

Portland State University Civic Action Plan
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Portland State University Civic Action Plan

Created in affirmation of Portland State University's signature to the Campus Compact 30th Anniversary Action Statement commitment.

PSU Engagement Background

Portland State University has established a remarkable portfolio of community engagement and partnerships. This work is widely recognized as innovative and impactful, providing demonstrable benefit to students, partners, the City of Portland, and the metropolitan region. Today, PSU is nationally and internationally recognized for its expertise in community-based teaching, learning, and research. Just one example of our longstanding commitment to community has recently been recognized with the prestigious C. Peter Magrath Community Scholarship Award from the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) for our 27-year partnership with Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

PSU made a commitment to community engagement when it redesigned undergraduate education and launched the much-celebrated Capstone Program. While this redesign happened over twenty years ago, PSU's commitment to community engagement encompasses each of the five commitments in the Campus Compact 30th Anniversary Action Statement. Our required senior Capstone courses demonstrate the University's core belief in the power of engaged, experiential learning to prepare students for lives of engaged citizenship as well as, our dedication to advancing the health and strength of the greater Portland community. As part of the University's nationally recognized integrated and interdisciplinary general education program, University Studies, the Capstone Program involves nearly every undergraduate student in nearly all academic majors. Through community-engaged learning, students gain practical experience, address and solve contemporary problems, and contribute to the local economy. The Capstone program has also been recognized by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) as exemplary in meeting their Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative (Pedon, Reed, & Wolfe, 2017).

Community and civic learning spans across educational experiences at PSU. Our undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral students are engaged through academic community-based learning courses (400 annually) and community-based research. In addition to our University Studies Capstone Program, students are able to engage in deep community-centered experiences as part of disciplines and programs across campus. Additionally, over 250 students engage each year through our Student Community Engagement Center in co-curricular programming ranging from episodic events to year-long experiences in the credit-bearing Student Leaders for Service Cohort.

Universities nationally and internationally look to PSU as a leader and guide in the community engagement arena because PSU effectively brings theory into practice in ways that produce graduates that are both intellectually and professionally prepared as they move into the workforce and civic life. PSU's partners (business, government, and non-profit) have benefited from the thousands of students who have worked on real-world projects that contribute to the quality of life in our region. Students have consistently reported that the applied learning experiences offered through Capstones are among the most significant of their college experience. Additionally, practitioners and scholars from across the globe have recognized, benefited, and built upon PSU's innovation connected to community and civic engagement.

This is evidenced through our longstanding history of recognizing community engagement in our promotion and tenure policies, connecting community engagement and sustainability, maintaining a strong partnership focus on K-12 education, and aligning engagement work to advance equity and inclusion (Spring, Reitenauer, & Kerrigan, 2016).

This legacy of work provides a strong foundation for investment and future prominence. Now is the time for PSU to expand and deepen its engagement activities into the other levels of the UNST program and inspire the next generation of community engagement that will further advance PSU's leadership and reputation. While our engagement efforts span academic, co-curricular, undergraduate, and graduate programs, we have decided to leverage this Civic Action Planning opportunity to advance our desire to increase opportunities for students to have community-engaged experiences prior to the undergraduate Senior Capstone, as articulated in our current Strategic Plan.

Importance of Connected Engaged Experiences

Recognizing Portland State University's longstanding history of engaging students in community-based learning, this plan moves toward deepening community-based learning experiences to foster *civic identity* in students. *Civic identity* refers to how individuals form internal beliefs about the reach and responsibility of government and views about individual responsibility to improve the lives of others. Strong civic identity is a major catalyst to individuals becoming involved in the life of their community through political and/or nonpolitical activity.

Efforts to grow civic engagement have been underway on college campuses in earnest for the past 25 years. A prime example is Campus Compact, a coalition of 1,100 colleges and universities that "advance[s] the public purposes of college and universities by deepening their ability to improve community life and educate students for civic and social responsibility." A primary strategy of Campus Compact and other enterprises that promote pro-civic development has been community-based learning (CBL), experiential learning that takes place outside of classrooms and in real-life situations, typically in community settings, where students can put what they are learning into practice.

George Kuh and the American Association of Colleges and Universities (2008) have developed a framework for understanding high-impact practices (HIPs). HIPs are robust learning experiences which are proven to increase student achievement and engagement. Community-based learning is identified as one such HIP with the potential to contribute to students' cumulative learning and increase rates of student retention and student engagement. Kuh (2008) has found the impacts of HIPs can be life changing for students. Kuh advocates for students to participate in two or more HIPs (ideally in their first year and in their senior year), finding increased success for students with increased exposure to HIPs (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2015). Additionally, multiple HIPs have been found to narrow the achievement gap for traditionally underrepresented students (Kuh, 2008).

