

- Spring is the time of year, around the globe, for celebrations. From the Spring Festival in China to the El Castillo in Mexico, the calendar says, and nature agrees, that it is time to stop and take notice of the bounty and the goodness of creation. It is time to marvel that an egg can stand on end due to the wonder of the vernal equinox, when day and night are equal.

Celebrations are important. They cause us to pause, step back, and take notice of the good work that has been done. Recognize the growth that has occurred. Applaud the dedication to the past that bodes well for the future. It is time for us to once again to celebrate the “equinox” of civic engagement at the [Robert G. Bringle Civic Engagement Showcase and Symposium](#).

Civic engagement, as many of you can attest, requires the constant balancing of work, idealism, commitment and reality. Balancing the tensions that are ever present as one strives to keep in mind both the campus and the community, the private gain and the public good, as well as the “What’s in it for me?” with the “What’s in it for you?” This tension Alexis de Toqueville aptly described as “self-interest rightly understood.” Interestingly, it is this type of self-interest that keeps us engaged and keeps us motivated to work with others towards the common good.

Unlike the laws of nature, when in fact there is an equal distribution between the length of day and the length of night, the human endeavor of civic engagement is typically not equal. Oftentimes these mutually beneficial partnerships weigh more heavily one way than the other. Students may learn more than the children they tutor, organizations may benefit more than faculty members conducting the research, or the campus may gain more recognition than community partners. Equality in human endeavors is rarely realistic. And that may be for our long term sense of health and wellbeing.

Equitable relationships are far more meaningful and enduring than equal relationships. Taking a “tit for tat” approach of equal time on task, equal reward and gain, equal roles and responsibilities oftentimes undermines the human element of creative expression and inspiration. Equitable relationships honor the unique and creative approaches of individuals. Equitable relationships respect the varied goals and different perspectives among organizations. Equitable relationships are built upon a mutual sense of trust that, over time, the relationship works well for both parties. As you know this takes time, commitment, and dedication.

Join us on Tuesday April 23rd to celebrate and recognize the outstanding civic partnerships that have developed among students, faculty, staff, and community partners and residents.

The *Civic Engagement Showcase and Symposium* offers an opportunity for you to network with others on campus and within the community; learn about successful programs, both local and national; and applaud the excellence of graduating students. And most importantly, it invites you to take some time out of your busy day to pause, step back, and take notice of the good work in your midst. You will be inspired.