

## PART TWO: CASE STUDIES: COLORADO AND WYOMING

### Introduction

#### WHY HAVE CASE STUDIES?

The takeover of civics education is a national phenomenon, but much of its work is at the local level, in particular institutions. In this section we examine four institutions in Colorado and Wyoming: the University of Colorado, Boulder (CU-Boulder), Colorado State University (CSU), the University of Northern Colorado (UNC), and the University of Wyoming (UW). We assess the fate of the traditional civics literacy curriculum in each university, and the extent to which it has been replaced by the New Civics. We offer institutional portraits, made up of classes, programs, and professors. Our report details what is now taught in the name of “civics.”

#### WHY STUDY THESE UNIVERSITIES?

We chose these four universities in the first place because they are public institutions. The insertion of the New Civics is just as extensive in private universities, but the New Civics takeover of public universities is more at issue. They are funded by taxpayer dollars so as to educate a broad spectrum of Americans. If any universities in the country should have a democratic and a civic mission, it is public universities such as those we have studied.

We have also chosen schools that are a rough proxy for the typical American university: neither Ivy League schools nor community colleges, but universities ranging from state flagships to somewhat less prestigious institutions. We have also chosen to study universities in Colorado and Wyoming precisely because they are not in liberal states such as California or Massachusetts. Colorado is a political swing state that is broadly typical of the country as a whole, and Wyoming is a conservative state (with a libertarian streak)—and in both of these states, moderate and conservative, a progressive political movement has made extraordinary headway in the public universities. Our case studies illustrate that the New Civics has permeated America’s entire system of higher education, and not just its radical fringe.

We also chose these universities because they exhibit different stages of the growth of the New Civics. CU-Boulder has been a pioneer in the New Civics, and it demonstrates the broad reach of a mature New Civics program. Colorado State University, the University of Northern Colorado, and

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the University of Wyoming show how the New Civics appears at an earlier stage of development. Less deep-rooted programs of civic engagement and service-learning, tacked on to more traditional forms of volunteerism, are already at work to subsume traditional volunteerism within the New Civics framework. The combined portrait illustrates how New Civics progresses, how a small New Civics program such as exists at the University of Wyoming will develop in time to the sprawling New Civics programs of CU-Boulder.

### **BIOGRAPHIES: CAMPUS COMPACT OF THE MOUNTAIN WEST**

We append to these four case studies a biographical study of the leaders of Campus Compact of the Mountain West (CCMW), the most important regional New Civics organization in Colorado and Wyoming. CCMW coordinates the progress of the New Civics throughout Colorado and Wyoming; we describe the individual professors, administrators and university presidents who make up CCMW, and who are the faces of the New Civics. Learning something about the people who lead a movement is an important part of understanding the ideals and ambitions that shape it.

### **SOURCES**

Our portrait draws heavily on the materials produced by the universities themselves—their administrative policies, their syllabi, the materials that state what they mean to do. These illustrate with their own words the New Civics advocates' ambitions, pedagogies, and practices. We follow our discussion of the four universities with a short section on the classroom experience at all four universities. We place limited weight here on consideration of how individual classes are taught. Tendentious texts and discussion assignments do play their role in eliminating traditional civic literacy: an American history text that ignores the Founding Fathers is not performing a particularly civic function, and neither are discussion sections on civil rights that silently pass by the Second Amendment right to bear arms. Yet to focus on individual classes is to risk descending to the level of the non-probative anecdote—and to extend unduly a lengthy report. We sketch the classroom experience, but as an adjunct to this report's central focus on the administrative structure of the New Civics.

We are keenly aware that this limits our ability to judge how effectively the New Civics advocates have transformed the student body. We presume that some students shrug off the New Civics' progressive advocacy, and some consciously reject it. Yet we take the progressive activists' own estimation of the New Civics' effect at face value: they have had real success in molding their students and capturing university resources, even if their triumphs are as yet only partial. The burgeoning numbers of progressive activists formed by such civics education are an imprecise but sufficient measure that the New Civics has been effective enough. When students emerge unchanged from a class in New Civics, it is by dint of a vigorously free mind—for which we may be thankful.