

University of North Carolina Asheville Civic Action Agenda

UNC Asheville's Civic Action Plan

UNC Asheville's Civic Action Plan is grounded in the current UNC Asheville Strategic Plan and centers on deploying University assets in ways that maximize benefit for all involved in and touched by campus/community initiatives, partnerships, and collaborations. The triple win means 1) students are prepared for effective societal engagement beyond college 2) faculty/staff are supported to enhance classroom learning with applied experiences in off-campus settings and 3) the local community (local/regional, state) gains a long-term partner in pursuing resilient community opportunities and in generating solutions to challenges.

Background-

The University of North Carolina at Asheville (UNC Asheville) is the designated Liberal Arts university in the 17 campus UNC higher education system. Located in Western North Carolina, UNC Asheville has conducted a range of community engagement activities over the past several years spanning urban and geographical regions across the state.

UNC Asheville's current five-year strategic plan (See Appendix I) aligns with 1) Campus Compact's Civic Action Plan five commitment statements 2) the North Carolina Board of Governors' current strategic plan and the 3) principles embodied in the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's community engagement definition. (See Appendix II)

The overall mission for UNC Asheville is predicated on successfully creating a culture that recognizes how our strength lies in honoring diversity and nurturing our community to make it more inclusive. Our mission encompasses encouraging innovation in a climate that accepts risk taking to advance new ideas and spread good ones across our community. Our mission honors sustainability in ways that model how we all support our natural environment, our communities, and the enduring health of UNC Asheville's campus and people. Below is UNC Asheville's mission statement, distinctive role and core values-

Mission Statement

To provide our students with the highest quality public liberal arts education that enables them to lead productive and fully engaged lives.

Distinctive Role

UNC Asheville will be a nationally recognized leader of the public liberal arts and a model of how a liberal arts university and its graduates have an impact on society.

Core Values

- **Diversity and Inclusion**
- **Innovation**
- **Sustainability**

The University's strategic plan has been the platform for developing the Civic Action Plan. This Civic Action Plan reflects UNC Asheville's approach to supporting distinctive competence in delivering a public liberal arts education that leads to a lifetime of critical thinking, continuous learning, and community service.

UNC Asheville's Community Engagement Focus

UNC Asheville's strategic plan elevates community engagement to one of four strategic directions with a related set of six founding strategies-

Strategic Direction #3- Community Engagement- Strengthen UNC Asheville's impact on the community through civic and cultural engagement, sustained partnerships, and a focus on economic vibrancy.

Founding Strategies

1. Create a more unified approach to developing and orchestrating community engagement experiences and civic leadership activities across UNC Asheville
2. Put systems in place to leverage current community and civic engagement activities of faculty, staff, and students, and provide incentives for even greater participation.
3. Provide more educational opportunities in Asheville and surrounding communities and invite community members to campus for issue-related conversations, athletic events, arts, and performance experiences.
4. Engage as an essential partner and leader as policies are developed and decisions are made about the future of the city, region, and state.
5. Broaden UNC Asheville's partnerships and networking efforts to include a global perspective and enable greater worldwide engagement activities of faculty and students.
6. Create systematic ways for alumni to actively engage with UNC Asheville, its students and community in ways that enhance graduates' connections with the university.

Under the new plan launched in 2016 UNC Asheville's Chancellor created a Community Engagement (CE) function that is part of the Chancellor's office. The CE function has an Executive Director and Project Assistant. The CE Executive Director serves on UNC Asheville's Senior Leadership Team. This CE function drives the execution of Strategic Direction #3.

Three other University units were incorporated into CE portfolio-

- 1) North Carolina Center for Health and Wellness (NCCHW) focused on community based health improvement strategies with cross sector partners and high impact experiences for sector partners,
- 2) Key Center focused on community engaged learning and high impact co-curricular experiences
- 3) the Center for Diversity Education with a 20-year track record of school and community partnerships designed bring to diversity, inclusiveness and cultural sharing experiences to schools and organizations throughout Western North Carolina

UNC Asheville's Community Engagement Vision

UNC Asheville is operationalizing community engagement to support a broad continuum campus-wide practices that help strengthen the social and economic fabric both on and beyond campus. In March 2017, the CE function convened an inaugural group of cross-campus staff and faculty stakeholders who participated in three meetings to "identify what we already do", "identify what we can do" and "identify results we want to achieve." This group will become the Community Engagement Council (CE Council) that convenes regularly with a cross-sector

stakeholder group that includes faculty, staff, student, and community representation.

The CE Council will focus on sharing and learning as well as identifying CE opportunities and monitoring impact. Progress will be tracked using what's known at Results Based Accountability (™) framework that focuses on first envisioning the vision desired, or end result, of what is designed. This is essentially a process of working backward with end results in sight first. <https://clearimpact.com/results-based-accountability/>

UNC Asheville is building its community engagement work with end results in mind that can provide guidance for actions to pursue under the plan. Below are the results developed by the CE Council that will drive the 'Why' behind UNC Asheville's CE strategic plan direction.

1. Our community is educated, healthy, safe, thriving, resilient, and in harmony with the natural environment.
2. All people have access to the educational resources necessary for meaningful employment and to help them make informed decisions about their lives and the community.