Studies indicate that best practice in community-based learning is the development of experiences that are purposeful, directing students toward deeper outcomes in order to move beyond charity to a social justice orientation (e.g., Perry & Katula, 2001; Wang & Jackson, 2005). Students' engagement experiences need to be intentional, supported, and contextualized to make meaning in relation to their civic identity. According to Richard Battistoni, a respected international expert on community-based learning, "[w]hen

democratic citizenship is at the foundation of a community-based learning experience, students come away feeling more a part of their communities, and with a better and more critical understanding of these communities and their own roles in them” (Battistoni, 1997, p. 150). Furthermore, scattershot approaches to community-based learning—a course here or there unconnected to a central theme—are not as effective as a coordinated approach in growing civic identity. Instead, a purposefully designed developmental approach is more likely to build civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Battistoni, 2014, p. 53).

Portland State University’s Strategic Plan, Equity Lens, and Students’ Civic Identity

Portland State University completed a 5-year Strategic Plan in 2016. Through a rigorous process that involved multiple stakeholders both inside and outside the University, “extend our leadership in community engagement” rose to become one of five strategic goals for the University. In addition to this engagement-focused goal, throughout the Plan there are initiatives which are advanced through this Civic Action Plan. Portland State University has applied an “equity lens” to each of the strategic goals, as well as articulated a commitment to equity through the stand-alone fourth goal of the Strategic Plan. This Civic Action Plan supports these goals, advances Portland State University’s use of an equity lens, and has the potential for institution-wide impact. Through this Civic Action Plan, we aspire to involve every undergraduate student at PSU in community engaged experiences, thus advancing the work of above-mentioned Strategic Plan while providing focus and structure to fulfill the commitments embedded in the Campus Compact Action Statement. In detailing this Civic Action Plan, the following elements of the PSU Strategic Plan are also addressed:

- Strategic Goal 3: Extend our leadership in community engagement
 - 3.1 Support lifelong community engagement.
 - 3.2.1 Organize, communicate, and disseminate information on collaborative opportunities, projects, and outcomes.
 - 3.2.2 Facilitate opportunities for partners who wish to join us for community-based learning.
- Strategic Goal 1: Elevate student success
 - 1.3.2 Expand culturally responsive and culturally specific supports for students from diverse communities.
 - 1.4.4 Increase opportunities for students to participate in scholarly activities, research efforts, and creative endeavors.
- Strategic Goal 2: Advance excellence in teaching & research
 - 2.1.5 Adopt high impact strategies for effective teaching and learning.
 - 2.1.5 Develop more expansive mechanisms for evaluating students.
 - 2.2 Maintain an array of academic programs that reflects our academic priorities, including a focus on equity and social justice.
- Strategic Goal 4: Expand our commitment to equity
 - 4.1.1 Create expectations, training and incentives for faculty, staff, and students to regularly participate in culturally responsive education and sharing opportunities.
 - 4.3.1 Incorporate assessment of diversity learning outcomes in academic units and the Diversity Action Plan.
 - 4.3.2 Train faculty to incorporate diversity elements in their courses.
- Equity Lens connections:

- Goal 1: Develop academic experiences, including community-based learning, that use universal design, accessibility and appropriate accommodations to ensure an equitable and inclusive learning experiences for all students.
- Goal 2: Consider differentiating PSU in the marketplace by re-branding our scholarly outputs to reflect specific values related to equity, collaboration, and reciprocity-that are community-based and partnership focused.
- Goal 3: Acknowledge that authentic community engagement is reciprocal. Commit to collaboration that is mutually beneficial and brings real value to (and does not harm or diminish) PSU’s community partners. Help PSU and its partners build greater capacity for advancing community wellbeing by designing partnerships that maximize social justice and racial equity. Develop partnerships that take into consideration the full costs of internships, service-learning, and experiential learning pedagogies. Accommodate students with limited financial resources who may struggle to balance family and work with the time commitments required by community-based learning.
- Goal 4: Deepen our commitment by looking for opportunities to make PSU policy, programs and practice more equitable. Elevate campuses expectations for greater accountability around equity issues. Acknowledge that “the international education experience” can be local, by making valuable cross-cultural experiences available to our students through increased contact with international students and communities in our area. Recognize that cultural understanding is a prerequisite for an engaged education and that we have the responsibility to provide our students with the necessary competencies to be able to work with diverse colleagues and the organizations they serve. (Portland State University, 2016)

