



Campus Compact



# Student design fellows' vision

INTRODUCTION

Strategic plans for student civic leadership are often written for students or about them. Rarely are strategic visions created by paid student leaders and designed with them leading every step of the way. Campus Compact aims to change that model, and with the critical support of the Lumina Foundation, Campus Compact launched the Student Design Fellowship to model and uplift a new vision for student civic leadership, with student voices at its center.

Over the past two years, Campus Compact's Student Design Fellows have investigated students' aspirations for creating a more equitable and impactful future for student civic leadership, as well as the challenges that are getting in their way.

Through extensive research, a review of existing best practices, and interviews with students and experts nationwide, Fellows designed and facilitated inquiry workshops about the future of student civic leadership. Broken into six themes and seven programmatic ideas, the Design Fellows' findings provide a clear roadmap for Campus Compact student engagement moving forward. We hope you join us in this effort.

# Table of Contents

---

## Introduction – Page 1

- About the Student Design Fellows initiative
- Key statistics and outreach
- Executive Summary: In Our Own Words

## Key themes – Page 6

- Making access to leadership training & development just
- Creating civic cultures of holistic care
- Supporting wrap-around services
- Advancing student voice & advocacy
- Reimagining outreach: expanding definitions of "student leader" and "community"
- Cultivating internal relationships for greater sustainability and impact

## Programmatic ideas – Page 9

- Expansion of community-engaged courses
- Multi-level training programs and platforms
- Virtual and in-person gathering opportunities
- Mini-grant funding expansion
- Federal Work-Study advocacy
- Student Leadership Advisory Board
- Campus Advocacy and Action Fellowship

## Call to action – Page 14

- For Community Partners
- For Administrators
- For Students
- For Staff & Faculty
- Campus Compact's Implementation Plan

## Resources – Page 19

- Glossary of key terms

# Student Design Fellows



**Soniy Alamdari**  
University of Florida



**Keoni Vega**  
University of Virginia



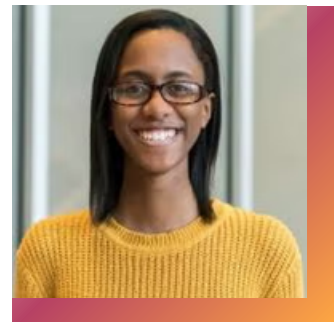
**Ru R**  
College of DuPage



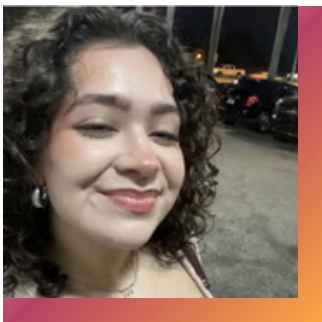
**Emmanuel Gómez**  
Long Beach State University



**Jessika Crockett-Murphy**  
Stonehill College



**Markya Reed**  
Morgan State University



**Cyntia Roig**  
Brown University



**Hannah Botts**  
Centre College

# Executive Summary

## IN OUR OWN WORDS

---

Through a partnership between Campus Compact and the Lumina Foundation, we (the Student Design Fellows) have worked over the last two years to analyze changes in student leadership and civic engagement in order to inform current and future Compact student programming, training, and resources. Throughout this document, you will find a summary of our research, which was conducted over a two-year period through modes including conference presentations, literature reviews, survey data, and focus groups.

### KEY STATISTICS

---

→ **250+**

Responses to a student-facing survey

→ **90+**

Organizations studied for landscape analysis

→ **50+**

Studies & articles on student civic leadership analyzed

→ **8+**

Conference presentations across the country

---

Using this data, we identified six general themes that encompass the civic engagement and leadership work highlighted in our research. Areas of interest covered a wide range of focuses, including direct resources and services for students, as well as efforts to shift societal norms and systems to better support long-term advocacy work.

