

THE STRAUSS REPORT

A PUBLICATION OF THE
ANNETTE STRAUSS INSTITUTE
FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

2006-2007 EDITION

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**NEW POLITICS FORUM HOSTS DALLAS
CONFERENCE**

**DOROT FOUNDATION OFFERS
CHALLENGE GRANT**

**SPEAK UP! SPEAK OUT!
HEADS TO SAN ANTONIO**



CREATING MORE VOTERS AND BETTER CITIZENS

2006-2007

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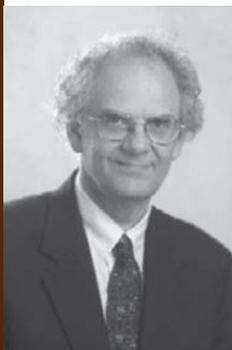
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From the Director



Roderick P. Hart

I thought my life was busy enough when directing the Annette Strauss Institute but now that I'm also dean of the College of Communication, the clock on my office wall spins faster and faster. Blessedly, the senior staff at the Institute has risen to the challenge. The newly tenured Dr. Sharon Jarvis—she of the two books, dozen articles, and five teaching awards—oversees our research operation. Dr. Mary Dixon, associate director for administration, is a human octopus, acquiring a new arm whenever a new set of skills is needed. And despite our successes, we all live by Mary's motto: "We can't become stale; we're only as good as our next project."

The following pages present some of those projects. They range from cutting-edge research conducted with the help of the Gates Foundation to *Speak Up! Speak Out!*, which brings together high school students with college student mentors to work on pressing local problems. We're also proud of the New Politics Forum, a campaign school for young people. Piloted in Austin over several years, the Forum is now on the move—Dallas last year, San Antonio this year, Houston next year. We have even more ambitious plans after that.

Our programs are flourishing but only because of an exceptional staff. NPF program manager Emily Balanoff, a whirlwind of talent, comes up with fresh ideas almost daily. Debbie Wise, who oversees our American Trustees project, has just completed a seventh video and will produce five more by March, 2007. Veronica Inchauste and O'Neil Provost ably oversee our Office of Survey Research, providing critical research services to University departments, State agencies, and the City of Austin. Emily, Debbie, O'Neil, and Veronica—entrepreneurs all.

But it is the graduate research assistants who give us our energy. Jane Saunders from the School of Education runs our high school program. Laura Barberena, Amanda Davis, Natasha Kovalyova and Cathy Setzer from the College of Communication help with our inquiries into youth engagement, and Lauren Quinlan of the LBJ School is assisting me with a long-term research project. We can't pay these fine young professionals what they're worth. Their collective passion is inspiring.

Dr. Bob Luskin and Dr. Talia Stroud have recently joined the Institute, Bob to pioneer a deliberative polling project and Talia to oversee our assessment work. But this edition of the Strauss Report is dedicated to an extraordinary young woman who works in all our behalf.

Melissa Huebsch, the Institute's administrative associate, never misses a deadline, never refuses to take on more work, never fails to greet visitors with a smile. Melissa is talented enough to do anything under the sun but she chose us instead. Why? Because Melissa Huebsch is a citizen.

The purpose of the Institute is to make more citizens like Melissa. To do so we need your help. The activities described here can only be undertaken when people like you lend a hand financially. The Institute gets some University funding and some grant money but we heavily depend on philanthropy. If you find our story compelling, please help. We promise to make you proud.

Our Purpose

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Participation was established at The University of Texas at Austin in 2000 to respond to growing political cynicism and disaffection in the United States. The goals of the Institute are (1) to conduct cutting-edge research on how civic participation, community understanding, and communication are undermined or sustained, and (2) to develop new programs for increasing democratic understanding among citizens. The Institute's mission is strictly non-partisan. It works within communities to engage people in the political process, teach them about the nation's democratic heritage, and encourage them to take leadership roles.

