy," I believe the closer we get the better, and the farther along we will progress toward becoming a "more perfect union."

Martin Carcasson is an assistant professor in the Speech Communication Department at Colorado State University and the director of the CSU Center for Public Deliberation. The CPD is hosting a Kickoff Event and Community Issues Forum from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Lincoln Center Columbine Room. Contact Carcasson at cpd@colostate.edu for information.

Section 2: Fall 2006- Summer 2007 Activities

This section details the primary activities of the CPD during its first year. This section is organized in 5 sections:

- Community Networking
- Developing Student Associates
- Moderator training workshops
- National Issues Forums
- Additional Public Forums
- Director Activities and Training

Community Networking:

This being the first year, CPD students and staff focused on getting acclimated to the community's politics and getting to know the key issues, organizations, and figures. Numerous meetings were held with members of the school board, school administration, city council, county government, local media, university leaders, and leaders of various community organizations such as the League of Women Voters. At times these meetings were one-on-one meetings, and at times Dr. Carcasson gave informational presentations on deliberation and the CPD during a regularly scheduled meeting of various organizations.

Through these meetings, a broad advisory board was built with both on and off campus members. The **Advisory Board** during the first year included:

- Greg Dickinson, Colorado State University (CSU) Department of Speech Communication
- Lyn Kathlene, Director, Colorado Institute of Public Policy
- Barb Kistler, Director, CSU Student Leadership and Civic Engagement Office
- Ellen Laubhan, Director of Communications, Poudre School District (PSD)
- Michael Liggett, PSD Think Tank and Fort Collins Regional Library District Board
- Brad MacDonald, CSU Department of Political Science
- John Meyer, President of Fort Collins Church Network and Pastor of Summitview Church
- Robert Moore, Executive Editor, *Fort Collins Coloradoan*
- Ginny Sawyer, Neighborhood Administrator, City of Fort Collins
- Dixie Schmatz, Spokeswoman, Larimer County League of Women Voters
- William Timpson, CSU Department of Education
- Deni La Rue, Larimer County Community Information Manager

Additional meetings were also held with:

- Paul Alexander and Michael Briand, Regis University Institute for the Common Good
- CSU College of Liberal Arts Associate Deans, Lou Swanson and Alex Bernasek
- Tony Cheng, CSU Department of Natural Resources
- Ellyn Dickmann and Michael Leggit, PSD Think Tank
- Ray Caraway, Community Development Foundation

- Ray Martinez, former Fort Collins Mayor
- Darrin Attebury, Fort Collins City Manager
- Mims Harris, Northern Colorado Multicultural Corporation
- Bob Powell, Character Fort Collins
- Cheryl Distaso, Center for Justice, Peace, and the Environment
- Robert Thompson, Fort Collins Interfaith Council
- Erin Stout, CSU College Republicans
- Randy Fischer, Colorado State Representative
- John Kefalas, Colorado State Representative
- Linda Mahan, Health Care for All Colorado
- Mallorie Burns, Community Peace Circles
- Steve Burkholder, Mayor of Lakewood, Colorado
- Larimer County Facilitation Group
- Maro Zagoras, Civility in the Commons, Not in our town Association
- Mary Carraher, Project Self-Sufficiency
- Jana Ley, PSD School Board President; Nancy Tellez, PSD School Board Vice-President; and M.L. Johnson, PSD School Board Director
- Jerry Wilson, PSD Superintendent

Developing Student Associates:

Another primary method used to achieve the goals for the CPD is to recruit, train, and utilize high-quality CSU undergraduates. We typically bring in 10-15 student associates each semester, with most of them (unless they are graduating that semester) serving for two semesters. While serving as student associates, they receive upper level Speech Communication class credit. During their first semester they develop a strong theoretical knowledge of deliberative theory and practice, are trained as moderators, and typically run forums with CSU students in various classes to gain experience. Their second semester they work on a major project, either individually or in a group. Fifteen student associates were brought in for the fall of 2006, with 4 of them graduating in December. In January, eleven of the experienced students returned, while ten new students began their work with the CPD. Local projects thus far have included convening and running community NIF forums, researching local issues to begin the process of developing local issues books, and working with local organizations to run forums on particular issues of interest to them.