From these thematic areas, we, along with input from various students and higher education professionals, created seven intentional programmatic ideas for the next stages of this project. This includes the creation of physical groups and programs for student support and collaboration, as well as a variety of adaptable resources and training tools that cater to diverse social justice areas and academic environments.

---

Accessibility, adaptability, and student voice were foundational areas in which we grounded their work. The goal of analyzing and developing better student advocacy training and resources was a substantial task to tackle, but through the year and a half that the cohort has been meeting, we have been able to draft this vision document, which will serve as the catalyst for the next phase of development.

The vision document includes guidelines for implementing the various research findings for individuals across a range of roles (including student leaders, staff, faculty, administrators, and community partners), as well as information on how these individuals can contribute to the ongoing work in this next phase.

It is essential to note that, given the tumultuous nature of the current political landscape in the United States and the ever-changing nature of higher education, this document and its findings are subject to this combined volatility. This document is an adaptable and living roadmap, not a rigid, finalized report.

Our work, research, and proposals are a mere snapshot of the broader sphere of student civic engagement work, but this snapshot still serves a useful purpose in guiding the work of Campus Compact and its collaborators as they continue to serve student leaders. The work of our cohort will help to guide the next five to ten years of student leadership development, and allow for the framework of the cohort to enter into a cyclical model that will enable Campus Compact to stay at the forefront of the developing needs for student leaders and civic change makers.

As students continue their efforts to change the world and make their communities a better place, Campus Compact will remain dedicated to amplifying their voices, providing necessary resources and support for their projects, and ensuring their needs are met at all levels.

# How can Campus Compact improve the future of student civic leadership?

---

→ 1

Making access to leadership training & development just

For student civic leadership (see glossary), to be diverse, inclusive, just, and equitable, the pipeline to leadership must also be diverse, inclusive, just, and equitable. We must design and implement models for civic leadership training & development that are easy to access and empower students from all walks of life.

---

→ 2

Creating civic cultures of holistic care

Collegiate environments often emphasize civic engagement without addressing systemic barriers to participation, like financial and time scarcity, which contribute to student burnout and disengagement. To alleviate this, we encourage both a culture shift and the provision of tangible resources for students. To foster sustainable civic leadership, it is crucial to prioritize holistic care that addresses students' physical, mental, spiritual, and social needs (see glossary), provide equitable and relational support systems, and equip students with the tools to balance self-care with community care.

## → 3

## Supporting wrap-around services

While cultivating a culture of care is essential, a changing culture must be accompanied by providing tangible resources. Across every demographic, college students face a lack of equitable access to basic needs, which is the most prevalent barrier to participation in civic engagement activities. By providing proactive, student-centered, evidence-based wraparound services that offer personalized and coordinated assistance to help students overcome barriers to entry (see glossary), campuses can reduce barriers to student leadership participation.

## → 4

## Advancing student voice &amp; advocacy

Students often lack the knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively engage with political systems and advocate for policies that align with their interests and values, both on campus (in the campus administration) and off (in the government). Students want more than just to have a voice. They want to know how to use that voice effectively to advocate and implement change.

## → 5

## Reimagining outreach: expanding definitions of who we consider a “student leader” and “community”

**Reimagining Student Outreach:**

Campuses should reimagine who student leaders are, ensuring that outreach efforts include students from all backgrounds, not just those with prior experience in civic engagement. Expanding leadership definitions allows more students to see themselves as agents of change. See the glossary for more information.

**Redefining Community Outreach:**

Outreach should help students reimagine what “community” means by fostering engagement beyond traditional campus spaces. Connecting students with diverse organizations and real-world opportunities strengthens ties between students and broader communities. See the glossary for more information.

→ 6

Cultivating  
internal  
relationships for  
greater  
sustainability  
and impact

Students are eager to drive social change and improve their communities through academics and careers, yet many colleges struggle to sustain these ambitions in the long term, leading to burned-out students and student-led initiatives.

To build lasting impact, institutions must strengthen intergenerational connections by involving alumni, mentors, and older or retiring faculty and staff in the life of the campus. Creating intentional mentorship opportunities and fostering collaboration across student cohorts, departments, and generations can establish more resilient networks of support.

