



Executive Summary

Civic Engagement is a way of being at Central College and is rooted in 164 years of liberal arts education. Commitment to community traces back to Central's foundations, when the college was established by the citizens of Pella, Iowa. Community engagement does not just fit into the institution and our leadership – it is pedagogically essential to liberal learning and Central wouldn't know how to deliver the education it offers without it.

In accordance with the mission statement the college, Central promotes the development of values essential to responsible citizenship, including acceptance, mutual respect, justice, compassion and service to others. Central empowers individuals for effective service in local, national and international communities with the knowledge and skills essential to engaged citizenship. In order to solidify the values, knowledge and skills of civic engagement gained at Central College, we are intentional in providing opportunities for civic action through dialogue with communities beyond the campus and the region. Our compass of concern includes a five-county area in Central Iowa as well as the localities of our study abroad programs.

Central believes global and community engagement contribute to the depth of understanding in a liberal arts education, imparting resilience of mind to honor differences, and a greater capacity for creative thinking in addressing challenges of a complex interconnected society.

Our civic action plan was developed through cross-campus and community information gathering, and is complemented by other college strategic documents. The resulting plan includes five overarching goals, which are supported by objectives and action steps throughout the document.

Plan Goals

- **Develop Central College students for lives of engaged citizenship within local, national, and international communities, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act and lead in pursuit of the public good.**
- **Establish Central College as an anchor institution, leveraging our convening power to bring together other stakeholders for the good of our community.**
- **Expand and enhance opportunities for community-based research and scholarship for students, faculty, and staff**
- **Strengthen Civic Engagement and Service Learning infrastructure to guarantee student access to community partners**
- **Implement a coordinated communication strategy to give voice to the civic mission of Central College and share the story of our engagement efforts, within college and in the broader community.**

Preface

Civic Engagement is a way of being at Central College and is rooted in 164 years of liberal arts education. Commitment to community traces back to Central's foundations, when the college was established by the citizens of Pella, Iowa. Community engagement does not just fit into the institution and our leadership – it is pedagogically essential to liberal learning and Central wouldn't know how to deliver the education it offers without it.

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Our historical commitment to the value and practices of the liberal arts will continue to be animated by a sense of responsibility to the greater community, and we will endeavor to pursue the goals articulated in this plan to the extent that fiscal responsibilities will allow.

Members of Civic Action Planning Team:

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Time Line

In March of 2016, President Mark Putnam signed the Campus Compact [Civic Action Statement](#), which expressed his agreement to empower a team whose charge was to develop a Civic Action Plan on behalf of the college. A team was appointed and began the work in fall of 2016. The planning process consisted of these steps:

Fall, 2016: The Center for Community-Based Learning, utilizing a [self-assessment tool developed by Iowa Campus Compact](#) and based on standards developed the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, identified constituents to complete a survey to assess institutional capacity for civic engagement. Representatives of faculty, student development staff, academic affairs staff, students, and community partners participated in the process and findings were compiled by the Center for Community-Based Learning. The planning team met to review the findings and reach consensus on the implications of potential action steps for the plan.

January 20, 2017: Several members of the campus community attended a Civic Action Plan workshop in Ames, where we learned more about the planning process.

February – April, 2017: The planning team met, approximately weekly, to undertake a four-phase listening and drafting process.

Phase I: Team members facilitated conversations with various campus and community partner constituencies in order to hear additional ideas for strengthening our civic engagement. Concurrent with that, other members reviewed the civic action planning documents that resulted from the college planning process of 2011-2012, which included significant campus and community listening with regard to civic engagement as well as recommended civic action initiatives.

Phase II: Team members brainstormed regarding a potential format for the plan. We reviewed several relevant templates, eventually deciding to shape the plan in this way:

- A list of overarching goals, based on themes that emerged in the self-assessment and constituent listening sessions.
- Goals to be based on language from the compact's civic action pledge, Central College mission and goals, and previous civic action planning documents.

Phase III: The team drafted the aforementioned overarching goals, created a Google Doc, and worked in small groups to craft substance to each. Each small group met at least once, and the larger team continued to meet to discuss each goal together.

Phase IV: Community-Based Learning staff reviewed the document and condensed the material with a goal to create a concise, yet comprehensive plan.

