

Presidents' Declaration
on the
Civic Responsibility
of
Higher Education

"A different
world cannot
be built by
indifferent people."

HORACE MANN



Campus Compact

Presidents' Declaration on the Civic

CAMPUS COMPACT INDEX OF ENGAGEMENT

\$7.1 billion*

Annual value of service contributed to the community by students at Campus Compact member schools through campus-organized activities.

377 million*

Total number of service hours performed by students at Campus Compact member schools during the academic year.

20 million

Number of students Campus Compact has mobilized in service to their communities over the past two decades.

\$13 million

Funding raised annually by Campus Compact's national and state offices to support service and service-learning initiatives that connect campuses with their surrounding communities.

2.7 million

Hours of community work clocked in 2005–2006 by volunteers recruited through Campus Compact state office AmeriCorps programs.

98*

Percentage of Campus Compact member campuses that have a partnership with one or more community organizations.

32*

Percentage of students at Campus Compact member colleges and universities who participate in campus-organized service—up from 28% in 2001 and 10% in 1998.

* SOURCE: Campus Compact Annual Member Survey, 2005 and 2006.



s presidents of colleges and universities, both private and public, large and small, two-year and four-year, we challenge higher education to re-examine its public purposes and its commitments to the democratic ideal. We also challenge higher education to become engaged, through actions and teaching, with its communities. We have a fundamental task to renew our role as agents of our democracy. This task is both urgent and long-term. There is growing evidence of disengagement of many Americans from the communal life of our society in general, and from the responsibilities of democracy in particular. We share a special concern about the disengagement of college students from democratic participation. A chorus of studies reveals that students are not connected to the larger purposes and aspirations of the American democracy. Voter turnout is low. Feelings that political participation will not make any difference are high. Added to this, there is a profound sense of cynicism and lack of trust in the political process.

We are encouraged that more and more students are volunteering and participating in public and community service, and we have all encouraged them to do so through curricular and co-curricular activity. However, this service is not leading students to embrace the duties of active citizenship and civic participation. We do not blame these college students for their attitudes toward the democracy; rather, we take responsibility for helping them realize the values and skills of our democratic society and their need to claim ownership of it.

This country cannot afford to educate a generation that acquires knowledge without ever understanding how that knowledge can benefit society or how to influence democratic decision making. We must teach the skills and values of democracy, creating innumerable opportunities for our students to practice and reap the results of the real, hard work of citizenship.

Colleges and universities have long embraced a mission to educate students for citizenship. But now, with over two-thirds of recent high school graduates and ever-larger numbers of adults enrolling in post secondary studies, higher education has an unprecedented opportunity to influence the democratic knowledge, dispositions, and habits of the heart that graduates carry with them into the public square.

Higher education is uniquely positioned to help Americans understand the histories and contours of our present challenges as a diverse democracy. It is also uniquely positioned to help both students and our communities to explore new ways of fulfilling the promise of justice and dignity for all, both in our own democracy and as part of the global community. We know that pluralism is a source of strength and vitality that will enrich our students' education and help them learn both to respect difference and to work together for the common good.

Four higher education leaders gather to discuss how campuses can support student service. The following year, Campus Compact is formed to support civic education and community building in higher education

1988

The first two state Campus Compact offices are established to provide member campuses with local, state, and regional support

Campus Compact launches the Integrating Service with Academic Study (ISAS) initiative, which links community service with the academic mission of higher education, by funding more than 120 faculty grants and 130 service-learning workshops

1991

The Campus Compact coalition—colleges and university presidents committed to the public purposes of higher education—passes the 500 member mark

1995

1985

Responsibility of Higher Education

We live in a time when every sector—corporate, government, and nonprofit—is being mobilized to address community needs and reinvigorate our democracy. We cannot be complacent in the face of a country where one out of five children sleeps in poverty and one in six central cities has an unemployment rate 50 percent or more above the national average, even as our economy shows unprecedented strength. Higher education—its leaders, students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni—remains a key institutional force in our culture that can respond, and can do so without a political agenda and with the intellectual and professional capacities today’s challenges so desperately demand. Thus, for society’s benefit and for the academy’s, we need to do more. Only by demonstrating the democratic principles we espouse can higher education effectively educate our students to be good citizens.

How can we realize this vision of institutional public engagement? It will, of course, take as many forms as there are types of colleges and universities. And it will require our hard work, as a whole and within each of our institutions. We will know we are successful by the robust debate on our campuses, and by the civic behaviors of our students. We will know it by the civic engagement of our faculty. We will know it when our community partnerships improve the quality of community life and the quality of the education we provide.

To achieve these goals, our presidential leadership is essential but, by itself, it is not enough. Faculty, staff, trustees, and students must help craft and act upon our civic missions and responsibilities. We must seek reciprocal partnerships with community leaders, such as those responsible for elementary and secondary education. To achieve our goals we must define them in ways that inspire our institutional missions and help measure our success. We have suggested a Campus Assessment of Civic Responsibility that will help in this task (www.compact.org/presidential).

We ask other college presidents to join us in seeking recognition of civic responsibility in accreditation procedures, Carnegie classifications, and national rankings and to work with governors, state legislators, and state higher education offices on state expectations for civic engagement in public systems.

We believe that the challenge of the next millennium is the renewal of our own democratic life and reassertion of social stewardship. In celebrating the birth of our democracy, we can think of no nobler task than committing ourselves to helping catalyze and lead a national movement to reinvigorate the public purposes and civic mission of higher education. We believe that now and through the next century, our institutions must be vital agents and architects of a flourishing democracy.