By creating mentorship opportunities, fostering cross-campus collaboration, and expanding co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities for more students, institutions can establish systems of sustainability that do not rely solely on one outstanding student leader, faculty member, or department. Strengthening these relationships and support systems not only enhances student engagement during and after college but also improves retention by creating a more connected, purpose-driven campus experience for more students.

# Student design fellows' programmatic ideas

Based on the research themes mentioned above, a prior landscape analysis of existing organizations and initiatives, and their understanding of Campus Compact's mission and capacity, the Student Design Fellows generated dozens of potential programmatic ideas they thought might address some of the desires they heard from students.

Of the 25+ ideas shared, and after weeks of discussion, the fellows voted the following seven ideas as the most promising. The Design Fellows then solicited feedback on these ideas in focus groups and at conferences across the last six months.

---

**Advocate for the expansion of community-engaged courses at all Compact institutions. Community-engaged courses improve recruitment, retention, and equity because too many students have to choose between class, work, and civic engagement due to a lack of time and finances.**

- Provide more community-based learning classes that students can take for credit towards graduation or that are financially accessible through tuition discounts or similar financial incentives (This is especially important if the class cannot count towards a degree requirement, yet the student still has to pay to take it). Avoid making these courses a requirement, as many individuals respond negatively to additional mandatory coursework, which can, in turn, hurt the impact and partnerships with the community the class is engaging with.
- Utilize and transform existing community-based learning frameworks into a comprehensive, accessible toolkit for faculty to transition their courses from traditional to community-based ones. This will make it easier for faculty to access the support and roadmaps they need to expand these offerings and influence campus culture.
- Provide stipends to a select group of faculty members who are innovating recruitment routes for non-traditional students or underrepresented student groups into student civic leadership opportunities and courses. This could expand the pipeline of students who are involved and may not have previous experience in community-engaged work (especially community colleges and MSIs).

Provide equitable access to user-friendly training resources that educate, connect, and credential students for their present and future civic leadership.

- Conduct an asset map of training resources in the field. Connect students to existing high-quality training resources and assist with reducing barriers (e.g., offering travel stipends, allocating time for completion, waiving tuition fees, and providing course materials). Expand the value of what's already available by expanding existing training resources whenever possible, and when not, add value through the creation of new resources.
  - Focus on regional and local implementation by designing adaptable training templates that each campus can personalize to its context. Consider taking these training models and resources on the road via "conference tours," where Compact staff deliberately visit different geographic areas to showcase the variety of resources available.
  - Balance online, hybrid, and in-person training mediums, with a preference for interactive learning formats (e.g., workshops, dialogue circles, mentoring, hands-on community-grounded service and advocacy).
  - Professionalize student participation in training programs through certification, integration with workforce development, and career networking.
- 

Cultivate connections for students by creating or uplifting space for virtual and student-led in-person gatherings that connect student activists with resources and networking opportunities.

- Make virtual interfaces customizable to support and empower agents of change, allowing them to collaborate more easily by engaging with other civic leaders who meet their specific needs and preferences. For example, create more avenues for students to easily find and connect with each other across the Compact network, allowing them to search by issue areas, geographic regions, demographics, methods of change, and other relevant criteria.

- Work to support and create more national and regional in-person student-led gatherings (like the [IMPACT Conference](#) and [Newman Fellows Convening](#)) for students to connect and share best practices, collaborate on ideas, and be inspired to take lessons back to their communities.
- Strategize conference planning to become more creative, accessible, and engaging by offering hybrid options and low-income (students prioritized) fee waivers/scholarships. Increase advocacy momentum generated in student-led conferences by not isolating conferences to one location once a year, but create a 'conference tour' model to take the same training/networking conference model on the road across the country (or at multiple sites across the country at once) for greater geographic participation and student input.