Phase V: The plan was submitted to the Senior Leadership Team

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- **Expand and enhance opportunities for community-based research and scholarship for students, faculty, and staff**
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Civic Action Plan

- 1. Develop Central College students for lives of engaged citizenship within local, national, and international communities, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act and lead in pursuit of the public good.**
 - a. Build on the strengths of academic community-based learning courses across the curriculum, making them more integrated and coordinated, helping extend our classrooms further into the community and providing students with a wider variety of service venues and opportunities. Track activities and impact and communicate
 - i. Sustain current service-learning offerings and explore ways to increase faculty participation through professional development offerings
 1. Department specific workshops for service-learning practice
 2. Build in service-learning workshops to the new faculty first-year series
 3. Develop topical workshops at faculty request
 - ii. Host community partner networking events as a means of fostering synergy that will allow us to extend our classrooms further into the community and providing students with a wider variety of services venues and opportunities
 1. Extend invitation for instructors of LAS 410 and 110
 - iii. Curricular development
 1. Integrate service-learning/civic engagement with LAS 110, 410, and Emerging Scholars
 2. Capture service-learning artifacts for the Central portfolio
 3. Explore the possibility of endorsement/certificate or SL honor roll
 - iv. Continue to sustain financial resources for community service scholarships as part of our recruitment and retention efforts
 - v. Strengthen scholar engagement through the development of a cohort for sustained, four-year service. Possible format to include the following:
 1. Year one—Listening to needs of community partners
 2. Year two—Pre-planning
 3. Year three—Implement sustainable plan
 4. Year four—Evaluate, reflect and adjust. Train next group
 - b. Develop and sustain curricular and co-curricular programs to instill and develop citizenship and leadership
 - i. Purposeful communication with student groups with a goal of informing them of resources available for civic engagement.
 - ii. Educate and encourage the campus community to take an active role in the political process
 - iii. Expand initiatives that increase interfaith understanding
 - c. Expand immersive global experiential opportunities
 - i. Service learning at abroad sites
 - ii. Faculty led service experiences
 1. Foster opportunities for domestic or international service experiences
 2. Explore models of Alternative Spring Break (ASB)
 - d. Encourage the integration of current events and issues with classes, modeling and fostering respectful dialogue across difference
 - i. Provide opportunities to share approaches and resources with faculty, staff and student leaders leveraging integrated learning practices
- 2. Establish Central College as an anchor institution, leveraging our convening power to bring together other stakeholders for the good of our community.**
 - a. Institutional
 - i. Sustain partnerships and participation in civic organizations.
 - ii. Increase participation in policy advocacy, especially related to equitable access to higher education

- iii. Invite community voice as the college considers decisions that have community implications.
- iv. Prepare for future Central College students with an understanding of the emerging and changing student demographic.
 - 1. Strengthen existing and build relationships with community partners who serve diverse children and youth.
 - 2. Expand campus experiences for youth of all ages
- v. Sustain our holistic model privileging community voice and involving community partners as co-educators.
- b. Individual
 - i. Track, support, and celebrate individual civic engagement: volunteerism, participation on civic boards, etc.
 - 1. Consider incentives through annual review process
 - 2. Provide professional development opportunities for staff, both in terms of their own civic engagement and how better to serve as role models for students they work with through formal and informal reflection, conversation, etc.
 - ii. Utilize service Day as a key opportunity for a diverse group of staff and faculty to partner with students in civic engagement

3. Expand and enhance opportunities for community-based research and scholarship for students, faculty, and staff

- a. Survey partners and align needs with resources at Central to facilitate research opportunities between scholars on campus and community partners
 - i. Enhance outreach to students, faculty, and staff who engage in research and whose expertise and skills may be beneficial to community partners
 - ii. Create networking opportunities to facilitate connections between community partners with research needs and Central students, faculty, and staff with research expertise, centered on the goal of engaging in mutually-beneficial research and scholarship
- b. Strengthen the capacity for community-based research across the curriculum, with a focus on collaborative scholarship within courses and for independent study projects.
 - i. Provide continued support to courses centered on community-based research and scholarship
 - ii. Identify new opportunities for community-based research within existing courses, new courses, and/or independent study projects on campus.
 - iii. Provide workshop opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to learn about effectively conducting collaborative research in partnership with community organizations.
 - iv. Facilitate opportunities for scholars to present community-based research and scholarship on Central's campus.
 - v. Identify and provide support for students, faculty, and staff to attend local, regional, and national conferences and present scholarly work involving community-based research.
- c. Expand summer research opportunities
 - i. Expand research opportunities in the summer to include community-based research along with Bosch and Sustainability research
 - ii. Seek financial support for students and faculty sponsors to engage in collaborative summer research that involves community partners

4. Strengthen Civic Engagement and Service Learning infrastructure to guarantee student access to community partners

- a. Professional development and curriculum support

- e. Develop strategies to effectively communicate and highlight community-based research as part of “Central’s story”
- f. Utilize the framework and support from the Iowa Campus Compact Giving Voice Campaign to better tell the story of the civic mission of higher education.