



Connecticut | **Campus Compact**

An aerial photograph of the Connecticut State Capitol building, showing its prominent white dome and surrounding urban landscape. The sky is blue with light clouds.

**Connecting for Good:**  
*How Colleges and Universities  
Can Work Together to Improve  
Connecticut's Civic & Economic Health*

**Report on Presidents' Leadership Summit**

**2013**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Forty-one of Connecticut's higher education presidents and executives, as well as panelists representing government, business, the Arts, and community-based organizations, were convened by Connecticut Campus Compact to hear evidence about and discuss ways in which the state's civic and economic health might be bolstered by a collective approach. What emerged was a call to action. **Accepting the vital role of campuses across Connecticut to act as the fulcrum for strong civic networks, leaders in the room committed to a series of measures that, ultimately, will aim to establish the first Connecticut Institute for Civic and Economic Health.** The series is as follows:

**First**, to identify model higher education public work programs that show contributions to a vibrant, connected, and resilient society that can be brought to scale across the state.

**Second**, to demonstrate the importance and benefits of campus engagement in the form of public work both to the economy and civic health of communities through the use of an aggressive marketing campaign

**Third**, to bring together multiple stakeholders in a retreat to design a set of initiatives that will align the mission of higher education with both the civic and economic goals of the state, and in doing so, find new ways to create and attract advantageous businesses to Connecticut

**Fourth**, to establish the Connecticut Institute for Civic and Economic Health (CICEH) with financial support from members of CT Campus Compact and commitment of long term matching corporate funding, initially targeted at measuring and demonstrating the economic impact of civic work, and the establishment of a research fund aligned with the goals of the Institute



*Participants available for photo at the CTCC Presidents' Leadership Summit, 2013, at Yale University*

## **THE VITAL ROLE OF CAMPUSES ACROSS CONNECTICUT AS THE FULCRUM FOR STRONG CIVIC NETWORKS**

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Our state's institutions of higher learning can serve as strong civic anchors – convening and networking a broad range of interdependent stakeholders from the education, corporate, philanthropic, government, and charitable sectors. The overriding purpose is to enhance social connectedness. Colleges and universities can aspire to present an unbiased view on the most urgent issues of our time. Higher education as a whole- can be the convener within these networks; leading to stronger social connectivity and economic resilience.

The following excerpt is from Connecticut Campus Compact Presidents' Leadership Summit program<sup>1</sup>:

Robert Sampson (a Harvard Sociology professor) concluded from his 20-year research of Chicago neighborhoods that the civic fabric of the neighborhood is one of the most important factors in predicting a wide range of outcomes for individuals. Sampson observes, "It is the totality of the institutional infrastructure [referring to nonprofit organizations and their connections] that seems to matter in promoting civic health and extending to unexpected economic vitality, whether in the form of rebuilding New Orleans or in rehabilitating vacant houses in economically depressed neighborhoods in cities around the country.

Research by Sean Safford and others have shown that cities where leaders of different types of organizations can congregate and socialize, and importantly, make decisions together, are more likely to thrive economically than cities that cannot do so. Safford, for example, documented that the economic trajectories of two similar towns (Allentown, PA and Youngstown, OH) diverged significantly after the crises of global competition and automation hit them both. Allentown, which had a robust and inter-sectorial civic network that provided a place for corporate, nonprofit, and university leaders to get to know each other, deliberate, and make decisions together, beat the economic challenges by innovation and collaboration. On the other hand, Youngstown, which had a less robust civic network, did not provide a place for leaders from different sectors to meet and work together. By the 1990s, Allentown and Youngstown were starkly different in every way, ranging from median income to murder rates. In Safford's careful network analysis of the two cities, Lehigh University emerges as an important hub. Lehigh's board included representatives of diverse local industries and unions, and the fact that board members knew each other allowed them to collaborate and develop a joint strategy when Allentown lost its traditional steel jobs.

### **Voices From the Presidents' Room**

The following comments and suggestions provide a sense of the discussion that took place in the Presidents' Room at Yale during the summit.

*The overriding issue is social connectedness which can lead to the types of civic networks that are so important. Higher education can be the civic pillar within these networks, leading to social connectivity and economic resilience. We can start by coming up with a meaningful, collaborative project everyone can partake in. What is the smallest university doing, what is the largest university doing? No matter who is doing what, coming together will be more impactful than everyone doing something themselves. We are an important sector in the economy. We may not be able to control all the issues in society, but we are solving things.*

– Denise Merrill, Connecticut Secretary of State

*Networks must overcome deep and pervasive residential racial segregation. For example, 137 out of 169 towns in Connecticut only permit the building of single family homes; ensuring apartment complexes cannot be built. Ideally, the colleges in our state will create and convene multi-constituency series of meetings on issues.*

– Orlando Rodriguez, Connecticut Voices for Children

*Higher education has the ability to bring community partners together and talk about community issues that need to be addressed. Since we are all advocates for our own institution, we deal with really strong opinions and need to find a common ground where we can all come together. We need universities to get involved in civic engagement more effectively and form an unbiased view on the issues we should tackle.*

– Stuart Parnes, Connecticut Humanities Council

The research and weight of opinion both point to an utterly achievable course of action. Together, Connecticut's colleges and universities can play a significant role as convener and coordinator of civic networks, and should anticipate enhanced social connectedness and economic resilience as primary outcomes.

