



Committee on the Social Application of Excellence

Purpose

The *NJCC Committee on the Social Application of Excellence* will work to strengthen commitments to, and uncover a broad array of connections between, individual expertise and the benefits to society.

Institutional Representation on the Committee

The goal of shared benefit will focus the selection of representation on the committee. **Liaisons to NJCC are asked to select key question(s) put forward below as a work plan for the committee.** The Executive Director will have final say on representation and committee members will complete a *Commitment to Serve* contract with NJCC for a period of one-year, renewable for up to three years. A Chairperson, to be nominated by the Board of Directors, will participate in an ex-officio capacity at board meetings and will make recommendations on behalf of the committee. A minimum of three people per question below must self-identify in order to proceed. In the case of fewer than three people self-identifying, the executive director will request that certain people shift focus to allow for group work to proceed.

Timeline for Phase I: September 2014 to May 2015

- Meet with the NJCC executive director in October '14 to review committee expectations and work plan pertaining to excellence socially applied. During the meeting, the committee will create a timeline for a mutually agreed set on targets bound by a June 2015 completion date, necessarily including progress targets within two month increments.
- Meet with the NJCC executive director in December '14 to review progress on the first set of targets and made the necessary adaptations.
- Meet with the NJCC executive director in February '15 to review progress on the second set of targets and made the necessary adaptations.
- In April 2015, the Chairperson shall present the work plan and evidence of progress to date.
- In May/June 2015, the committee will present findings to all NJCC liaisons during a reception.
- Based on the opinions of the board in April, the findings of the committee may be incorporated into the agenda of the June 22nd 2015 Strategic Planning Retreat for NJ Campus Compact, which all committee members will be requested to attend, possibly leading to its inclusion in a small number of multi-year strategic priorities.
- Committee members will be provided overnight accommodations at the Seaview Resort Hotel on June 21st

Function and Procedures

The committee will strive to explore the following questions:

1. Is civic engagement a proven student success strategy for New Jersey Higher education institutions?

The committee will begin by generating a plan to create an audit or descriptive account of all students' involvement in civic engagement activities, whether they be one-time, semester long, or multi-year.

The committee, with the help of NJCC member presidents, will work with institutional research departments to access data on student retention, graduation, GPA, and employment tracking. Survey samples of graduating student characteristics of engaged citizenship will be gathered.

Success will be defined in some or all of the following ways through regression analyses that test the relative value of civic engagement as a strategy for student success. Supporting research can be found in the "Issues of our Time" section of the website by clicking [here](#).

Increase retention rates; Increase graduation rates; Improve GPA scores; Graduate engaged citizens, promote an increase in public issues careers among alumni over time

NOTE: Plans for further phases of analyses such as the [role of best practices](#) in civic engagement in determining levels of student success will depend on the quality and rigor of initial data gathering.

2. (a) What would it take to expand the number of students and campuses utilizing [developmental models](#) and [milestones](#) for civic learning?

NJCC is spearheading a regional convening of campuses utilizing developmental models and milestones for civic learning, anticipated to take place in early 2015, and co-sponsored by NY Campus Compact, PA Campus Compact, and the Bonner Foundation. (*THIS IS STILL IN THE PLANNING PHASE*)

Committee members will guide the pre-work for the event and also guide the results process, some of which is identified below.

KEY ELEMENTS OF DISCUSSION DURING THE SUMMIT:

- a. Elements of Developmental Model that are in Place:
 - Selection of student candidates / links across academic years and disciplines / clearly articulated developmental trajectory / staff+faculty support ratios for students/ integrated role for community partners
- b. Outcomes associated with developmental approach to civic learning
 - Retention and success, cost value, public issue career choice, institutional brand and mission synergy
- c. Financial structures
 - budget elements, scholarships, work study, staff oversight,
- d. Model relationship to equity and affordability

How linked are the models to paying volunteers (scholarships/stipends/work study) and issues of equity

ANTICIPATED RESULTS OF SUMMIT:

- a) Event lead to publication and online resource
- b) Offer support to assist other campuses not using it in getting it off the ground
- c) Bonner Trainings, develop a consulting corps
- d) Lead up to proposing a national event and programmatic funding

INVITED PARTICIPANTS:

Teams should self-identify from each campus. Teams may include some of the following
TCNJ / Drew U / St. Johns NYC / Wagner / UPenn Civic Scholars / Tufts / Siena / Rutgers - New Brunswick / Montclair State / Allegheny / Waynesburg / Widener

3. What are the characteristics of civic engagement experiences that are contributing to students' development of civic minded professionalism and/or preferences for public issues careers.

Committee members will develop means of exploring this aspect of student career identification, ultimately by highlighting the kinds of experiences or moments during the undergraduate education that students reflect on as key to their decision-making regarding public issue careers.

The quality of the information gathered could subsequently lead directly to curricular and partnership redesign in line with new knowledge of the relationships uncovered.

Recap of Issue Area I. Excellence Socially Applied

A Commitment to Individual Expertise and the Benefits to Society

The engagement movement, at least for our generation, must be able to demonstrate both the economic and civic outcomes directly associated with high quality engagement activities. We know more about the improved rates of student retention and graduation associated with a culture of engagement on campus but, at this point in history, we must bring this connection to scale. To do this, one vital principle guiding all our efforts is that we appreciate the profound potential and civic responsibility in all people in our society. In addition, we must find new ways to connect the engagement movement to the civic and economic resilience of communities by highlighting the links between engagement and social issue-driven career identification.

Our role in Campus Compact is to work with funders, partners and member institutions to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn about the responsibilities associated with their education and the truly valuable role they can each play as active citizens, regardless of background or privilege.

New Jersey Campus Compact is focusing on four key issue areas:

A. Civic Engagement as a Strategy to Improve Retention and Success

Institutions of higher education are committed to retaining and graduating their students. Preparing students for productive and fulfilling lives is, after all, the business of higher ed. Civic engagement is necessary in helping higher education be successful, and the evidence points to the ways in which this is so. Put simply, campuses should strongly consider acting on the best practices in civic engagement in order to:

Increase retention rates; Increase graduation rates; Improve GPA scores; Graduate engaged citizens

B. Establishing Progressive Milestones for Civic Learning

For each institution, it is strategically important to establish milestones for identified types of civic learning outcomes. Clearly, it takes time to shape the different forms of knowledge, values, leadership, and skills to become an active member of the community and contributor to democracy. Institutions that seek to graduate students with specific civic learning outcomes will increase their success rates by establishing milestones, or indicators of progress, along the undergraduate journey.

C. Student Developmental Models of Civic Learning

A number of institutions of higher education have institutionalized a developmental approach to student civic learning. It seems logical that, in order to graduate critical thinking citizens with applicable skills, there must be a clear, interconnected, sequential approach adopted. The job of developing positive contributors to society should not only fall on higher education. There is also evidence in K-12 research on the need to reprioritize civic learning and engagement. Finally, for the job seeker, evidence exists of improved career readiness for the civically engaged college graduate.

Taken together, these points strongly suggest the role of civic engagement is forging clear cradle to career pathways and the fostering of a commitment to community.

D. Civic Minded Professionalism

Higher education institutions are committed to graduating responsible citizens with meaningful careers. Students that are engaged and deeply embedded in community issues, with the appropriate combination of academic learning and problem-based mentoring in places of work, will develop the 21st century skills needed to be a successful graduate. Indeed, it is because of the significant overlap between the skills developed through high quality civic engagement and those required by 21st century workforce that we need to expand our issue-driven, academically connected, community engagement experiences.