

Plymouth State University
Civic Action Plan

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Plymouth State University

Civic Action Plan

This plan advocates for civic engagement in higher education, framed in response to the Campus Compact 30th Anniversary Action Statement of presidents and chancellors at intuitions of higher education across the United States of America. In this plan, the Campus Compact organization, and the Campus Compact action statement upon which this plan is based, is introduced. This Civic Action plan establishes an introduction to civic action, and explains how Plymouth State University (PSU) plans to engage in civic action. The key terms relevant to the plan are defined, and the benefits of civic engagement and experiential learning for student learning outcomes and community building are examined in a review of the literature. The Civic Action Plan identifies three key goals, as well as the resources available to support the plan, support and opposition to the plan, target and agent stakeholders, and strategies, measures, action steps, and indicators to implement and assess the plan.

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Background

Campus Compact is a national coalition of over a thousand institutions of higher education committed to "the public purposes of higher education...build[ing] democracy through

civic education and community development" (Campus Compact, 2017). In 2015, Campus Compact celebrated its 30th anniversary by releasing an Action Statement to affirm their commitments (see Appendix A), which they asked the presidents of all member institutions to sign and commit their institutions to. In 2016, Campus Compact's New Hampshire (NH) chapter approached the authors of this plan with a request for the president at PSU to sign the commitment to the 30th Anniversary Action Statement. The authors, with representatives from the Center for Community and Business Partnerships, meet with the president at PSU and the executive director of Campus Compact NH to discuss the commitment of signing the action statement, and the development of a civic action plan to document how PSU would meet the commitments to the plan. At that time, it was requested by senior leadership that the action plan align with the new mission, vision and values of PSU with the commitments from the Campus Compact Action Statement. The authors are advocating for this plan as an advocacy project out of commitment to PSU's motto, *Ut prosim* (That I may serve), and the belief that higher education is a public service for community development and civic education, as identified by Campus Compact (2017). This plan illustrates how we can leverage community partners and co-curricular student engagement through conscious leadership in service-learning and integrated clusters in order to bring high impact learning practices to open laboratories that foster community and civic engagement. To accomplish this task, the authors have identified three goals:

1. To educate socially responsible active citizens and globally minded conscious leaders who are equipped to solve complex societal issues from an interdisciplinary perspective.

2. To provide resources for faculty and staff to further their scholarship of engaged learning.
3. To cultivate reciprocal, sustainable and equitable partnerships that enrich student learning, advance social justice, and transform individuals and communities

Mission and Vision of Plymouth State University

Vision

Plymouth State University is a visionary institution at the hub of an ever-growing creative community where students, faculty, staff, and alumni are actively transforming themselves and the region. We develop ideas and solutions for a connected world and produce society's global leaders within interdisciplinary integrated clusters, open labs, partnerships and through entrepreneurial, innovative, and experiential learning.

Mission

Plymouth State University serves the state of New Hampshire and the world beyond by transforming our students through advanced practices where engaged learning produces well-educated undergraduates and by providing graduate education that deepens and advances knowledge and enhances professional development. With distinction, we connect with community and business partners for economic development, technological advances, healthier living, and cultural enrichment with a special commitment of service to the North Country and Lakes Region of New Hampshire.

Plymouth State University Values: People and Place

Our values shape the environment in which our campus community members learn, teach, and serve. Our values guide our decision making, provide clarity in determining priorities, and influence our relationships and behaviors.

We value:

- our alumni, heritage, and future as a transformative and highly engaged University with innovative and creative approaches to learning and problem solving;
- service to others, exemplifying our motto, *Ut prosim* (That I may serve), and working across disciplines where deeper levels of learning and outcomes occur;
- entrepreneurial partnerships that enrich our learning and benefit our region focused on sustainable, environmentally connected, work that enhances our sense of place and purpose;
- the rights and dignity of all people;
- free speech, diversity of opinion, and the opportunity to learn from one another;
- collective responsibility for the health, safety, and wellbeing of our community;
- accountability for decisions, actions, performance, and conduct;
- continuous improvement in our programs, policies, and practices;
- responsible stewardship of our finite environmental, financial, and human resources.