NPF Hosts 100 students at Dallas Conference



Catherine Crier offers advice to an NPF student



Andy Borowitz visits with Sam Houston State University students



Peter Koechley chats with student following the infotainment panel discussion



Hatton Sumners executive director, Hugh Akin, speaks with students and presenters

The New Politics Forum hosted its first Dallas conference at the Belo Mansion on February 18, 2006. Funded by the Hatton W. Sumners Foundation with additional support from the Dallas Morning News and the Hearst Endowment, the program welcomed 125 students from 21 universities across Texas. “One of our chief goals has been to travel the program so that it can reach more young people,” project manager Emily Balanoff explains. “We definitely achieved that with this conference.”

One draw was the high caliber of presenters including keynote speaker Catherine Crier of Court TV, who challenged students to think carefully about how media and politics come together. “I am excited to be speaking to such a young crowd,” Crier remarked. “It’s truly impressive to see so many young people interested in politics and media. It’s rare that I have so few gray hairs in the room.”

Other speakers of note included Andy Borowitz, writer of the Borowitz Report, and Peter Koechley of the Onion who highlighted the rise of infotainment in politics. “They practiced what they preached,” Balanoff explained, “they delivered important messages while keeping the audience entertained.”

For UT Senior Addie Bryant, the Forum has been a way to share interests and ideas with other students and meet professionals in the field. “The conference piqued my interest so much that I approached a speaker afterwards to seek out an internship with his firm and was happy to discover how receptive he was.”

Currently in its third year, the New Politics Forum provides campaign training and seminars that introduce young people to political professionals, members of the media, and academics. Hatton Sumners Foundation executive director Hugh Akin noted, “It is really important to let young people engage in balanced political dialogue and hear speakers with multiple perspectives. We believe this program provides that opportunity.”

You can visit the New Politics Forum at www.newpoliticsforum.org

“The conference piqued my interest so much that I approached a speaker afterwards to seek out an internship with his firm and was happy to discover how receptive he was.” —NPF Student Addie Bryant

NPF To Host San Antonio Conference

The New Politics Forum will host its 2006 Campaign Debriefing conference at the Plaza Club in San Antonio on November 18, 2006. The event will provide students from across Texas an opportunity to hear an election recap from a variety of political professionals. National Public Radio Political Editor Ken Rudin will open the event with a discussion of Red vs. Blue States while Dr. Larry J. Sabato, will serve as keynote speaker.

Rudin directs campaign coverage for NPR focusing on all aspects of politics. He has been a familiar presence on many national TV news programs as well as NPR's Talk of the Nation, Morning Edition, and All Things Considered.

Sabato, a well known author, professor, and prognosticator on his *Crystal Ball* site, has been called the "Dr. Phil of American politics" by the *Washingtonian*. Sabato's most recent books include *Divided States of America: The Slash and Burn Politics of the 2004 Presidential Election* and the upcoming *Get in the Booth! A Citizen's Guide to the 2006 Midterm Elections*. He will share his views on the big issues and upsets of the 2006 election and how these events might impact the 2008 presidential election.



Keynote Speaker, Dr. Larry J. Sabato



Opening Speaker, NPR's Ken Rudin

“Bringing the Forum to students around the state who might not otherwise have access to programs like this lies at the core of our mission.”

—Institute Director Roderick Hart

The Forum hopes to encourage participants to think critically about our country's most visible democratic process. Featuring nationally known speakers from across the country, other panels will focus on issues such as campaign communication, campaigning outside a two party system, a statewide perspective from the Texas press, and the immigration debate and the Hispanic vote.

San Antonio is the second “traveling” location for the Forum. “We believe that the Forum should be a moveable feast,” Hart noted. “Bringing the Forum to students around the state who might not otherwise have access to programs like this lies at the core of our mission.” Students from universities across the state and at all levels of political experience are invited to attend the event.

Theodore H. Strauss Civic Internship Awards

Internship Profiles

Adelina Bryant spent the summer interning at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, DC. She was a member of the Congressional Travel Unit of the Legislative Affairs Bureau. “As an intern, I had hands-on experience planning trips for congressmen and their staff as they traveled around the world. I corresponded with embassies to set up meetings with foreign officials and other important aspects of a congressional trip. I also learned how the State Department handles an international crisis when I became a volunteer for the Lebanon evacuation of American citizens. These experiences were very rewarding and have undoubtedly given me a new perspective on the world and my future.”