## **IDENTIFY MODEL HIGHER EDUCATION PUBLIC WORK PROGRAMS**

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Volunteerism represents a mediocre partnership strategy for higher education. Students' community engagement experiences ought instead to be ladderized or, put another way, progressively professionalized to a form of advanced 'public work'. Essentially, public work was presented by summit facilitator Peter Levine as work that all citizens can perform to generate public goods but has an intentional focus on the public benefit of such goods and services. For campus strategists, this represents a focus where community needs are met through a different form of work, offering sustained support to the public fabric of society – education, government, charities, social enterprise, etc.; the key is that these are long-term commitments and not just day-long events with temporary volunteers. For students to be effectively involved in civic education experiences, faculty and staff are strongly encouraged to model active participation as well to assist with motivating and inspiring students. By colleges and universities committing to their community they can demonstrate institution-wide culture of democratic partnering as well as innovation.

Peter Salovey, President of Yale University, explained in his opening remarks that, “We have to find new ways to work, new models of student development, and new forms of strategic partnership”. Yale University is looking to the future, building students' competence and commitment to local issues while also enabling students to identify market-driven solutions. It can be argued that economic resilience is the result of business loyalty and investment to the community and employees, trust in others that is established through networks, and NGOs that improve government proactivity. Yale Entrepreneurial Institute recognizes this and is focusing its significant resources and intellectual capital to build the economy.

Among other courses of action, Salovey continued, this will require self-examination of how colleges can utilize existing networks to address both change and progress in our communities. Institutions of higher learning will also have to increase incentives for faculty to change their curricula and ensure people are civically engaged.

No doubt, this approach is reflected at other institutions of higher education in Connecticut. Their identification, description, and duplication, however, will represent an important accomplishment for CT Campus Compact to successfully steer. Indeed, other examples were shared in the summit program such as Purdue's EPICS Program<sup>2</sup>. The program seeks to help outside agencies by providing engineering students with strong technical backgrounds and, in return, students gain experiences that broaden and apply discipline-specific skills. Students work in teams to design, build and deploy solutions to engineering problems for education and community service agencies.

Finally, the New School in New York uses social enterprise to find market-based solutions to solve issues such as global warming, hunger, and poverty. According to the New School for Public Engagement, “Social enterprise is a new field that blurs the lines between the nonprofit and for-profit sectors. It has emerged in response to government and philanthropy’s inability to alleviate the world’s social ills”.<sup>3</sup> David Scobey, the Dean of the School, wrote that, “We need to integrate the pathways of career, liberal learning, and civic education – to see all of them as woven into a single, integral process of student development and self-authoring”.<sup>4</sup>

It is the view of CT Campus Compact that this professionalization of community engagement represents an important evolution in the field. It offers a counter argument to the priority of jobs for jobs sake but, at the same time, offers something of a win-win for both campuses and communities. This is not a unique view but, as the next section addresses, it has not been consistently and expertly marketed to a broad range of constituencies, including higher education leadership and their communities, as well as the public and private sectors.

## **DEMONSTRATE THE IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE USE OF AN AGGRESSIVE MARKETING CAMPAIGN**

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Colleges should provide students and employers the proper evidence to comprehensively understand the importance of high quality, sequenced, academically and socially relevant civic learning experiences. By developing concrete guidelines for all colleges and universities to follow, every institution will be closer to communicating the importance of civic engagement more effectively.

What is needed is to change the media conversation about higher education from one about job placement – a reactive pedagogical model - to one of citizenship and career skill development *through* civically focused experiences. We need to persuade employers that civic engagement is important, and that it has lasting effects on individuals and communities.

A pervasive civic engagement culture on campus promotes economic resilience as follows:

- Civic engagement (CE) of high quality promotes the skills employers are looking for
- Public work/workplace skills through civic life
- CE is both a strategy and a bridge, used in both the development of the individual and to support interdependence among constituencies

Volunteering gets students exposed to their communities but then how do we keep them connected and continue that work/engagement after graduation? In many ways, this is a marketing issue as students and employers don't truly believe in the importance of high quality, sequenced, academically and socially relevant civic learning experiences.

