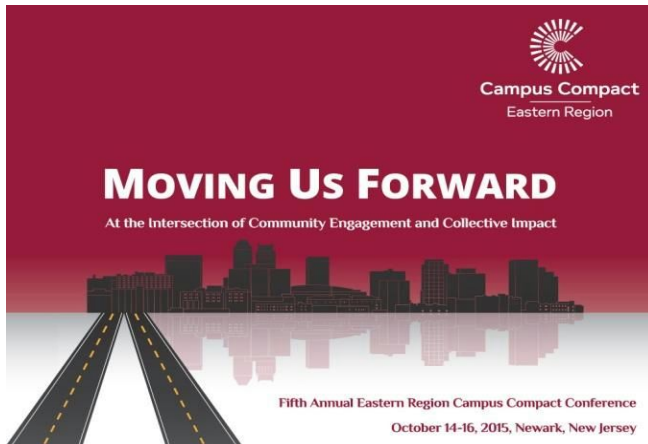


NEWS RELEASE

Campus Compact's Fifth Annual Eastern Region Conference Hosted at RU-N, NJIT, and ECC

BY SAUL PETERSEN



(Newark, NJ – Nov. 12) On October 14-16, 2015, Campus Compact convened its Fifth Annual Eastern Region Conference, “Moving Us Forward: At the Intersection of Community Engagement and Collective Impact,” on the campuses of Rutgers University-Newark (RU-N), New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), and Essex County College (ECC).

The conference was convened by the eastern region of Campus Compact states and chaired by Dr. Saul Petersen, executive director of the [New Jersey Campus Compact](#) organization. As a New Jersey-based higher education presidents’ coalition, New Jersey Campus Compact (NJCC) is committed to realizing the full capacity for positive change that community engagement provides. In regards to envisioning a conference that would take place over 3 days at 3 neighboring higher education institutions, conference chair and executive director of New Jersey Campus Compact, Dr. Saul Petersen said, *“In its very DNA, this conference needed to embody the antithesis of competition and the power and possibility of true collaboration when breaking new ground.”* More than 200 professionals, scholars, and community leaders gathered at this year’s Eastern Region Conference to exchange ideas and share best practices on how to effectively utilize the collective resources and assets of postsecondary institutions, community-based organizations, and municipalities to promote an engaged citizenry to ultimately help communities tackle deeply entrenched and complex social problems.



The conference was focused on ensuring that community engagement is a visible expression of the cultural values found in higher education and that this expression is seen to be both inclusive and empowering. Based on preliminary feedback from conference attendees, the overarching theme, individual presentations, featured speakers, and informal conversations succeeded in establishing its intended target. That primary outcome was to show that when higher education plays a sustained but evolving role in large-scale collaboratives, than community-wide transformation can be achieved.

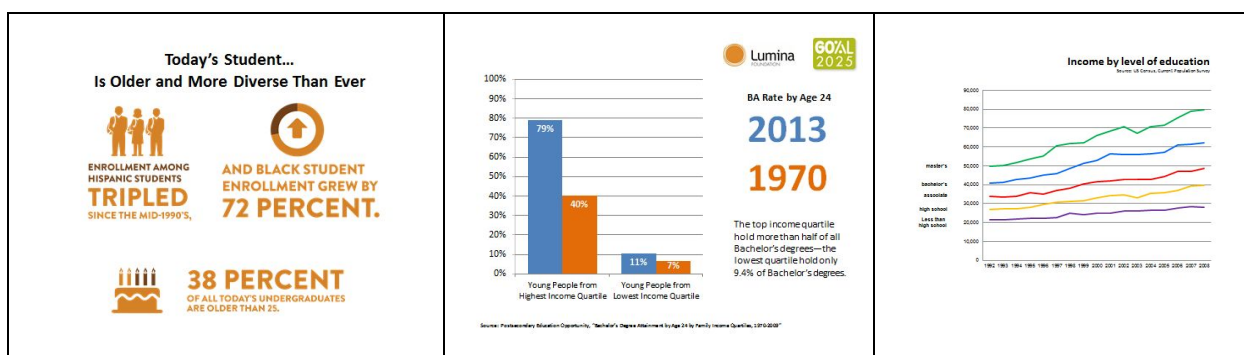
Recognizing that “collective impact” is an innovative and structured approach to making collaborations work across multiple constituencies to achieve significant and lasting social change, the conference agenda covered a variety of topics of interest to practitioners, scholars, officials, and administrators alike. The conference highlighted some of the best examples of this work from right



