

# **William Paterson University Civic Action Plan**

February 2018

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### A University Commitment to Civic Engagement

As part of the Strategic Plan 2012-2022, the William Paterson University community pledged to provide students with exceptional opportunities beyond the classroom. Specifically, the University encouraged and supported faculty to develop experiences for students linked directly to coursework and emphasized civic engagement opportunities for students, including opportunities through the American Democracy Project, Campus Compact and community service projects developed and implemented by William Paterson faculty and staff. Civic engagement is a cornerstone of the University Core Curriculum (UCC) through the Area 5: Community and Civic Engagement; William Paterson University was the first public university in New Jersey to establish a civic engagement course requirement. All new first-year students and most transfer students who come to William Paterson without having completed an associate degree now complete one or more civic engagement courses before they graduate.

Throughout 2014-2015, at the request of the Provost and Vice President for Student Development, a committee worked to help define long-term civic engagement goals for the University. Starting in the 2015-2016 academic year, President Waldron appointed Associate Provost Jonathan Lincoln and Director of Campus Activities, Service and Leadership, Donna Minnich Spuhler to share responsibility for leading William Paterson University's Student Civic Engagement Strategy and Programs. Their charge was to better support the next phase of developing and expanding civic engagement opportunities to all students inside and outside the classroom. A comprehensive web site was developed (<http://www.wpunj.edu/civic-engagement/>) and a cross-divisional advisory body that provides faculty and staff input for civic engagement was established (<http://wpunj.edu/civic-engagement/commitment/internal-advisory-group.html>)

Context for the university's civic action plan can be found on this website:

The William Paterson commitment to civic engagement is embedded in the institutional mission and values as well as strategic plan: <http://wpunj.edu/civic-engagement/commitment/index.html>

Civic Engagement is supported at the highest levels of university leadership: <http://wpunj.edu/president/campus-letters/president-message-mar22-2016.html>

Civic Engagement is well-integrated within the University Core Curriculum: <http://wpunj.edu/civic-engagement/ucc.html>

The University has defined the expectations for a civically engaged student and developed a mechanism to both encourage and document participation: <http://www.wpunj.edu/campus-activities/Leadership-Badge.html>

The University is using a wide range of strategies to assess the success and impact of our civic engagement initiative: <http://wpunj.edu/civic-engagement/commitment/assessment.html>.

## The Future of Civic Engagement at William Paterson University

Students, faculty and staff throughout William Paterson University have actively demonstrated a commitment to civic engagement. This commitment, through our curriculum and other activities, sits at the heart of our university's value system and we have acted to accelerate the development of programs and opportunities. As we continue on to our next phase of civic engagement activities, we will continue to build upon what we have already accomplished, documented throughout the William Paterson University Civic Engagement Website (<http://wpunj.edu/civic-engagement>), and work with our existing strengths.

Grounded in best practices and building upon the aforementioned commitment and initiatives, the William Paterson University Civic Action Plan includes four inter-related goals:

### **Goal 1: Increase WP students' civic engagement participation to meet established goals by 2021.**

As noted above, the university has established overall engagement goals for William Paterson University graduates. Therefore, our first priority is achievement of these participation goals:

- A. 100% of first-time entering students will meet the following criteria:
  - successfully complete UCC Area 5 requirements before graduation.
- B. 75% of all first time entering students will meet all of the following criteria:
  - participate in at least two low to mid-level civic engagement activities during their first two years at WPU.
  - participate in at least two high level civic engagement activities before graduation.
- C. 70% of all transfer students will meet all of the following criteria:
  - successfully complete UCC Area 5 requirements before graduation (for those who still need to complete this requirement)
  - participate in at least one low to mid-level civic engagement activity during their first year at WPU
  - participate in at least one high level civic engagement activities before graduation

#### Action Items:

- Achievement of these goals requires that we continue developing both low-level and high-level opportunities available to students throughout their academic career at William Paterson University.
- In addition, achievement of these goals requires that students are made aware of these goals and are provided appropriate incentive for achieving these goals.
- To that end, we will continue to engage students when they first arrive on campus to help them understand that community service and civic engagement is not only “good for others”, but key to their own academic and personal success and follow up with regular communications on this topic through email and social media.
- Finally, we will continue to refine the Digital Badge system as a means to document student achievement of these goals and to appropriately incentivize participation.