Civic Action Plan Outcomes

University Studies (UNST) serves as Portland State University’s general education curriculum and has been recognized for the innovative approach of its components, including the Capstone program, for over 20 years. As mentioned above, the Capstone program touches nearly every department and student at PSU. There is a strong desire not only among the UNST faculty and leadership, but also articulated in the PSU Strategic Plan, to enhance civic learning and community-engaged experiences earlier in a student’s education at PSU. While we know there are examples of applied work in the Freshman Inquiry level of University Studies, we also know the vast majority of our student come to PSU as transfers. Building on UNST’s history of innovation, the leadership and faculty of UNST intend to develop an infrastructure to scaffold civic learning and community-engaged experiences throughout the UNST course sequence, moving to next-level thinking and action about general education to impact every undergraduate student in every major at PSU. In an effort to layer our high-impact practices for deeper impact, we see our current pilot of PSU’s new ePortfolio learning tool as a key support for integrative learning for students to connect their experiences between courses and community experiences while at PSU and beyond. Additionally, this work will advance the vision articulated by Kevin Kecskes (2006) for “engaged departments,” further expanding students’ engagement experiences at Portland State University as well as providing them with sequenced, academic major-related and-engaged experiences across the University.

Portland State University intends to strengthen both the development of civic identity and learning outcomes of PSU students through the following strategies:

- Refinement of shared language within UNST in relation to engagement
- Expanding community engagement opportunities for students by enlarging the number of community-based learning courses prior to the Capstone seminar.
- Scaffolding community-based learning curriculum and learning outcomes in order to grow skills and dispositions for civic engagement across Freshman Inquiry, Sophomore Inquiry, and Junior Cluster levels.
- Working with students to connect their engaged learning experiences across their educational trajectories to, at, and beyond PSU through the use of our ePortfolio tool.

This expansion of community-based learning will include instruction and reflection on *diversity, inclusion, and equity*—critical elements of strengthening communities and preparing students for meaningful lives and successful careers.

Outcome	Type of change & relation to Campus Compact Commitment	Measure(s)/Indicators
Development of definition and supporting rubric of what constitutes a community engagement course within UNST.	Culture; policy/systems 5	Common language used in UNST class schedule, on website, and in departmental materials.
Development of scaffolding outcomes supporting additional and/or enhanced engaged experiences for students at earlier levels of UNST, including/especially in Sophomore Inquiry and Junior Cluster.	Policy/system 2, 1	Language from a sample of course syllabi indicating civic engagement experiences for students Aggregate student assessment data (possibly including evidence from ePortfolios) indicating civic engagement experiences
Development of service year (as a bridge year between the Senior Inquiry Program (high school level) and Freshman Inquiry and/or as post-bac: in the case of the latter, connection to alumni engagement).	Sustainable capacity development; policy/systems 2, 1	Number of students participating in service year or other post-graduation engagement experiences Service-year alumni survey data
Deepen reciprocal, authentic relationships with partners across UNST.	Sustainable capacity development, culture 1, 3, 5	Demonstrated positive community impact related to UNST CBL experiences. Data from assessment of impact on communities and/or community partners, faculty, and student survey

		data, mixed media data from “Storycorps” recordings.
Contribution to scholarship of engagement and engaged scholarship.	Sustainable capacity development 4	Faculty/staff publications (including joint publications with students and/or partners), conference presentations, and other scholarly work.

Civic Action Plan Implementation

The work toward actualizing this Civic Action plan has already begun at PSU. Monitoring of progress will be a collaborative effort facilitated by University Studies, the Office of Research and Strategic Partnerships, and the Partnerships Council, and reported as part of the PSU Strategic Plan progress monitoring. In considering what resources are required for the implementation of the plan, the need for a “Coordinator for Engagement” in University Studies was identified. The dates below outlines specific activities related to the timeline for realizing the Coordinator position as well as provides a possible outline for their first year of work. Once the Coordinator is in place, some of the below listed activities can begin immediately. Other activities may need additional resources for implementation. Other activities may be added as the Civic Action Plan implementation progresses. The Coordinator will work to identify those requests and work with UNST leadership, the Partnerships Council, the Office of Academic Innovation and other offices on campus to support this work and adjust this implementation plan accordingly.