across the country. Attendees and presenters discussed how the work must be done through consensus-building, focused action, and with scientific rigor, in order to generate momentum against the most intractable of social injustices. Petersen added, *“With the right partnership coalition, this collective target-setting outlined throughout the conference should help forge broader social cohesion, educate the civic minded professionals and innovators of tomorrow, and build a more perceptible safety net that can enable more of us to make positive choices. This work is part of NJ Campus Compact’s commitment to*

the state of New Jersey.”

Lumina Foundation partnered with Campus Compact to provide the keynote address and was given by Jeanna Keller Berdel, senior program officer. Lumina’s GOAL 2025 is to increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees and credentials to 60 percent by the year 2025. Toward this end, Keller Berdel highlighted the changing demographic of higher education, with triple the number of Hispanic students and a seventy percent increase in black students enrolled since the mid-1990’s. Given that racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by poverty, Keller Berdel highlighted Lumina’s “Equity Imperative” - how educational attainment is indeed as much an issue of inclusion as it is one of economic inequality. By dramatically increasing educational attainment among the college population of this era, we should be able to move closer to the realization of equal opportunity and therefore a more just and engaged society.



(Courtesy of Jeanna Keller-Berdel, Lumina Foundation, 2015)

During a key event for chief academic officers, the [Campus Compact Action Statement](#) was discussed. The document represents the national Campus Compact network’s expressed commitment to preparing students for democratic citizenship, building partnerships for change, and reinvigorating higher education for the public good. Member presidents and chancellors can sign the statement containing six key commitments as an expression of their commitment to higher education’s public purpose, including the first commitment which reads, “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.”



Finally, a panel of leaders from Newark - chancellors Cantor and Strom, presidents Bloom and Gibson, and Mayor Ras Baraka, closed the conference with a theme of the importance of collaborative action. The higher education leaders and conference hosts serve on The Council for Higher Education in Newark, or CHEN. Ras Baraka, the Mayor of Newark, joined them to discuss their initiatives to promote community engagement within the diverse population of the city. The unique collaboration of the CHEN institutions and Campus Compact helped bring awareness about their mission to foster internal cooperation and highlighted the educational and economic

development of Newark. In the words of NJIT President, Joel Bloom, "*CHEN institutions each serve different academic missions, but together we in partnership with the mayor and city leaders are committed to supporting collective efforts in support of Newark as a college-town.*"

Reflecting on the conference, Essex County College president and co-chair of NJ Campus Compact board of directors, Gale Gibson, said, "*CHEN believes its participation with Campus Compact displays the innovative way their institutional differences come together to foster inclusion and educational leadership opportunities for the city and its residents.*" Panel moderator and Campus Compact president, Andrew Seligsohn observed, "*The Eastern Region Campus Compact Conference in Newark was a major success. Those of us in attendance not only learned a great deal about how to advance collective impact initiatives in our communities but also had the opportunity to experience firsthand three institutions working to change the educational opportunity landscape in the city of Newark. Campus Compact exists to help our member institutions continue to get better at supporting positive change, and this conference was a terrific example of our mission in practice.*"

For more information and for access to presentation powerpoints, please contact Dr. Petersen at saul.petersen@stockton.edu.

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PHOTOS:

(Photo, right of second paragraph: Dr. Saul Petersen; photo credit: Shelley Kusnetz)

(Photo, left of fifth paragraph: Attendees at a reception held at Rutgers University-Newark; photo credit: Shelley Kusnetz)

(Photo, bottom left: Dr. Brian Strom, Dr. Joel Bloom, The Honorable Ras Baraka, Dr. Gale Gibson, Dr. Nancy Cantor; photo credit: Shelley Kusnetz)