

Widener University
Campus Compact Action Plan
March 2017

1. Institutional Vision
2. Institutional Mission
3. Strategic Goals
4. Civic Action Planning Team
5. Approach: Four Phases of Transformation
6. Timeline
7. Communicating our deep and lasting commitment

Vision

As a preeminent metropolitan university, Widener aspires to be a dynamic, inclusive academic community, transforming our students into scholars, leaders and globally engaged citizens.

Widener University's Mission

As a leading metropolitan university, we achieve our mission at Widener by creating a learning environment where curricula are connected to societal issues through civic engagement. We lead by providing a unique combination of liberal arts and professional education in a challenging, scholarly, and culturally diverse academic community. We engage our students through dynamic teaching, active scholarship, personal attention, and experiential learning. We inspire our students to be citizens of character who demonstrate professional and civic leadership. We contribute to the vitality and well-being of the communities we serve.

Institutional Strategic Goals:

By 2021, Widener University will be a leader among metropolitan universities in promoting student transformation and success through:

1. Rigorous academic expectations and high-impact educational practices that support intended learning outcomes.
2. A dynamic campus environment that immerses students in meaningful curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences.
3. A culture of leadership that inspires students, faculty, and staff to have a positive influence on their workplaces, professions, communities, and the world.
4. A diverse university community that champions a culture of respect, civility, and inclusivity.

5. Scholarship by faculty and students that enriches learning and advances knowledge within and across disciplines.
6. **Civic engagement that furthers the university's national and global leadership in educating engaged citizens and in contributing to the vitality and well-being of the communities we serve.**
 - Create and enhance institutional structures and processes to advance the university's leadership in civic engagement.
 - Increase the scope and impact of curricular and co-curricular civic engagement activities.
 - Increase support for developing strategic reciprocal partnerships that enhance student learning through civic engagement.
 - Enhance the university's role as an anchor institution.
7. Institutional agility and innovation that make the university attractive, accessible, and sustainable.

The Civic Action Planning Team

Committee Members: The civic action planning committee (created in AY 2016-2017) brings together key representatives from the Office of Civic Engagement (Gretchen Mielke, Assistant Dean for Civic Engagement), the Academic Service Learning Faculty Development Program (Dr. Marina Barnett, Service-Learning Fellow and Associate Professor of Social Work), Community-Based Research (Dr. Loyd Bastin, Associate Professor of Chemistry and Coordinator of Undergraduate Research), Political Engagement (Dr. James Vike, Associate Professor of Political Science and Project Pericles Director) and the Chief of Staff in the Office of the President (Dr. Kathryn Herschede). This initial subset of members was intentionally designed to be small in order to maximize efficiency and focus on drafting the initial plan.

However, given the scope of civic engagement at Widener, the committee will continue to expand to involve key community leaders, other senior administrators, academic leadership, students, institutional research, university relations, and other key community-affecting functional areas as we move through the four phases of the plan.

Approach: Four Phases of Transformation

Rationale: Given our institutional leadership transition in 2016, Widener University is at a wonderful place for self-reflection, evaluation and transformation. Institutionally, we are seeking new efficiencies and evaluating how and why our institution operates in certain ways.

While we have had a national reputation for civic engagement for many years, we seek to deepen our impact and redesign our civic structures, resulting in long-term sustainable impact across Campus Compact's five action statements that follow.

1. 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.
2. We prepare our students for lives of engaged citizenship, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act and lead in the pursuit of the public good.
3. We embrace our responsibilities as place-based institutions, contributing to the health and strength of our communities-economically, socially, environmentally, educationally, and politically.
4. We harness the capacity of our institutions-through research, teaching, partnerships, and institutional practice-to challenge the prevailing social and economic inequalities that threaten our democratic future.
5. We foster an environment that consistently reaffirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education by setting high expectations for members of the campus community to contribute to their achievement.

We designed a four phase process and our own unique template to better suit where our institutional processes and transition currently align. We want to simultaneously honor our past contributions, yet leave the door open to real institutional civic transformation. In 2016-2017, we have focused a great deal of energy on drafting this plan and implementing phase 1 of our approach.

We look forward to highlighting the meaningful work that we have done this year, in addition to outlining our next three stages.