Caleb Pfifer spent his summer working in Rhode Island for the American Sail Training Association, a unique educational non-profit program for disadvantaged youth. “The connections that I made in the field this summer were invaluable. If I wanted to work in Washington tomorrow, I feel confident that I could find a home with the Rhode Island delegation. Additionally, I was able to put skills to work that I have only learned about in the academic sense. While it is often a cliché to say that an internship would not have been possible without the help of a grant, I have to stress in this case it is true.”

Rebecca Laurel had the opportunity to work with Texas State Senator Judith Zaffirini, including drafting legislation. “The legislative director would talk to me about an idea for a bill for the coming legislative session in January, and from that moment the bill was my responsibility. The process began with a legislative proposal to the Senator asking for her approval to proceed researching the bill. After receiving her consent, I researched everything about the bill from general facts to financial implications, talked to the various groups that would be affected by the bill, and then helped in writing the legislation. I woke up every morning wanting to go to work and learn more.”



Robyn Parker interned with U.S. Congressman Lamar Smith’s Austin office. Robyn used her internship as an opportunity to learn more about immigration policy. “This internship allowed me access to behind the scenes, in-depth ideas and gave me first-hand knowledge of the law-making processes involved in a contested and debated issue.” Additionally, Robyn learned a great deal about public service through her experiences with constituents. “I got to hear their stories first hand. This unexpected aspect of my internship altered some of my political views, and made me a more compassionate person all around.”

UT Students learn about public policy and community service

Abdulhadi Akhtar, a University of Texas senior in psychology, joined a group of doctors and epidemiologists from the Yale-Griffin Prevention Center to help conduct a psychiatric field study assessing the prevalence of psycho-social disorders in survivors from the October 2005 earthquake. “The October 2005 earthquake in Kashmir wiped out entire villages and claimed the lives of over 80,000 people. Seven months later, hundreds of thousands remain displaced in refugee camps. These figures, however, cannot begin to reveal the magnitude of pain and devastation caused by the catastrophe,” Hadi explains. The team visited half a dozen UNHCR tent villages located in Northern Pakistan and Kashmir in order to collect over 500 survivor interviews. Afterwards, Hadi worked as a relief worker for Concern for Children, a Pakistani NGO conducting operations in Kashmir. “I worked with four other volunteers from the United States, UK, and Canada to help create and sustain educational projects. Our team introduced activities that supplement the current rote-based instruction practiced in the schools and trained teachers on how to conduct such activities on their own.” Examples of these supplementary exercises include story time for the younger children, writing and play-acting for the older children, drawing and a variety of physical activities for all age groups (Nursery through Grade 9). Students and teachers alike valued these activities because they were both enjoyable and educational.



Dorot Foundation Offers Matching Funds for Internship Endowment Expansion

The Dorot Foundation of Providence, Rhode Island has provided funds to expand the Theodore H. Strauss Civic Internship Award endowment and a challenge grant to encourage matching funds. The Foundation has provided \$50,000 in new funds during the 2005-2006 school year enabling the Institute to award three additional stipends, bringing the total to five.

“The foundation’s generosity has already made a difference in the lives of seven UT students and it will continue to do so for many years to come,” noted Mary Dixon, associate director.

As a result, this year five University of Texas undergraduates had the opportunity to hone their public service skills in internships at the state, national, and international levels. The Theodore H. Strauss Internship awards provided \$2,500 stipends to each of the students to help defray the costs of their unpaid intern work.

“The foundation’s generosity has already made a difference in the lives of seven UT students and it will continue to do so for many years to come.” —Associate Director, Mary Dixon

Speak Up! Speak Out!

SUSO Team Studies ways to Beat High Gas Prices



In a year when gas prices hit an all time high, it's no surprise that *Speak Up! Speak Out!* students challenged judges to think more about how alternative fuels and public transportation impact the community. Other students examined equally salient issues such as high school redesign and teen pregnancy.

Speak Up! Speak Out! challenges high school classes to work as a team to choose a community problem, research the issues, and devise an original solution. Teams present their ideas at an annual Civics Fair to community judges. This year's judges included business people, academics, and non-profit leaders.

