The Urgency and Relevance of Community Engagement:
How Institutional Values are Manifested through Commitment to the Public Good

Every college and university in the United States currently faces an existential crises as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The immense associated challenges and uncertainties raise questions about whether many institutions will survive. The disparate impacts of COVID-19, as well as the effects of institutional racism that continue to profoundly impact our nation's marginalized communities, have laid bare again, the staggering social and economic inequalities and injustices that continue to plague our country and the world.

The current crises have shone a light on the debilitating effects of political and social divisions and mistrust in our country. This moment serves as a powerful reminder that our civic mission rests on our collective ability to improve the human condition for everyone

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through effective long-term, reciprocal community engagement and partnerships. Our institutions play a critical role in preserving the health of our democracy. In addition, our country's polarization and systemic racism require us to fulfill our moral obligation as civic leaders and institutions. Now more than ever, it is imperative that our universities prioritize community engagement in strategic initiatives and budgeting.

This moment calls for a renewed commitment to the civic mission of higher education. Now is a time to recommit to our vital community and civic engagement initiatives, and indeed to increase investment in this work – particularly the infrastructure that supports and facilitates education and research connections that respond to the immediate community needs.

Our community engagement centers and programs are committed, determined, and well poised to take an even more active role in the democratic education of students and contribute to the public good, especially in advancing the anti-racism work that this moment demands and the creation of a more just and equitable post-COVID-19 global society.

Meaningful and ethical engagement with communities does not just happen. It takes intentionality, infrastructure and people to develop and maintain deep, mutually respectful partnerships that enhance institutional relationships with communities. Our community engagement centers and programs connect communities with our academic missions.

Above all, we bring people together to build more inclusive, participatory, and equitable communities. We believe higher education plays a crucial role in that effort—by educating students for lives of public engagement and supporting greater access and opportunity for all. As higher education leaders, you are well aware of the questions of relevance and challenges that face our institutions. Our community engagement centers and programs are leading the way in building trust with marginalized communities and demonstrating the value and significance of our institutions.

The following are community engagement examples from across California Campus Compact members. Now is the time to support and expand these efforts.

Campus Examples

[Cal Poly Pomona, Center for Community Engagement](#)
Cal Poly Pomona Kids Activities and Resources for Educational Support (KARES) is a site developed by Cal Poly Pomona students providing Southern California parents/caregivers of children aged 0-12 with access to educational activities and resources that can assist with educating children at home during the school closures.

[California State University, Channel Islands, Center for Community Engagement](#)
Dr. Robin Mitchell's History students interviewed others about their experiences during COVID-19, capturing information (an article, podcast, etc.) about the pandemic and the students recorded their own experiences in "Women of the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic: A Collection of Journal Entries, Analyses, and Student Reflections."

[California State University, Dominguez Hills, Center for Service Learning, Internships, & Community Engagement](#)
The Center for Service Learning, Internships, &Community Engagement assists community partners with emergency resources, grant proposal writing, and grant funding.

[California State University, Fresno, Jan and Bud Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning](#)
The Center trained faculty on how to teach effective online service-learning courses and worked with community partners focused on developing meaningful virtual service opportunities that provide quality service and learning for students.

[California State University, Los Angeles, Center for Engagement, Service & the Public Good](#)
Cal State LA partnered with the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank and Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor Hilda Solis in a regional food distribution to over 2500 families.

[California State University, Sacramento, Community Engagement Center](#)
The Community Engagement Center is hosting the Network Café - a monthly meeting bringing local non-profits together to share resources and information.

[California State University, San Bernardino, Office of Community Engagement](#)
The Office of Community Engagement created a COVID-19 virtual resource guide featuring basic needs information, community-based resources, and virtual volunteering opportunities.

[California State University, San Marcos, Office of Service Learning](#)
The Office of Service Learning designed and facilitated webinars providing support for 40 community partners and faculty as they adapted their service learning to a virtual environment.

[Dominican University, Center for Community Engagement/Service-Learning](#)
The Center for Community Engagement launched a yearlong initiative *Everyone Counts: Census 2020*, participating with a coalition of organizations focused on outreach to the hard-to-count, racial minority communities in Marin County.

[Harvey Mudd College, Community Engagement](#)
Through the Homework Hotline, HMC student tutors offer open access, free, over-the-phone tutoring for students in grades 4-12th.

[Humboldt State University, Center for Community Based Learning](#)
Approximately 200 students in Service Learning and Academic Internship classes are conducting research and collecting stories about the short-term and long-term effects and responses to COVID-19 in Humboldt County, called *Humboldt in the Time of COVID*.

[Loyola Marymount University, The Center for Service & Action](#)
The Center for Service & Action created a COVID-19 virtual resources page for LMU students to access service, justice, and advocacy opportunities that keep them in engaged in the community and doing the work of LMU's Ignatian tradition.

[Occidental College, Center for Community Based Learning](#)
The Center for Community Based Learning provides financial resources to community partners for online engagement with students. Civically engaged student and faculty scholars support community-based projects.

[Pepperdine University, Pepperdine Volunteer Center](#)
The Center cultivated service and engagement opportunities (called *Waves of Service*) that could be supported remotely, for the entire Pepperdine community, faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends.

[San Diego State University, Service Learning and Community Engagement Program](#)
The Service Learning and Community Engagement Program created a website

resource for faculty development: Adapting to the Coronavirus Crisis.

[San Francisco State University, Institute for Civic & Community Engagement](#)
The Institute for Civic & Community Engagement created online "meet, greet, and connect" workshops to provide the campus community the platform to engage with community members, highlight the work of SFSU's partners, and connect students to leadership opportunities for serving and participating in the current civic and social movements in support of the Black and Indigenous communities.

[Sonoma State University, Center for Community Engagement](#)
The Center for Community Engagement (CCE) partners with the Sonoma County Library to collect primary sources related to life during COVID-19. Over 15 service-learning classes are involved with this project.

[Stanford University, Haas Center for Public Service](#)
Stanford University student teams created a map of all food stamp-accepting retailers in the SF Bay Area, tailored to the needs of food stamp beneficiaries.

[University of California, Los Angeles, Center for Community Learning](#)
Students in community-engaged courses mapped COVID-19 data to understand how a state's policy regarding coronavirus affects citizen mobility.

[University of San Diego, The Mulvaney Center for Community Awareness and Social Action](#)
Students and faculty created GIS story maps of University of San Diego's community engaged work during COVID.

[University of San Francisco, Leo T. McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good](#)
The Center partnered with the community to create a course, *COVID-19 and Inequalities: Understanding and Responding to the Disparities in a Global Pandemic through Asset-Based Community Engaged Learning.*