

The University of Utah
CIVIC ACTION PLAN
PHASE 1

May 2, 2017



This document presents the results of Phase 1 of the University of Utah's civic action plan process. It marks the first step in implementing the University's commitment, made at the 30th Anniversary Action Statement at the Campus Compact Summit of Presidents and Chancellors. The document was prepared by the Civic Action Plan Working Group, in collaboration with the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center, the Office of Engagement, and University Neighborhood Partners at the University of Utah.



INTRODUCTION

The mission of the University of Utah (the U) is to serve the people of Utah and the world through the discovery, creation and application of knowledge; through the dissemination of knowledge by teaching, publication, artistic presentation and technology transfer; and through community engagement. The U is one of over 350 colleges and universities to sign on to the 2015 Campus Compact Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education. This declaration states:

“This country cannot afford to educate a generation that acquires knowledge without ever understanding how that knowledge can benefit society or how to influence democratic decision-making. . . Higher education — its leaders, students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni — remains a key institutional force in our culture that can respond, and can do so without a political agenda and with the intellectual and professional capacities today’s challenges so desperately demand.”

The U is already home to an array of engagement efforts. Scholars are partnering with communities to carry out participatory research, students are learning content through collaboration with external partners, staff are building system-level partnerships with public and private actors, and much more. The U holds a Carnegie Classification as a Community-Engaged Research I University, and affirms its commitment to **“engage communities to improve health**

and quality of life” as one of its four core strategic goals.

The **Civic Action Plan Phase 1** lays out a set of proposed strategies that will assist the U in fulfilling its civic responsibility and enacting its four strategic goals. This plan is rooted in a vision of the University of Utah as a national leader in community engagement, advancing community-engaged scholarship, learning, and outreach through long-term collaborative partnerships.

The action plan presented here is a living document. It will evolve over time through the feedback and participation of the University and its communities. **Phase 2** of the action plan will involve a thorough process of communication, discussion, and revision. It will be inclusive of students, faculty, staff, administration, trustees, and community partners.

This plan does not represent a new direction for the University. It is aimed at enhancing the existing goals and efforts of University departments and offices such as the Bennion Center, the Office of Outreach and Engagement, and University Neighborhood Partners, working in collaboration with faculty, staff, and students across the University. It does, however, bring a new level of cross-campus coordination and collaboration to the U's community engagement efforts, with the ultimate goal of increasing impact on students, communities, and the University as a whole.

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Increase the number of students who have a deeply engaged community learning experience before they graduate from the U.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Enhance the university's capacity to appropriately value and assess community-engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure decisions.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Strengthen collaborations with key actors at the neighborhood, city, and county level to support community health, quality of life, and the promise of higher education.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4

Improve systems for documenting, assessing, and telling the story of community engagement at the U through shared data and indicators.



INSTITUTIONAL BASELINE

Faculty, staff, and students across the University are involved in a range of civic and community engaged activities through community engaged learning (CEL) classes, student groups, engaged research, and many other routes. Our most recent data shows:

- 330 CEL Courses, engaging 4,517 students
- 88 active student-led groups
- 50+ departments with faculty engaged on the city's west side
- 100+ community organizations and institutions engaged in partnership
- 400 K-12 programs engaging over 107,000 students since 2013

Three units at the University serve as a support system for engagement.



The Office of Engagement connects community with the promises of higher education by first helping young people IMAGINE and believe they can go to college, then by mentoring and preparing them through the process, and finally by helping them DO — fostering real achievement through counseling, engagement, and the creation of a safe space to learn and discover.



The Lowell Bennion Community Service Center fosters lifelong service and civic participation by engaging the University with the greater community in action, change, and learning. The Bennion Center supports student-led projects, Bennion Center Scholars, community engaged learning courses, faculty development, Utah Reads, community

outreach events, Bennion Service House living/learning opportunities, Issue & Action Education, and Alternative Break experiences.



University Neighborhood Partners (UNP) brings together University and West Side resources in reciprocal learning, action, and benefit. UNP represents a specific commitment by the University to decreasing barriers to higher education and supporting community well being in west Salt Lake City.

In 2010, a Community Engagement Faculty Task Force produced a set of recommendations for enhancing community engagement across the University, including ways to:

- Create new and expand existing support structures for community engaged scholarship
- Improve measurement and reporting of community engagement
- Increase awareness and visibility of community engaged scholarship

Since then, progress has been made in many areas, for example:

- The language of engagement has been integrated into university policies and documents including the university mission, strategic plan, and student pledge.
- New grant opportunities, awards, and celebrations have been created for faculty involved in community engaged learning and research.
- Reporting structures have been changed so that the Bennion Center, the Office of Engagement, and UNP all report to Academic Affairs.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Increase the number of students who have a deeply engaged community learning experience before they graduate from the U.

*The University of Utah prepares students from diverse backgrounds for lives of impact as leaders and citizens. In order to meet this goal, the U promotes participation in high impact programs, or “deeply engaged learning experiences.” This includes what we are calling **deeply engaged community learning experiences (DECLE)** — educational opportunities that invite students off campus to engage in collaborative, reciprocal learning relationships with community partners to address community-identified issues. With this plan, we look to increase access to DECLEs while enhancing our ability to track and celebrate the learning students are doing through community engagement.*

PROPOSED STRATEGIES

- Develop a shared definition of “deeply engaged community learning experience,” through dialogue with faculty, staff, students, and administration across campus.
- Work with faculty and staff to increase the number and quality of DECLEs, for example by increasing the number of CEL-designated courses and by integrating more engagement opportunities into the U’s living and learning communities.
- Strengthen the culture of community engaged learning at the U through outreach, awards, scholarships, and potentially an expanded transcript that recognizes DECLEs.
- Explore the possibility of a CEL course (or a DECLE) as a general education requirement, piloting the concept with one or two interested academic units.
- Integrate more DECLEs into existing general education courses.
- Improve data collection and analytics to track and report DECLEs, including systems to evaluate students’ civic competencies (Civic Awareness, Civic Skills, Civic Habits, and Civic Values).



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Enhance the university's capacity to appropriately value and assess community-engaged scholarship in promotion and tenure decisions.

Community-engaged scholarship (CES) is a core strategy for connecting the University's research mission with its public responsibilities. In collaboration with community partners, community-engaged scholars at the U are simultaneously advancing knowledge in their discipline or field and having an impact on the health and well-being of the communities with which they work. However, a persistent institutional hurdle has been the difficulty of appropriately assessing and valuing CES within systems of retention, promotion, and tenure (RPT).

In January 2016, SVPA Ruth Watkins convened the Ad Hoc Working Group on Community-Engaged Scholarship, charged with offering recommendations on how to appropriately assess and value CES within the University's structures, policies, and procedures. The result was a report, [Assessing and Valuing Community-Engaged Scholarship at the University of Utah](#). With this strategic direction, we commit to collaborating with academic units to begin implementing the Working Group's recommendations.

PROPOSED STRATEGIES

- Incorporate of a common definition of Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES) into the next version of the university-wide RPT template.
- Disseminate the Working Group's report to faculty, staff, students, community partners, and colleagues working on similar efforts at other institutions.
- Create multiple opportunities for feedback and dialogue about the report, with the goal of revising or further developing the recommendations.
- Convene a knowledge community of faculty and staff that can provide resources and best practices for units as they work to implement the report's recommendations, as befits their particular field and/or discipline.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Strengthen collaborations with key actors at the neighborhood, city, and county level to support community health, quality of life, and the promise of higher education.

*While the University of Utah's public mission extends across the state, it also has a particular responsibility as a place-based anchor institution in Salt Lake City. In 2002, the University launched **University Neighborhood Partners (UNP)**, a community-engaged department dedicated to decreasing barriers to higher education in the city's west side neighborhoods. In 2005, the University helped to found **A Capital City Education**, a partnership with the city, the school district, the library system, the chamber of commerce, and Salt Lake Community College, aimed at "cultivating a college, career, and civic-ready environment in Salt Lake City." With this strategic direction, the University commits to strengthening partnerships and integration with local government, businesses, community-based organizations, schools, and other institutions in order to build collective capacity to impact community health, wellbeing, and pathways to higher education for residents of Salt Lake City and surrounding areas.*

PROPOSED STRATEGIES

- Work with university leaders and community partners to identify a set of overarching social impact goals for engagement in the Salt Lake City area. This effort should begin with goals already developed through existing partnerships, such as A Capital City Education, and with the priorities of key partners.
- Assess current strategies through a survey of community residents and partners in order to identify gaps, duplication, successes, challenges, and new possibilities.
- Develop key indicators for each social impact goal and measure baseline data in collaboration with community partners.
- Leverage university assets to strengthen relationships with key partners at the neighborhood, city, and county level, and explore ways of better integrating efforts to improve overall civic capacity.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4

Improve systems for documenting, assessing, and telling the story of community engagement at the U through shared data and indicators.

The University is already home to numerous community engagement efforts. Unfortunately, this information is reported in different ways and through different systems, making a broad assessment of efforts exceedingly difficult. Moreover, the University has in recent years begun moving beyond “bean counting” toward a deeper, outcome-based approach to assessment in terms of impact on students, the University, and partner communities. While recognizing that different forms of engagement will require different types of outcomes and data, this strategic direction is about developing shared systems so that data on key indicators can be collected, communicated, and aggregated across units, beginning with the Office of Engagement, UNP, and the Bennion Center. This will allow the University to increase its impact and become better at telling the story of its civic commitments.

PROPOSED STRATEGIES

- Identify a set of core indicators for assessing community engagement, taking into account the impact on students, communities, advancement of knowledge, and the University — aligned with the goals of the University and its partners.
- Develop a system for inputting, sharing, and aggregating assessment data around these core indicators, with clearly identified responsibilities for maintaining it.
- Continue to develop deeper ways of measuring and describing student, University, and community outcomes.
- Use unique identifiers to track individuals involved in multiple University engagement efforts over time, in order to assess the success of our “pathways” approach to supporting educational opportunities.
- Set up a system for regular communication across the Bennion Center, the Office of Engagement, and UNP to keep up to date on each other’s activities and collaborate on areas of overlap.
- Implement a standard method of tracking individual student engagement on campus and in the community, including student-led efforts outside of the Bennion Center.



NEXT STEPS

Phase 1 of the Civic Action Plan was based in, and built upon, the work that faculty, students, staff, and partners are already doing in conjunction with the Office of Engagement, the Bennion Center, and UNP. Phase 2 will expand involvement to the broader University community and its partners through a process of sharing and dialogue beginning in Summer, 2017. This process will include:

- Distributing the Civic Action Plan Phase 1 online with avenues for feedback.
- Presenting the plan to University bodies including the Faculty Senate, the Council of Academic Deans, ASUU, and University Trustees.
- Campus town hall meetings to discuss the plan.
- Sharing the plan with key institutional partners and community leaders.

Through this process, the plan will be revised and expanded, with the goal of a new, updated plan completed at the end of the 2017–2018 academic calendar. This updated plan will include:

- Key outcomes with measures and indicators.
- A timeline for implementation.
- A plan for internal and external communication.



APPENDIX A

Civic Action Planning Task Force

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