The CE Council is placing laser focus on how much is being done, how well, and whether anyone is better off. In the first quarter of UNC Asheville's next fiscal year the CE Council will define outcomes and performance measures that will complement best practices in selecting indicators and documenting the impact of CE with respect to the end results. The CE Council currently reflects a cross sector of campus stakeholders with strong community connections and will be expanded to include community-based partners.

CE work to date and anticipated work is summarized under the bullets below-

- Identify existing community partnerships that can be organized and catalogued into a centralized repository accessible across all campus units
- Create a navigable framework for summarizing existing activity and vetting new opportunities in alignment with the new UNC Asheville strategic plan (Other three strategic directions are Academic Rigor, Student Success, and Organizational Capacity)
- Build the prerequisite faculty, staff, and student support systems to integrate community engagement best practices into learning, service and partnership activity in the local, regional, and state arenas
- Deepen UNC Asheville's anchor institution role to invest in adjacent geographic areas and broader target areas that experience gaps in social and economic well being
- Highlight and document existing CE activities/initiatives at UNC Asheville
- Enhance Community Engagement structure in ways that build on strengths of existing UNC Asheville assets connected to student learning, campus partnerships and

local/regional/state/national initiatives (*Board of Governors Strategic plan naming Economic Impact and Community Engagement as one of five goals, National Campus Compact Civic Plan initiative and North Carolina Campus Compact goals focused on k-12*)

- Build support for faculty/staff so that community engagement thinking and practices are adopted across campus, e.g. assistance with training, special recognitions, evaluation assessment role
- Create performance measures for the Community Engagement Council
- Create messaging and communications plan for UNC Asheville Community Engagement work

The Community Engagement Council will expand to include community voices who inform UNC Asheville's work with a focus on strategic opportunities, feedback, and shared commitment to achieving the two community engagement results.

UNC Asheville Community Engagement Initiatives and Actions

In alignment with Campus Compact's Five Civic Action Plan commitments UNC Asheville's CE Council has begun to identify initiatives and activities, some of which are new or already underway. In general, there is focus on ensuring that UNC Asheville participates in a network of local/regional cross sector collaborations around that benefit educational and economic opportunity that engage students, faculty and staff around building the common good beyond campus.

At present UNC Asheville is creating co-curricular transcript to document students' high impact out-of-classroom learning experience and exploring a campus-wide student success that begins in first year to build social connections and service opportunity exposure for students. UNC Asheville has strengthened and deepened existing Anchor Institution relationships with Mission Health, Asheville Housing and local school districts.

Below are a few examples that correspond to the six founding strategies in the UNC Asheville plan section for community engagement. Note, several of these strategies connect to other goals in the plan- Academic Rigor, Student Success and Organizational Capacity.

Create a more unified approach to developing and orchestrating community engagement experiences and civic leadership activities across UNC Asheville.

- CE function created to operate out of Chancellor's Office
- CE Council formation underway
- Add community voice to CE Council
- Add another course designation for Community Engaged Learning in addition to Service Learning designation
- Explore creation of a Bonner leaders program
- Established partnership with Asheville City Schools Foundation to share an employee as a community liaison between UNC Asheville and city schools to help implement impact learning experiences

Put systems in place to leverage current community and civic engagement activities of

faculty, staff, and students, and provide incentives for even greater participation.

- Create a faculty fellows program for engaged learning
- Expand living/learning communities for students
- Expand Marvelous Math and literacy programming capacity at Asheville Housing (public housing) through community partnerships
- Launched Connections E-newsletter for community engagement opportunities

Provide more educational opportunities in Asheville and surrounding communities and invite community members to campus for issue-related conversations, athletic events, arts, and performance experiences.

- Continue Leadership Asheville programs including 9th leader training and summer “Buzz Breakfast” policy issue series
- Build campus speaker series around UNC Asheville strategic plan values and initiatives across goal areas

Engage as an essential partner and leader as policies are developed and decisions made about the future of the city, region, and state.

- NCCHW is part of a Network Development Learning Collaborative health aging
- NCCHW will help with planning an international conference on using Results Based Accountability (™) in the context of advancing better health outcomes.
- NCCHW continues co-leading RBA (™) co-leading trainings around region and state

Broaden UNC Asheville’s partnerships and networking efforts to include a global perspective and enable greater worldwide engagement of faculty and students.

- Explore creation of a student Leadership Institute
- Expand International Alternative Spring Break trips
- Expand Service Learning components in study abroad programs

Create systemic ways for alumni to actively engage with UNC Asheville, its students and community in ways that enhance graduates’ connections with the university.

- Partner with local United Way to extend Hands on Asheville volunteer opportunity website to UNC Asheville alumni
- Coordinate with Advancement office on forming high impact connections with UNC Asheville learning, service, and support opportunities

Summary

Through its work UNC Asheville will exemplify community engagement and civic action practices that result in students’ lifelong commitment to community service/community engagement and the university’s national distinction for enhancing community resilience across the region, state and nation. The impact will be documented with performance measures, data, and stories reportable in formats suitable for multiple audiences.