(“Plymouth State University Mission Statement | Office of the President - Plymouth State University,” n.d.)

Definition of Terms

Co-curricular Student Engagement: "activities, programs, and learning experiences that complement, in some way, what students are learning in school – i.e., experiences that are connected to or mirror the academic curriculum" (Great School Partnership, 2013).

Community Engagement: Collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity (Campus Compact for New Hampshire, 2017).

Community Partners: Encompassing for-profit, non-profit, and community based organizations partnering with PSU both within the geographical region and beyond.

Civic Engagement: Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy (Campus Compact for New Hampshire, 2017).

Conscious Leadership: Leaders who are, "...loving and respectful of others and have a deep commitment to values and to living an inspiring life that is sensitive to everything and everyone" (Secretan, 2006).

High Impact Learning: "High impact learning engages students in experiential opportunities off campus with partnering organizations and businesses. In this way students apply what they are learning in the classroom in practical settings that develop professional skill sets while positively impacting the community" (Center for Business and Community Partnerships, 2016).

Integrated Clusters: "Flexible and inclusive, team-based, multidisciplinary structures that encompass faculty, centers and departments, as well as outside partners in the community (including other universities) and are defined by a common theme or broad focus area inspired by a major 21st century challenge" (Birx, Anderson-Fletcher & Whitney, 2013, p. 12).

Open Laboratories: “physical or virtual spaces that support engagement in integrated clusters, whether brainstorming, designing, or coming together to think, innovate, create, and engage across multiple disciplines” (Birx & Holba, 2016).

Service-learning: A teaching pedagogy that combines student engagement in experiential activities that address community needs, with robust reflection tied to learning outcomes (Jacoby & Howard, 2015).

Literature Review

There is extensive research that points to the benefits of civic engagement and experiential learning for student learning outcomes and community building. Eyler and Giles (1999) studied service learning, a teaching pedagogy that links academic curriculum and learning outcomes with meaningful service projects that has positive impact on communities. Scholars started conducting research specific to service learning in the 1990’s, and Eyler and Giles (1999) provided a comprehensive understanding of data collected through qualitative interviews and focus groups with students, as well as quantitative survey data from two national research projects. The impact of service learning on students was found to be consistent (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Civic engagement and experiential learning experiences are associated with a number of benefits, which include enhanced academic understanding, the development of servant leaders, increased organizational capacity among community partners, and enhanced community building (Battistoni, 2002; Clayton, Bringle, & Hatcher, 2012; Cress, Collier, & Reitenauer, 2013; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 2014).

Ehrlich (2000) discussed the role of higher education in developing active citizens as it relates to the changes that have taken place in higher education. Ehrlich (2000) stated, “If higher education today is uncertain about its social responsibilities, as seems manifestly the case, then

this suggests that the American academy is unsure about its institutional identity” (p. 19). Ehrlich (2000) discusses the benefits for civic engagement and also explores some of the problems that emerge in civic learning: defining what civic activity is for students, the role of communities in developing the agenda for higher education, the role of liberal arts in civic learning, the incentives offered to students engaging in civic learning, and the institutional requirements for civic engagement.

Battistoni (2002) argued that service learning has historically been connected to civic education, and a growing concern about civic apathy among students contributes to the need for civic learning on campuses “...there is an ever deepening feeling that our educational institutions are leaving students unprepared for a life of engaged, democratic citizenship” (p. 1). Furthermore, Battistoni and Longo (2005) explained that engaging students in community work is a beneficial strategy for both civic and workforce development in terms of educating civic leaders, developing professional competencies, and recognizing the relevance of place.

Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, and Corngold (2007) asserted that higher education’s public and democratic purposes are important. Colby et al. (2007) stated, “...institutions of higher education have critical roles to play in helping to ensure the vitality and evolution of our culture and democratic system, and preparing students as thoughtful, responsible, creative citizens is an essential element in this” (p. 2). Political learning is an important aspect of civic engagement (Colby et al., 2007). Institutions need to think intentionally about how to integrate civic learning into the student experience in cultivating active citizens (Colby et al., 2007).

