

## Civic Action Plan SUNY Cortland

April 2017

### Vision/Mission:

For over 30 years, SUNY Cortland has been “living” its mission of helping students “grow as engaged citizens with a strong social conscience fostered by outstanding teaching, scholarship, and service” through its many community partnerships. We will continue to embody those ideals while also helping the college meet its financial needs by creating a symbiotic relationship between the college’s academic, social, and economic entities.

### Strategic Approach:

We will form an *advisory panel* that represents academic, social, and economic perspectives. Panel members will be our Risk Management Officer, a faculty economic expert, an assessment specialist, a student, and a local nonprofit agency supervisor. The panel will help the Institute for Civic Engagement identify and nurture civic engagement projects that address our four priorities: academic excellence, transformational education, well-being, and maximizing resources (including economic resources). Campus Compact’s *Five Statements* (in “Creating a Great Campus Civic Action Plan”) mirror those priorities.

### Baseline, Assets: Institutional

- SUNY Cortland is a community anchor institution: It is the sole college in the county.
- We are already addressing the Civic Action Plan’s Statements in these ways –
  - Statement #1. Faculty are encouraged to partner with community members “to co-create partnerships in pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable future.”
  - #2. Through service-learning courses in departments such as Philosophy and Education, we “prepare our students for lives of engaged citizenship.”
  - #3. Through 30 years of partnership with the greater Cortland community, we have “embrace[d] our responsibilities as [a] place-based” institution.
  - #4. Through courses in Philosophy, Foundations and Social Advocacy, and English (for example), we “harness the capacity of [our college] to a democratic future.”
  - #5. Our RTP policies encourage service to the community and “affirm the centrality of public purposes of higher education.”
- To nurture civic engagement activities, our engagement infrastructure is composed of
  - Offices and departments –
    - The Career Services Office.
    - The Admissions Office, which provides worthy students the opportunity of a four-year, \$1,500-per-year *Civic Engagement Scholarship*. Twenty newly-accepted students have been offered this scholarship for the 2017-2018 academic year.

- The Student Government Association, including its new *Office of Civic Engagement and Outreach*, with which the Institute for Civic Engagement is partnering.
- Individual departments that use applied learning pedagogies such as internships.
- The Institute for Civic Engagement.
- o Committees and Plans –
  - The Institutional Planning and Assessment Committee is revising our 2017-2022 *Strategic Plan*, which now calls for “expand[ing] the impact of applied learning.”
  - SUNY Cortland’s *Performance Improvement Plan* includes “engagement” in its outcomes for Academic Excellence and Transformational Education.
  - Middle States Committee. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education, in its most recent assessment, praised the Institute for Civic Engagement’s work.
- o Projects and courses such as –
  - Service-learning projects: On average, more than 2,600 service-learning students devote about 184,000 hours of service – worth over \$5 million – to the community annually. (*The Independent Sector* values volunteering in NY State in 2015 at \$27.59/hour.) These figures, and those in items immediately below, suggest ways in which civic engagement can help SUNY Cortland financially.
  - In each of the last two years, an average of 4,000 students volunteered in non-service-learning civic engagement projects such the *Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)* Program which, in 2015, saved more than 400 low-income residents over \$60,000 in tax preparation fees.
  - Students in the *Community Innovation Lab* help community organizations build capacity and strengthen marketing efforts. The course begins its 4<sup>th</sup> year in fall 2017.
  - In the *Strategic Philanthropy and Non-profits* course, students review agencies’ applications for small grants. Students have awarded \$40,000 over four years.
  - The *Economic Inequality Initiative* involves students and community members in civic decision-making activities, such as those that help inform government and funder actions on issues that range from hunger to the environment.
  - Exercise Science students provide free health lessons for Cortland community adults who have cardio-vascular challenges. In fall 2017, this project will enter its 3<sup>rd</sup> year.
  - Graduate students enrolled in “The School Health Program” (HLH 635) have conducted needs analyses for local school districts.
  - The Childhood/Early Childhood Education’s two service-learning learning-communities run for a full academic year. They enter their 4<sup>th</sup> year in fall 2017.
  - Students in at least four Adapted Physical Education courses teach self-sufficiency skills to children with disabilities, and to the children’s teachers and parents.
  - The Common Problem Pedagogy Project combines STEM and Humanities courses in applied learning projects; in fall 2017 it will begin its 3<sup>rd</sup> year with new courses.

- The NY State Legislative Internship Program provides students with invaluable first-hand experiences in conducting the work of state government.
- The All-In Campaign engages students in civic decision-making activities, such as voter-registration and get-out-the-vote drives, on campus and in the community.
- Four student political clubs are collaborating on a political atmosphere project that began with a spring 2017 student survey; that survey is informing the design of student-facilitated deliberative dialogs in the 2017-2018 academic year.

#### Baseline Assets: Community

- Community agencies and coalitions address economic, health, education, social justice, and environmental concerns. SUNY Cortland partners in this work.
- Since 2001, the Seven Valleys Health Coalition has published the yearly Cortland Counts, which provides data regarding our community's goals related to housing, health, youth, sustainability, and the economy. SUNY Cortland helped launch this project.

