January 6, 2016

Dear Colleagues & Friends,

2015 was a watershed year in advancing civic life in Florida. In February over 100 representatives from 30 organizations came together for the Florida Civic Advance Summit (see the Summit Report at: http://consensus.fsu.edu/Civic-Advance/ pdfs2/FCRC_FlCivicAdvSummit_08_07_15.pdf) At that meeting we agreed upon 12 areas of civic life to be strengthened. We were encouraged by many national and state leaders, developed many ideas as to how to work together, and received commitments from a dozen organizations to provide leadership and support going forward.

We are pleased that key ideas discussed at the Summit meeting are being advanced. They include:

1. FLORIDA CIVIC ADVANCE COORDINATING COUNCIL: A distinguished group of Florida leaders has been established and convened to provide oversight, and policy and planning guidance for our shared efforts to advance civic life in Florida. A list of Council members is included in the Progress Report starting on page 3 below. The FCRC Consensus Center agreed to serve as a secretariat, pursue and secure resources and provide for coordination among the various network activities.

2. FLORIDA CIVIC ADVANCE STRATEGIC PLAN: One of the initial decisions of the FCA Coordinating Council was to develop a strategic plan for our shared future work. Work has begun on the plan and in the next six weeks the Summit participants and other network members will be asked to provide input.

3. FLORIDA CIVIC ADVANCE RESEARCH AGENDA: A group of scholars from Florida higher education institutions with interest in civic related matters is being organized by Dr. Frances Berry of Florida State University and Dr. Thomas Bryer of University of Central Florida University. During 2016 this group will:

- Seek input from practitioners on important questions that research can help them with in the 12 civic opportunity areas.
- Create a related annotated civic research bibliography organized by the 12 areas. The Florida Library Association has agreed to take the lead in developing a bibliography.
- Compile a list of Florida and national scholars conducting research in each 12 areas.
- Develop a list of key research questions in each area and cross cutting research
priorities.

- Develop ideas for supporting ongoing research efforts, including faculty research, doctoral dissertations, student capstone projects, etc.

4. MIAMI-DADE REGIONAL CIVIC ADVANCE SUMMIT. In July 2015 the Florida Civic Advance received a grant from the Allegany Franciscan Ministries Foundation, a FCA Summit sponsor, to further develop the network, create a strategic plan, and engage with leaders in the Miami-Dade community to explore ongoing platforms for collaboration and civic advance, including a local civic summit meeting.

5. FLORIDA CIVIC METRICS DEVELOPMENT: In 2015 many efforts were undertaken to expand and improve collection of information about the civic practices of Floridians. The Florida Benchmarking Consortium’s nearly 50 local governments (18 counties, 25 cities and 2 authorities) have developed 19 sets of local government benchmarks, the newest of them, a series of civic benchmarks, include 41 data points measuring the range and depth of civic engagement and civic health at the local level. The Consortium members have agreed to collect annual data on these indicators starting in early 2016 and continuing in the coming years. The initiative is looking to find and gather data on indicators of civic engagement and civic health at a level below Florida’s MSAs that can reveal patterns at the community and neighborhood levels. The initiative is receiving assistance from the Lou Frey Institute at UCF, the Bob Graham Center at UF and the CIRCLE program at Tufts University.

6. NEW MEMBERS: Since the 2015 Florida Civic Advance Summit, the FCA network has grown to 35 organizations including the three newest members, the Florida Benchmarking Consortium, the Florida Children’s Council and the Florida Public Television Association. For a full list see the Progress Report below. We expect other new member to join in 2016.

We will continue to provide you with quarterly updates on FCA activities and initiatives. Follow us on Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/Florida-Civic-Advance-358585160995320/?ref=bookmarks](https://www.facebook.com/Florida-Civic-Advance-358585160995320/?ref=bookmarks). Let us know if you are interested in participating in any of the four areas described in the attached progress report: Civic Success Models; Community and Leadership Assistance; Civic Indicators; and Civic Research Agenda. Also let us know if you believe there are other organizations around the state we should contact about joining the Florida Civic Advance Network.

Warm regards,

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Chair of the FCA Coordinating Council & Senior Fellow FCRC Consensus Center

Florida Civic Advance Progress Report, 2015
One of Florida’s great challenges is its weak civic life. This is evident in some of the lowest civic health ratings in the nation for voting, helping neighbors, volunteering, giving to charity, attending public meetings, and many other civic practices. This is unfortunate since civic engagement is a known important factor in achieving community stability, economic prosperity, and a desirable quality of life.

The good news is that there are many Florida organizations dedicated to strengthening civic life, and there is an abundance of good and innovative civic work being done in Florida communities. The bad news is that the connections between groups interested in civic improvement have been weak, and the good civic work being done in Florida is not well recognized, appreciated, or understood.

But the Florida civic landscape is changing. In recent years many state organizations and leaders have been in dialogue about how to collaborate to help strengthen the civic health and capacity of Florida communities. The result is the formation of new network, the Florida Civic Advance (FCA). The Florida Consensus Center, based at Florida State University, has helped to guide the dialogue and formation of the FCA. A list of the Florida Civic Advance network organizations is listed at the close of this report.

THE FLORIDA CIVIC ADVANCE SUMMIT

In February 2015, the FCA convened an inaugural statewide Florida Civic Advance Summit in Orlando with over 100 representatives from over 30 organizations interested in improving civic life in Florida’s communities. A 21 page report about the Summit is available at: [http://consensus.fsu.edu/Civic-Advance/pdfs2/FCRC_FlCivicAdvSummit_08.07.15.pdf](http://consensus.fsu.edu/Civic-Advance/pdfs2/FCRC_FlCivicAdvSummit_08.07.15.pdf).

