



THE PERICLEAN: Sharing updates and stories from our network of civic champions, delivered each month.



Higher education has a vital responsibility and opportunity: to bring people together, foster belonging, and prepare students to engage across differences. At Project Pericles, we believe that connecting people across diverse perspectives is essential not only for strengthening democracy but also for creating more inclusive, compassionate communities.

This month, we are spotlighting programs that embody this theme—from Elon University’s efforts to cultivate civic identity to using oral history to bridge cultural divides at Chatham University. We are also sharing tools and events designed to help educators create spaces for thoughtful dialogue and collaboration, equipping students with the skills to navigate the complex political landscape.

Read on to discover how Periclean institutions are breaking down barriers, fostering empathy, and preparing students to lead with courage and compassion.

Exploring Civic Identity and Bridging Divides: Highlights from Elon University

How can higher education bridge divides and strengthen democracy?

Executive Director Sanda Balaban recently explored this important question during her visit to [Elon University](#), a founding Periclean institution, where she engaged with faculty and students dedicated to fostering civic identity and trust in democracy--and each other.



Sanda with Periclean Scholars from Mat Gendle’s class at Elon

Sanda began her visit in [Professor Mat Gendle’s](#) Periclean Scholars class, a program empowering students through global civic engagement with a focus on student leadership and sustainable partnerships. She also met with campus leaders, including Elon President and Periclean Board Member [Connie Book](#), and later led an interactive session titled [“Disrupt Distrust: Fostering Well-Being and Resilience Through Democratic Engagement.”](#) In our age of economic instability and political polarization, the workshop emphasized strengthening students’ individual

and collective sense of agency and civic identity as a pathway to rebuilding trust.

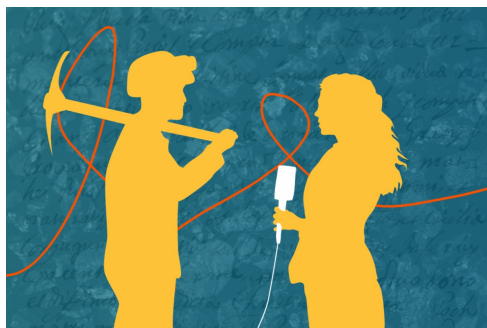
Her visit aligned with the [North Carolina Campus Engagement](#) PACE Conference, where discussions on “Democracy Civic Identity” and “prophetic imagination” underscored higher education's role in preparing students to navigate complex societal challenges. These conversations reinforced a core belief of Project Pericles: that colleges and universities must empower students to bridge diverse viewpoints, collaborate on solutions, and become informed, engaged citizens capable of driving meaningful change

Discover the full story and learn more about the exciting things happening at Elon.

Read
more

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Faculty Highlight: Lou Martin at Chatham University: Connecting Coalfield Communities Through Oral History



This week on LinkedIn, we highlighted Professor Lou Martin of Chatham University in Pittsburgh, whose Spring 2024 course, *Oral History and Coalfield Communities*, connected students with coal industry workers in southwestern Pennsylvania- fostering dialogue across geographic and cultural divides.

Partnering with the Center for Coalfield Justice (CCJ) and the West Virginia Regional History Center, students interviewed former miners and coal industry workers, adding their stories to CCJ’s archive and the Regional History Center’s collection. Through these conversations, students gained firsthand insights into rural life, comparing personal narratives with media portrayals to challenge assumptions and foster empathy. This course was supported by our [Periclean Faculty Leadership \(PFL\) Program](#).

One student reflected, “Allowing people to feel proud of their background and their life is the best way to let them open up to you and feel comfortable.” Beyond developing practical skills, students discovered the power of oral history to break down barriers and build connections - a lesson that extends far beyond the classroom and will serve them well in their broader studies and professional lives.

Discover how storytelling and dialogue transformed students' understanding of history, identity, and community by reading the fuller piece on our website.

“What was most important to me as instructor of this course was that students come to appreciate and respect the experiences of coal miners and their families... Accomplishing that meant instilling in students **a desire to understand rather than to judge and to appreciate that the people we interviewed were socialized into communities that usually had very different histories than our own.**”



Lou Martin
Chatham University



▣ Resource Spotlight: Deliberative Dialogue Modules ▣

Empower your students to bridge divides and address today's most pressing challenges with deliberative dialogue. Our modules include a comprehensive [faculty facilitator guide](#) and [discussion topics and prompts](#), to help connect course content with real-world policies. Through thoughtful discussions, students explore critical civic issues, consider diverse perspectives, and evaluate potential solutions - reinforcing the importance of civic participation.



Deliberative dialogue develops essential skills: critical thinking, active listening, public speaking, and consensus-building. By shifting the focus from polarized viewpoints to collaborative problem-solving, it fosters civil conversations and helps students find common ground across differences. This approach is a powerful tool for any classroom, from the arts and humanities to social sciences and STEM.

▣ Pericleans at Compact25 ▣

Heading to [Compact25](#), Campus Compact's Annual Conference from March 31st to April 2nd in Atlanta? Connect with our Executive Director, Sanda Balaban, and Associate Director, Arielle del Rosario, and catch dynamic sessions led by speakers from Periclean Institutions.

[View the full lineup of Periclean speakers and sessions here](#) - plan your schedule and be part of the conversations driving change in higher education! If you're attending, we'd love to hear from you! Reach out to arielle@projectpericles.org.