Finley (2011) concluded that civic engagement varies among institutions of higher education, and, “On many campuses it is viewed primarily through the lens of service-learning and other apolitical forms of community involvement” (p. 20-21). However, the scholarship of

civic engagement is emerging in terms of developing necessary skills sets for advancing democracy (Finley, 2011). The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012) conducted a series of national roundtables involving 134 individuals and 61 institutions and concluded the importance of including civic learning for democracy and for problem solving both on a community and on a global scale. Clayton, Bringle, and Hatcher (2013) argued that public institutions are reluctant to discuss civic values but civic learning creates opportunities to link the institutional mission to civic values and learning outcomes. Additionally, Cress, Collier, and Reitenauer (2013) suggested that offering service learning and community-based learning courses demonstrate an institution's commitment to developing citizenship-related competencies.

Consequently, Sponsler and Hartley (2013) discussed the important role that student affairs professionals have in advancing co-curricular civic engagement efforts. Sponsler and Hartley (2013) suggested improving institutional culture and policy in advancing civic engagement by developing and defining an institutional ethos for civic engagement that expands the institutions mission through multiple co-curriculum activities, and determining the success of the program by developing assessment tools. Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) outlined the importance of providing authentic experiences for students to serving the needs of the community and the need for "reciprocal relationships between the students, institutions, and the community in a mutually beneficial partnership" (2015, p. 6).

Campus Compact (2015) discussed the data collected from its annual membership survey and explained that 53% of member institutions that responded identify student outcomes for community engagement. Respondents also indicated 81% are tracking student outcomes related to civic or democratic learning (Campus Compact, 2015). Campus Compact's 30th Anniversary

Action Statement provided the opportunity for presidents and chancellors of member institutions to reaffirm their commitment to civic engagement “...by taking action to make the institutional systems, policy, and cultural changes necessary to fulfill the public purposes of higher education in an environment of increasing polarization and inequality” (Campus Compact, 2015, p. 2). The survey results indicated that member institutions are engaging students in a variety of curricular and co-curricular activities aimed at advancing civic engagement in efforts to positively impact the common good and public purposes (Campus Compact, 2015).

The literature reviewed for this Civic Action Plan demonstrates that experiential learning and civic engagement opportunities contribute to local, national, and global communities, while developing professional skills sets among students. Faculty, staff, and administrators need to be intentional in the design phase in efforts to ensure that learning experiences are rooted in reflection and reciprocity. Developing a comprehensive plan that incorporates common goals and shared language is beneficial in advancing civic engagement on an institutional level.

Civic Action Plan

Goal One	Resources	Support/Opposition	Targets/Agents	Strategies/Measures	Action Steps	Indicators
<p>To educate active citizens and globally minded conscious leaders who are equipped to solve complex societal issues from an interdisciplinary perspective.</p>	<p>Funding: Center for Business and Community Partnerships</p> <p>Center for Transformation</p> <p>Staff: High Impact Learning Team</p>	<p><u>Support:</u> Community Action Committee</p> <p>Off Campus Organizations and Businesses (ex: Utility Choice Savings, Pemi Youth Center/Parks & Recreation, Ladders/Bridge House)</p> <p>Service, social action, political, and governance student organizations.</p> <p><u>Opposition</u> Mental models that see partnering with private enterprise separate from civic engagement. Current political climate doubts the value of civic engagement PSU is undergoing significant change, therefore it's difficult to give all initiatives equal voice. Initiative burnout due to wide spread systemic change</p>	<p>Students</p> <p>Faculty</p> <p>Staff/Administration Community Partners</p> <p>Accrediting bodies</p>	<p>Online training demographic and reflective data Student evaluations Partner evaluations of the students NSSE survey</p> <p>Online training demographic and reflective data Student evaluations Partner evaluations of the students NSSE survey</p> <p>Decide on assessment tool for student engagement Student reflections NSSE survey</p> <p>Participant evaluations Student reflections</p> <p>Admission enrollment demographics data</p> <p>National Survey of Student Engagement (NSEE) survey data</p>	<p>Pilot high impact learning and leadership lab opportunities to build student competencies and increase capacities for off campus partners</p> <p>Sequenced and developmental leadership training for students</p> <p>Integrated shared language and cross divisional competencies to cultivate holistic experiences for students</p> <p>Community wide deliberative dialogue sessions</p> <p>Recruitment and retention of a more diverse student body</p> <p>Include the Civic Engagement module in the 2019 NSSE survey</p>	<p>% Increase in student effectiveness % Increase in quality placements</p> <p>% Increase in student effectiveness % Increase in quality placements</p> <p>Demonstrated understanding of learning outcomes and application</p> <p>Demonstrated awareness of topic</p> <p>% Increase in diverse individuals enrolled and retained</p> <p>Inclusion of Civic Engagement module</p>

