

PPA is honored to welcome our PPA2018 keynote speaker

## April Kelly-Woessner, PhD



**April Kelly-Woessner, PhD**, is professor of political science and department chair of Politics, Philosophy and Legal Studies at Elizabethtown College. She received her doctorate in political science from Ohio State University, with a specialization in political psychology. She is currently president of the Faculty Assembly at Elizabethtown College, where she also directs the Master in Public Policy Program, and was recently selected by her peers as the inaugural recipient of the Ranck Prize in Research Excellence. She serves on the Executive Committee of Heterodox Academy, an organization of academics dedicated to fostering viewpoint diversity in higher education.

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Kelly-Woessner to PPA2018 on **Wednesday, June 13, at 10:30 a.m.**

### The Silencing Generation: Explaining the Decline in Political Tolerance Among America's Youth

Since Samuel Stouffer's (1955) study of America's intolerance toward communists, social scientists have optimistically concluded that younger people are consistently more tolerant than their parents and that the country will become more tolerant over time due to generational replacement. Political psychologist April Kelly-Woessner, PhD, presents evidence from the General Social Survey that the relationship between age and tolerance has recently reversed. For the first time since social scientists began to study political tolerance, young people are now less tolerant than their parents. The consequences of this growing intolerance are evident on campus and in society, as people shout down and even assault those with whom they disagree.

Relying on evidence from the GSS and two original studies, Dr. Kelly-Woessner makes the case that this increase in youth intolerance is the result of (1) reduced exposure to intellectual diversity and (2) declines in civic literacy and low confidence in one's civic skills. First, she claims, people are exposed to less political diversity than they were

in the past. Relying on a well-established body of social science literature as well as her own original research, Dr. Kelly-Woessner explains that students who encounter a greater variety of opinions at their universities or within their majors are more tolerant than students in homogeneous educational environments. Second, she provides evidence that civic literacy has declined. For example, a report by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni shows that college graduates now lack even basic knowledge about American government and only 18% of colleges and universities require students to take an American history or American government course. This lack of civic awareness leads to low confidence in one's civic competency, which translates into political intolerance. People who lack the confidence to defend their values will elect to censor those who challenge them rather than engage with them. The talk concludes with a discussion on the consequences of these trends and some suggestions for how we might begin to address the problem of intolerance, both within higher education and in other contexts.