Garza Independence High School students examined how grain based fuels such as ethanol could impact Travis County by reducing emissions and lowering fuel costs for drivers. On the other side of the transportation issue, Crockett High School students shared the problems that come with the Austin public transportation system, making recommendations for improving safety and comfort. When asked how *Speak Up! Speak Out!* impacted him, Senior Kenneth Nausbuam stated, "If we work together we can change something in Austin. It is possible to do and I think we can actually make a difference."

This year *Speak Up! Speak Out!* will expand to two new districts, San Antonio Independent School District and Manor Independent School District. "We really think this program can benefit kids in both large school systems and smaller communities. This year we will have an opportunity to try it in both environments," associate director Mary Dixson explains. *Speak Up! Speak Out!* is funded by a grant from the Doro Foundation of Providence, Rhode Island.

For more information, please visit www.speakupspokeout.org

Above Top to Bottom:
Crockett High School students
prepare for presentation of their
solution to judges

SUSO offers opportunities for
students to meet state leaders
such as State Representative
Elliott Naishtat

Ticole Dawson explains Akins
team's Civics Fair project to
mentor, Laurel Kennedy

Right:
SUSO students gather
for a group photo

"If we work together we can change something in Austin. It is possible to do and I think we can actually make a difference."

— Kenneth Nausbuam, Senior, Akins High School



Strauss Institute helps Longhorns Vote

The Annette Strauss Institute worked with University of Texas student organizations to host *Longhorns Vote: Get Out the Vote* week on UT's campus. "Fewer than 15 percent of eligible 18-25 year-olds voted in Travis County during the last midterm election," noted associate director Sharon Jarvis. "We hope to remind students about how important this election is in terms of issues they care about."

In addition to voting, the Institute focused its attention on recruiting university students to act as poll workers. "The average age of a poll worker in this country is 72 years old. That just has to change," explains Cathy Setzer, the event's organizer. "With the expansion of new voting technology, we really need people who are comfortable with explaining these new machines. Young people are natural early adopters of technology and tend to be better able to explain the process. It's a great way for UT students to get involved and get paid."

The week kicked off with a GOTV Rally in front of the Tower. A brass ensemble played Texas thematic music while the UT Cheerleaders volunteered their time to draw attention to the need to get out and vote. With a rallying cry of "longhorns vote" hundreds of students stopped by to register, learn about becoming a pollworker and get a t-shirt to promote GOTV Week.

Other events included a deputization session to allow students to register voters on campus, a poll worker information session, a table in front of the Texas Union providing election information, poll worker applications, and registration opportunities. "We handed out thousands of voter guides and information cards, and we heard a lot of gratitude," according to Setzer. "Students want to participate; it's just a question of telling them how."

For more information, please visit www.utgotv.org

"The average age of a poll-worker is 72. That just has to change."
—Cathy Setzer,



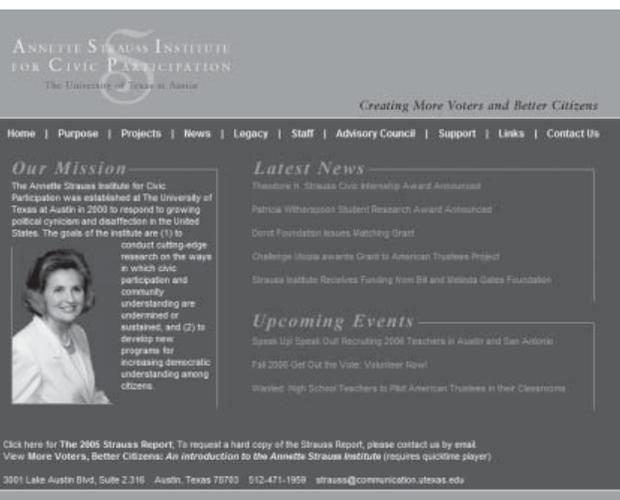
Above Top to Bottom:
Students register to vote during the Get Out the Vote Rally

Students are sworn in as deputy registrars

Left:
UT Spirits volunteering time at the GOTV rally lead students in a mobilizing cheer



Strauss Institute Launches New Website Look



The Annette Strauss Institute unveiled its redesigned website September 1, 2006. The new website features improved navigation and design to promote accessibility. “We have a diverse audience coming to our site to read about research, learn about our programs, donate to the Institute and volunteer for our projects,” explains Mary Dixon, associate director. “We needed a site that was easy to use and really highlighted our mission.”

