



## **Campus Compact: The Project for Public and Community Service**

Nancy C. Rhodes  
Outgoing Director  
Campus Compact  
Brown University

### **Overview**

**F**ounded in 1985, *Campus Compact: The Project for Public and Community Service* is a national coalition of 520 college and university presidents committed to helping students develop the values and skills of citizenship through participation in public and community service.

Member campuses are bonded together as a coalition, actively supporting presidents, faculty, staff, and students to reach into the community to build partnerships and to improve the social and economic well-being of our communities.

Membership represents every sector of higher education. There is a Campus Compact network for historically black colleges and universities and a national center for community colleges, as well as state Campus Compact offices in California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Washington, and West Virginia. Nearly 80 percent of the current members are from one of these networks, a steady increase that has taken place over the past four years.

Headquartered at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, Campus Compact has been a project of the Denver-based Education Commission of the States, a national nonprofit organization formed in 1965 that works with policymakers and educators to improve education at all levels.

### **History of Campus Compact**

In the mid-1980s, media portrayed college students as self-absorbed and more interested in their future earning potential than in the future of their communities. The annual freshman survey conducted by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute corroborated this image; in 1983, 69 percent of freshman indicated it was important to be well-off financially, while only 44 percent said it was important to develop a meaningful philosophy of life.

Several college and university presidents believed this generalization failed to honor and reflect the service work in which their students were quietly participating in their communities.

In 1985, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching published Frank Newman's report, *Higher Education and the American Resurgence*, which made the critical connection between higher education and "its original purpose of preparing students for a life of involved and committed citizenship." Newman argued that participating in public and community service would help students acquire the citizenship skills necessary for "helping this country to be not simply a strong competitor but a responsible and effective leader in a complicated world."

Newman, president of the Education Commission of the States, joined with Brown University President Howard Swearer, Georgetown University President Timothy Healy, and Stanford University President Donald Kennedy to counter the public image of student apathy and materialism and to encourage more students to become involved in community service that was linked to a vision of citizenship. They believed that if they and other college presidents issued a call to students and provided supportive structures on their campuses, students would respond and get involved in community service.

In October 1985, these four led a group of seventy-five college presidents in forming the Project for Public and Community Service. In a statement released at the meeting, the presidents acknowledged: "Over the last decade the interest of college students in their obligations to society have diminished. More and more of them have become preoccupied with personal goals and career aspirations." President Howard Swearer added that despite this observation, "there have been recent signs that there are more students willing to take advantage of public service opportunities if they are presented with opportunities to do so." As a coalition, this group vowed to provide visibility and leadership for community service and to provide on-campus staff and administrative support for the student service efforts.

Over the next four years, membership doubled as Campus Compact developed technical support for college campuses and continued to emphasize student volunteerism as its central mission. Efforts focused on a national literacy project and on a major mentoring initiative, Campus Partners in Learning, which promoted "best practices" in campus-based mentoring programs for youth at risk of failing in school. The community service movement was growing, with increased student awareness and participation, as well as increased administrative and financial support.

On the national front, interest for a federal program of service was at a high level. In July 1989, nine different bills on national service were pending in Congress. Campus Compact played a major role in supporting these legislative initiatives which eventually came together as the National and Community Service Act of 1990. In an editorial in *Change* magazine, then Campus Compact Director Susan Stroud stated, "The importance of federal encouragement of commu-

nity service on campus should not be underestimated. The federal government can send a strong message about national priorities, provide seed money for programs that leverage state and institutional funds, and test new approaches to student finance. A strong federal role, in combination with the creativity and commitment of the campuses, puts us on the road to a new ethic of service in American education."

### Service Learning

As more students volunteered and the national climate grew more supportive, Campus Compact began to look at ways service could be fully institutionalized on campuses. In 1989 Donald Kennedy and David Warren, then presidents of Stanford University and Ohio Wesleyan University, respectively, and members of Campus Compact's executive committee, commissioned a study of faculty attitudes toward integrating community service into teaching and research. Kennedy noted that presidents come and go and students pass through for only four years, but faculty are "the hardy perennial" of higher education. Any effort to institutionalize community service would have to receive "buy-in," or endorsement, from faculty and be directly linked to the academic mission. The 1990 report by Timothy Stanton of Stanford University, *Integrating Public Service with Academic Study: the Faculty Role*, outlined the need for three key initiatives: 1) to expand and strengthen faculty participation through recognition, reward, and incentives for involvement; 2) to define a faculty role in which they link students' public service with academic study; and 3) to revise the curriculum with the objective of developing in students a sense of civic responsibility and the skills necessary for effective citizen participation.

Utilizing the findings of this report, Campus Compact launched its Project on Integrating Service with Academic Study (ISAS) in 1990. The goal of the ISAS project is to provide training, advice on strategy, and technical assistance to colleges and universities that are working to build community service into their teaching and research. While resources such as syllabi are available to individual faculty, the emphasis is on building campus teams and action plans that aim to institutionalize service on individual campuses.

Over three years, sixty Compact member institutions sent teams of five people each to ISAS Summer Institutes to study the pedagogy of service learning, its role in citizenship, how it is institutionalized, and how courses can be redesigned. Participating teams designed action plans to guide their work after the institute. Compact staff followed the progress of these teams through campus visits, surveys, and phone calls. A series of publications analyzed the factors related to successful incorporation of service learning and provided suggestions for planning for service learning.

