



COE COLLEGE[®]

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Civic Action Plan

Expected Outcomes of Coe's Civic Action Plan

Coe College is a national, residential small liberal arts college that provides students with the opportunity to study within the arts and sciences, as well as professional programs, in an urban setting. The college has a distinctive practicum requirement that requires students to engage in their communities through internship programs in the local region and through study-abroad experiences that encourage students to engage with broader global communities. The mission of the college is to prepare students for meaningful lives and fulfilling careers in a diverse, interconnected world.

This Civic Action Plan is designed with two key goals in mind:

1. Improve the ways in which community engagement is documented and assessed at Coe (Internal Assessment and Impact); and
2. Improve the ways in which community engagement is included and highlighted in professional development at Coe (Professional Development).

Key Goals within the Next Year:

Internal Assessment and Impact

- Defining key terms of community-based learning;
- Identifying hiring practices that currently include civic and community engagement;
- Identifying aims in Coe's mission and strategic plan that give rise to community-based learning development; and
- Highlighting civic action plan across the college and emphasizing its aims to faculty, staff, and students at Coe.

Professional/Faculty Development

- Identifying incentives for faculty to engage in civic and community-based learning goals;
- Identifying current professional development opportunities surrounding community-based learning;
- Identifying currently taught courses in which civic and community engagement projects are central to the course goals; and
- Collating syllabi for courses that currently use community-based learning models.

Key Goals within the Next 3 Years:

Internal Assessment and Impact

- Rethinking Coe's marketing strategies for civic and community engagement, and reconsidering the ways in which the institution can frame its marketing materials to focus on community-based learning in a manner that complements the existing mission and strategic plan, and highlights the interconnected nature of community-based learning with the existing mission and strategic plan;
- Developing a college-wide system for tracking community-based learning in the classroom and outside it; and
- Developing a college-wide system for assessing the impact of community-based learning on students' actual career opportunities as well as students' perceived understanding of community-based learning on their career preparation.

Professional/Faculty Development

- Implementing incentives for faculty to develop community-based learning projects in the classroom, specifically incentives through yearly evaluations and promotion/tenure;
- Developing an assessment rubric for civic and community engagement projects that occur within the classroom;
- Expanding upon funding sources and general opportunities for community-based teaching and professional development; and
- Generating new and consistent institutional opportunities for faculty, student, and staff collaboration on community-based learning projects within and outside the classroom.

Coe's Civic Action Vision

In 2016, Coe began working toward the goals of its five-year Strategic Plan. Two of the key strategies of the Strategic Plan will be bolstered and enlivened through the Civic Action Plan. Those strategies include the following: 1) Demonstrating the value of the liberal arts and sciences for career preparation; and 2) Reflect the changing demographics and cultures in our global society.

Given that Coe is in the early stages of defining and implementing its civic action goals, this plan aims to focus on two capacity areas through which the college can develop, implement, and ultimately assess the strengths of civic engagement among the faculty and student body:

- Internal assessment and impact; and
- Professional development.

By implementing a system to systematically track, document, and assess the college's civic engagement focus on students and faculty, the college will obtain data that will demonstrate how faculty are engaging reciprocally in the local and global communities in ways that reenter the classroom, and how students are developing greater career preparation through reciprocal

engagement in their own local and global communities. Moreover, tracking, documenting, and ultimately assessing the impact of civic action within the college will allow us to show how the college itself reveals changing demographics and cultures through reciprocal engagement in the Cedar Rapids community.

A concurrent focus on professional development is designed to provide faculty with resources concerning civic and community engagement, as well as service-learning opportunities, within their classrooms, while also shifting the ways in which faculty at the college view the necessity of civic engagement. To fulfill the two strategies of Coe's Strategic Plan outlined above, we need to encourage faculty to expand the boundaries of the classroom space to include both local and global community members, and to provide community partners with reciprocal power to teach our students about the changing demographics and cultures in our increasingly global world.

Our vision is a short-term one that is designed to implement the first steps in expanding upon the institution's commitment to civic engagement, community engagement, and service-learning within the space of the liberal arts college. Coe recently created a Center for Creativity and Careers, which aims to connect the college to the Cedar Rapids community, and to develop community partnerships that will enable the college to expand its community engagement opportunities in the coming years. With the creation of the Center, the college has identified a need for assessing, tracking, and implementing community-based learning opportunities. At the same time, implementing the Civic Action Plan will require steps to bolster this foundation.

Coe's Approach to Developing a Civic Action Statement

As an institution, Coe has decided to focus on initial civic action goals that will have the greatest short-term impact and will provide us with a strong foundation for implementing additional civic action goals in the future.

Recent History of Coe's Approach to Civic Action Planning

➤ November 2016

Our path toward the current civic action goals began with a gathering of eight faculty and six staff members from across the college in November 2016. The group of faculty members was drawn from among the arts and sciences departments at Coe, as well as from the professional programs. The staff represented admission, marketing, career services, and human resources. The faculty members had diverse experiences in designing and implementing civic and community engagement, as well as service-learning, activities through the college and within the classroom, with some having no experience in these projects at all. The goal of this meeting was to determine two key areas of focus for Coe in the next one to three years as the institution reshapes its commitment to civic action and community engagement.

Through multiple discussions and assessment work using the Iowa Campus Compact Member Capacity Self-Assessment Rubric, the group members determined that "Internal Assessment and Impact," as well as "Professional Development," were the two most pressing areas for the

college. The group concluded that “community engagement is tracked and document in at least some programs and courses, but information is not systematically assessed or used.” As such, there is an immediate need for Coe to implement a system for tracking and documenting civic action work, and for using that information systematically in assessment of the college’s mission and the aims of its strategic plan. In addition, the group also concluded that “community engagement is included in a few, isolated professional development activities, but is not widely used.” Given these collective assessments, the faculty identified these two key areas for initial civic action work at the college with the understanding that Coe’s civic action plan will shift and expand in the coming years.

➤ January – April 2017

Following the initial meeting of faculty members from across the college in November 2016, a smaller group began gathering once per week from January – April 2017 with a goal of determining the following:

- Existing infrastructure from which we can build; and
- Ideas for new systems and tools at Coe to begin work on the two key features of the civic action plan.

The goal of these meetings was to establish a baseline for what is being done at Coe and to consider new approaches to expand the institution’s commitment to community engagement while also reshaping the faculty’s commitment to civic engagement activities through new professional development opportunities.

The following are a list of goals outlined for “Internal Assessment and Impact” that grew out of these meetings:

- Define civic engagement, community engagement, community-based learning, and service-learning so that the college has a baseline understanding of the terms used in civic action planning and has a set of defined terms through which to assess the institution’s progress;
- Identify hiring and evaluation processes and practices for faculty and staff that concern civic and community engagement (i.e., the level to which matters of civic and community engagement are taken into account in hiring processes and practices); and
- Identify the ways in which Coe’s mission is framed through a story of community-based learning and reciprocal engagement between the institution and its local/global communities.

The following are a list of goals outlined for “Professional/Faculty Development” that grew out of these meetings:

- Identify courses and specific course assignments that have been designed with community-based learning in mind;

- Identify faculty resources and opportunity for faculty development in community-based learning;
- Track when community-based projects are part of the classroom experience and when, differently, they are part of extracurricular activities through the college;
- Track student interest in community-based learning and student desire to participate in reciprocal community projects;
- Determine where and how students see benefits to civic and community engagement;
- Identify incentives for faculty to engage in community-based learning projects as part of coursework.

From these goals, the group considered specific aims within the next year given Coe's current infrastructure, as well as specific outcomes for which to aim within the next three years.