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Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education and Campus Assessment of Civic Responsibility

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Higher Education in Service to the Nation



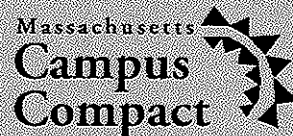
campus compact

*Presidents' Declaration
on the
Civic Responsibility of Higher Education
and
Campus Assessment of
Civic Responsibility*

Presidents' Declaration
on the
Civic Responsibility of Higher Education

The following statement was drafted by Thomas Ehrlich, senior scholar, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and president emeritus, Indiana University, and Elizabeth Hollander, executive director of Campus Compact, with the advice and input of 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, recent 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 and to identify the behaviors that will make that commitment manifest. It was reviewed, refined and endorsed at a Presidents' Leadership Colloquium convened by Campus Compact and the American Council on Education at the Aspen Institute on June 29-July 1, 1999¹.



reprinted on the occasion of the Massachusetts Campus Compact
Fifth Anniversary Breakfast
October 18, 1999

Declaration

As presidents of colleges and universities, both private and public, large and small, two-year and four-year, we challenge higher education to reexamine 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 participation². We do not blame these college students for their attitudes toward the democracy, rather we take responsibility to help 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 to learn both to respect difference and work together for the common good.

We live in a time when every sector—corporate, government and nonprofit—is being mobilized to address community needs and reinvigorate our democracy (Gardner, 1998). 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% 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 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. It is a work in progress. We ask you to review the draft and to ask yourself what aspects of this can work on your campus and also to share with others practices that are not on this list.

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.

¹ We are deeply indebted to the drafters of the Wingspread Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Research Universities, crafted by Harry Boyte of the Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota and Elizabeth Hollander, with the commentary of a distinguished group of scholars, administrators, foundation personnel, and others gathered by Barry Checkoway at the University of Michigan in December of 1998. Many ideas and some of the language have been used here with the authors' permission.

²UCLA American Council on Education Study 1999; National Association of Secretaries of State 1998

Campus Assessment of Civic Responsibility

The next important step for each president endorsing the Declaration is to conduct an assessment on your own campus of your current activities to promote civic responsibility. Each of us is urged to gather a diverse group of trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partners on your campus to develop measures of successful civic engagement that are consistent with the mission of your particular institution. To assist you, we have compiled this list of questions for your use in framing your discussions.

We know that every campus will fulfill its civic mission in its own unique way. In fact, each campus will make a unique contribution to refining what it means to be an engaged campus. The following questions are designed to inspire you in that enterprise. We look forward to learning in a year what you have done and will circulate a document summarizing various campus efforts.

Presidential Leadership

In what ways am I leading my campus in articulating and implementing a civic mission that calls upon us to prepare our students for engaged citizenship? Is that mission widely known and understood by our trustees, faculty, administration, alumni, students and our larger community? How well have I, as president, personally and actively engaged in community or public policy development? How well do I articulate the philosophical and intellectual meaning of higher education as an agent of democracy? Do I help to highlight the specific and unique quality and character of my particular institution, and make visible the public work and contributions of faculty, staff, and students?

Campus Constituencies Students

Curriculum: How well does our curriculum help students develop civic competencies and civic habits? These habits include the arts of civil public argument, civic imagination, and the ability to critically evaluate arguments and information. They also include the capacities and curiosity to listen, interest in and knowledge of public affairs, and the ability to work with others different from themselves on public problems in ways that deepen appreciation of others' talents. Are our students given multiple opportunities to do the work of citizenship through real projects of impact and relevance, linked to their academic learning? Do we seek to measure student' knowledge of American democratic institutions at matriculation and/or at graduation? How well have we worked to increase opportunities for community-based learning, including community-based research and curricular-based community engagement (service-learning)? How well do we prepare our future teachers — for K-12 and higher education—to integrate civic learning into their teaching?

Co-Curricular Activities: How well do our campus's co-curricular activities provide opportunities for civic engagement? Do these activities include participation in political campaigns and/or other change-oriented activities? To what extent do our co-curricular activities include a regular time and place for reflection about how such experiences might shape students' view of the world and their future careers and life work?

Campus Culture: How well does our campus's culture support students' participation in genuine, vigorous, open dialogue about the critical issues of their education and the democracy? To what extent are students on campus able to help build and sustain genuinely public cultures full of conversation, civil argument, and discussion about the meaning of their learning, their work, and their institutions as a whole? How well does our campus promote

voter registration and participation? Do we regularly invite elected officials to campus to speak, and support public forums on critical issues of the day?

Campus Diversity: How diverse is our student body? Do our financial aid and admissions policies reflect our desire for a diverse student body? How do we enable students to encounter and learn from others different from themselves in experience, culture, racial background, gender, sexual orientation, ideologies and views?

Student Careers: To what extent do our career offices provide opportunities for public and nonprofit career choices? At what stage is our campus in preparing students for, and providing financial aid programs to support career choices in the public and nonprofit sectors?

Faculty

Faculty Culture: How well does our campus provide opportunity for faculty to create, participate in, and take responsibility for a vibrant public culture on campus, which values faculty and students moral and civic imagination, judgment, and insight? Is our faculty encouraged to participate in genuine civic partnerships based on respect and recognition of different ways of knowing and different kinds of contributions in which expertise is “on tap, not on top”? Is our faculty encouraged to discuss the need to develop student citizenship skills and debate what those skills and habits are and how they might be developed?

Faculty Development and Rewards: Do faculty hiring, development opportunities, promotion and tenure policies encourage and support teaching that includes community-based learning and undergraduate action research? Do these systems support and reward faculty who link their research and service to community needs and concern? How well are faculty members prepared to pursue “public scholarship” relating their work to the pressing problems of society, providing consultations and expertise, and creating opportunities to work with community and

civic partners in co-creating initiatives of public value? How well do we orient new faculty members to the community of which the campus is a part, developed in collaboration with community leaders? Do we have ongoing programs to introduce faculty to community issues and community perspectives on those issues? Do faculty, deans, and the chief academic officer have knowledge of and access to discipline-based development materials regarding engaged scholarship and teaching?

Administrators and Staff

How well do our administrators create and improve structures that sustain civic engagement and public contributions in many forms? Do our administrators seek to find their own ways to be publicly engaged? To what extent are our hiring practices driven by a desire to achieve broad representation and social diversity, not simply out of moral imperative but out of full recognition that a diversity of backgrounds, cultures, and views is essential to a vital public culture? To what extent does our staff receive recognition for the often extensive ties that many have with the local community? To what extent are those ties seen as a resource for community-university partnerships, for student learning, for engaged scholarship, and for the broad intellectual life of the institution? To what extent do our administration and faculty view the staff as an integral part of the process to educate students for democracy? To what extent is our staff encouraged to work with faculty to examine and change the campus culture to support engagement?

Trustees and Alumni

Are trustees engaged in discussing the importance of the civic responsibility of the institution in all its dimensions? Are alumni educated about the institutions’ civic engagement and encouraged to support those activities through their own actions and their financial support?

The Institutional Role in Civic Responsibility

Democratic Practice on our Campus: Does our campus model democratic behavior? Do we engage all of our campus constituencies in our governance, our promotion of robust debate, in the ways in which we use tensions and controversies as teachable moments to demonstrate the value of rigorous, not rancorous discourse?

Campus/Community Partnerships: How well does our institution create and sustain long-term partnerships with communities and civic bodies? Do we share resources with our partners? Do we allocate resources to support these activities? Can our civic partners point to long-term, positive experiences with our campus? Are our partnerships framed in ways which reflect the campus' commitments to community building and civic vitality, that integrate community experience into the learning of students and the professional service opportunities for staff, and that fully understand and appreciate the public dimensions of scholarly work?

Communications with our Community: How well does our campus promote awareness that civic engagement is an essential part of our mission? How well does our campus create structures that generate a more porous and interactive flow of knowledge between campus and communities?

Community Improvement: To what extent have we improved the condition of the communities surrounding our campuses? To what extent is a public measure of campus success the condition of the surrounding community and the measurable difference the campus has made in improving the physical and human condition of neighborhood residents? How well do we think about procurement and employment practice and use of physical plant as opportunities to enhance our local communities?

Campus Engagement: How well do we make sustained efforts to track civic engagement activity by students, staff, or faculty and make an effort to deploy these activities in strategic ways that make maximum impact on the community's improvement agenda?

Notes