**Goal 2: Identify and Develop additional high-level activities embedded in University Core Curriculum Community and Civic Engagement (Area 5) courses and elsewhere in the curriculum.**

We are on target with providing sufficient low-level Community and Civic Engagement opportunities both on-campus and in the community primarily through activities planned by the Office of Campus Activities, Service and Leadership (CASL). And while CASL also plans and executes a number of successful high-level experiences for students such as alternate spring breaks and the Pioneer Service Ventures, providing sufficient high-level experiences for the established goals requires that these experiences are available through their academic programs as well as non-academic programming. Furthermore, although we already provide enough Community and Civic Engagement (Area 5) courses to make them available to all students, we need to provide opportunities for these courses to embed community engagement activities when appropriate to the course.

**Action Items:**

- Target strategic planning funds to help support community-based activities embedded in Community and Civic Engagement (Area 5) courses.
- In collaboration with the University Core Curriculum Senate Council and the William Paterson University Center for Teaching Excellence, provide ongoing professional development opportunities that support faculty in their efforts to integrate community-based activities within their courses.
- Continue to make faculty aware of opportunities available through collaboration with the Office of Campus Activities, Service and Leadership.
- Identify and document high-level Community and Civic Engagement experiences already in place within existing curriculum and academic departments.
- Assist academic departments pursuing curriculum revisions that provide students with high-level Community and Civic Engagement.

**Goal 3: Support the campus culture of community and civic engagement.**

As noted above and at <http://wpunj.edu/civic-engagement>, William Paterson University has a long and rich history of Community and Civic Engagement including being a founding member of the New Jersey Campus Compact chapter and an early member of the American Democracy Project. It is therefore our goal to not only maintain, but also further strengthen and support the existing culture of Community and Civic Engagement on campus.

**Action Items:**

- Identify and recognize all appropriate low-level and high-level Community and Civic Engagement activities offered across all divisions within the university through the Community and Civic Engagement website and the WP LEADs Digital Badge system.
- Regularly highlight Community and Civic Engagement activities offered across all divisions within the university through traditional and electronic media.
- Continue regular communications with students, faculty and staff.
- Actively engage with appropriate regional and national organizations such as Campus Compact and the American Democracy Project.
- Integrate community and civic engagement into the curriculum for individual major programs in addition to the University Core Curriculum when appropriate for the discipline.

- Take steps to prepare for Elective Carnegie Community Engagement Classification based on most recent documentation framework. Specifically, identify existing and develop new mechanisms for gathering community feedback such that we have met this requirement in time for the 2025 application cycle.

**Goal 4: Develop impactful relationships with community partners.**

As we continue to grow Community and Civic Engagement opportunities for our students, faculty and staff, we must ensure that these efforts continue to be of value to our community partners. As we seek to expand opportunities, we must be mindful that our community is defined by more than geographic proximity. For many of our students, community means their home city, county or even country.

**Action Items:**

- Sustain, replicate and grow existing partnerships by working closely with these partners to ensure we provide a level of effective volunteer support that furthers our combined missions.
- Seek new community partners with potential for long-term, sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships.
- Connect faculty doing community-based research with appropriate community partners through structures such as the Paterson Metropolitan Region Research Center, the William Paterson University Professional Development Schools Network and United for Prevention in Passaic County.
- Regularly seek feedback from partners and the community to ensure that our collaboration is impactful.
- Take steps through outreach, regular and electronic media to make our community aware that William Paterson University is an engaged campus.
- Students give back to the communities they care for; therefore, as we identify new partnerships we will take this into account as we define the communities we serve.