Fall 2006 Student Associates:

Krystal Angelo*	Janie Dunckley	Ryan Olivett
Ellie Christopher*	John English	Bethany Porter
Alex Fairbanks*	Anthony Grimes	Thea Rinard
Michael Lawrence*	Angela Huffman	Daniel Segreti
Michael Crook	Kassidy Kaylor	Jake Woods
* Graduated in Fall 2007, all other students returned Spring 2007		

Spring 2007 Student Associates:

Rich Rodriguez*	Kristen Turechek	Lisa Wirth
Aubrey White*	Jamie Folsom	Matthew Wolf
Jonathan Cohen*	Mandi Gum	
Kevin Jacobi*	Brian Kraus	
* Graduates Spring 07, all other student associates continued in Fall 2007		

Moderator training workshops:

Two moderator training workshops were held for the CSU undergraduate students that had applied and been chosen to serve as CPD “student associates.” The students beginning their first semester with the CPD go through the training, thus one was held October 2006 and another in January 2007. The January student training also included seven graduate students and lecturers from the Speech Communication department that decided to attend training and then be available to help with CPD projects.

We held our first community workshop from August 2-4. We had eighteen participants from five different states (Colorado, Arizona, Nebraska, Maryland, California). Twelve participants were from the local community, and a few have agreed to be available to work on CPD projects. Our second annual community training workshop will be held in late spring/early summer 2008.

National Issues Forums:

One of our basic activities is running National Issues Forums (www.nifi.org). The National Issues Forum Institute is a national network of a network of civic, educational, and other organizations, and individuals, whose common interest is to promote public deliberation in the United States. It has grown to include thousands of civic clubs, religious organizations, libraries, schools, and many other groups that meet to discuss critical public issues.

One of the primary funding sources for the CPD is a grant provided by the Council for Public Policy Education, which is connected to the National Issues Forums, and provides grants to help establish new centers like the CPD. One of the responsibilities of the grant is to provide NIF training and run forums.

A total of 12 forums using NIF material were convened and moderated by CPD students or staff. The following is a list of those forums:

- Democracy’s Challenge (Fall 06) with SP 207 students
- America’s Role in the World (Fall 06) with SP 207 students
- Terrorism (Spring 07) with PLP students

- Alcohol (Spring 07) with SP479 students
- Immigration (Spring 07) with SP407 students
- Making Ends Meet (Spring 07) with SP479 students
- 21st Century Mission of Schools (Spring 07) with SP479 students
- News media (Spring 07) with SP479 students
- Alcohol (Spring 07) with SP479 students
- Violent Kids (Spring 07) with high school students
- 21st Century Mission of Schools (Spring 07) with SP407 students
- Making Ends Meet (Spring 07) with community members

Most of the forums were held on CSU campus with CSU students in various classes as part of the first semester training for the student associates. At the end of the spring semester, three student associates did convene and moderate a community NIF forum using the Making Ends Meet book. They worked with State Representative John Kefalas as well as a local advocate for working poor mothers called Project Self-Sufficiency. Twenty community members attended the discussion.

Additional Deliberative Meetings and Events

In an effort to provide the students experience as well as serve our community and pursue our goals, the CPD was involved in a number of additional deliberative events throughout the year.

- CPD student associates helped facilitate an “Implication Wheel” exercise in September for the Poudre School District concerning the possibility of moving the 9th grade to high schools. Approximately 30 participants.
- CPD student associates facilitated three charrettes for the Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization concerning the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan in September and October, 2006. Approximately 120 participants.
- CPD student associates facilitated a public meeting for the Poudre School district on the Civic Mission of Schools on October 24, 2006. Over 100 students, parents, and interested citizens attended. The information from that meeting was used by the PSD Think Tank to develop action items that were presented to the superintendent and at the statewide Civic Mission of Schools summit in January 2007. The CPD will continue to be involved in this project and play a key role in addressing the action items. Approximately 100 participants.
- On Wednesday, January 24th, we held our Kickoff Event and First Annual Community Issues Forum at the Lincoln Center in Fort Collins. 135 citizens gathered to hear about the CPD and discuss what issues were important to them. Participants learned about deliberation, and then were asked to talk in small groups with a student facilitator about the issues they felt were most important to the community. After those individual table discussions, the students combined all the information from the various tables and put up paper on the walls with all the various issues. The participants were then given sticker dots to place on the issues they felt were more important. Once all the dots were placed, tables were assigned for those issues that garnered the most dots, and participants had the chance to sit at the issue they were most interested in. Student facilitators again took notes, getting