### **Voices From the Presidents' Room**

*A concern with the Obama higher education plan is that it ties funding to future income and disciplines' ability to get jobs for graduates. This is an issue if engineering is highest paid and social services are lowest paid disciplines.*

– Peter Levine and Kia Kawashima-Ginsberg, Tufts University

*The message to presidents must be that work done is in their economic self-interest. A vibrant local community is essential to a successful college.*

– John Lahey, President of Quinnipiac University

*As leaders of the intellectual community represented by our Connecticut colleges and universities, we respond in the affirmative, from our own bailiwicks, to the critics who ask whether college is still "worth" the investment. The benefits absolutely outweigh*

*the costs, despite the enormity of these challenges. Still, we are called upon to demonstrate how and why that is true<sup>5</sup>. In the millennia to come, we will be judged by the civilizations over which we provided stewardship.*

–Anna Wasescha, President, Middlesex Community College, and Presidents’ Summit Chair

*Community engagement starts with our students. We should find what they are interested in, enthusiastic about, and take advantage of their creative ideas and we can make a difference. We want everyone to feel engaged.*

– Dorsey Kendrick, President Gateway Community College

*Society put bipartisan pressure for higher education to promote employment... Students rate “a stable future” as their top career consideration far above working for social change... We need to persuade employers that civic engagement is important, and that it has lasting effects on individuals and communities.*

–Peter Levine, Tufts University



## **BRING TOGETHER MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS IN A RETREAT**

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Holding a retreat will allow campus members to organize a set of initiatives that would align the mission of higher education with the economic goals of the state, and find ways to attract business that is beneficial to Connecticut. The groundwork is already laid out; reconvening is the next step in order to bring shape into our ideas. Inviting key stakeholders to a retreat will offer an opportunity for CT Campus Compact members to voice their opinions about issues that need to be focused on in the state.

To continue discussions after the retreat, a board made up of key stakeholders will be formed. Steven Kaplan, President of the University of New Haven, raised this issue of creating a statewide board of various businesses and NPOs to address agreed upon issues. Mary Papazain, President of Southern Connecticut State University, referenced states that have done this as a partnership between the public and private sectors with colleges and universities such as North Carolina and Michigan.

One potential initiative, a win – win project perhaps, would be to use existing models to create a collective set of core civic competencies that is endorsed by all Connecticut higher education presidents. It would be up to the individual institutions to decide how to infuse these competencies into curricular and non-curricular initiatives. The outcome would be an enhanced marketing tool that would attract a quality and diverse student body and shift the focus away from workforce development and toward career AND citizenship-building.

### **Voices From the Presidents' Room**

*Core Civic Competencies will foster new career innovation and strengthen colleges and universities commitment to communities.*

– Saul Petersen, Campus Compact Executive Director

*We are all involved in our communities already. Let's take existing networks and get them to act as roles for social purposes; we must treat them as contributing members of society.*

– Jeffrey P. von Arx, S.J., President of Fairfield University

*While we do have networks of higher education institutions in CT, we don't really work together. This is what we have to find a way to do.*

– Pamela Trottman-Reid, President of the University of St. Joseph

*We are a force. And let's take that force and bring some shape into it now.*

– Connecticut Secretary of State, Denise Merrill

## **ESTABLISH THE CONNECTICUT INSTITUTE FOR CIVIC AND ECONOMIC HEALTH (CICEH)**

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The strategic connector for campus collaboration was first posited at the summit by Mary Papazian, President of Southern Connecticut State University. Creating a statewide Connecticut Institute for Civic and Economic Health (CICEH) will allow for further identification and modeling higher education public work programs that show contributions to a vibrant, connected, and resilient society that can be brought to scale across the state.

The CICEH vision might be:

*To challenge higher education and the key employers to seek out and challenge the evidence for the civic and economic impacts of volunteerism as compared to sequential forms of public work. CICEH will promote a commitment to community that advances institution-wide culture of democratic partnering and a progressively professionalized sequence of civic competency-building experiences.*

It will be important to demonstrate the importance and benefits of campus engagement both to the economy and civic health of communities through the use of an aggressive marketing campaign. Such an institute will also promote a coordinated research agenda to test and hopefully provide further evidence for the benefits of aforementioned measures.