---

### Expand mini-grant funding to all Campus Compact students (call it the Civic Wellness or Civic Action Incubator)

- Expand a program like the [Newman Civic Fellows Mini-Grant Program](#), where students work with established nonprofits or community engagement centers to apply for grants up to \$1,500 each to enhance or expand a current program or project or initiate a new idea or solution backed by the community.
- Ensure that mini-grant programs also provide students with stipends for their time in addition to the funding for community action, which will support students' basic needs while they work.
- Prioritize directly funding students and local organizations, and allowing them to get hands-on experience related to grant-making and fundraising. By allowing the student to go through these processes directly, they're able to build tangible skills rather than just being provided with a grant.
- Further develop the current [Student Summer Impact Series](#), where students can showcase their projects to their campuses, local government officials, nonprofit leaders, and potential investors.

## Promote equitable student compensation through community-engaged work opportunities

- Federal Advocacy
    - Advocate for updating and expanding FWS funding, eligibility guidelines, and community-engaged requirements to better support students who must choose between paid work and serving their communities.
    - Support legislation such as the Students Working for Communities Act to expand the total amount of FWS funds available to schools
    - Broaden definitions of what qualifies as community-engaged work
    - Raise the minimum percentage of FWS funding that must go toward community-based work (currently only 7%)
  
  - Institutional Implementation
    - In addition to federal efforts, educate colleges and universities on how to maximize their current use of FWS funds for community-engaged positions, even beyond the minimum threshold. Work with campuses to make these opportunities more visible, accessible, and inclusive, regardless of FWS eligibility.
    - Create paid programs for students who are not eligible for FWS but still need to work while in school.
- 

## Amplify and listen to student voices as equal players, not afterthoughts or advertisements for promotional materials

- Create and maintain a Student Leadership Advisory Board for Campus Compact to continue advising and holding Campus Compact accountable for this plan, and to help implement or lead strategic projects as necessary.
  
  - Amplify more models, best practices, and templates/starter guides for creating shared governance committees on college campuses, where students feel they have a voice in major campus decisions.
  
  - Craft a resource database or set of guidelines and considerations to ensure students are aware of the rules, regulations, and consequences associated with their involvement in acts of civil disobedience on and off campus.
-

- Prioritize accessibility in feedback collection by offering multiple modalities and flexible timing to ensure a more representative range of student voices. Embed these processes within formal university structures, such as shared governance committees, to ensure that students participate not only as informants but as equal decision makers alongside faculty and staff.
- 

## Create a Campus Advocacy and Action Fellowship

- Select a diverse cohort of fellows from across participating campuses to ensure representation from a range of institutional types, regions, and student backgrounds.
- Provide fellows with structured training in grassroots organizing, lobbying, and coalition-building to equip them with the skills to drive meaningful change.
- Facilitate collaboration among fellows through regular convenings, shared resources, and peer mentorship to promote cross-campus learning and movement-building.
- Incorporate regional cohorts by recognizing and responding to differing political and cultural contexts by offering regionally-focused cohorts (e.g., Southern, Midwest, Northeast) that address unique challenges and opportunities. This structure supports students in tailoring advocacy strategies to their specific environments, particularly in areas where civic restrictions are heightened.

# Call to Action: Advancing Student Civic Leadership

---

The Student Design Fellows Vision outlines key steps to make student civic leadership more accessible, equitable, and impactful. Now, we need you—students, community partners, administrators, and staff—to take action and turn these ideas into reality.

We recognize that institutionalization is not a cure-all for problems student leaders may encounter. Although formalizing programs can offer structure and resources, it can also reduce red tape that slows down action. This call to action emphasizes flexibility, co-creation, and student agency. Leadership initiatives must stay dynamic and rooted in the student voice. Change is not dependent on perfection—rather, it is based on action.

---

## CALL TO ACTION

# students

### Make your voice heard

- Join or start student-led initiatives that push for equitable civic leadership policies.
- Engage in campus governance and advocate for expanded leadership training.