basic local information about that issue, such as key individuals and organizations involved in the issue. The information gathered that night will be utilized by the CPD to prioritize our agenda and also to kickstart any project based on those issues. In addition to facilitated table discussions, participants completed surveys that asked questions about what issues they would like to have the community engage more deliberatively. They were also provided a list of all the available NIF books (as well as a table with examples of all the books), and were asked to identify which books they preferred. The participant list from this event became the basis of our email notification list, and the publicity both before and after the event likely introduced many to the CPD. Approximately 135 participants. See Appendix C for copies of the articles written on the event, as well as the surveys and survey results.

- We partnered with the Graduate Student Council to host a discussion with Vice Provost Dorhout (Graduate Affairs) and our local state representatives about the changes proposed in state statutes that would affect graduate student health insurance at Colorado State University. The meeting was held at 4:30 pm on Wednesday, Jan. 31, on campus. Approximately 40 participants.
- In our most significant project during our first year, CPD staff assisted the Poudre School District in designing, facilitating, and reporting on a series of 6 public meetings concerning the grade configuration of PSD schools. I was called in to advise the district on the format of the meetings, and the district decided to produce an NIF style summary of the choices, which included keeping the current configuration (K-6, 7-9, 10-12), moving both 6th and 9th graders up, just moving 9th graders up, or using a hybrid model that had half the district changing and half staying the same. The prepared materials, mailed to all parents in the district as well as passed out at the meetings, listed advantages, disadvantages, and tradeoffs for each option. Each meeting involved splitting the audience into breakout rooms of 15-30, and having CPD student associates facilitate an NIF style discussion that walked through each option's pros and cons, and concluded with a reflections period. As participants left, they were given 5 sticker "dots" to place on the statements recorded during the discussion that resonated with them the most. Students then took those notes and typed them up. These forums culminated in a 65 page report compiled by the CPD and presented to the school district (the full report is posted on the CPD website, the summary report is included in Appendix D). A total of 486 participants attended over the six meetings

The dates and locations of the meetings were as follows:

Feb. 13 - 4:00-6:00pm, Lincoln Jr. High School
Feb. 15 - 7:00-9:00pm, Fossil Ridge High School
Feb. 21, 4:00-6:00pm, Preston Jr. High School
Feb. 22, 7:30-9:30pm, Fort Collins High School
March 1, 7:00-9:00 pm, Rocky Mountain High School
March 7, 7:00-9:00pm, Poudre High School

- The CPD sponsored a town hall meeting with the Northern Colorado state legislators focusing on education policy on April 24th at Lory Student Center on CSU campus.
- The CPD sponsored a bi-partisan town hall meeting with Northern Colorado state legislators on Saturday, March 3, at Lory Student Center on CSU campus. Legislators spoke briefly, and then simply answered questions from the citizens. Approximately 50 participants.

- The CPD sponsored a forum on Latino/a Issues with Representative Kefalas at the Atzlan Community Center on Saturday, March 24th. A panel of community leaders discussed key issues, and then took questions from the citizens. Approximately 30 participants.
- The CPD sponsored a town hall meeting for Northern Colorado state legislators on May 12th at the Lory Student Center to allow Q&A concerning the end of the legislative session. Approximately 50 participants.
- The CPD sponsored and facilitated a local meeting on June 30th for the state-wide Conversations 2007 education reform process initiated by the Donnell-Kay Foundation. Approximately 40 participants.

