



Committee on Social Connectedness

Purpose

The *NJCC Committee on Social Connectedness* will:

- Work to increase the scale of New Jersey-based k-12 students that are both 'likely' and 'ready' to succeed in a postsecondary education environment
- Act on evidence of the potential for career networking and market niche identification resulting from lasting community engagement initiatives, and
- Work with multiple sectors to find new ways to reduce debts associated with a postsecondary education.

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 workplan 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 workplan pertaining to social connectedness. 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 workplan 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 accommodation at the Seaview Resort Hotel on June 21st

Function and Procedures

The committee will strive to explore the following questions:

- 1. Including those provided in “[Issues of our Time](#)” , what are the most successful access programs here in New Jersey that have one or more higher education institutions serving as integral partner(s)?**
 - a. What are the key insights from each individual program?**
 - b. How can NJCC build momentum from their achievements?**

The committee will begin by generating a plan to create an audit or descriptive account of all such programs in New Jersey. “Best programs” analyses will use some or all of the following indicators, many of which are illustrated by the “[Leveling the Playing Field](#)” report:

Sources of scholarships for successful applicants, use of paid college mentors (and funding sources), includes rigorous academic assistance, proactive and supported college financial aid planning, social and emotional supports, and ALL undertaken with consistent quality over the long term.

The committee may, based on the evidence uncovered, develop strategies for scaling up the practices uncovered in other strategic community engagement initiatives.

- 2. For New Jersey’s higher ed students, what are the facets of community engagement that go beyond learning in the classroom that are leading to career opportunities in local communities?**
 - a. What evidence is there for career networking through community engagement, based in part on the evidence presented in “[Issues of our Time](#)”?**
 - b. What skills and experiences, attributable to community engagement activities, are possessed by the graduates, according to employers?**

The committee must first generate an audit of seniors involved in long term or intensive community engagement projects. Students will then be interviewed regarding the opportunities for career identification and networking that emerge.

Then, with the help of NJCC member presidents, the committee will work with institutional research departments to access data on student graduation and employment tracking. Employers will then be interviewed regarding the skills and experiences possessed by successful candidates and their reflection on the role and relevance of engagement experiences in the employers’ decision-making.

The committee may, based on the evidence uncovered, develop strategies for scaling up these opportunities for career networking and skill-building through other strategic community engagement initiatives.

- Work with multiple sectors to find new ways to reduce debts associated with a postsecondary education.
- 3. For the differing institution types located here in New Jersey, what are the existing and potential policies and innovative strategies for postsecondary debt reduction, including those referenced in [“Issues of our Time”](#)?**
- a. With whom should NJCC partner to advocate for policies and programs that can deliver affordable and rewarding postsecondary education to the masses?

This committee shall set about examining existing plans and policies, as well as some creative programs, which help to alleviate the burden of postsecondary debt and, based on the research, make recommendations to NJCC with regard to advocating for an expansion of sound policies and initiatives.

Recap of Issue Area III. Social Connectedness

Building Clear Steps to Civic and Economic Prosperity

The endurance of institutions of higher education rests heavily on the civic and economic resilience of their neighboring communities. This model – *one of collective success or failure* – is at the forefront of every president’s policy agenda. Strong and clear linkages back to K-12 education AND forward to the job market, as well as multi-constituency partnerships forged for longevity, can invoke a belief among ALL local residents that they can each find an open door to a college education and a level of responsibility to society. This ‘network’ or web-like approach to civic and economic prosperity can fuse the cracks all too familiar to society’s most shackled by struggle. For many societies, these cracks are already becoming chasms, as whole sections of the population fall into invisibility. If we do not find a way to allow all of society the access to supports and opportunities that promote both education and accountability, how will we be remembered?

To that end, New Jersey Campus Compact will focus on the following issue areas:

A. Local Issue Civic Networks

The assets of the higher education are vast and challenging to quantify– whether it’s willing teams of students; faculty looking to make a difference and tackle issues with knowledge-sharing and research; higher ed leaders whose legacy is to move from piecemeal to community-wide. New Jersey Campus Compact is joining higher ed in the fight for the shared opportunity to prosper and contribute to society.

A civic network is a clustered, multi-constituency approach to the issues of our time such as equitable access to quality and affordable education, social connectedness, and innovation for civic and economic prosperity. The evidence points to the success of several such networks, and it is based on these localized approaches to large-scale issues that New Jersey Campus Compact will advocate and convene around the issues we should stand together on.

B. Equity in Access

The persistently small proportion of successful postsecondary students from lower income families is a frightening indictment on society. Its persistence represents accumulation of heirlooms associated with lack of wealth and education, poor awareness of what it takes to avail of financial aid, feeling ‘outside’ of the college bound cohort, low expectations regarding the value of a degree, low expectations regarding one’s ability to succeed, and more.

Being both ‘ready’ and ‘likely’ to succeed (based on evidence) necessitates that college access interventions and policies involve a menu of related measures, including rigorous academic assistance, proactive and supported college financial aid planning, social and emotional supports, and ALL for as long as it takes. This philosophy underpins the partners New Jersey Campus Compact endorses and supports, and will inform the initiatives we will deliver throughout the state.

C. Graduating With a Career in the Community

The places identified as the primary locations for institutional engagement, coalitions, and partnerships, inevitably become the geographical boundaries where students and faculty network with communities. Through education and experience, these locations forge commitments and lasting relationships that inform students' decision-making upon graduation. The outcomes for both alumni and for institutions' neighbors are positive and lasting, not least, because of early career networking and market niche identification resulting from lasting engagement initiatives.

The civic engagement movement is not alone in recognizing this fact. Indeed, the lines are blurring between civic engagement, social innovation, social enterprise, social entrepreneurship and even workforce development. New Jersey Campus Compact is finding new and expanded ways of working with institutions of higher education and the various employment sectors to build career pathways proactively and with reciprocal benefit.

D. Affordability of Postsecondary Education

Our schools, government, and society at large have a long way to go in offering all young people a quality education and the kinds of continued supports, both academically and developmentally, that can satisfactorily prepare them to make good college choices and then to succeed. Through scholarships, a lucky or hard-working few will be guaranteed that their effort and ability will be enough to ensure their success. For too many others that put in the effort, they will be asked to take on a burden of debt that is frightening and unjustifiable.

New Jersey Campus Compact will work with allies to advocate for policies and programs that can deliver affordable and rewarding postsecondary education to the masses by examining some of the policies and initiatives that are gaining interest and traction in the legislature, including here in New Jersey, such as:

- No Loan Policies
- Income-Based Repayment Plans
- Pay Forward Plans
- Embedded Giving With Community Link Foundation