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Civic Responsibility:
What Is the Campus Climate for Learning?

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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Core Commitments:
Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility
An initiative of

Association of American Colleges and Universities
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About Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility

Core Commitments, a signature initiative from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), aims to reclaim and revitalize the academy’s role in fostering students’ development of personal and social responsibility. Funded by the John Templeton Foundation, the initiative is designed to help campuses create learning environments in which all students reach for excellence in the use of their talents, take responsibility for the integrity and quality of their work, and engage in meaningful practices that prepare them to fulfill their obligations as students in an academic community and as responsible global and local citizens.

Core Commitments focuses national attention on the importance of students exploring questions about ethical responsibility to self and others. Core Commitments was developed in concert with AAC&U’s Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative, which champions a set of learning outcomes—including personal and social responsibility—that are essential for all college students’ achievement in the twenty-first century.

Through a series of interrelated projects, Core Commitments provides national visibility and leadership, and assists campuses as they articulate clear expectations for students’ personal and social responsibility and develop intentional opportunities to advance and assess students’ progress over time. These projects include a leadership consortium selected from a national pool of applicants; research and assessment, including the development of a new campus climate instrument; a presidential call to action; outreach activities at national conferences; and a growing set of Web-based resources. For more information about this initiative, visit www.aacu.org/Core_Commitments.

The Core Commitments Leadership Consortium

Allegheny College
Babson College
Bowling Green State University
California State University–Northridge
Concordia College–Moorhead
Elizabethtown College
Miami University
Michigan State University
Middlesex Community College
Oakland Community College
Portland State University
Rollins College
Sacred Heart University
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Saint Mary’s College of California
St. Lawrence University
United States Air Force Academy
United States Military Academy
University of Alabama–Birmingham
University of Central Florida
University of the Pacific
Wagner College
Winthrop University
Acknowledgments

The authors would like to offer special thanks to the following individuals for making this report possible. First, we wish to acknowledge the alumni of the University of Michigan Core Commitments team, including Chris Jensen, Karen Moronski, Ryan Smerek, and Veronica Vergoth, for their assistance in the early stages of the project. Next, we would like to express our thanks to the Core Commitments Leadership Consortium teams and other campus leaders at those institutions, whose feedback throughout the project enhanced the quality of this work, and for the thousands of respondents who volunteered their time and offered their insights through completing the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory.

Our colleagues on the AAC&U staff deserve special mention, especially Caryn McTighe Musil, Nancy O’Neill, and Michèle Leaman, who offered wonderful editorial suggestions and generally made the whole enterprise run, and L. Lee Knefelkamp, whose intellectual leadership throughout the project was invaluable.

Finally, we most gratefully acknowledge the John Templeton Foundation, for providing both the leadership and the resources that were so critical to the success of this project.

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Introduction to the Series

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) is pleased to present Civic Responsibility: What Is the Campus Climate for Learning? This report is part of Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility, an AAC&U initiative that is supported by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation. In this report, the first of three Core Commitments research studies, Eric L. Dey and his associates from the University of Michigan Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education offer revealing data on the perceptions of four campus groups—faculty, students, student affairs professionals, and academic administrators—regarding the availability of learning opportunities that help college students recognize and act on their responsibility to their educational community and to the wider society.

Civic Responsibility: What Is the Campus Climate for Learning? focuses on whether—and which—educational environments promote civic learning. Exploring data that illuminate similar questions about enabling environments, the second report, Developing a Moral Compass: What Is the Campus Climate for Ethics and Academic Integrity?, and the third, Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others: What Is the Campus Climate for Engaging Diverse Viewpoints?, will both be released in 2010.

This first report examines campus climate trends across students and campus professionals who completed an instrument called the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI): An Institutional Climate Measure along one important dimension of education for personal and social responsibility—whether college students have ample opportunities to prepare for knowledgeable and engaged citizenship. Importantly, Dey and associates show that across all four of the groups surveyed, respondents strongly agree that recognizing and acting on one's obligation to the larger community should be an essential—not optional—outcome of college. This is news worth celebrating, and we believe this strong endorsement is reflective of the decades of work undertaken by campuses and national organizations in the areas of civic engagement, service learning, diversity and global learning, and democratic engagement.

