

March 2, 2009

Members of the Tallahassee City Commission:

Thank you for your interest in Soul of the Community (SOTC). The first year of this three-year study was conducted by Gallup in Tallahassee and the other 25 John S. and James L. Knight Foundation communities across the United States. The study employs a fresh approach to determine the drivers of emotional community-citizen engagement and its role in community economic growth and well-being. It focuses on the emotional side of the connection between residents and their communities.

The results of the SOTC study identify new approaches to help create transformation and new possibilities for continued progress in Tallahassee and other Knight communities. The study provides community leaders with an evaluation of what community characteristics emotionally connect residents to their community.

Community leaders can use the study's findings to maximize community strengths and address community challenge areas to improve community-citizen engagement and increase economic growth in the community. The relationship of community citizen engagement to economic development has particular relevance beyond the current economic crisis as the study's findings can help leaders make long-term and strategic choices about investing in areas that have the greatest impact on engaging the community.

In its first year, the study compared residents' engagement level to the GDP growth in the 26 communities over the past five years. The findings show a significant correlation between community-citizen engagement and economic growth. Over the coming years, researchers will analyze the trends of both community-citizen engagement and economic growth and learn whether community engagement drives economic growth or the other way around. Within a smaller microcosm, such as a company, Gallup has been able to show that increasing employee engagement will indeed lead to improved financial performance.

We invite you to learn more about the community characteristics that drive community-citizen engagement, understand what is going on in our community and get involved.

You can find complete results of the study at www.soulofthecommunity.org

Thank you,

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