

# The Civic-Minded Graduate Construct in the Context of the Engaged University—A Case Study of a University From Slovakia

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## Abstract

Our exploratory study analyzes the civic-mindedness of university graduates in an engaged university with emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Slovakia. The research sample consisted of 452 graduates of the second level of university studies. To map and analyze civic-mindedness, we used the Civic-Minded Graduate Questionnaire (CMG; Steinberg et al., 2011). At the selected university, graduates scored the highest in skills and dispositions and the lowest in behavioral intentions. Furthermore, we found that those graduates who volunteered during their university studies had statistically significant greater development in the areas knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavioral intentions, as well as in CMG scale overall, than those who did not participate in volunteering. Our study showed that the CMG concept is usable in countries with different contexts of the development of the university environment and the idea of citizenship and can help map the level of civic-mindedness among university graduates.

*Keywords: engaged university, civic-mindedness, civic-minded graduate, Slovakia*



University–community engagement has emerged as a priority in the European Commission’s (2017) renewed agenda for higher education. Although actions that link a university with the broader society are not a novelty, community engagement in higher education is a new way of articulating and structuring how higher education interacts with the broader world. The Commission’s renewed agenda emphasizes that higher education must play its part in facing up to Europe’s social and democratic challenges and should engage by integrating local, regional, and societal issues into curricula, involving the local community in teaching and research projects, providing adult learning, and communicating and building links with local communities. As stated in the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (2015) in *Engaged Universities Shaping Europe*, the development of universities into knowledge hubs in society fuels discussions on the

essential characteristics of higher education on which day-to-day practices must be based. A common trend of these discussions seems to be the opening-up of higher education to public and private stakeholders, the students’ opinions and interests, and cross-fertilization between research and education and greater cooperation and internationalization. One of the manifestations of these changes in the university environment is the emphasis on developing the civic competencies of university graduates or the formation of civic-minded graduates. One structure that connects with this focus is the civic-mindedness construct. Civic-mindedness is distinct from orientations that emphasize oneself, family, or a corporate or profit motive (Steinberg et al., 2011). The civic-minded graduate (CMG) construct provides a set of common learning objectives that can guide the design, implementation, and assessment of curricular and cocurricular civic engagement programs (Bringle, Hahn, & Hatcher, 2019).

Our exploratory study aims to analyze the civic-mindedness of university graduates in an engaged university with an emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), particularly Slovakia.

### University Social Responsibility and the Engaged University

The changes in today's society related to globalization and the growth of the knowledgeable society are reflected in the transformation of organizations and institutions, not excluding universities. As stated in the document *Magna Charta Universitatum 2020* (Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum, 2020), the potential for higher education to be a positive agent of change and social transformation endures. Current changes require the global academic community to identify responsibilities and commitments vital to universities worldwide in the 21st century. Universities acknowledge that they are responsible for engaging with and responding to the aspirations and challenges of the world and the communities they serve to benefit humanity and contribute to sustainability.

These considerations of new roles and tasks of universities are reflected in concepts such as the third mission, social responsibility, public engagement, civic engagement, community engagement, social role/dimension, innovation, outreach, transfer, and translation. There is no unambiguous agreement in defining individual concepts; it can be stated that they are significantly contextually defined. As Vasilescu et al. (2010) stated, social responsibility has become an increasingly important concept within the European Union. According to the green paper *Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility* (European Commission, 2001), being socially responsible means not only fulfilling legal expectations but also going beyond compliance and investing more into human capital, the environment, and relations with stakeholders. As stated by Wallace and Resch (2017), university social responsibility (USR) itself is still at an early stage of development. The critical importance of social responsibility in the case of universities stems from the fact that universities represent the centers of intelligence, knowledge, and creative activity and play a key role in society's scientific, cultural, social, and economic development. Chen et al. (2015) saw USR as the philosophy of a university to use an ethical approach

to develop and engage with the local and global community to sustain social, ecological, environmental, technical, and economic development. USR sees universities taking responsibility for the impacts of their decisions and activities on society and the environment through transparent and ethical strategies. They understand such practices should be promoted and encouraged among students and staff in a way that celebrates and promotes the values of justice, equity, participative democracy, social responsibility, and sustainability (Amorim et al., 2015).