However, these findings also indicate that work remains to be done to make robust forms of civic learning pervasive across the curriculum and cocurriculum and available to all students. When asked if their institutions currently make contributing to a larger community a major focus, far fewer respondents—across all four groups—strongly agreed. There is a troubling gap on campuses between aspiration and actuality.

The report takes readers through some of the nuances of this gap for the colleges and universities that were part of the study—the nature of it, the extent of it, where it exists, and for whom. Exploring the nuances of this gap is an important step institutions should take as part of their ongoing work to strengthen their educational programs, across the curriculum and cocurriculum. The crucial next step is then to identify strategies to close the gap, and to monitor progress in doing so.

The Core Commitments research grows out of AAC&U’s broader framing of key outcomes for a twenty-first-century college education, taken up most recently through the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative. LEAP is organized around a set of essential learning outcomes, which college graduates need to thrive as responsible workers and citizens (see appendix A). The LEAP outcomes are: (1) knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, (2) intellectual and practical skills, (3) personal and social responsibility, and (4) integrative learning. Core Commitments is designed to bring attention to the personal and social responsibility outcome, which AAC&U often refers to as the “orphan” outcome. While many nod assent to the outcome’s importance, few take the initiative of ensuring that students are actually educated for personal and social responsibility.

AAC&U affirms that all students must have multiple opportunities over time to practice excellence, integrity, and civic commitments as part of their basic responsibilities as learners. And we argue that if students are to become accountable for pursuing these things, we—faculty, student affairs professionals, and...
academic administrators—must become much more intentional about articulating these expectations to students, about creating ongoing opportunities for students to acquire these capacities, about assessing how well students are acquiring them, and about learning—across the academy—from our shared progress.

To illustrate this point, the data in this report indicates that while nearly one-half of students in the sample of 24,000 strongly agreed that they came to college aware of the importance of contributing to the greater good, only one-third felt strongly that their awareness had expanded while in college, that the campus had helped them learn the skills needed to effectively change society for the better, or that their commitment to change society for the better had grown while in college.

The good news here is that many students are primed to focus on contributing to community from the time they enter college, and these students can be encouraged to publicly advocate for this goal among their peers. But more must be done to help all students deepen these commitments. We are obliged to help them build their knowledge, skills, and sense of efficacy so that they can make meaningful contributions in the face of often daunting and deeply entrenched social problems.

We hope this report proves useful to campuses interested in making education for personal and social responsibility an essential outcome of their educational programs. The report might prompt a campus to collect its own data on constituents’ perceptions about education for personal and social responsibility and engage in meaningful dialogue across groups as it charts a course of action. The Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory used in this research is currently being refined and will be available to the broader higher education community in the future. For resources that can assist campuses in strengthening education for personal and social responsibility right now, be sure to visit AAC&U’s Core Commitments Web page, www.aacu.org/Core_Commitments.

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Foreword

This report on the campus climate for civic learning is being released by AAC&U’s Core Commitments initiative at a crucial juncture in the history of U.S. higher education.

Policy and philanthropic leaders have clearly signaled a new determination to provide postsecondary education to many more Americans than ever before. Today, about one in three Americans has completed a two- or four-year college degree; the new goal is to increase that number to six out of ten Americans. This priority reflects a widespread understanding that the global economy places a premium on higher-level skills and offers dramatically lessened opportunities for those who lack them.

Yet the new policy emphasis on “access and completion” has been strikingly devoid of any discussion about what today’s students actually need to accomplish in college. To date, the discussion has focused on jobs and job training; even the call for “higher-level skills” has been left vague and underdeveloped.

The time is right, then, for higher education itself to advance a compelling public vision of the learning that matters most in college, moving beyond issues of credit hours and years-to-degree to focus on the capabilities Americans will need for a turbulent global environment and a diverse democracy facing unprecedented challenges.

