

Minnesota Campus Compact's Vision of The Engaged Campus

The Engaged Campus vision expands the scope of our work from student involvement in service and service-learning to *campus-wide involvement in community partnerships*. Service and service-learning remain crucial to educating students for life-long, informed and active citizenship. Yet these strategies are only two of the many possible ways that campuses can and do collaborate with their communities in order to promote positive social change.

At the heart of the Engaged Campus is an active *institutional commitment to reciprocal, sustained relationships with local communities and organizations*. This commitment reflects both the specific mission of the campus and the public responsibilities of any major institution. It affects a wide range of decision-making processes, programs, and policies. It suggests the need to develop a long-term vision and short-term goals together with community residents and organizations, thereby building mutual understanding and trust. As both the campus and the community act on common goals, dialogue and evaluation continue.

A second key to broader engagement is *mobilization of a wide variety of human, material, and financial resources from both the campus and the community*. Many Minnesota Campus Compact member campuses have focused their efforts on involving students in service and service-learning. Additional campus resources that could be used to support collaborative programs or otherwise strengthen communities are often overlooked or disconnected from service and service-learning efforts. Meanwhile, many community assets go unrecognized because attention usually centers on community needs. The campus resources that might be marshaled include:

Human resources:

students
faculty
staff
administrators
alumni

Material resources:

office/meeting space
technology
library
gymnasium
other facilities

Financial resources:

purchasing
employee wages
and benefits
financial aid
investment funds

Intentional, strategic coordination of community partnerships guides resources toward projects that complement and build on each other, maximizing impact on all involved. Many campuses justifiably consider hiring a staff person to direct community initiatives a major step toward coordinating community engagement. That kind of infrastructure and leadership is certainly crucial, yet it is often all a program director can do to respond to individual requests. The Engaged Campus strives to build integrated and institutionalized leadership and support for outreach efforts. This, in turn, cultivates an expectation that all people involved in partnerships will think about how to connect various projects and resources in order to maximize impact.

Ultimately, *the Engaged Campus is a process rather than a destination.* Each of the 47 colleges and universities within the Minnesota Campus Compact network has already made a commitment to community involvement. Yet an ethic of continuous improvement will challenge member campuses – and Minnesota Campus Compact itself – to attend to the ever-

present possibilities for improving the quality and impact of our collaborative efforts. This approach is by far the best way for colleges and universities to develop high-quality programs and partnerships that positively impact their students and communities. The Engaged Campus theme is thus central to Minnesota Campus Compact's pursuit of its mission to engage colleges and universities in partnerships that strengthen communities and in education for informed and active citizenship.