The institutes became regional in 1994, and through November 1996, twenty-five regional institutes have involved 1,000 faculty, community-service directors, provosts, and other members of the campus community. Out of the interest of faculty who participated

in these training institutes, the Invisible College was conceived in 1994 to bring together faculty leaders in service learning. The Invisible College, made up of faculty engaged in service learning, supported the work of the regional institutes and sponsored National Gatherings in Providence in May 1995 and in Indianapolis in June 1996 of faculty and other educators across the spectrum of disciplines to hear from their peers about efforts to integrate service into the classroom. These National Gatherings were the first meetings of faculty solely dedicated to service learning.

As more faculty become interested in service learning and want to explore ways in which they can build service into the curriculum, Campus Compact has increased its efforts to bring these faculty together and to strengthen service learning within specific disciplines. A monograph series on service learning initiated by the Invisible College is being published to focus on the connection between service learning and disciplines. Through a grant from the Corporation for National Service, Campus Compact is offering mini-grants for faculty in science, engineering, architecture, mathematics, and computer science to introduce community service into their classes.

Connecticut College President and immediate past chair of Campus Compact's executive committee Claire Gaudiani says service learning has the power to engage students in a profound way. At a recent Lilly Foundation Conference, President Gaudiani talked about her experiences teaching a literature course with a service-learning component:

Service learning is a deep integration of service into the theoretical and pedagogical framework of a college course. It is not a simple add-on where students perform voluntary service on the side. A service learning course is a risk-taking and pioneering framework where action and reflection coexist and interact to enhance learning . . . Service learning is going to be the next area of intellectual risk-taking that we will undertake with our students and, we hope, with our communities. If we do, the academic framework will become more responsive to the wider community, to building relationships, and to building caring as well as competence in our democratic civil society.

Integrating service with academic study will continue to be a focus of the Compact's work in the next few years. By weaving community service into the curriculum, service becomes an essential part of the academic fabric, helping to institutionalize community service on the campus.

### **Future Directions**

When Campus Compact entered its second decade last year, Compact-member presidents began to address the larger issue of campus and community partnerships — and the responsibilities higher-education institutions have to their local communities. At the March 1996 Presidents' Colloquium, the presidents committed to a set of five principles supporting the notion that "Campus Compact

---

presidents are joined together in their commitment to the development of personal and social responsibility as integral to the educational mission of their campuses." The presidents agreed that:

1. Campus Compact presidents strongly advocate the participation of students, faculty, staff, and higher-educational institutions in public and community service. Such service may range from individual acts of student volunteerism to institution-wide efforts to improve the social and economic well-being of America's communities.

2. Campus Compact presidents share a resolute commitment to speak out on issues of public concern and to articulate ideas that contribute to the common good of American and global society. Campus Compact member presidents strive to influence the quality of civic discourse and to ensure that key issues of civic concern are fairly discussed in impartial public forums.

3. Campus Compact presidents support initiatives that promote productive collaborations between colleges and communities. Such initiatives seek to create opportunities for renewed civic and community life, improved educational and economic opportunity, expanded democratic participation by citizens, and the application of the intellectual and material resources of higher education to help address the challenges that confront communities.

4. Campus Compact presidents support the development of opportunities that increase student, faculty, staff, and alumni involvement in citizenship-building service activities. Community and public service, especially when linked to the core educational mission of the college and university, is a powerful vehicle for developing citizenship skills — including participation in the political process — and the spirit of civic engagement required for life in a democratic civil society.

5. Campus Compact presidents support service learning because it enables students and faculty to integrate academic study with service through responsible and reflective involvement in the life of the community.

The presidents also outlined fourteen steps presidents can take to put these principles into action. One step is to "partner with local nonprofits, the federal government, and the state for neighborhood redevelopment, community reinvestment, or K-16 collaborations."

Participants at the colloquium heard from Alexander Astin about his recent research that links student community service to several positive behaviors and attitudes, including: an improved sense of civic responsibility, and a greater likelihood to socialize across racial

---

and ethnic lines, to finish college, and to be involved in their communities after graduation. Robert Putnam introduced his study on America's declining participation in civic institutions such as the Parent Teacher Association and bowling leagues. He challenged the presidents to help restore the nation's civic life and rebuild America's social capital — as, de Tocqueville noted, a critical component in making democracy work.

These two speakers both touched on what was at the heart of Campus Compact's founding: a recognition that U.S. society cannot function well without educated and active citizens, and that participation in community service helps students develop these critical citizenship skills.

Campus Compact's vision has evolved since its founding in 1985. The mission has deepened and expanded from one of promoting community service, to linking service with the curriculum, to seeing the campus as citizen.

Research Campus Compact will undertake in 1997 will measure the long-term impact on students of participation in community service and will examine schools that have publicly committed to community service. Campus Compact continues to explore ways to mobilize campus-based service to help communities and to develop citizens.

### **About the author**

Nancy Rhodes will step down as director of Campus Compact March 1, 1997, a position she held after serving 18 months as acting director, since January 1994. Rhodes oversees all projects of Campus Compact and the continuing development of its network.

Prior to joining Campus Compact in 1991, Rhodes was chief policy analyst for education and the arts to the Rhode Island governor. For eight years, she was a member of the Brown University admissions office.

Rhodes holds a master's degree in education administration, planning, and social policy from Harvard University and a bachelor of arts degree from Smith College. She is a doctoral candidate in the Harvard Graduate School of Education.