In addition to a new color scheme and a restructuring, the new site highlights upcoming events and news stories. “The original site was designed in 2003 when we were a much smaller operation,” Dixon notes. “We need a site that better accommodates our growth and diversity as a research organization.” The homepage

is designed to provide quick access to current events and information. Designer Dorie Pickle worked to retain the main elements of the page while improving functionality for both casual visitors, who look around the site, and visitors seeking specific information about a given project.

We encourage you to visit us at www.annettestrauss.org and browse our new site.

Strauss Appoints New Assistant Director for Research



Dr. Natalie Stroud

Natalie (Talia) Jomini Stroud joined the Annette Strauss Institute as an Assistant Director and the University of Texas at Austin as an Assistant Professor in September of 2006. She comes to the Strauss Institute from Philadelphia, where she received her Ph.D. in Communication from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Stroud is excited to draw from her experience at Annenberg where she worked on several grant projects at the Annenberg Public Policy Center, including the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey.

To this point, her research has been focused on understanding which political media sources people select and the effects of their choices. She looks forward to continuing this line of research at Strauss and to getting involved in ongoing Strauss projects. “The Strauss Institute was an important factor in my decision to come to the University of Texas at Austin,” Stroud said. “I am absolutely thrilled to be joining such a creative and talented team.”

American Trustees Completes Annette Strauss Documentary for Use in Classrooms

The American Trustees Project is pleased to announce the completion of its seventh documentary video. The Annette Strauss piece and accompanying lesson plan shares with students the lessons of perseverance, hard work, and compassion. The supporting online materials give students opportunities to explore the topic of homelessness, develop skills in argumentation and persuasion, and examine the races of female politicians.

Additionally, this year the Institute has taken the American Trustees project to Dallas to educate teachers about the use of the product. “American Trustees has the potential to provide my kids with examples of what they only read about in textbooks,” notes one Dallas teacher. Due to the success of our teacher workshop, the American Trustees project has been asked by other educational service centers and districts to provide professional development classes statewide.

The Institute hopes to complete the Texas series this year, with four additional stories and an evaluation of its use. With the technical assistance of teachers, faculty and curriculum advisors, several additional pieces will be added to cover such topics as the judiciary, the legislature, the Constitution, and the media. With the completion of these stories, we will be launching the project statewide. Project manager, Deborah Wise notes, “We look forward to a bright future of engaged students and constantly expanding opportunities for young people to see themselves as Trustees of their own communities.”



“We look forward to a bright future of ... constantly expanding opportunities for young people to see themselves as Trustees of their own communities.”

—Deborah Wise,
Project Manager

Institute Hosts State Department Visitors

The Strauss Institute participated in the U.S. Department of State’s International Visitor’s program, sharing information about civic education and voter research projects to guests from across the globe. Visitors from Jordan, Chile, Lebanon, Russia, Turkey, and Egypt toured the Institute and had the opportunity to sit down with Strauss project managers to ask questions and share ideas. “Even though the countries involved were all so different, the goals of involving youth are always the same,” explains associate director Mary Dixon.

Levenson Endowment Funds

The Greg and Shana Levenson Civic Education Endowment provided funding for University of Texas at Austin *Get Out the Vote* efforts this year. “The Levenson Endowment allowed us to support campus efforts to get more UT students engaged at all levels of the election process,” notes institute director Rod Hart. Funds from the endowment were used to host deputization events, craft voter education materials, and recruit volunteers. The \$50,000 endowment makes possible civic education programs at the University. “We are tremendously grateful for the Levensons’ continued support of our work.”

Undergraduates Undertake Ground-breaking Facebook Study

Young voters tend to be politically disinterested, disengaged, and demographically underrepresented. Yet at the same time, youth tend to be early technology adopters, and find novel uses for technology. While much work has been done measuring the political effectiveness of older media like radio and television, there is considerably less research concerning the utilization of the internet for political purposes.

