

# Organizing for Change in Higher Education

By John Reiff

## Why are we here today?

- Story of Self
- Story of Us
- Story of Now

## What is your purpose statement?

- I am organizing **WHOM** to do **WHAT**?
- I am organizing the **senior administrators, faculty, staff, students, and community partners** of my institution to **create and embrace a Great Campus Civic Action Plan.**
- I am organizing **WHOM** to do **WHAT--HOW**?

## What are the Five Commitments in a Civic Action Plan?

- 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.

## What are the Five Commitments?

- 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.

## What are the Five Commitments?

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

## What are the Five Commitments?

- We harness the capacity of our institutions—through research, teaching, partnerships, and institutional practice—to challenge the prevailing social and economic inequalities that threaten our democratic future.

## What are the Five Commitments?

- 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.



## What do we need to know to organize the people of our campus?

*“In democratic countries, knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge; on its progress depends that of all the others.”*

–Alexis de Tocqueville

# What are some of the key elements in the “knowledge of how to combine”?

- Relationships
- Motivation
- Strategy
- Campaigns
- Leadership

--with thanks to Marshall Ganz

## Relationships

Organizers develop new relationships out of old ones—sometimes by linking one person to another and sometimes by linking whole networks of people together. Relationships grow out of:

- exchanges of **interests** and **resources** (you have to figure out what they are),
- the **commitment** to sustain them (you have to ask for it), and
- the creation of a **shared story** (you have to make it together).
- **One-to-ones are a key tool for an organizer.**

## Relationships

*An Example:* Your committee decides to pursue the creation of a civic engagement course requirement as one way to prepare your students for lives of engaged citizenship. Who are the “gatekeepers” who control access to the **resource** of curriculum requirements? What are their **interests**? How might their interests be met through your initiative—and how might your initiative be shaped to meet their interests? What **story** can you share about this initiative?

## Motivation

Organizers deepen people's understanding of who they are, what they want, and why they want it—their **values**. Organizers engage people in articulating a call to action as a shared story of the challenges they must face, the choices they must make, and the hope that can inspire the courage to make these choices now—a **story of self, us, and now**.

## Strategy

Organizers engage people in deliberating about how they can turn what they have (**resources**) into what they need (**power**) to get what they want (their **interests**): **strategy**. Power is the influence our resources can have on the interests of others who hold resources that can influence our interests. Organizing often requires using our resources to mobilize power interdependently *with* others.

## Action (Campaigns)

- Organizers work through campaigns. Campaigns are highly energized, intensely focused, concentrated streams of activity with specific goals and deadlines. People are recruited, programs launched, battles fought, and organizations built through campaigns.

# CAMPAIGNS





## Leadership

Organizers identify, recruit and develop leadership; build community around leadership; and build power out of community.

Where is the leadership for the Civic Action Plan?

## Another Example

Your committee decides that one way your institution can embrace its responsibilities as a place-based institution, contributing to the health and strength of its communities, is by committing to purchase more of the food it serves from local farmers. Who are the stakeholders in this issue, and how might they be mobilized to support this commitment? What changes would it require in your campus and community systems, and who would have to decide to make those changes?

## Another Example

Your committee decides that one of the best ways for your campus to affirm the centrality of the public purposes of higher education would be to explicitly reward excellence in **community-engaged teaching and research** through your **tenure and promotion policies and procedures**. What are the elements and the stages in the campaign to accomplish this goal?

# CAMPAIGNS



## A Sample Consultation

Applying an organizing lens to a specific institution . . .

**What are your questions?**

# Thank you!

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