### Apply for support & funding

- Seek mini-grants for community engagement projects.
- Explore opportunities for paid civic leadership roles through Federal Work-Study or fellowships.

### Build connections

- Attend networking events and conferences, such as the IMPACT Conference and Newman Fellows Convening.
- Participate in student leadership gatherings—both virtual and in-person—to collaborate with peers across the nation.

CALL TO ACTION

## community partners

### Strengthen student–community engagement

- Partner with colleges to offer paid community engagement opportunities.
- Co–create experiential learning projects that allow students to apply civic skills in real–world settings.

### Support mini–grants & fellowships

- Provide funding or mentorship for student–led civic projects.
- Help students access grant opportunities to support social impact initiatives.

### Advocate for equitable Federal Work–Study use

- Work with colleges to increase Federal Work–Study positions for community–engaged work.

---

CALL TO ACTION

## administrators

### Expand leadership development & training

- Implement credit–bearing courses that focus on civic leadership and experiential learning.
- Offer stipends for underrepresented students to access leadership opportunities.

### Prioritize student well–being in civic engagement.

- Embed wraparound support services (e.g., financial aid, mental health resources) into civic programs.
- Address student burnout by integrating holistic care into leadership initiatives.

### Build shared governance structures

- Create student advisory boards with decision–making power in institutional policies.
- Develop clear policies for student advocacy and civil disobedience, ensuring students are informed and supported.

CALL TO ACTION

## faculty & staff

### Integrate civic engagement into the classroom

- Offer community-based learning courses that connect academics with civic impact.
- Use toolkits & faculty stipends to transition traditional courses into experiential learning opportunities.

### Mentor & support students

- Advocate for financially accessible leadership training on your campus.
- Guide students in applying for funding and fellowships to support their civic engagement work.

### Foster sustainable change

- Help expand student representation in university-level decision-making bodies.
- Strengthen university-community partnerships by aligning institutional resources with local needs.

---

### GET INVOLVED TODAY!

Together, we can create a more equitable and impactful future for student civic leadership.

- **Spread the word:** Share this vision with your campus and community
- **Collaborate with us:** Reach out to explore potential partnerships and program implementation opportunities.
- **Take action:** Join student advisory boards. Apply for funding. Advocate for change.

Want to get involved in what's next? Email us at [studentdesign@compact.org](mailto:studentdesign@compact.org)

# What's next? Campus Compact's Implementation Plan

FROM THE CAMPUS COMPACT TEAM

---

Campus Compact is committed to following the lead of the Student Design Fellows' Vision over the next five years as we continue to prioritize centering student leadership and voice, the first strategy outlined in our 2025–2030 strategic plan.

Following the rollout of the Student Design Fellows' Vision in the fall of 2025, Campus Compact will launch a new set of partnerships, programs, and initiatives that fund and address the Student Design Fellows' thematic findings and reflect many of their recommendations.

For instance, in the 2025–2026 academic year, Campus Compact plans to:

- Launch a partnership with the Peterson Foundation to offer a policy and advocacy student leadership program for students passionate about social change and learning fiscal policy skills
- Begin recruiting for the Student Leadership Advisory Board (as mentioned in this plan) to start in spring 2026 to initiate a student-led accountability and voice structure that is embedded in Campus Compact's decision-making.
- Expand the amount of mini-grants awarded to Newman Civic Fellows in the coming academic year.
- Release the updated *Community Service Federal Work-Study Handbook* by Daniel Tome, Campus Compact's Community Service Federal Work-Study Fellow since 2023.

By the fall of 2027, Campus Compact hopes to:

- Expand our support for in-person student gatherings (like the Impact Conference) and cultivate online Student Changemaker Coalitions, which provide students with the option to join virtual, peer-led groups (with paid student facilitators) that tackle various issues (climate, guns, education, food insecurity, etc.) through learning from other students passionate about the issue, sharing resources, and collaborating on collective action across Campus Compact's coalition.
- Initiate the early stages of an online training and credential platform that will offer any student in Campus Compact's network the opportunity to access student leadership trainings, webinars, and resources for free, while also having the opportunity to earn certifications/credentials for students whose universities lack those opportunities.