▣ Periclean Conversation Recap ▣

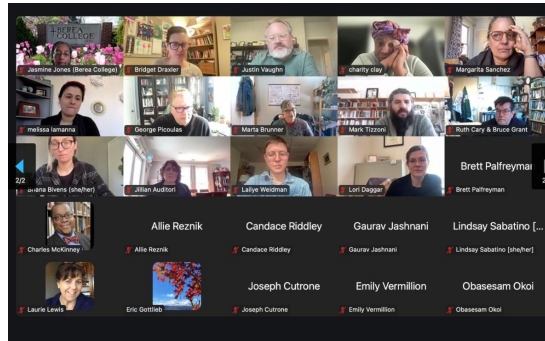
On February 17th, we hosted our first Periclean Community Conversation of 2025, bringing together 36 members of the Periclean Community from 24 campuses nationwide. Together, we explored the challenges facing civic engagement in higher education today and, most importantly, how these challenges are driving innovation and hope.

From studying past resistance movements to supporting students in exploring community organizing and



self-advocacy, participants shared actionable strategies and inspiring examples of their work. The conversation not only strengthened our community ties but also highlighted inspiring ways Pericleans are empowering students to uplift democracy and be more active citizens.

Thank you to everyone who participated and contributed their insights! We look forward to our next community convening on May 16th—sign up information below.



□ Upcoming Events □

A promotional graphic for a webinar. The top half has an orange background with white text: "UNIFY AMERICA AND PROJECT PERICLES PRESENT" and "Technology Empowered Dialogue: Within and Beyond the Classroom" in white and yellow. Below that, it says "Friday, March 14 from 3– 3:45 pm ET". The bottom half features a map of the United States with two circular inset photos of people. A blue arrow points from the photo on the left to the photo on the right. A blue box at the bottom right contains the text "Register at the Zoom link in the description!".

□ **March 14 Webinar: "Technology Empowered Dialogue: Within and Beyond the Classroom"** with Unify America from 3-3:45 PM ET. Register [here](#). (Open to everyone and will be recorded.)

Led by Periclean Fellow Dr. Emily Stacey and [Unify America](#), this webinar will explore strategies for integrating meaningful conversations into courses about today's most pressing issues using a digital platform that facilitates real-time, virtual discussions.

□ **March 14 Webinar: Campus Compact's Creating Civic Cultures on Every Campus** from 1 - 2 PM ET. Register [here](#).

(Open to everyone.) Join Campus Compact's Civic Learning Week and hear from a panel of faculty members to hear about innovative approaches to incorporating civic engagement into your campus. Featuring Periclean Program Director Heather Novak.

□ **May 16 Periclean Community Conversation** from 2 - 3 PM ET. Register [here](#) (For colleagues at Periclean institutions or participating in Periclean fellowships only). These virtual convenings offer the opportunity to connect with other Periclean fellows, faculty, and staff to share ideas, exchange resources, and spark inspiration.

📖 Pericleans in the Press 📖

□ Brian J Evans, Periclean Faculty Leader and Professor of Theater & Dance and Africana Studies at Bates College, was featured in the blog post ["A Pedagogy of Love"](#) by Bates' Harvard Center highlighting his course Embodied Activism, which he presented at AAC&U's annual conference.

□ Alison Byerly, President of Carleton College, published an opinion piece in the [Washington Post](#) arguing against the federal excise tax on university endowments. In the article she suggests that rather than penalizing successful institutions, policies should encourage the growth of endowments to support educational advancement and accessibility.

□ Mathew Gendle, Periclean Program Director and Professor of Psychology at Elon University, was highlighted in [Today at Elon](#) for his presentation "Beyond the Numbers: Rethinking Success in Higher Education Community Partnerships," critiquing big data approaches to measuring the quality of community partnerships and calling for qualitative evaluations that take into account the lifelong impacts of community-based work.

□ Marjorie Hass, President of the Council of Independent Colleges and former President of Rhodes College, wrote an opinion piece for [Inside Higher Ed](#) calling for a reimagining of DEI programs on campuses in the service of moving beyond sometimes superficial compliance to genuine integration into curricula and co-curricular activities.

□ Brian Rosenburg, President Emeritus of Macalester College, along with Natalia Mehlman Petrzela and Claire Potter, both history professors at The New School, were featured in The Chronicle of Higher Education's ["16 Bold Ideas to Make Higher Ed a Better Place to Work."](#) This compilation of innovative ideas aims to improve the workplace experience in higher education.

□ What Staff are Reading □

□ Sanda (Executive Director) is reading [We: Reviving Social Hope](#) by Ronald Aronson, which presents a tough-minded yet inspired vision for collective hope—one that fosters social will and political action to create a more equal, democratic, peaceful, and just world.

□ Arielle (Associate Director) is revisiting a classic: [The Crucible](#) by Arthur Miller because a few themes are extraordinarily relevant today. Arielle is also reading [Real Queer America: LGBT Stories from Red States](#) by Samantha Allen, a road trip through unexpected pockets of America in the wake of the 2016 election shattering the myth that LGBTQ+ communities only flourish on the coasts.

□ Chandler Murphy (Program Associate) is reading [Outraged: Why We Fight About Morality and Politics and How to Find Common Ground](#) by Kurt Gray, which provides compelling insights into how morals are formed and how differing perceptions of vulnerability shape political divides.

□ Jason Vadnos (Intern) is reading Anne Applebaum's [Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism](#), a brilliant analysis of the appeal of authoritarianism across the Western World, and one that is deeply applicable in this moment.

What are YOU reading (or listening to--Sanda listens to most of her reading these days...)? None of us have enough time to read all that we wish we could, and we appreciate tips from readers and thinkers we admire. We would love to share your suggestions in our next newsletter! Email: Sanda@projectpericles.org

If you have a story, event, or publication you'd like us to feature, please reach out! E-mail: chandler@projectpericles.org

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