To capitalize on SUNY Cortland's considerable civic engagement resources, the Institute for Civic Engagement and the college's Risk Management Officer will form an Advisory Panel that will help the Institute identify civic engagement projects that meet our four priorities. Panel members will be our Risk Management Officer, a faculty economic expert, an assessment specialist, a student, and a local nonprofit agency supervisor.

The Institute for Civic Engagement is well-positioned to address over-arching concerns because its three members work with community decision-makers; one of those three works on Main Street. Our Risk Management Officer helps identify areas of financial opportunity. The Institute's members and the Risk Management Officer are dedicated to

- Continual development of the plan.
- Rigorous assessment of progress.
- Application of assessments to the plan's continual development.

These individuals have the perspective, persistence, and power to make lasting change; its members have more than 30 years' combined experience working with the Cortland community.

We will ensure that voices beyond those of the Institute and the advisory panel are heard by sharing updates with the president's cabinet, faculty senate, SGA, Cortland Counts, and at on- and off-campus meetings that are open to the public.

We expect this plan to work because of our success with many types of civic engagement projects and because of our long-term collaborations with the greater Cortland community.

## Outcomes

Outcome	Type of change	Action Statement Commitment	Measure(s)	Indicator(s)
We will create a plan through which we identify and measure civic engagement's direct and indirect economic benefits to the college.	Sustainable capacity development.	#3. We embrace our responsibilities as place-based institutions, contributing to the health and strength of our communities [including economically].	The number, & the monetary value, of those benefits.	Increases in the number of benefits and in the monetary value of those benefits.
We will capitalize on those benefits by creating additional projects that help us meet our four priorities, including the maximizing of resources. Those projects include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged-pedagogy courses (e.g., service-learning and problem-based learning).</li> <li>Engaged scholarship projects.</li> </ul>	Sustainable capacity development;  Culture change.	#1. We empower our students, faculty, staff, and community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships...  #5. We foster an environment that affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education...	The number of engaged-pedagogy courses and engaged scholarship projects.	Increases in the number of those projects.
At least one faculty member will partner with at least one community member to conduct a progression of service-learning courses that provide additional ways of meeting our four priorities.	Culture change.	#1. We empower our students, faculty, staff, and community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships...	Numbers of multi-semester courses.	Increases in these numbers.
A greater number of promotions and tenure appointments will be based on faculty members' engaged pedagogy courses and scholarship projects.	Policy adjustment.	#1. We empower our students, faculty, staff, and community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships...	Department data on promotion and tenure awards; including percentages of those who are involved in engaged teaching and research.	Increased number of faculty receiving promotions and tenure for the centrality of their engaged teaching and research.
A greater number of students in Career Service's graduate survey will name civic engagement activities as important to their civic and professional success. These numbers will help demonstrate the value of our civic engagement activities to future students.	Culture change.	#5. We foster an environment that affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education by setting high expectations for members of the campus community.	The number of students who name civic engagement activities as important to their professional and civic success.	Increases in those numbers.
A greater number of incoming first-year students will name civic engagement opportunities as important to their choice of SUNY Cortland. These numbers will help demonstrate the student-recruitment value of our civic engagement activities.	Culture change.	#5. We foster an environment that affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education...	The number of students who name civic engagement opportunities as a reason for attending SUNY Cortland.	Increases in those numbers.

Implementation: Action steps to be taken by the Institute for Civic Engagement

1. By August 31, 2017, form the Institute for Civic Engagement's Advisory Panel.
2. By September 29, 2017, begin partnering on this work with at least two of these offices:
  - a. Career Services
  - b. Economics Department
  - c. Institutional Advancement
  - d. Institutional Planning and Assessment Committee
  - e. Institutional Research and Analysis
  - f. Sponsored Programs
  - g. Strategic Outcomes Committee
  - h. Student Affairs
  - i. Student Government Association
3. Also by September 29, 2017, partner with select faculty, students, and community members for mutual academic, social, and economic benefit.
4. By May 31, 2018, begin recording progress:
  - a. Track direct and indirect financial benefits to the college.
  - b. Use Task Stream to track civic engagement numbers (e.g., number of students).
  - c. Service-learning students record reflections electronically, to note evidence of learning.
  - d. Continue interviewing community partners to collect additional information.
  - e. Generate additional data from our *National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE)* and *National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE)* reports.
5. By May 31, 2019, we will have identified at least three ways in which our civic engagement projects help our college financially and help it to continue meeting its four priorities.
6. Use data to assess and refine applied learning pedagogies annually.
7. Host two events per semester to share lessons from, and benefits of, civic engagement projects. The person responsible is the director of the Institute for Civic Engagement.

#### Communication

Our planning process has revealed a situation in which the college is probably letting academic, social, and financial opportunities "slip-by" because it does not have a plan for maximizing the potential of its considerable civic engagement resources.

To help us capitalize on those resources, we will launch the plan described above, and we will communicate more aggressively by sharing our progress and lessons at department meetings, Sandwich Seminars (open to the public), professional conferences, and community events such as *Cortland Counts* meetings,. SUNY Cortland's President, Erik Bitterbaum, already promotes civic engagement at events on- and off-campus.

We will publicize progress through the student newspaper and through the Institute for Civic Engagement's *Newsletter*, web page, and social media accounts. We will work with our Communications Office to expand our publicity, and we will share our results with our government representatives. We are redoubling our work with the SUNY Chancellor's office, which has been promoting the financial benefits of applied learning for college graduates.