And across the next five years, we aspire to:

- Expand our partnerships to address students' basic needs and efforts to foster a culture of holistic care on campus.
- Connect our faculty and staff development opportunities with community-engaged courses to our student work, advocating for the expansion of community-engaged course support and resources.
- Collaborate with partner coalitions and our partners in Washington to advocate for the protection and eventual expansion of government and non-government funds (such as AmeriCorps or foundation funding) and advance policies at the federal level that protect and support the public mission of higher education, thereby enhancing the common good.

Whether you are a partner organization, member institution administration, interested faculty, or dedicated staff, or (most importantly) a passionate student, we hope you will partner with us to make this Student Design Fellows' Vision come to life.

As Student Design Fellow Cyntia Roig says, "The work doesn't need to wait until everything is formalized. In fact, sometimes the most powerful changes begin outside formal structures. So let's create space for leadership that is bold, messy, student-driven, and ultimately built to last."

We invite you to join us on this journey—to fund the students, follow the students, and now, to help fulfill this student-led vision. Interested in learning more about the Student Design Fellows program, the Fellows' vision document, or how Campus Compact can work with you? Email us at [studentdesign@compact.org](mailto:studentdesign@compact.org).

# Glossary

---

- **Civic engagement:** Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes. (Thomas Ehrlich, The Policy Circle)
- **Community outreach:** The various ways in which the university extends its expertise for the direct benefit of surrounding communities and external audiences. (University of Colorado Boulder, Office of Information Technology)
- **DEI:** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- **Constructive Dialogue:** Constructive dialogue is a form of conversation in which people who have different values, beliefs, and perspectives seek to build new ways to understand and interact with each other, even as they sustain commitments to their own principles and perspectives (Constructive Dialogue Institute)
- **Democracy:** A principle that emphasizes open-mindedness, civility, the worth of each person, ethical behaviors, and concern for the well-being of others; a spirit of public-mindedness that influences the goals of institutions and engagement with local and global communities. (Higher Education's Role in Enacting a Thriving Democracy; Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change - Hoffman et al. 2018)
- **Diverse:** Including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc. (Oxford Definition)
- **Equitable:** The state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair. (Annie E. Casey Foundation)
- **Holistic care:** Holistic health is about caring for the whole person — providing for your physical, mental, spiritual, and social needs. It's rooted in the understanding that all these aspects affect your overall health, and being unwell in one aspect affects you in others. (Dignity Health)

- **Inclusive:** The state of including or being included within a group structure, often involving authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging. (Annie E. Casey Foundation)
- **Just:** The impartial, fair, and proper treatment of people. (Cornell Law School)
- **Leadership:** A set of mindsets and behaviors that align people in a collective direction, enables them to work together and accomplish shared goals and helps them adjust to changing environments. (McKinsey & Company)
- **MSIs:** Minority Serving Institutions
- **Multi-level training program:** A structured, online training system that provides different levels of training or education within a single program, with certification at the end.
- **Student basic needs:** The minimum resources necessary to holistically support all students in their daily lives, including but not limited to food, housing, physical safety, and mental health services. (University of California, Basic Needs Initiative)
- **Sustainability:** Ability to maintain actions and systems at a level that allows for long-term continuity while avoiding burnout of those involved. (Student Design Fellows created the definition)
- **Wrap-around services:** Wrap-around services and programs offer personalized and coordinated assistance for complex needs surrounding the individual's ability to engage in civic activities. These material and immaterial resources can include, but are not limited to, monetary funds, office supplies, technology, transportation, food, housing, healthcare, coaching, and mentorship. (Adapted from the Rural Health Information Hub)

**Note:** *The youth.gov website is no longer active, as it was taken down by the current administration. Previously, youth.gov was a federal government website that focused on youth programs, helping young people find funding and get civically engaged.*