Additional Activities by Director Martín Carcasson

- Director Martín Carcasson attended NIF moderator training in March of 2006 in Missouri.
- Director Martín Carcasson, Assistant Director Kari Anderson, and graduate assistant Elizabeth Sink attended the Kettering Foundation Public Policy Workshop in Dayton, OH in July 2006.
- Director Martín Carcasson attended the Policy Consensus Initiative's conference on the Role of University Centers as Neutral Forums for Decision-Making in Denver in May 2006.
- Director Martín Carcasson attended the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation in San Francisco in August, 2006.
- Director Martín Carcasson's editorial entitled "A Different Kind of Politics" was published by the *Fort Collins Coloradoan* (copy in Appendix C).
- From March 21-23, director Martín Carcasson attended a 3 day workshop in Chicago, Illinois, on how to frame issues for deliberation put on by the National Issues Forum Public Policy Institute at the College of DuPage.
- Director Martín Carcasson moderated the Fort Collins Municipal Election Candidate Forum sponsored by the *Coloradoan* and radio station KFKA 1310 on March 15th.
- Director Martín Carcasson and Assistant Director Karrin Anderson attended a "Community Politics" workshop in Dayton, Ohio put on by the Kettering Foundation. The CPD was provided a \$10,000 contract by the Kettering Foundation for participating in a year-long collaborative research project.
- Director Martín Carcasson and student associate Jamie Folsom attended the Raising the Civic Canopy event on Thursday, February 15th, 3-6 pm, The Belmar Center, Lakewood, CO
- Director Martín Carcasson attended the Policy Consensus Initiative's conference on the Role of University Centers as Neutral Forums for Decision-Making in Seattle in May 2007.

Section 3: Future Activities

Scheduled Activities for Fall 2007/Spring 2008

- **Sept 15/16 - Sustainable Living Fair** (10-6 Sat, 10-5 Sun) – We are hosting a “Dialogue Tent” at the Sustainable Living Fair.
- **Sept 22 (Sat, 12-4pm in Greeley) – Phi Theta Kappa Leadership conference** at Aims Community College in Greeley, Colorado. We will be moderating a discussion on **energy policy** with 50 community college honors students.
- **Sept. 29th - Health Care forum**, CSU campus, 9 am-12pm (partnering with League of Women Voters to host a conversation connected to the current state health care proposals being examined by the 208 Commission).
- **October 20th (Sat, all day) - By the People event**, Denver, Colorado. (partnering with By the People, the Institute for the Common Good, the Colorado Civic Canopy, and Rocky Mountain PBS to host an all-day deliberative event using 100 randomly selected Colorado citizens, focusing on **education policy**). Part of a nationwide project that will be aired on the McNeil-Lehrer hour:
<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/btp/>
- **November 12th (Monday night, 6-9pm) - Capstone day** – This will be our major event for the semester, as we will invite the Fort Collins community to join with 100 speech communication majors during their capstone class for a series of public forums on various issues. Students and residents will be able to choose from a slate of 8-10 issues. If you have an issue of particular interest, we could work with you and include it as one of the options. We will need all the help we can get for this one, and if you have a particular NIF issue book (or even another issue you could develop), you could have a chance to run your own forum for this event.
- **February 2, 2008 - Community Circles**: CPD student associate Mallorie Bruns is currently planning a community circle on CSU campus.

Projects currently under development:

- **PSD District Ends Policy** The Poudre School District has asked us to potentially help them with gathering public input on their "district ends" policy, which is essentially discussions focused on the big picture purpose of public education.
- **Civic Mission of Schools**: Last October, we hosted a meeting for the local school district concerning the role of civic education in public schools. It was part of a national "Civic Mission of Schools" campaign. 100 citizens came to that meeting to work through a set of questions that we had posed, and out of that meeting and some others with the PSD Think Tank, we came up with some "Action plan" items. We will start working on implementing those action items this year.
- **Poverty**: Dr. Carcasson is part of a local committee directed through the United Way of Larimer County to lead a large community effort to examine and confront the growth of poverty in Larimer County. This project will likely connect to a number of critical issues, including but not limited to job training, job creation,

- **Role of Science/Technology/Engineering/Math (STEM) is K-12 Curriculum:** Dr. Carcasson will be working with Dr. Ellyn Dickmann of the CSU School of Education to examine the role of STEM courses in the K-12 curriculum.