

K-STATERS FOUND INSTITUTE FOR CIVIC DISCOURSE AND DEMOCRACY

MANHATTAN (Sept. 27) -- As a way to better organize and present research examining the connection of communication and democracy, seven Kansas State University faculty and staff have founded the Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy.

"What we found was that much of the research that we do centered around how to speak more civilly to one another and how to speak civilly in politics," said David Procter, department head and associate professor of speech communication, theater and dance and director of the institute. "Also, we were interested in how communication impacts democracy -- for example, how communication can advance or impede democracy. When we saw that so many of us were doing research that connected, we decided we should found this institute that gave us a common mission and purpose."

The Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy is a research and educational group that looks at the interaction between those in leadership -- especially politics -- and various publics. The institute is housed in K-State's department of speech communication, theater and dance.

The institute primarily conducts research and programming in three interest areas: communication in representative democracy; communication in deliberative democracy; and crisis communication and democracy.

"One thing we're trying to do is work at facilitation efforts to improve political communication," he said. "There are lots of different forums that we facilitate and moderate to try to improve and enhance our political communication."

Procter said political communication is communication that deals in some way with the politics of a community, state or nation.

"I hope that we are able to improve, enhance and expand our political communication," Procter said. "I think that too often when we turn on television all we hear are political [critics or authorities] yelling at one another. We hear all kinds of ideological slogans hurled at each other. There's not a lot of reasoned discourse or reasonable talk. We hope to create and enhance that kind of discussion."

Along with Procter, founders of the institute include LeAnn Brazeal, assistant professor of speech communication; Charles Griffin, associate professor of speech communication; Donna Schenck-Hamlin, program associate for the digital library department; William Schenck-Hamlin, professor of speech communication; Mary Tolar, executive director of Kansas Campus Compact; and Young-ok Yum, assistant professor of speech communication.