As this Core Commitments study and AAC&U’s related work make clear, the academy is ready, both to provide this public vision and to affirm that educating students for personal and social responsibility needs to be an integral part of each institution’s mission and each student’s actual course of study.

Collectively, colleges and universities across the country have reached consensus that civic learning and responsibility ought to be a significant goal of college. Through a broad array of community partnerships and curricular or cocurricular innovations, faculty and campus leaders are creating educational resources to help students achieve this goal.

Of the twenty-three widely diverse colleges campuses that contributed to the study reported on in these pages, 93 percent of students and 97 percent of academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals agree either “strongly” or “somewhat” that preparing students to contribute to the community should be an essential goal of a college education. With some 33,000 respondents contributing to the overall study, this is a very significant finding.

The important point, however, is that the institutions included in this study stand in the vanguard of a much larger and rapidly growing national movement. Their explicit commitment to prepare all their students for active roles in the community beyond the classroom is, we now know, representative rather than unusual.

Last spring, AAC&U surveyed its member colleges and universities to find out how many had already defined learning outcomes that applied to all their students. With nearly half of campuses responding, 78 percent had indeed set such goals. Significantly, the themes addressed in this report and in the broader Core Commitments initiative turn out to be very high priorities for hundreds of colleges and universities of all kinds: public, private, two year, and four year (www.aacu.org/membership/memberssurvey).

Among the 78 percent of AAC&U member institutions that have already defined learning outcomes applicable to all students, 68 percent include civic engagement among those expected outcomes. Seventy-five percent have made ethical reasoning an expected outcome, and 79 percent view intercultural learning as an essential outcome. Another 66 percent have set goals that address “application of learning.”

These personal and social responsibility outcomes—civic learning, ethical learning, intercultural learning, and applied learning—are best understood as woven strands in a larger tapestry. As the founders of the U.S. republic understood very well, the sustainability of a democracy depends on its citizens’ possession of knowledge, judgment, skill, and willingness to engage with other citizens—who, in this country, have always come from highly diverse cultural, ethnic, religious and socioeconomic circumstances. Ethical responsibility is a necessary strand in this array of civic virtues, because espoused values gain meaning only when they are matched by conscientious actions. Values are standards for action, and in a democracy,
continuing engagement with the meaning, scope, and application of one’s responsibilities to self and others is a crucial foundation both for community and for justice.

Until the late twentieth century, of course, very few citizens actually went to college. The universities certainly contributed needed expertise to the wider community but, of necessity, the primary responsibility for civic education has long been assigned to the public schools.

Now, however, with a majority of all Americans being guided toward higher education, we have an unparalleled opportunity to take education for mindful citizenship to a much higher level of purpose, scope, and demonstrated accomplishment. As both this Core Commitments research and the AAC&U membership study show, higher education is poised to seize this opportunity.

To succeed, higher education will need to work vigorously on two intersecting priorities. The first is to challenge and reframe, once and for all, a public discourse about learning that, since the 1970s, has seen education at all levels as primarily about economic needs and individual or private benefit. Many college leaders and faculty have already challenged this framing on campus. But now we need to speak out in unison as a community about democracy’s stake in more vibrant and empowering forms of civic learning, knowledge, and responsibility. With such a large majority of colleges and universities now endorsing civic learning as an expected learning outcome for all students, we owe our society a compelling and wide-ranging discussion of the multiple aims of college, not just of the economic benefits alone.

The second priority for vigorous action, of course, is to match explicit aspirations with educational programs that live up to the goal. As this report makes plain, higher education is at best only halfway there. The Core Commitments study and other national surveys, such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), show persuasively that, campus priorities and graduation requirements notwithstanding, many graduating students do not believe that college significantly influenced their capacity to contribute to the larger community.

How and where—even on highly committed campuses—are we falling short? The students themselves offer some intriguing insights in both the quantitative and qualitative findings in this Core Commitments report. One finding to ponder is the steady decline across four years in students’ perception that civic responsibility actually is a high priority for their institution. