



**Campus Compact's 20/20 Vision: Celebrating Our First Twenty Years and  
Planning for the Next Two Decades**

Barbara A. Holland, Executive Director, National Service-Learning Clearinghouse and  
Engaged Scholar, Campus Compact and  
Elizabeth Hollander, Executive Director, Campus Compact  
February 2006

This year Campus Compact celebrates 20 years of educating students for active citizenship, using the resources of colleges and universities to help build strong communities, and providing a strong national and state voice for the civic purposes of higher education. In this celebratory year, we recognize the successes of the past two decades and look to the future to plan how we can best achieve our vision of colleges and universities as agents and architects of a vital democracy.

**Twenty Years of Growth**

Founded in 1985, Campus Compact continues to develop high-quality programs and services to promote campus engagement and build the skills and values of democracy.

In the early years, Campus Compact focused on student co-curricular community service as the best vehicle for fostering democratic participation. In the early 1990s, Campus Compact began advocating service-learning as a way to build civic education into the heart of higher education and deepen students' understanding of the challenges of a democratic society. In the late 1990s we started promoting the "engaged campus" in recognition that campuses could be mobilized to revitalize communities. In the early

2000s, Campus Compact initiated a major campaign to help students advocate for their own civic involvement.

At each stage of this development, Campus Compact has called for a deeper commitment to civic engagement. Higher education institutions have responded to this call. In our second decade, Campus Compact has seen a huge rise in membership, which now nears 1,000 colleges and universities across the spectrum of higher education. The number of Campus Compact state offices has grown commensurately, with 31 state offices now providing state and regional support for member campuses, and more offices in development.

### **Our Vision for the Future**

Campus Compact believes that our country cannot afford to educate a generation that acquires knowledge without understanding how it can benefit society or influence democratic decision-making. We believe that higher education remains a key institutional force in our culture, both as a repository of knowledge and as the training ground for the leaders of tomorrow. We recognize that higher education must respond to community needs and democratic responsibilities with the intellectual and professional capacities demanded by today's challenges.

As we plan for the future, we see three crucial challenges that must be met: embedding engagement more deeply across all institutions, bridging the opportunity gap by improving educational access and success, and educating students for global citizenship.

*Embedding engagement more deeply across all institutions.* The need to educate students to take on their civic responsibilities within their communities and the nation is not yet fully embedded in the core work of higher education. The development of students' civic skills, habits, inclinations, and abilities needs to be consciously built into academic and student life. Engaged practices, including service-learning and community-based research, must be recognized as legitimate, rigorous forms of teaching and scholarship. This recognition must be reflected in graduate education, promotion and tenure guidelines, disciplinary association work, accrediting standards, research publications, and funding. In addition, campuses need to model civic engagement and provide rich opportunities for student civic work by building strong partnerships with their communities.

*Bridging the opportunity gap by improving educational access and success.* The divide between the rich and poor continues to grow in our nation, with immigrant and minority populations being particularly hard hit. This divide is reflected in students' access to, and success in, college. Nearly twice as many white students earn a bachelor's degree by their late twenties (35%) as African-American (18%) or Hispanic students (19%). A college education is a major predictor not only of individual economic and social improvement but also of civic participation (voting, volunteering, keeping abreast of public issues). College access and success are, however, very uneven. Opportunities and support systems for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter and stay in college are

significantly lower than they are for those with greater means. Participation in the democracy is similarly uneven.

*Educating students for global citizenship.* To be an effective citizen in the 21st century requires global understanding. College civic engagement efforts should include efforts to educate students to be global citizens. Involvement in the cultures of other countries deepens students' global awareness and opens new perspectives on the challenges facing their own country. In the United States, every jurisdiction has new immigrant populations with needs to be met and cultures to share. Students don't have to leave the country to experience and understand their role as global citizens. Poverty, race, and social justice are as much local, regional, and national issues as they are global issues—and, indeed, are often related to global conditions. There is enormous potential for students to learn from, and work with, new immigrants.

### **The Next Twenty Years**

These three themes that frame the exploration of Campus Compact's next 20 years also reflect the current state of community engagement across higher education. Around the globe, engagement is increasingly seen not only as a vital strategy for recapturing the ideal of higher education as a public good but also as an essential benchmark of institutional impact and quality. Each of the three themes creates a pathway that connects Campus Compact's work and vision to important challenges and reforms that cut across higher education on a global scale.

Campus Compact's major thematic focus on *embedding engagement more deeply across all institutions* reflects the growing need to help all types of colleges and universities articulate their civic goals and embed engaged models of teaching, learning, and research across their institutions. For most of the last decade, largely more regionally oriented public and private institutions embraced engagement as a mode of scholarly work. As community engagement has moved from the margins of higher education into the core—due to the work of organizations like Campus Compact as well as acceptance by the disciplines and key research funding organizations—engagement as a mode of teaching and research has rapidly expanded across all institutional types. At the same time, engagement has become strongly associated with institutional prestige. As a consequence, engagement is now understood to be a key element of nearly every institution's academic focus, although the level of relevance varies according to the institution's mission, history, purpose and external community context.

What evidence supports this development? For one thing, the core systems for ranking and classifying U.S. institutions now include indicators of institutional engagement. The Carnegie Foundation, as part of its ongoing work in classifying colleges and universities, recently completed a pilot project to develop a classification for community engagement. In a second phase of this work, institutions will participate in a voluntary documentation effort that will form the basis of the new classification. In addition, three regional accreditation associations have adopted specific criteria for assessing institutional engagement activities as components of teaching, research, and campus-community partnerships. *U.S. News and World Report's* annual ranking of colleges and universities

now includes engaged learning as a key component of curricula, and The Princeton Review recently collaborated with Campus Compact to publish a guide to higher education institutions that demonstrate a “social conscience” through their approaches to teaching and learning (*Colleges with a Conscience*, 2005). These systems strongly influence the behavior of academic institutions, and have clearly validated engagement as a distinguishing characteristic of importance.

In addition, community engagement is strongly linked to new trends in research. Knowledge generation and dissemination have changed dramatically as the world economy becomes driven by ideas and data. Technology has diffused access to knowledge broadly across society, and research paradigms are changing to recognize this phenomenon. Knowledge generation increasingly involves expertise from a wide array of individuals and organizations that cross institutional and even national boundaries. Increasingly, discovery is pursued in the context of the potential usefulness of new knowledge, and the relationship between research and application is becoming blurred as the speed and breadth of dissemination increases.

Engaged scholarship is a good example of growing global interest in more collaborative approaches to research. Elements of engagement are already being introduced into research systems. Major U.S. research funding sources, including the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, have added new review criteria that ask applicants to describe the potential public involvement in or public impact of the proposed research. Organizations that define global research priorities, such as the National Academies of Science, the European Union’s research academies, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, recognize these changes as a critical force for higher education reform. Engagement is proving to be a powerful method for building institutional capacity for collaborative research and for demonstrating the public benefits of academic scholarship.

Thus, every institution must develop a plan for embedding engagement into teaching, learning, and research as a reflection of its unique mission. In our experience, institutions that develop a more intentional and coherent agenda that engages researchers in questions related to local, state, and regional issues experience an increase in both research funding and productivity. Institutions with a clear engagement agenda are also likely to see growth in donor support and alumni giving.

Engaged teaching and research also direct the attention of colleges and universities toward the urgent challenges that shape the economic and social fabric of their surrounding communities. In particular, changing demographics and poor school performance combine to threaten the educational basis for a sound and sustainable economy at the local and national levels. Higher education has both a moral responsibility and an intense self-interest in contributing to the knowledge base needed to build a strong K-20 educational continuum that ensures a high rate of achievement across the entire population. Thus, Campus Compact’s theme of *improving educational access and success* through expansion of engaged teaching and learning strategies aligns perfectly with this national priority.

In particular, public and private higher education institutions must reform their teaching and learning environments in order to serve the coming generations of new students. Look at the changes already taking place in school demographics in your region. America's student population is increasingly made up of ethnic minorities, immigrants, and other groups that are underrepresented in higher education. Research shows that engaged learning environments improve access and success for these students. Community-based learning, civic learning, and academic service-learning are strongly associated with improvements in high school completion and transition to college. Active pedagogies such as community-based learning have been shown to enhance the retention of first-generation college students, especially in the freshman year. Engagement also has a positive impact on persistence (time-to-degree), career choice, and academic achievement. Evidence suggests that the reason for these benefits is that these students find community engagement as a pedagogy highly relevant to their lives; it helps them gain confidence as learners by linking theories and ideas to the real world.

Of course, that real world is increasingly "flat" and connected. The third Campus Compact theme, *global citizenship*, reflects the need to prepare these new, more diverse students to be effective participants in an increasingly complex social environment and global economy. In the context of rapid generation of knowledge and growing global interdependencies, being a lifelong learner now means building skills and competencies that support global citizenship. As America becomes more diverse, these competencies become increasingly important to support healthy local communities in the context of a global, knowledge-based economy. New modes of international interactions are emerging that engage our students more deeply in activities that build cross-cultural competencies and demonstrate the knowledge assets inherent in different cultures and settings. The traditional model of thin "exchange visits" is being supplanted by more action-oriented, problem-based experiences that give students the opportunity to put their knowledge to work in ways that both address human issues and strengthen international connections. Just as research is increasingly transcending national borders to accelerate knowledge generation and dissemination, so must our teaching and learning strategies.

For Campus Compact, the two latter themes represent important strategic directions that help address the broader goal of embedding engagement more deeply in the core work of colleges and universities. During the past 20 years, Campus Compact has had an enormous impact on the quality and extent of engaged teaching, learning, and research practices across higher education. The long-standing question of whether civic engagement is an educational "fad" has been answered definitively: engaged teaching and research are essential components of the successful campus of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As colleges and universities develop strategic engagement agendas that connect their priorities to community needs and assets, they continue to expand our understanding of what it means to be an engaged campus. Already, the locus of enhancing institutional capacity for engaged teaching and research is moving to a greater focus on specific state and regional concerns as higher education becomes more "engaged" in work on public

issues such as regional economic development, health care, K-12 education, and the environment.

Over the next 20 years, Campus Compact, with the foundation of these three overarching themes, will act as a catalyst for increasing institutional commitment to civic engagement. It will do so by providing a platform for national-scale funding, policy, documentation, and visibility for engagement as a key indicator of higher education's role in serving the public good. Campus Compact's great strengths are its unique reach across all institutional types and its distributed assets, which support work at the state, regional, and national levels. Through this structure, and through 20 years of successful programs, Campus Compact has acquired the capacity to exert influence on the public's understanding of and support for higher education as a vital resource for strengthening our communities and our democracy.

*Clearly, the next 20 years hold enormous promise. We invite you to join us in planning for our future success.*