To learn more about the role of social networking websites, three UT undergraduates, Ben Barney, Jessica Fertitta, and Emma Graves Fitzsimmons supervised by Dr. Sharon Jarvis have started one of the first facebook.com studies in the nation. Barney, Fertitta, and Graves Fitzsimmons surveyed UT students on their internet and technology usage.

Interestingly, they find that college students not only use Facebook, but use it frequently, visiting it 5-7 days a week. About half of the respondents joined a Facebook group during the Student Government election and almost all voted for that campaign or candidate on Election Day. Four-fifths of respondents would be very interested or would consider joining an online group on a social networking website for a candidate and/or campaign they supported. While respondents were mixed on whether student government campaigns should use Facebook as an organizational tool, they were strongly opposed to employers and newspapers accessing the website, showing that respondents want a certain amount of privacy when using Facebook.

“The importance of the internet in students’ political lives is becoming increasingly clear,” Jarvis explains. “Three-fifths of respondents have used the internet to get information on a political candidate. One-fourth of respondents have already participated in a political activity that was organized online.”

To learn more about the role of Facebook in non-UT elections, Barney, Fertitta, and Jarvis are replicating this study during the midterm 2006 elections. Findings from this study will be available in December 2006.

Study Suggests Young Americans Take the Cowboy Way to Politics

Young Americans take the cowboy way when participating in political life according to research by former Strauss staffer Jay Childers. His research project *Cowboy Citizenship: The Rhetoric of Civic Identity among Young Adults, 1965-2005* examined how young adults in the United States discuss their communities and political institutions. Through an analysis of seven high school newspapers from around the country, he found that young adults have become focused on national and international politics, are engaged through donations and sporadic volunteering, and tend to be critics of politicians and government.

“These findings argue against the idea that young people have become politically apathetic,” Childers explains. Instead, he asserts, young adults pay attention to politics and respond in a number of important ways, some that may not benefit them or America in the long run. This is because young adults in the United States have adopted a civic identity reminiscent of the American cowboy. “Young people today have few ties to their cities and towns. Young people tend to be self-interested when it comes to community organizations, and they distrust most institutions, using a “go-it-alone” philosophy when community problems do arise.” Childers’ work highlights the importance of understanding how young people engage in an increasingly mediated society. Dr. Childers is currently Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Kansas.

Institute studies attitudes, skills, and knowledge in Civic Education

What does a high school graduate need to know to succeed in college? At work? As a citizen? Over the past five years the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has partnered with educators and policy-makers to learn more about curricular reform and standards assessments to work toward creating graduates who are ready for college and the workplace. The Strauss Institute is proud to be the recipient of their first research grant to examine the third question: Are students prepared for citizenship? “We are really looking at civic education in a different way,” explains Dr. Sharon Jarvis, associate director and lead researcher on the project. “We are thinking more about the practical outcomes for students.”

Phase One of the 18-month project led to the creation of the “Attitude, Skills and Knowledge (ASK) Inventory” which distilled the key recommendations for civics instruction from educators, scholars and state standards in three states. “We were surprised to see the tensions between the educators who seem to crave an opportunity to teach civics through questions, activities, and project-based learning and standards which emphasize the mastery of lists of material,” commented Dr. Jarvis.

In Phase Two of the project, focus groups were conducted with four sets of stakeholders (professors, managers, municipal employees and recent high school graduates) in each of the three states. Participants in these groups were asked questions about what defines a good citizen, and about how to educate good citizens. “A key theme to emerge from all of the groups is the complicated nature of teaching civics in a high school,” Jarvis notes.

Phase three will compare the findings of the focus groups to the ASK Inventor to create a set of recommendations for educators and policy-makers. A final report that summarizes the results will be submitted to the Gates Foundation in June of 2007.

Witherspoon Research Award Winner Studies Community’s Role in Preventing Juvenile Crime

University of Texas graduate student William Vetter was the recipient of the 2006 Patricia Witherspoon Research Award. Vetter utilized his research stipend to examine disproportionate contact rates among minorities in the juvenile justice system. Vetter’s research shows that solutions must be directed at the community and state level, rather than at just the individual level. Vetter explains, “Strengthening communities from the inside, including increased civic engagement and participation, is essential to reforming the juvenile justice system if we are to reduce disproportionate minority contact.”