An important accomplishment of the Summit was to develop consensus and gather ideas about 12 areas of civic practice, called Civic Opportunity Areas. These areas, depicted below, help to define and shape our
thinking about civic life in Florida’s communities. As such, these areas represent categories of activities to study and promote excellence and innovation in the future.

Another important accomplishment of the Summit was to develop support for and gather ideas on how to implement the following three goals of the Florida Civic Advance:

1. To share and obtain information about exemplary and innovative civic practice.
2. To encourage, influence, and undertake research in regard to civic practices.
3. To assist local leaders, citizens, and governments in strengthening community civic life.

Building on the three goals identified above, the FCA Summit resulted in the identification of four areas in which to organize and conduct work in the next several years. The four areas are as follows:

1. **Civic Success Models**- identifying, describing, and analyzing the most successful, exemplary and innovative civic activities and practices in Florida.
2. **Community and Leadership Assistance**- designing implementation strategies at the local and regional levels that can build on civic success models and help Florida communities and their leaders strengthen their civic life, capacities and collaborative leadership practices.
3. **Civic Indicators**- identifying and developing the most appropriate indicators to measure the civic health of Florida communities building on the work to date.
4. **Civic Research Agenda**- prioritizing research topics and projects that can provide knowledge to strengthen civic life in Florida communities, and proposing ways in which such research can be funded and undertaken.
An important concluding feature of the Summit was that 12 organizations made commitments to help support Florida Civic Advance work in the near future (see page 20 of the Summit report). The Florida Consensus Center agreed to serve as a secretariat of the Network, pursue and obtain resources, and provide for coordination among the various network activities.

POST SUMMIT ACTIVITIES

Following the Summit meeting, discussions have been held with a number of organizations that have joined the FCA network or are considering doing so. Three new organizations have since joined the network and we anticipate as many as five additional members in 2016.

In July 2015 the Florida Civic Advance received a grant from the Allegany Franciscan Ministries Foundation, a FCA Summit sponsor, to further develop the FCA network, create a strategic plan, and to engage with leaders in the Miami-Dade community to explore platforms for collaboration and civic advance, including a local civic summit meeting.

Throughout the year, many members of the FCA have been doing work to develop civic metrics that can be used to measure health and progress in many areas of civic life in Florida communities. We are pleased that collaboration has been strong in these efforts and that many other network members have shown strong interest in the progress and are eager to review the results.

Leaders from the Askew School of Public Administration at Florida State University and the Non Profit Institute at the University of Central Florida are leading a workgroup to develop a Florida Civic Advance Research Agenda in 2016. The Florida Library Association is developing a research bibliography as a part of this initiative. It is anticipated that two additional workgroups will be established by Spring 2016 reflecting strategies to be developed in the FCA strategic plan to be completed by then.

The FCA Coordinating Council was organized during the year, and the first meeting of the group was held at the Florida Chamber Foundation in November. One of its first decisions was to call for the development of a strategic plan as soon as possible. Work has begun on this effort and efforts to engage network members, Summit participants, and other interested parties are being launched. A list of the Coordinating Council follows:

1. Stuart Langton, Chair, FCRC Consensus Center, Senior Fellow
2. David Biesmenderfer, Florida Philanthropic Network
3. Susan Boyer, Florida Benchmarking Consortium
4. Tony Carvajal, Florida Chamber Foundation
5. Marilyn Crotty, Institute of Government, UCF
6. Bryan Desloge, National Association of Counties
7. Doug Dobson, Frey Institute for Politics, UCF
8. Todd Greene, Federal Reserve, Atlanta
9. Earle Klay, Askew School of Public Administration & Policy, FSU
10. Dee Dee Rasmussen, Florida Campus Compact
11. Jeff Johnson AARP Florida
12. Linda McCarthy, Florida Library Association
13. Jim Murley, Miami Dade County
14. Scott Paine, Florida League of Cities
Other agreements made by the Coordinating Council include:

- FCA Network Organization Role - participate in and contribute to FCA Network activities
- FCA Coordinating Council Role - Develop plans and policies for the FCA Advance; Foster communication among FCA organizations; and Promote coordination and collaboration among FCA organizations.
- FCA Workgroups, will be organized around strategic priorities and will engage with short-term tasks and provide longer-term strategic guidance on FCA goals and activities.

The Florida Civic Advance network is interested in encouraging and showcasing regional and local civic advance innovations and convening a diverse range of public, non-profit and private organizations that can build collaborative capacity at the local and regional levels.
1. AARP Florida
2. Allegany Franciscan Ministries
3. The Reubin Askew School of Public Administration, FSU
4. American Planning Association, Florida Chapter
5. Big Bend Minority Chamber of Commerce
6. Broward College
7. Corporation for National & Community Service-Florida
8. FCRC Consensus Center, FSU
9. Federal Reserve Bank, Atlanta
10. Florida Association of Counties
11. Florida Benchmarking Consortium
12. Florida Campus Compact
13. Florida Chamber Foundation
14. Florida Children’s Council
15. Florida City County Management Association
16. Florida League of Cities
17. Florida Libraries Association
18. Florida Local Government Coalition
19. Florida Philanthropic Network
20. Florida Non Profit Alliance
21. Florida Public Television Association
22. Florida Regional Councils Association
23. Florida Tax Watch, Florida Citizenship Center
24. Florida Trend
25. Lou Frey Institute of Government and Politics, UCF
26. Bob Graham Center for Public Service, University of Florida
27. The Good Government Institute, University of Miami
28. Institute of Government, UCF
29. Leadership Florida
30. Plum Creek
31. Sabadell United Bank
32. St. Petersburg College, Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions,
33. Tallahassee Community College
34. University of Central Florida, Center for Public and Non Profit Management
35. Village Square, Tallahassee, St. Petersburg & Broward County
36. Volunteer Florida