



Campus Compact

## **Statement of Campus Compact for the National Commission on Military, Public, and National Service**

November 26, 2019

Campus Compact is committed to the strength of America's communities and of our democracy. We believe service in all its forms contributes to the achievement of those goals. We are therefore pleased to contribute to the deliberations of the Commission as it seeks to inspire every American to serve.

### **About Campus Compact**

Campus Compact is a national coalition of nearly 1000 colleges and universities enrolling roughly six million students. Our broad membership reflects the full diversity of higher education--two-year, four-year, public, private, and faith-based. Our network includes a national office and state and regional offices across the country, connecting institutions of higher education to communities to advance the common good.

We advance the public purposes of colleges and universities by deepening their ability to improve community life and to educate students for civic and social responsibility. Campus Compact envisions colleges and universities as vital agents and architects of a diverse democracy, committed to educating students for responsible citizenship in ways that both deepen their education and improve the quality of community life. Our national organization and many of our state and regional affiliates host national service programs, creating the opportunity for AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA members to facilitate higher education community engagement.

### **Our Recommendations to the Commission**

Campus Compact believes higher education can play a significant role in exposing students to the personal and public benefits of service and the opportunities for continued service beyond college. Research has shown this goal is best achieved when colleges and universities themselves make manifest to their students deep commitments to communities beyond the campus.<sup>1</sup> Our recommendations therefore focus both on creating pathways for students to

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<sup>1</sup> Barnhardt, C.L., Sheets, J.E. & Pasquesi, K. You Expect *What?* Students' Perceptions as Resources in Acquiring Commitments and Capacities for Civic Engagement  
Res High Educ (2015) 56: 622. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-014-9361-8>

become engaged in service and on situating student service in the context of deeper institutional engagement for the common good.

To advance the goal of supporting higher education participation in building a national commitment to service, we recommend:

- 1. Expand the community service dimension of the Federal Work Study (FWS) program.** Currently, the Higher Education Act requires that seven percent of FWS placements be community service positions. Many colleges and universities routinely exceed the minimum by substantial margins, demonstrating that it can be done if an institution makes it a priority. For students who must work to earn money to pay for college, FWS placements are their best opportunity for sustained community service participation. For all students, FWS community service placements help develop a sense of efficacy through service. Increasing the requirement to fifteen percent or more will create more positions, launching students on a lifetime of service and guaranteeing that the community service experience in college is available to students regardless of financial means.
- 2. Restore funding for Learn and Serve.** The Learn and Serve program was highly successful in inspiring and supporting colleges and universities to develop service learning programs. The elimination of that funding has slowed progress toward making a commitment to service an expected aspect of a college education. The highest priority, therefore, is to bring back funding oriented toward achieving that goal. Because the academic curriculum is the only experience in which all students participate, it is essential that we integrate the experience of service into the curriculum. We have learned a great deal since Learn and Serve was designed, and we have the opportunity to bring the program back with greater clarity about the curricular and pedagogical practices that maximize the impact of service learning experiences in developing service-oriented graduates. A renewed Learn and Serve program can help students understand how citizens acting together can improve their communities, thereby building a commitment to collective self-governance, the principle at the heart of the American tradition.
- 3. Restore funding for Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC), with expanded reach to include rural communities.** Through its grants, the COPC program, administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, helped “colleges and universities apply their human, intellectual, and institutional resources to the challenge of revitalizing distressed communities.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Community Opportunity Partnerships Centers Program, <https://www.hud.gov/programdescription/copc>

COPC grants built centers that organized community-facing work to increase effectiveness. Centers created a venue to integrate students into substantive service work linking cutting edge knowledge with community leadership to make positive change. As the research cited above suggests, this is the best way to build a sustainable civic commitment among students. While the earlier program served only urban areas, a revitalized COPC program should include rural areas to maximize impact and equity.

- 4. Increase the value of the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, make it non-taxable, and formalize a program for university matching.** The Education Award is a tangible way of showing the value the country places on service. It is also a way of opening up access to national service for lower income students. To be a major benefit in the context of the real cost of higher education, its value must be increased. In addition to increasing the dollar amount and eliminating taxability, the Department of Education can create a formal program encouraging colleges and universities to match the award and celebrating those who do.

Taken together, these policy changes can increase the extent to which college students see service as an integral part of their lives; demonstrate that the value of service is shared among governmental and educational institutions; and create the kinds of opportunities through which students will develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to serve local and national communities enthusiastically and effectively.