Activity	Date	Responsible	Status
Identify potential funding for Coordinator position	Fall 2016	UNST Director Vice Provost	Complete
Draft position description	Fall 2016	UNST Director UNST Leadership	Complete
Secure approval for creating the position	Winter 2017	UNST Director Vice Provost	Complete - currently in hiring freeze
Establish search committee	Winter 2017	UNST Director	In progress
Post position announcement	Winter 2017	Search committee chair	Not started
Position closes	Winter 2017	Human Resources	Not started
Review applications	Winter 2017/Spring 2017	Search committee	Not started
Interviews	Spring 2017	Search committee	Not started

Candidate selection	Spring 2017	Search committee UNST Director	Not started
Position start date	Fall 2017	UNST Director	Not started
Coordinator begins working on specific outcomes of the civic action plan	Fall 2017	UNST Engagement Coordinator	Not started
NOTE: The following activities are included as representative of the type of work the UNST Engagement Coordinator may lead to implement the Action Plan. Working in collaboration with the Partnership Council and University Studies leadership, there may be additional resources identified as the Civic Action Plan implementation takes shape. A review of the implementation plan will take place after one year (and at regular intervals thereafter) to revise the plan as needs and opportunities emerge.			
Assemble UNST Civic Learning Faculty Learning Community (CLFLC)	Fall 2017-ongoing	UNST Engagement Coordinator	Not started
Create resources to support faculty in developing authentic, reciprocal UNST/Partner relationships.	Fall 2017-ongoing	UNST Engagement Coordinator	Not started
Connect UNST faculty to existing resources and work to develop new resources supporting the scholarship of engagement.	Fall 2017-ongoing	UNST Engagement Coordinator	Not Started
CLFLC develops UNST definition and supporting rubric of what constitutes a community engagement course within UNST	Fall 2017	CLFLC under UNST Engagement Coordinator	Not started
Develop inventory of existing UNST courses to identify benchmark for existing levels of engagement.	Fall 2017- Winter 2018	UNST Engagement Coordinator	Not started
Maintain inventory of UNST Civic Engagement practices	Ongoing	UNST Engagement Coordinator	Not started
CLFLC develops scaffolded civic engagement outcomes to support additional and/or enhanced engaged experiences across the UNST experience.	Winter 2017- Spring 2018	CLFLC under UNST Engagement Coordinator	Not started
Begin development of service year experience for students	Spring 2018- Summer 2018	UNST Engagement Coordinator with input from CLFLC	Not started

Develop guidelines for students to build their ePortfolios across UNST courses (and other PSU courses) to articulate their engaged learning experiences.	Spring 2018-Summer 2018	UNST Engagement Coordinator with input from CLFLC	Not started
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Communication

Portland State University has a longstanding history of dissemination of best practices in teaching and learning, curricular innovations, and data on student impacts. Recently, PSU worked with the *Metropolitan Universities Journal* to publish a special issue titled “Curricular Innovation: Engaged Capstones at Portland State University” (Spring, Reitenauer, & Kerrigan, 2016). This collection of eleven articles articulates the conceptualization, infrastructure, and pedagogical approach for the PSU Capstone program. PSU also has a history of directly shaping the national conversation regarding engagement. Most recently, PSU served on two formal study groups initiated by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). PSU was chosen as a top 10 national exemplar for Capstones in 2014-15 and again for 2015-16 (the only institution chosen in both years) to participate in AAC&U’s formal study on “signature experiences.” AAC&U is disseminating publications in 2017 that capture the experiences, insights, and wisdom gained at PSU through our implementation of the largest senior Capstone in the nation. Our campus leaders remain eager to engage in the national conversation regarding this work.

PSU is proud to share this Civic Action Plan and stories regarding implementation on campus, in our community, and beyond. Sources for dissemination include the PSU Partnerships Council, Strategic Plan reporting, the PSU website, national association publications, and the Partnerships newsletter. PSU is contacted annually for this type of knowledge dissemination. In Fall 2016, AAC&U solicited a publication from PSU via the “Democracy and Diversity” publication to inform readers about our work collaborating with incarcerated persons. PSU is perfectly positioned to advance the work of Campus Compact and AAC&U locally, regionally, and nationally. National conference presentations are already scheduled (e.g., AAC&U, January 2017), and scholarship will continue to be generated and communicated to audiences both inside and outside the University.

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