Office of Survey Research Conducts State-wide Relationship Study

The Office of Survey Research is currently engaged in a large statewide telephone survey for the Population Research Center. This project will consist of interviewing 2,000 Texans chosen at random about people’s thoughts on relationships, marriage, family and divorce. “OSR is proud to have been chosen to work on such an important project,” notes OSR’s Veronica Inchauste. “It will employ dozens of UT students and provide excellent survey research experience.” The study will help researchers understand how people in Texas feel when it comes to their relationships.

Internship Awards

Why Your Support Matters

The Institute is funded in three ways. We receive modest University support for basic operations, grant funding to support specific projects, and donations from people like you. **Your contributions help the Institute pilot new projects, ensure the health of on-going educational endeavors, and fund innovative research programs.**

\$1,000 - will support undergraduate voting efforts

\$5,000 - will sponsor a keynote speaker for the New Politics Forum

\$10,000 - will support the *Speak Up! Speak Out!* program for a year

\$25,000 - will fund the creation of one American Trustees video and lesson plan

\$50,000 - will fund a national research project on youth participation

Our Supporters

We hope you will add your name to the list of supporters on the right. Our gift levels reflect our belief that a society needs all of its members to work for the common good. Our highest level, The Citizen's Level, is inspired by Harry Truman's statement upon leaving the White House: "I'm not leaving the highest office in the land, I'm assuming the highest office—that of citizen."



Advisory Council Meets in Dallas and Austin

The Annette Strauss Institute Advisory Council met October 5, 2006 at the Belo Mansion in Dallas, Texas and October 26, 2006 at the Headliners Club in Austin, Texas. "Adding a meeting in Dallas allows more of our members to attend," noted associate director Mary Dixon, who provided a summary of research and programs at the Institute followed by a financial overview by director Roderick Hart. Co-chair Cappy McGarr led the Dallas meeting, while Bud Shivers presided over the Austin group.

Addie Bryant, one of five recipients of the 2006 Theodore H. Strauss Civic Internship Award, presented her experience evacuating Americans from Lebanon as part of her U.S. State Department internship. Dr. Sharon Jarvis provided an update on the research project being conducted for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Dr. Dixon debuted the new Annette Strauss American Trustees video.

Institute director Rod Hart ended the meeting with a discussion of a matching funds program called the Angel Fund designed to help attract matching funds and new donors.

Advisory Council members chat while Jeremy Halbreich visits with internship recipient Addie Bryant

Advisory Council member Dr. Willis Maddrey is welcomed to the meeting by Ted Strauss and Cappy McGarr

Supporting the Annette Strauss Institute

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Strauss to Study Voter Attitudes and Behaviors in 2006

The Annette Strauss Institute is pleased to announce that it will be participating in the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). This large-scale study (involving interviews with approximately 30,000 people) will provide researchers with a rich source of data to analyze people's political beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Survey participants will complete two online surveys, one in October and a follow-up survey after the 2006 midterm elections.

This study involves a partnership with not only the College of Liberal Arts and the Government Department at the University of Texas at Austin, but also researchers from 30 different universities across the United States. Each university team contributed a set of survey questions that will be asked of 1,000 people. In addition, researchers at various universities collaborated to develop a questionnaire of "common content" that will be asked of all 30,000 respondents.

The Strauss Institute contributed questions to the survey asking people about their media use and their attitudes toward congressional candidates and political parties. These questions will provide researchers at the Strauss Institute with information about which media outlets people use in gathering political information and whether these choices relate to people's political attitudes.

At the Strauss Institute, Dr. Natalie Stroud and Dr. Sharon Jarvis will work on analyzing the survey results. "In such a dynamic midterm election season, we are excited to be in the field gathering data," Stroud says. "The results of this study will not only help us to gain a better understanding of the electorate, it will also help us in targeting future efforts to increase civic engagement."

The Annette Strauss Institute
for Civic Participation
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