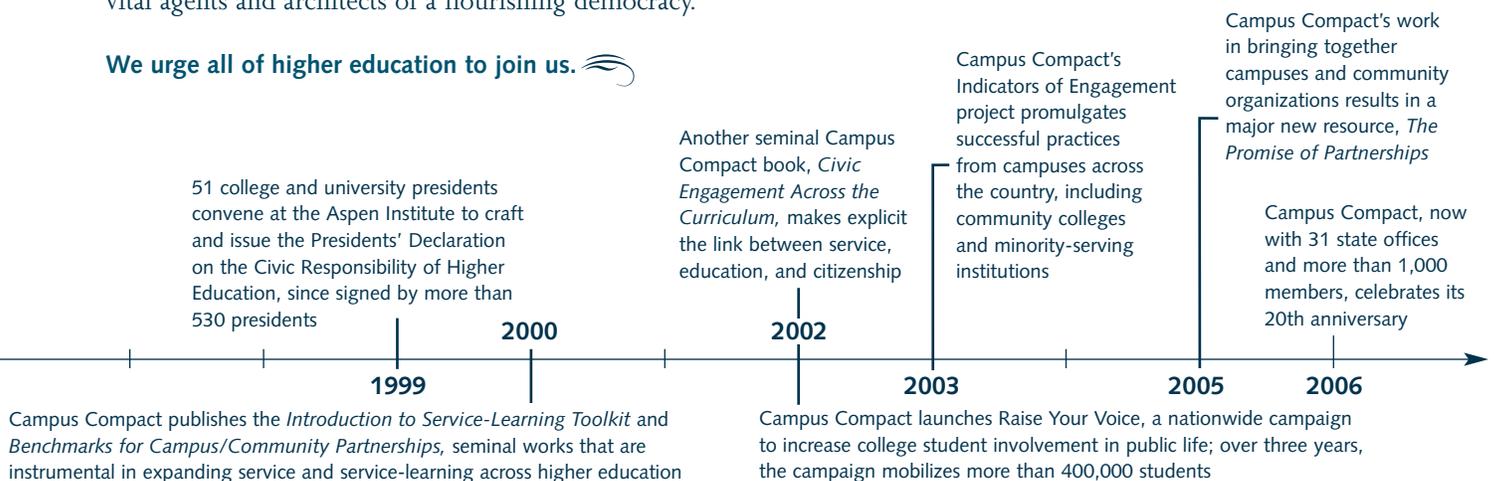
We urge all of higher education to join us. 

Where do we go from here?

To date, 561 college and university presidents from every sector—public and private, large and small, two- and four-year—have endorsed the Declaration.

You can add your campus to the list of enclosed signatories at www.compact.org/resources/declaration/signatories.

We urge all readers to use this document to encourage dialogue on your campus among administrators, faculty, staff, and students.



“Consider Campus Compact to be one of the most enlightened and farsighted ventures that American colleges and universities have undertaken in recent years.

It provides evidence that there are, in the world of higher education, people more than willing to pitch in, people of vision and commitment.”

JOHN GARDNER,
former U.S. Secretary of Health,
Education and Welfare
and former president of the
Carnegie Corporation



Campus Compact

Additional copies of the Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education can be obtained by calling Campus Compact at (401) 867-3950 or by sending an email to campus@compact.org.

The Declaration is also available online at www.compact.org/resources/declaration.

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About Campus Compact

Campus Compact is a coalition of more than 1,000 college and university presidents—representing some 6 million students—who are committed to fulfilling the public purposes of higher education. As the only national association dedicated to this mission, Campus Compact is a leader in building civic engagement into campus and academic life. Through our national office and network of 31 state offices, member institutions receive the training, resources, and advocacy they need to build strong surrounding communities and teach students the skills and values of democracy.

Campus Compact's membership includes public, private, two- and four-year institutions across the spectrum of higher education. These institutions put into practice the ideal of civic engagement by sharing knowledge and resources with their communities, creating economic development initiatives, and supporting service and service-learning efforts in key areas such as literacy, health care, hunger, homelessness, the environment, and senior services.

Campus Compact comprises a national office based in Providence, RI, and state offices in CA, CO, CT, FL, HI, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, ME, MI, MN, MO, MT, NC, NH, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, RI, TX, UT, VT, WA, WI, and WV. For contact and other information, see www.compact.org.

The Presidents' Declaration was drafted in 1999 by Thomas Ehrlich, senior scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and president emeritus of Indiana University, and Elizabeth Hollander, executive director of Campus Compact, with input from a distinguished Presidents' Leadership Colloquium Committee composed of Derek Bok, president emeritus of Harvard University; Dolores Cross, president of Morris Brown College; John DiBiaggio, president of Tufts University; Claire Gaudiani, president of Connecticut College; Stanley Ikenberry, president of the American Council on Education; Donald Kennedy, president emeritus of Stanford University; Charles Knapp, past president of the Aspen Institute; Edward A. Malloy, president of the University of Notre Dame; Frank Newman, president of the Education Commission of the States; and Eduardo Padrón, president of Miami-Dade Community College.

The purpose of this statement is to articulate the commitment of all sectors of higher education—public and private, two- and four-year—to their civic purposes. The statement was reviewed, refined, and endorsed at a Presidents' Leadership Colloquium convened by Campus Compact and the American Council on Education in July 1999.

We are deeply indebted to the drafters of the Wingspread Declaration on Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University, crafted by Harry Boyte of the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota and Elizabeth Hollander of Campus Compact, with the commentary of a distinguished group of scholars, administrators, and others. Many ideas and some of the language have been used here, with the authors' permission.