Although USR is a broader concept, activities connected with civic engagement are essential to a USR approach (Wallace & Resch, 2017). Holland (2001) defined the engaged university as an institution committed to direct interaction with external constituencies and communities through the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge, expertise, resources, and information. Bridger and Alter (2007) stated that the engaged university works in partnership with local people to facilitate a broad range of community interaction that fosters individual and social well-being. The perspective of an engaged university emphasizes that the university responds not only to changes in the higher education environment but also through mutual engagement with different organizations at different geographical scales (Goddard & Vallance, 2013). As a common denominator of an engaged university, several authors (for example, Bridger & Alter, 2007; Holland, 2001; Jongbloed et al., 2008; Nicotera et al., 2011) have emphasized the need for reciprocity, respect, and responsibility between the university and the community. In this context, Bridger and Alter (2007) distinguished between development of the community and development in the community. According to Holland (2001), the work of the engaged campus is responsive to (and respectful of) community-identified needs, opportunities, and goals in ways appropriate to the campus's mission and academic strengths. This engagement is not one-way but based on mutually beneficial relationships and considering community needs (Nicotera et al., 2011). A civic university goes beyond teaching, academic research, and knowledge. It engages actively with the public and the surrounding society at all levels. As stated by Jongbloed et al. (2008), this approach makes community engagement challenging to separate from traditional teaching and research activ-

ity—they cannot be put in a separate box. Engaged universities are primarily expected to directly tackle community issues such as poverty, inequality, or health problems and thus are more directly linked to the concepts of civic engagement and social responsibility (Watson et al., 2011).

### **Civic-Mindedness**

Despite the strong emphasis on economic value and employability in public policy in many countries, Kreber (2016) stated there is a parallel discourse that highlights not the economic but the social and, more importantly, the public purposes of higher education. The argument underlying this discourse is that higher education plays a crucial role in forming citizens (often conceptualized as global citizens) and, by extension, is a vehicle for creating a more democratic and fair society. In connection with this discourse, we are asking what we should consider a “good” or “ideal” university graduate and, by extension, “ideal professional practice” in society. The concept of civic-mindedness or the civic-minded graduate offers the answer.

Civic-mindedness is a multifaceted and multidimensional concept comprising cognitive, affective, and conative elements. According to Bringle et al. (2011), a civic-minded graduate is comprised of a set of knowledge outcomes (cognitive), dispositions (affective), skills, behavioral intentions, and behaviors. Weber and Weber (2010) presented three dimensions of civic-mindedness. The first is self-efficacy to contribute time and service to the public good. The second dimension is civic participation, which can be defined as the desire to support the less fortunate by volunteering time and money to those in need. The third dimension in developing civic-mindedness is the role universities should play in this process. Kober (2003) named three criteria that characterize a civic-minded individual: a sense of belonging to a community (the emotional dimension of civic-mindedness), orientation to the common good (the normative aspect of civic-mindedness; as a normative idea, the common good is tied to values like justice and human dignity), and a willingness to work for the community (the practical dimension of civic-mindedness requires that individuals know how they can get involved and also that they are allowed to participate). A willingness to get involved is inherent in civic-mindedness. However, if

the community is to benefit from this willingness, the individual must have specific abilities for dealing with others: that is, civic skills.

Research studies from the North American context (Billig & Good, 2013; Bringle, Hahn, & Hatcher, 2019; Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Crandall et al., 2013; Palombaro et al., 2017; Pike et al., 2014; Steinberg et al., 2011) connected with the concept of a civic-minded graduate are mostly focused on the impact of service-learning on students and graduates.

In the European context, we can find a similar concept to civic-mindedness prepared by the Council of Europe (2016) called “competences for democratic culture.” This concept provided a model for civic competencies for learners if they are to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and live in culturally diverse democratic societies. The framework consists of 20 competencies for learners focused on values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and critical understanding and can also be used in designing programs in engaged universities.

### **Contexts of Engaged University and Civic-Mindedness in Central and Eastern Europe and Slovakia**

Although the development of the concepts mentioned above can be considered highly relevant for higher education, the application of these concepts into practice and, subsequently, the development of a civic-minded graduate is strongly determined by historical, economic, social, cultural, and political contexts (Aramburuzabala et al., 2019). It seems almost impossible to name common characteristics for European models in this area; we find differences between countries not only of Eastern and Western Europe but also between countries that, at first glance, share a common historical experience of communism and socialism. As several studies have shown (Coffé & Lippe, 2009; Vandor et al., 2017), the ideas of communism and socialism found different forms of application in these countries and took various political and economic structures and social paths of development after the fall of communism.

