A Vision for Community Engagement on your Campus

At North Carolina Campus Compact we work to create “engaged campuses.” An engaged campus prioritizes "community engagement.” Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) definition most useful: Applying institutional resources (e.g., knowledge and expertise of students, faculty and staff, political position, buildings and land) to address and solve challenges facing communities through collaboration with these communities. The methods for community engagement of academic institutions include community service, service-learning, community-based participatory research, training and technical assistance, capacity-building and economic development.

The Carnegie Foundation also has a helpful definition of Community Engagement: The collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

There are a variety of ways that a campus can be engaged in the community.

**Service-learning**, integrated in academic courses is service-learning which is defined as: students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and students reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995, p. 112)

**Engaged Community Service** can be non-course based involvement that may include alternative break trips, daylong immersive experiences, or helping to build the campus’ engagement within a particular agency. Some campuses “require” service as a part of the overall educational experience. Engaged Community Service works best if it is based on specific goals for student development and incorporates critical reflection.

**Social entrepreneurship** is the recognition of a social problem and the uses of entrepreneurial strategies and partnership principles to organize, create and manage a social venture to achieve a desired social change.

Faculty may participate in engaged scholarship or community-engaged scholarship, distinct in that it:
- is participatory and values the community partners as collaborators.
- benefits the community partners (e.g., agencies, neighborhoods, clients) in ways that are identified by them and others as being significant and effective.
- furthers the scholarship of the faculty member in ways that are recognized by others as having academic impact as well as community impact. (From the Memorandum, Indiana University-Purdue University)

**Diagram for Distinctions among Experiential Learning Models**

An engaged campus is one that is consciously committed to reinvigorating the democratic spirit and community engagement in all aspects of its campus life: students, faculty, staff and the institution itself. The call for civic engagement has been clearly articulated in several recent documents. (Presidents’ Declaration, Wingspread Declaration, Civic Self Assessment). Community engagement includes service-learning, which integrates community service into academic study, gives students an opportunity to improve their citizenship skills, and renews the faculty member’s enthusiasm for teaching. Service-learning, however, is only one characteristic of an engaged campus. The engaged campus, like the service-learning student, recognizes that knowledge cannot be separated from the purposes to which it is directed. The engaged campus is not just located within a community, it is intimately connected to the public purposes and aspirations of community life itself. The engaged campus is unable to separate its unique responsibility for the development of knowledge, from the role of knowledge in a democratic society to form the basis for social progress and human equality.

In addition to extensive student learning through service, there are common practices that characterize an engaged campus. For presidents, this means a deep commitment to and articulation of the importance of community engagement. For faculty, this includes a scholarship of engagement to share their knowledge with and help their students learn from the community. For campuses, this means having staff whose job it is to build collaborative community relationships based on mutual respect. Finally, it is sharing with the community such physical and economic resources of the campus as space, athletic facilities, purchasing power and employment opportunities.

**WHY SHOULD A CAMPUS BE ENGAGED?**

American higher education has a long and rich tradition of seeking higher moral and civic purposes in its endeavors. College presidents have advocated for democratic reform, and students have challenged the injustices of society. In addition, campuses have been the sites of debate on the critical issues of the day and faculty have sought to provide students with the tools for rigorous analysis, critical reflection, and participation in the democracy. However, many in the academy are deeply concerned that these traditions are, today, threatened by both an entrenched emphasis on disciplinary divisions and an excessive focus on preparation for the workplace.

Campus Compact believes that, now more than ever, higher education is challenged to educate the leaders of tomorrow and to connect those future leaders with the world of today. There is widespread concern about the state of American democracy as voter registration continues to decline and public apathy and cynicism about political life increase among youth, even as their participation in service activities increases. In spite of a strong economy, America has homeless people in every town, children going to bed hungry, and children whose education leaves them unprepared for work in a complex and unstable world.

It is a time in our civic life when the role of central government is declining and other sectors are being called upon to address our community needs and reinvigorate our democracy (Gardner, 1995). Higher education-its leaders, students, faculty, and staff-can be a key institutional force in this effort. Although subject to economic pressures and political agendas like all of our institutions, colleges and universities have the intellectual and professional resources to be actively engaged in addressing community issues.

There are many reasons for mobilizing the resources of higher education on behalf of society. This is part of the grand tradition of American higher education. Legislators and other stakeholders are asking about the social utility of higher education. Many campuses are located in disadvantaged communities, and all campuses are affected by the poor quality of elementary and secondary education of disadvantaged youth because it limits their access to higher education and narrows the pipeline of diverse talent that campuses seek.

The academy also has much to gain by community engagement, including the intellectual challenges of applying scholarship to the pressing issues of the day and the prospect of new interdisciplinary insights that the scholarship of engagement will bring. Community engagement can be an important catalyst for the institutional change demanded by dramatic changes in the economy, advances in technology, and the increasing diversity of students attending college.

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