### **Goals for the Connecticut Institute for Civic and Economic Health (CICEH)**

Once developed, plans to establish a research fund aligned with the goals of the Institute can also be brought to action with financial support from members of CT Campus Compact as well as a commitment of long term matching corporate funding. It was agreed by participants of the summit that General Electric would be approached in hopes to garner support. One such example is the Itasca Project in Minnesota. According to their site<sup>6</sup>:

*Itasca Project is an employer-led civic alliance drawn together by an interest in new and better ways to address Minneapolis/St. Paul regional issues that impact our economic competitiveness and quality of life. Its 50-plus participants are primarily private-sector CEOs. The group also includes a small number of public and nonprofit leaders, including the governor of Minnesota, the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul, the chair of the Metropolitan Council, the leaders of the University of Minnesota and MNSCU and leaders of major foundations and the United Way.*

*Itasca Project Goals:*

- Build a thriving economy and quality of life in our region
- Reduce and eliminate socioeconomic disparities

*This "virtual organization" identifies and focuses on a slate of initiatives (for example):*

- Apply a fresh approach and/or accelerate promising efforts already underway, through participants' direct involvement and/or their organizations' involvement
- Unite public, nonprofit and business interests behind common goals and solutions for faster, better results

A common area of both interest and high relevance for focusing on at the CICEH will be to attempt to measure and demonstrate the economic impact of civic work. The Institute should assess tried and tested models of public work/civic engagement, already happening across the state.

### **Voices From the Presidents' Room**

*I think what we need here is to agree upon establishing a statewide Institute for civic as well as economic health.*

–Mary Papazian, President of Southern Connecticut State University

*We all have individual solutions, but should come up with a state-wide approach. We all do a lot individually so how do you market it to get a bigger bang for the buck?*

– Patti Glassford, VP and CFO at General Electric Industrial

## NOTES FROM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- 1 Online at: <http://www.fairfield.edu/ctcampuscompact>
- 2 Online at: <https://engineering.purdue.edu/EPICS/About>
- 3 Online at: <http://www.newschool.edu/ucc/courseDetail.aspx?id=NMGT3030>
- 4 Online at: [http://www.aacu.org/bringing\\_theory/documents/CivicProvocations  
monograph\\_000.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/bringing_theory/documents/CivicProvocations_monograph_000.pdf)
- 5 Online at: <http://www.fairfield.edu/ctcampuscompact>
- 6 Online at: <http://www.theitascaproject.com/>

## SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

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### ***Presidents:***

Anita Gliniecki, President, Housatonic Community College  
Anna Wasescha, President, Middlesex Community College  
Carmen Cid, Interim President, Quinebaug Valley Community College  
Cathryn Addy, President, Tunxis Community College  
David Levinson, President, Norwalk Community College  
Dorsey Kendrick, President, Gateway Community College  
Jeffrey von Arx, S.J., President, Fairfield University  
John Lahey, President, Quinnipiac University  
Mary Ellen Jukoski, President, Mitchell College  
Mary Papazain, President, Southern CT State University  
Pamela Reid, President, University of Saint Joseph  
Peter Salovey, President, Yale University  
Sandra Stosz, Superintendent Coast Guard Academy  
Steven Kaplan, President, University of New Haven  
Susan Herbst, President, University of Connecticut  
Wilfredo Nieves, President, Capital Community College

### ***Campus Leaders:***

Ann Atkins, Associate V.P. for Academic Affairs, Western CT State University  
Cheryl Barnard, V.P. for Student Affairs, University of Saint Joseph  
Denise Bukovan, Dean of Outreach, Housatonic Community College  
Edina Oestreicher, Dean of Students, University of Bridgeport  
Jason Ebbeling, V.P. of Student Affairs/Dean of Students, Mitchell College  
Kimberly Goff-Crews, Secretary and V.P. for Student Life, Yale University  
Kurt Colella, Dean of Academy, Coast Guard Academy  
Kimberly Goff-Crews, Secretary and Vice President for Student Life, Yale University  
Michael Rooke, Dean of Academic Affairs, Tunxis Community College  
Rebecca Johnson, Associate V.P. for Student Affairs and Dean of Students,  
Robbin Crabtree, Dean for the College of Arts and Sciences, Fairfield University  
Sally Reis, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, University of Connecticut  
Steve Minkler, Dean of Academic Affairs, Middlesex Community College  
Tracy Tyree, V.P. of Student Affairs, Southern CT State University  
Victoria Bozzuto, Dean of the Resource Education and Training Center, Gateway Community College

### ***Panelists:***

Denise Merrill, Connecticut Secretary of the State  
Kei Ginsberg, Deputy Director of CIRCLE, Tufts University  
Orlando Rodriguez, Senior Policy Fellow, Connecticut Voices for Children  
Patti Glassford, VP & CFO, GE Industrial  
Peter Levine, Director of CIRCLE, Tufts University  
Stuart Parnes, Executive Director, CT Humanities

### ***Campus Compact Staff:***

Saul Petersen, Executive Director  
Katie Coutu, Program Manager  
Sam Rigotti, AmeriCorps VISTA Team Leader  
Megan Lenzzo, AmeriCorps VISTA Member Coordinator