



CIVIC ACTION PLAN

A vision for civic engagement at Elon University in 2025

Central to the Elon University mission is preparing civically engaged graduates who are “global citizens and informed leaders motivated by a concern for the common good.” As a university we emphasize our responsibility to live in community, acknowledging our interdependence with others. Our goal is to help students develop the knowledge, understanding, values and skills to sustain a commitment to community well-being and civic action throughout their lives.

Elon University defines *civic engagement* as the process of learning about the assets, needs, and concerns of the larger communities of which we are a part and the willingness to collaborate with others to help define and achieve the common good.

Elon students, faculty, staff and alumni join in an intentional and developmental educational process to create a culture that:

- Provides increasingly complex learning experiences that enhance the development of the skills needed for effective leadership and civic engagement, including communication, collaboration, critical analysis, media literacy, problem solving, and cultural competence
- Offers opportunities and programs that deepen students’ awareness and understanding of social and political issues and challenges students to develop a framework for responsible citizenship
- Assists members in recognizing their responsibility, as part of the larger community, to actively address social conditions through mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships with community partners
- Celebrates and rewards the accomplishments of students, faculty, staff, alumni and community partners who demonstrate good citizenship, lead lives of civic engagement and support the civic life and programs of the university

Over the next ten years, Elon will continue to be a national leader in civic engagement and fully prepare students for lives of engaged citizenship. We will continue an integrated focus on civic engagement efforts both in and out of the classroom, to support student learning across their entire university experience. As we think strategically about the year 2025, when Elon will once again apply to renew its Community Engagement Classification with the Carnegie Foundation, the Council on Civic Engagement looks forward to reporting progress in the five areas highlighted on the following pages.

PARTNERSHIPS

We empower our students, faculty, staff, and community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships in pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable future for communities beyond the campus—nearby and around the world.

1. Establish an Elon community partnership council through the leadership of the Kernodle Center to manage community relationships between campus and community partners
2. Establish a systematic method to regularly evaluate and report collective impact of university service and civic engagement activities, in close collaboration with community partners
3. Develop templates for partnership agreements between the university and community partners
4. Evaluate, expand, and deepen community collaborations with key partners in Alamance County
5. Deepen Elon's commitment as a consistent collaborator, contributor, and site for important community conversations (e.g. Community Connections, political debates and forums, community dialogues, etc.)
6. Create additional interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary mechanisms and opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to come together with community partners around common issues of focus for the community
7. Expand and deepen the opportunities for faculty, staff, and community partners to mentor students in their civic engagement activities and learning

PREPARATION FOR ENGAGED CITIZENSHIP

We prepare our students for lives of engaged citizenship, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in pursuit of the public good.

8. Increase student participation in community engagement, focusing on students who are currently less likely to participate during their time at Elon
9. Define and communicate sequential opportunities for students to participate in civic engagement throughout their undergraduate or graduate experience (including the undergraduate Core Curriculum) as a hallmark of an Elon education
10. Infuse service and civic engagement activities into the life of residential neighborhoods through formal initiatives and structures
11. Establish reflection and vocational discernment opportunities that help students integrate their learning and connect their gifts and talents to the needs of their communities and the world
12. Establish formal initiatives to broaden and deepen participation in service by student athletes
13. Establish formal initiatives to engage more alumni and parents in service, political, and civic engagement activities, on campus and through regional/local efforts
14. Broaden the recruitment and deepen the quality of experience for signature programs such as Periclean Scholars, Civic Engagement Scholars, Loy Farms and Environmental Studies, the Poverty and Social Justice minor, social innovation and entrepreneurship, design thinking, etc.
15. Use the AAC&U VALUE rubric on civic engagement to implement strategies to assess civic learning at Elon

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

We embrace our responsibilities as a place-based institution, contributing to the health and strength of our community—economically, socially, environmentally, educationally, and politically.

16. Clarify the university's role as an active partner with key community organizations in Alamance County and expand partnerships with Greensboro and Guilford County
17. Expand and deepen the impact of post-graduate fellows programs, including the Elon-Alamance Health Partners and Community Impact Fellows
18. Continue to refine and strengthen the economic development and revitalization initiatives, including support of the Elon Downtown Master Plan and partnerships with organizations such as partnerships between the Burlington Downtown Corporation and Downtown Innovation Group
19. Support community based plans for wellness and food security in partnership with Impact Alamance, Healthy Alamance, and other community organizations
20. Continue to implement the goals of the University Sustainability Master Plan, which seeks to "minimize our impact on the global environment by establishing a carbon neutral university"
21. Strengthen university impact on K-12 education in Alamance County by consolidating and coordinating efforts through the Council for School Partnerships
22. Secure corporate and foundation support for Center for Access and Success programs that are not institutionally funded
23. In partnership with the Alamance-Burlington School System (ABSS), develop and implement a summer honors experience focused on civic leadership for ABSS high school students
24. In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and local middle schools, deepen the quality of the Alamance Youth Leadership Academy for middle school students in Alamance County
25. Establish formal structures and ongoing activities to support student political engagement, especially during election years
26. Expand the initiatives and reach of the Elon Poll

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

We harness the capacity of our institution—through research, teaching, partnerships, and institutional practice—to challenge inequities that potentially threaten our democratic future.

27. Support faculty and staff collaborations and professional development to increase and deepen curricular and co-curricular civic engagement activities
28. Infuse design thinking principles into civic engagement experiences
29. Identify opportunities to engage students and faculty in conducting and presenting research on civic engagement
30. Ensure that community-based research opportunities are available across the disciplines
31. Increase academic-service learning class offerings by shifting the focus from individual faculty/courses to departments/programs
32. Investigate potential clarifications of the experiential learning designation beyond academic service learning to also recognize other forms of course-based community engagement
33. Establish the Center for Research on Global Engagement to foster high quality scholarship related to research on global engagement and the preparation of global citizens

34. Clarify the way the university values, supports, and recognizes civic engagement (including academic service learning and community engagement)
35. More intentionally link civic engagement activities to the liberal arts curriculum of the institution and more closely link civic engagement goals with their academic foundation
36. More intentionally link civic engagement with diversity, inclusion, and global engagement
37. Provide leadership to various consortia and external organizations related to civic engagement

INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

We foster an environment that consistently affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education by setting high expectations for members of the campus community to contribute to their achievement.

38. Further define and refine the charge, goals, and structure of the Council on Civic Engagement as a university-wide, collaborative council to lead these efforts
39. Establish commonly understood definitions and pedagogical relationships between civic engagement, academic service learning, community engagement, social innovation, and political engagement
40. Clarify and articulate the connection between civic engagement and the Core Curriculum
41. Strengthen the role, expectations, and professional development for faculty fellows for academic service learning, civic engagement, leadership, and sustainability
42. Be active participants in national conversations about standards, ethical principles, and future directions for civic engagement on college campuses
43. Continue to raise the profile of Elon as a national model for civic engagement

The descriptions for the five areas of the plan were derived from the statements of commitment in the Campus Compact 30th Anniversary Statement of Presidents and Chancellors, 2016.

*Elon University Council on Civic Engagement
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