The University of Central Oklahoma (UCO), founded in 1890, is located on a 210-acre campus in Edmond, a northern suburb of Oklahoma City. Fall 2009 enrollment exceeded 16,000. UCO is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools as a bachelor’s and master’s degree granting institution. The University consists of five undergraduate colleges and a college of graduate studies, with day, evening and weekend course offerings. UCO awards ten bachelor’s degrees, offering 119 majors in 63 programs of study. Six master’s degrees are offered in some 54 majors in 31 programs of study. UCO also offers study in six non-degree pre-professional areas and two certificate programs.

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For Chengyan Yao (on right), an English education major from Zhejiang Province, China, coming to the United States for a year of study at the University of Central Oklahoma was an exciting opportunity for her to compare higher education in China and the United States. “Colleges and universities in China and the United States encourage critical thinking,” Yao maintains, “but I find that in America education is more accessible to people.” In this image, Chenyan Yao is leading an ADP Coffee with the Times discussion on higher education in China and the United States.

Students speak to administrators regarding campus issues as part of the Deliberative Polling Initiative, an example of democracy in action.

Summer teacher institutes on civic engagement and land stewardship issues at Selman Living Laboratory.

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What is the American Democracy Project?

The American Democracy Project is committed to increasing student civic engagement, an essential component of transformative learning, at the University of Central Oklahoma. Established in 2003 in partnership with The New York Times and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, with UCO as a charter member, the American Democracy Project involves over 229 institutions in a special initiative that focuses on higher education’s role in preparing the next generation of informed, engaged citizens for our democracy. As institutions and as individuals we make a difference by example, by living lives of engagement, and by inviting our students to prepare for lives of moral and civic responsibility.

What is Civic Engagement?

Civic engagement is a broad term and includes a spectrum of examples ranging from volunteerism and community service on one side of the spectrum to public policy and politics on the other side. As one of the

Central Six components of Transformative Learning, civic engagement is central to the mission of the University of Central Oklahoma, educating the next generation of college students to serve as active, ethical and engaged citizens within their local communities, the nation and the world. In addition, President W. Roger Webb challenges us to become engaged citizens and value the 3 C’s: Character, Civility and Community. The goal of ADP is to integrate these core values into the fabric of university life.

Civic Engagement at UCO

- Innovative partnerships between students, faculty, staff and community partners
- UCO research team and Oklahoma Campus Compact partner with the National Conference on Citizenship to generate the Oklahoma report for the Civic Health Index
- Partnership with The New York Times: free copies of The New York Times for the campus community, Coffee with the Times discussion series, and Student Newspaper Editors Workshop in New York City
- Summer Teacher Institutes at UCO and UCO’s Selman Living Laboratory
- Civic Education and Voter Registration
- Read & Lead book discussion series with Leadership Central
- Partnerships with Oklahoma Campus Compact, Mobilize.org, National Conference on Citizenship, The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, UCO Policy Institute and First Year Experience

Developing Civic Skills

As faculty and staff at the University of Central Oklahoma, we have a responsibility to model civic engagement and service to our students. The campus community provides us with the opportunity to practice and cultivate our civic skills.

Practicing Civic Responsibility

Public institutions of higher education like the University of Central Oklahoma serve with public purpose and civic mission in our democracy. Democracy requires us to work collaboratively to solve problems.

“Civic engagement is a component of a learning-centered, transformative education. It can go on within the walls of a classroom or beyond those walls.”

Dr. William J. Radke
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at UCO

Professor Janelle Grellner participates in a roundtable discussion with students Amber Price and John Bobb-Semple at the ADP regional conference at UCO.

Voter registration drive

Professor Bob McGill directs “Conviction,” a student-authored play concerning current events on the U.S.-Mexico border.