Four Phases of Transformation:

Widener University's civic action plan will explore how to take our civic work to deeper levels, promoting institutional civic transformation in four key phases:

Phase 1: Civic engagement structural analysis (Started in Fall 2016)

Phase 2: Assessment: Conduct an inventory of campus-wide civic activities, such as: programming, financial analysis, people impacted. (Started in Spring 2017)

Phase 3: Evaluation: What should be our strategic focus and goals for our civic work: why do we do this work; who is the community; what is our intended impact; what are our civic learning outcomes; and how well do we do what we do and to what end? We will partner with the faculty-led Student Learning and Assessment Committee in order to build upon the work they have already done in creating a rubric for citizenship as an institutional learning outcome. Additionally, faculty expertise and institutional research will be essential in helping campus-wide civic engagement assessment efforts.

Phase 4: Implementation and Communication: After careful analysis of structure, inventory of activities, and assessment data collection, recommendations will be implemented to maximize the impact of civic engagement. We want to deepen our work, empower community transformation, and create the next generation of student leaders and "wicked problem" solvers.

Phase 1: Inventory and Civic Structures Analysis (Initiated in Fall 2016):

The President's Civic Engagement Committee (Structures and Coordination Efforts): In Fall 2016, President Julie Wollman created a cross-divisional committee to study the structure of civic engagement at Widener. The group was tasked to explore how civic engagement is organized at Widener and to consider whether (and if so how) we need to improve coordination and communication. The committee studied the current structures in place at Widener University and best practices related to emerging research in civic engagement.

Committee Members: The President's Civic Engagement Committee is led by the Chief of Staff in the President's Office and includes a broad spectrum of university leadership: the Dean of the School of Education; the Dean of the School of Engineering; the Assistant Dean of the School of Business; the Associate Provost/Dean of Students; two service-learning faculty, one in criminal justice and the other in psychology; and a faculty member from nursing. One of the faculty members, Dr. Lori Simons, has expertise in civic engagement assessment, which is helpful for informing the committee's data collection methods. Additionally, two of the three faculty have been involved with service-learning.

Methods: In order to more fully understand the specific dynamics at Widener, the committee issued a survey to all Main Campus faculty and staff. The survey sought to inform multiple dimensions of the committee's work. Specifically, the committee asked:

- Have you ever been engaged in civic engagement work as part of your work role or responsibilities?
- The type of civic engagement that the faculty or staff member has/had been engaged in (ex: service-learning, volunteering, internships, community-based research, community outreach, etc).
- For faculty members, whether civic engagement was embedded in the expectations of their discipline.
- What does civic engagement mean to you in your role at Widener?
- What enables your work on civic engagement at Widener?
- What inhibits your work on civic engagement at Widener?
- If you could make one change to improve civic engagement at Widener, what would it be?

Finally, the survey asked respondents to consider 15 dimensions of support for civic engagement and whether those dimensions were enabling or inhibiting civic engagement at Widener. These dimensions first appeared in *Becoming an Engaged Campus: A practical guide for institutionalizing public engagement* by Carole A. Beere, James C. Votruba, and Gail W. Wells.

The committee issued the survey in March 2017 and plans to complete their study and provide a list of recommendations by the end of the Spring 2017 semester.

TIMELINE

We anticipate completing the work of phase 1 by the end of this semester (Spring 2017) and look forward to making expeditious progress on the remaining phases.

COMMUNICATING OUR DEEP AND LASTING COMMITMENT

Widener University has established a national reputation for civic engagement, evidenced by the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, President's Honor Roll, and a deep integration of civic value interwoven into the fabric of our institution. Civic engagement is a component of our mission, serves a prominent role as one of seven institutional strategic goals, and is deeply embedded in our community clinics, as well as the Widener Partnership Charter School, the College Access Center, and the Small Business Development Center.

We will develop a robust strategy to communicate the results and decisions related to each of the four phases of implementation, as well as continue to emphasize that civic engagement is an important institutional value.

We are proud to continue our public commitment to universities' historic mission of "preparing the next generation of citizens to achieve public goals and solve public problems" made as a signatory of the 30th Anniversary Action Statement of Presidents and Chancellors (Campus Compact).