The term “third mission” or “third task” of universities does not appear in any strategic document in Slovakia before 2014 (Matulayová, 2013). Strategic documents also do not mention the “new mis-

sion” or civic engagement of universities. Universities tend to focus on industry and the private sector. Knowledge is considered a commodity, education, and research service. The Slovak Republic has adopted an approach that pushes the economic dimension of higher education to the forefront. Academic capitalism is striking in all aspects of government policy affecting higher education, science, and research—from organization and funding to quality and evaluation of outcomes for future school development. A current conceptual document dealing with the development of higher education, which has been in force since 2018, is the National Programme for the Development of Education. This document supporting quality and accessible education for Slovakia (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, 2018) mentions, among other things, the implementation of tools to support the implementation of the third mission of universities (p.51). However, this measure is not specified in any detail.

The absence of conceptual and legislative support for implementing the above concepts does not mean universities do not carry out any activities in this area. However, it is primarily a bottom-up process, implemented and led by active teachers, without systematic institutional support or strategic and long-term plans to build partnerships with the community. It is not easy for “traditional” higher education institutions to take on the role of a committed university and to promote student participation in civic engagement and social responsibility. Many of them are still not open to cooperation with public and nongovernmental organizations in the region where they operate and do not have sufficiently developed capacities to solve local, regional, or national challenges and problems.

Coffé and Lippe (2009) stated that the experience with communism makes definitions of citizenship in CEE particularly interesting. In communism, citizens were not faced with choices; they were part of a mass mobilization demanded by a totalitarian regime that controlled most spheres of life and repressed all forms of autonomous nonstate activity. The tradition of civic activism was forcibly interrupted in individual totalitarian regimes, and the activities of all forms of independent organizations were purposefully and systematically reduced or subject to strict control. Communist rulers

tended to dissolve civil society through a diversity of means: state control over any type of association, including, for example, labor unions, women’s associations, and even chess clubs; complete control over media; short and unattractive opening hours for restaurants, pubs, and any other place where people could meet and talk; state control over citizens’ time through mandatory, unpaid supplementary work (sometimes called voluntary or patriotic) and through the obligation to participate in ritual party meetings. Public space was perceived as the room of lies, of the official fake reality, with subsequent deep consequences including a postcommunist lack of trust in any public activity (Voicu & Voicu, 2009). However, beyond the state’s policy on values, a wide variety of unprescribed, practical solidarity grew among the population. These informal types of civic-mindedness served mainly to cope with the problems induced by the nation’s economy of scarcity, and they vanished relatively quickly after the revolution. Many people experienced the disappearance of this solidarity as a loss. That these particular forms of civic-mindedness did not survive indicates that whatever solidarity a state-imposed collective orientation was able to engender was mainly a matter of joining forces against the state rather than drawing together with one’s fellow citizens. It originated more from small communities opposing the state than from forming bonds with other groups (Kober, 2003). The lack of participative values, mistrust in democracy and governments, less developed entrepreneurial values, self-responsibility, autonomy, and individual planning were identified as the main discontinuities between Western capitalism and the Eastern European cultures (Voicu & Voicu, 2009).

After the 1990s, national education policy frameworks that support students’ civic engagement and civic-mindedness as part of their (higher) education have unfortunately not been a priority. Learning about democracy, human rights, political participation, civic engagement, volunteering, social responsibility, and activism has been predominantly left to the not-for-profit organizations’ efforts, leaving public educational institutions on the side (Culum Ilic et al., 2021). It is therefore no surprise that many EU reports as well as national studies show that political literacy and civic participation in many CEE countries is much lower than in other European countries with substantial democratic history (see, for ex-

ample, European Union Open Data Portal, 2017, 2020).