Goal Two	Resources	Support/Opposition	Targets/Agents	Strategies/Measurements	Action Steps	Indicators
<p>To provide resources for faculty and staff to further their scholarship of engaged learning.</p>	<p>Institutional property/resources, Center for Transformation, online tutorials, partnering businesses and organizations</p>	<p><u>Support:</u> Community Action Committee</p> <p>Off Campus Organizations and Businesses (ex: Utility Choice Savings, Pemi Youth Center/Parks & Recreation, Ladders/Bridge House)</p> <p>Service, social action, political, and governance student organizations.</p> <p><u>Opposition</u> Mental models that see partnering with private enterprise separate from civic engagement. Current political climate doubts the value of civic engagement PSU is undergoing significant change, therefore it's difficult to give all initiatives equal voice. Initiative burnout due to wide spread systemic change</p>	<p>Students</p> <p>Faculty</p> <p>Staff/Administration Community Partners</p> <p>Accrediting bodies</p>	<p>Faculty/staff evaluations Integrated Cluster data CBCP data</p> <p>Promotion and tenure process</p> <p>Impact on employee moral Feedback from community partners</p> <p>HR demographics data</p> <p>Registrar data</p>	<p>Professional development resources for faculty/staff to develop projects aligned with scholarship/ interest areas</p> <p>Engaged scholarship is rewarded in promotion and tenure processes</p> <p>Release time for faculty/staff to engage in community-wide service opportunities</p> <p>Recruitment and retention of more diverse faculty/staff</p> <p>Engaged learning course designation to support integrated cluster work</p>	<p>Indication of beneficial resources Increase in quality partnerships Inclusion of engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure process</p> <p>% Increase in job satisfaction as reported on performance evaluations</p> <p>Positive feedback from community partners</p> <p>% Increase in diverse faculty and staff</p> <p>Completion of implementation</p>

Goal Three	Resources	Support/Opposition	Target/Agents	Strategies/Measurements	Action Steps	Indicators
<p>Cultivate reciprocal, sustainable and equitable partnerships that enrich student learning, advance social justice, and transform individuals and communities.</p>	<p>Institutional property/resources, partnering businesses and organizations</p>	<p><u>Support:</u> Community Action Committee</p> <p>Off Campus Organizations and Businesses (ex: Utility Choice Savings, Pemi Youth Center/Parks & Recreation, Ladders/Bridge House)</p> <p>Service, social action, political, and governance student organizations.</p> <p><u>Opposition</u> Mental models that see partnering with private enterprise separate from civic engagement. Current political climate doubts the value of civic engagement PSU is undergoing significant change, therefore it's difficult to give all initiatives equal voice. Initiative burnout due to wide spread systemic change</p>	<p>Students</p> <p>Faculty</p> <p>Staff/Administration Community Partners</p> <p>Accrediting bodies</p>	<p>CFT data CBCP data Alumni Office data</p> <p>Implementation of partner evaluations student evaluations</p>	<p>Dynamic and interactive workshops/reflective practice groups for community partners, faculty/staff, students, and alumni</p> <p>Community identified and driven projects that are assessed</p>	<p>% Increase in workshop sessions and reflective practice groups</p> <p>Completion of implementation</p>

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Appendix

Campus Compact Action Statement

To advance the public purposes of higher education, we affirm the following statements, which characterize our current commitments and name the ideals toward which we will work with renewed dedication, focus, and vigor.

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.

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.

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

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.

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 (Campus Compact, 2015).