In addition to participation, civic engagement development is determined by an understanding of citizenship and the citizen's active role in a society with its own specificities in Slovakia. Despite the limitations that the communist regime engendered in all areas of society, and in the field of education and civil society, most people in Slovakia today think that socialism led people to a more moral way of behavior and that people helped each other more; they showed more solidarity with each other and were closer (FOCUS Marketing and Social Research, 2018). According to Strečanský (2020), this favorable view is the result not only of nostalgic optimism and persistent stereotypes passed down from generation to generation, but also a lack of explanation in families, the media, and education about the objective reality of the communist regime. Distortion in people's thinking is also reflected in the perception of the role of the welfare state and solidarity, which also influence the perceived position of higher education in society. A significant part of the public in Slovakia still believes in the ability of the state to provide the achieved level of social security and thinks that the state should play an essential role concerning their living conditions. At the same time, many are skeptical of voluntary solidarity and the ability of private providers in the social system (Šimek & Gonda, 2020). In a representative survey of the FOCUS agency (2018), up to 69% of respondents stated that people are unwilling to help themselves in an emergency voluntarily, so the state must take care of them. The prevailing view is that volunteers would not be needed if the state fulfilled its responsibilities. In 1998, this opinion was held by 55% of respondents (Woleková, 2002), and in 2003, 74% (Bútorová, 2004). There is no shift in opinion in the young generation either. In a 2017 survey (Brozmanová Gregorová et al., 2018) conducted among young people aged 15 to 30, up to 54% of respondents agreed with this statement.

This context provides a framework for understanding how the CMG concept can be grasped in the university environment in Slovakia. As stated by Steinberg et al. (2011), the domains of the CMG are all rooted in an American understanding of civic learning. The degree to which the generalizability of the CMG model is appropriate or warrants

modification when considering educational systems in other countries will need to be conceptually and empirically evaluated. To contribute to the academic discussion and develop a better understanding of the specific aspects of CMG in Slovak conditions, we explore various issues in our empirical study to answer the following research questions:

- What is the level of CMG and its subscales for graduates of a selected Slovak university?
- Are there differences between graduates who have volunteered during their university studies and those who have not volunteered?

We conducted our research at a selected university as part of the process of institutionalizing a service-learning strategy.

## Methods

The research sample consisted of 452 graduates of master's studies in the 2018 academic year. A total of 6,951 students studied at the selected university that year. The research sample selection was random; the questionnaire was distributed to all graduates on the first dates of the final exams ( $N = 773$ ). Its completion was anonymous and voluntary; by completing it, respondents agreed to participate in the research. The research sample was dominated by women (78.5%), and one respondent did not state their gender. Compared to the primary sample, 72.1% of women completed their studies at the university that year. Graduates of all colleges of the university were represented in the research; the percentage of individual colleges was as follows: education ( $n = 123$ ; 27.2%), humanities ( $n = 64$ ; 14.2%), political science and international relations ( $n = 62$ ; 13.7%), natural sciences ( $n = 52$ ; 11.5%), economics ( $n = 115$ ; 25.4%), law ( $n = 36$ ; 8.0%). More than 50% of graduates from each college participated in the research, and their distribution within individual colleges copies the basic sample.

We used the Civic-Minded Graduate Questionnaire (Steinberg et al., 2011; Slovak translation Brozmanová & Heinzová, 2018) to map and analyze civic-mindedness. The construct of CMG consists of 10 domains clustered by knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavioral intentions:

- *Knowledge* covers understanding ways to contribute to society; understanding how knowledge and

skills in at least one discipline are relevant to society's issues; and understanding of current events and the complexity of modern society's problems locally, nationally, or globally.

- *Skills* include the ability to communicate (written and oral) with others, listen to divergent points of view, understand the importance of, and work with, others from diverse backgrounds; also, appreciation of and sensitivity to diversity in a pluralistic society, ability to work with others, including those with diverse opinions, and work across differences to come to an agreement or solve a problem.
- *Dispositions* are about understanding the importance of serving others and being actively involved in communities to address social issues; having a desire to take personal action, with a realistic view that the action will produce the desired results; and feeling a sense of responsibility and commitment to using the knowledge gained in higher education to serve others.
- *Behavioral intentions* are described as a stated intention to be personally involved in community service in the future. (Steinberg et al., 2011)

The original questionnaire consists of 30 items, and the Slovak version of the questionnaire contained 28 items (two items were excluded from the Slovak version, as they were semantically the same in the Slovak context), which are assessed on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*). The items are formulated so that the graduate always comments on whether studying at a particular university has helped him/her with the given knowledge, skills, or disposition. CMG administration takes approximately 7 to 10 minutes. Cronbach's alpha of the CMG scale was .96, indicating good internal consistency across items.

Our study has shown that the CMG concept is also usable in countries with different contexts for developing the university environment and the idea of citizenship. Of course, we are aware of the limitations of our research related to using a hitherto non-standardized CMG tool. Therefore, we veri-

fied the presence of the so-called common method bias using this measurement tool, and we found that the data of our research sample do not skew the results in connection with the use of a nonstandardized questionnaire because the total deviation extracted using Harman's one-factor test is 42.7% and is lower than the recommended limit of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

To measure the involvement in volunteering, we asked, "During your studies, did you participate in volunteering (unpaid activities for the benefit of other people or nonprofit organizations outside your household that were not part of your studies or practice)?" It could include different types of volunteering involvement—one-time and long-term—but they were not part of their study duties. In the Slovak context this was an important explanation, because many people do not distinguish between volunteering and internship or practice education.

Based on descriptive indicators (coefficients of skewness and sharpness), we did not notice a significant deviation from the normal in the monitored variables of the CMG questionnaire, so we used parametric procedures in the statistical analysis.

## Results

We approximate the variables of the CMG questionnaire using descriptive characteristics in Table 1.

The total CMG score for graduates reached an average of 3.73. The skills subscale was rated the highest (3.90;  $SD = 1.02$ ), and the behavioral intentions were the lowest (3.50;  $SD = 1.01$ ).

According to the results in Table 2, we can observe that in all subscales of the CMG, as well as in the CMG scale overall, the highest score was achieved in the College of Political Science and International Relations, whereas the lowest score in most CMG indicators was achieved in the College of Law. The last place in the dispositions and behavioral intentions subscales is shared with the College of Humanities. We verified the differences between the colleges in the indicators of the CMG questionnaire by means of ANOVA, which confirmed the statistical significance of the differences between the colleges only in the skills subscales. We verified the differences between the colleges through the least significant difference procedure, which showed that the statistical significance of

**Table 1. Descriptive Indicators of the CMG Questionnaire and Its Subscales for Graduates (*N* = 452)**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Knowledge</b>	3.69	.91	3.78	-.11	-.31	1.3	6
<b>Skills</b>	3.90	1.02	4.06	-.40	-.47	1.2	6
<b>Dispositions</b>	3.84	1.00	3.89	-.30	-.51	1.1	6
<b>Behavioral intentions</b>	3.50	1.01	3.67	.02	-.42	1.0	6
<b>CMG scale overall</b>	3.73	.89	3.78	-.21	-.36	1.5	6

**Table 2. Basic Descriptive Indicators of CMG by College**

College	CMG scale overall	Knowledges	Skills	Dispositions	Behavioral intentions
	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> <i>SD</i>
<b>Education (<i>n</i> = 123)</b>	<b>3.82</b> .99	<b>3.77</b> .96	<b>3.97</b> 1.12	<b>3.96</b> 1.08	<b>3.57</b> 1.13
<b>Humanities (<i>n</i> = 64)</b>	<b>3.64</b> 1.00	<b>3.65</b> 1.02	<b>3.84</b> 1.08	<b>3.64</b> 1.12	<b>3.43</b> 1.08
<b>Political science (<i>n</i> = 62)</b>	<b>3.92</b> .86	<b>3.84</b> .97	<b>4.14</b> 1.06	<b>3.97</b> .94	<b>3.75</b> 1.03
<b>Natural sciences (<i>n</i> = 52)</b>	<b>3.62</b> .89	<b>3.51</b> .91	<b>3.76</b> 1.05	<b>3.77</b> .98	<b>3.45</b> 1.00
<b>Economics (<i>n</i> = 115)</b>	<b>3.71</b> .75	<b>3.72</b> .77	<b>3.92</b> .84	<b>3.84</b> .92	<b>3.38</b> .84
<b>Law (<i>n</i> = 36)</b>	<b>3.51</b> .77	<b>3.43</b> .80	<b>3.47</b> .87	<b>3.73</b> .90	<b>3.43</b> .85

differences in the score achieved in the skills subscale is between graduates of the College of Law and the College of Education, College of Political Science and International Relations, and College of Economics to the detriment of graduates of the College of Law. Specifically, it is a subscale of B.2. Skills: Diversity, which maps the understanding of the importance of diversity, as well as the ability of graduates to work with it and be sensitive to diversity. Results of statistical testing with the least significant difference procedure are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

The second hypothesis that we verified with our research was whether the volunteer experience of graduates is related to their civic-mindedness. We divided the research sample into two groups—those who had volunteer experience during their studies (*n*

= 60) and those who did not have such experience (*n* = 312). The remaining 80 graduates answered the question “I don't know.” In Table 5, we present the percentage of graduates' involvement in volunteering according to their affiliation with the colleges. Table 6 shows the results of the statistical comparison using a *t*-test between the group that was involved in volunteering and the group that was not.

According to the results of the statistical verification of differences between graduates who were involved in volunteering activities during their university studies and those who were not, there is a statistically significant difference in all subscales as well as in the CMG scale overall, with a moderate to strong material significance. All the differences were in favor of those who were involved in volunteering.

**Table 3. Differences in the Skills Subscale Between Different Graduates**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>LSD</i>
Law ( <i>n</i> = 36)	3.47	.87	Education ( <i>n</i> = 123)	3.97	1.12	-.50*
			Political Science ( <i>n</i> = 62)	4.14	1.06	-.67*
			Economics ( <i>n</i> = 115)	3.92	.84	-.45*

\**p* < .05.**Table 4. Differences in the Subscale B.2. Skills: Diversity Between Different Graduates**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>LSD</i>
Law ( <i>n</i> = 36)	3.24	.92	Education ( <i>n</i> = 123)	3.88	1.14	-.64*
			Political Science ( <i>n</i> = 62)	3.96	1.13	-.72*
			Economics ( <i>n</i> = 115)	3.81	.91	-.57*

\**p* < .05.**Table 5. Involvement of Graduates in Volunteering During Their Studies by College**

College	<i>n</i>	%	Total graduates
Education	24	19.5	123
Humanities	7	10.9	64
Political Science and International Relations	5	8.0	62
Natural Sciences	3	5.8	52
Economics	18	15.6	115
Law	3	8.3	36
Whole university	60	13.3	452

**Table 6. Difference in CMG According to Graduates' Involvement in Volunteering**

	Volunteering	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i> -index
Knowledge	Yes	4.29	1.03	5.196	.83*
	No	3.55	.87		
Skills	Yes	4.36	1.04	3.803	.54*
	No	3.79	1.03		
Dispositions	Yes	4.30	1.07	3.873	.58*
	No	3.73	.98		
Behavioral intentions	Yes	4.06	1.07	4.681	.71*
	No	3.36	.99		
CMG scale overall	Yes	4.25	1.00	4.660	.73*
	No	3.61	.87		

\**p* < .001.



## Discussion

CMG mapping at the selected university showed that graduates achieved a CMG scale overall (3.73;  $SD = .89$ ) for the entire university. We can compare these data with studies carried out in the American context. In the first study by Bringle, Hahn, and Hatcher (2019) the overall CMG score for students ( $N = 180$ ) averaged 4.32 ( $SD = 1.03$ ), whereas, in the second study ( $N = 250$ ), the average score was 4.15 ( $SD = 0.92$ ). The measured values in the overall scale are a few points higher than in our case. Graduates scored the highest at the mapped Slovak university in skills (3.90;  $SD = 1.02$ ) and dispositions (3.84;  $SD = 1.0$ ) and the lowest in behavioral intentions (3.50;  $SD = 1.01$ ). We can therefore state that during their studies, they further developed the dimensions of civic-mindedness related to communication and listening, diversity, consensus-building, valuing community engagement, self-efficacy, and social trustee of knowledge.

Within the colleges, the college focused on political science and international relations scored the highest on the CMG overall scale; the highest score achieved at this college was in the subscale skills (4.14;  $SD = 1.06$ ). It can be stated that the result reflects the specifics of preparation in study programs at this college, which prepares students to work in an international environment full of diversity, where communication skills are essential, as is the ability to work with different people in different settings.

The lowest score on the CMG scale overall was achieved by the College of Law; at the same time, the graduates of the College of Law have a statistically significant lower development of understanding of the importance of and the ability to work with others from diverse backgrounds and appreciation of and sensitivity to diversity in a pluralistic society, in contrast to graduates from the Colleges of Education, Political Science and International Relations, and Economics.

In verifying the relationship between the involvement of graduates in volunteering during their university studies and the results in the CMG, we found that those graduates who participated in volunteering during their university studies have statistically significant greater development in knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavioral intentions, as well as in CMG scale overall, than those who did not volunteer. Our findings are comparable to the findings

of other authors, especially those that do not focus only on verifying the development of the concept of civic-mindedness using the service-learning strategy. Fenzel and Peyrot's (2005) alumni study showed that participation in cocurricular service was positively related with alumni attitudes toward social and personal responsibility as well as alumni involvement in postcollege community service. Bowman et al. (2015) found that participation in ethnic group organizations on campus, which often involves service, was positively associated with civic engagement 6 years later. Vogelgesang and Astin (2000) using data from more than 22,000 students, found that students participating in service only (not connected to a course but assuming some informal reflection was involved) showed learning gains in civic outcomes similar to those who had course-based service-learning when compared with students who did not participate in service at all. However, those who volunteer during college are more likely to continue to do so after graduation than those who do not. Richard et al. (2016) showed the development of professional orientations that integrate civic identity, and work was associated with current civic action. Concerning the nature of the service activities, Bowman's (2011) meta-analysis found that face-to-face interactions with diverse groups resulted in favorable and significant effects on civic attitudes, behavioral intentions, and behaviors compared to classroom-based educational experiences. Similarly, Levine's (2003, in Bringle, Brown, et al., 2019) research found that simply involving students in community-service activities was insufficient for developing civic learning and skills.

As stated by Bringle et al. (2011), the developmental model for the CMG is grounded in the expectation that civic-mindedness can be represented as the integration of (1) the self with both (2) civic activities and (3) student activities. The degree of overlapping of this dimension is indicative of the degree of integration. From the perspective of this model, the task of college and staff is to design and refine interventions that will lead to increasing the intersection of the three dimensions—in other words, to result in greater integration.

## Conclusion

On the one hand, we can see that the development of the concept of a committed university and the emphasis on the formation

of civic-mindedness or civic competencies is obvious in the European context. On the other hand, the actual application practice in different countries can be very different. The relationship between higher education and society can be seriously challenged when a country, like Slovakia, at the national level does not support this relationship intentionally and when citizens have no consensual understanding of what constitutes civic and active citizenship in the democratic context. We agree with Thomson et al. (2010) that different political systems call for other citizenship skills. The design of pedagogies to develop these skills will also need to be tailored to the particular political and social context. Nevertheless, some fundamental values (e.g., reciprocity, mutual benefit, democratic processes, and community voice) may transcend geographical, historical, political, and economic boundaries.

Although the CMG was developed within the context of community service-learning programs, its implications apply to programs at other institutions of higher education that intend to contribute to civic growth (Bringle et al., 2011). CMG is a broader conceptualization because it includes how educational activities inform and contribute to personal and civic growth and how education can provide individuals with a focused sense of civic direction and purpose. CMG can be considered as a preferable superordinate construct for civic-engagement outcomes encompassing specific knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavioral intentions in the civic domain (Bringle, Hahn, & Hatcher,

2019). Bringle and Wall (2020) presented different possibilities for using CMG, which also apply in the Slovak context.

How to encourage civic growth in students, including those for whom the civic domain is underdeveloped or has little or no integration into their identity, presents an essential educational challenge (Bringle & Wall, 2020). However, the fact that civic-mindedness needs to be intentionally developed is not yet sufficiently discussed in the Slovak university environment. Although most universities state in their strategic intentions, among other things, the formation of a community of responsible graduates, many institutions seem to assume that this intention will bear fruit in the university environment somehow automatically, without intentional action. Involvement in volunteering, as evidenced by our results, may be one way, but as Bringle et al. (2015) reported, no amount of learning and thinking about democracy and no amount of activity (e.g., community service) in communities will result in the development of democratic civic skills and civic identity without democratic partnerships. Boyle-Baise (2002) also pointed out that a charitable task will probably not generate insights for social change. Partnerships between students and community members that contain democratic qualities are critical and necessary for the full development of civic lessons about democratic processes and for cognitive learning to be clarified (Bringle et al., 2015).



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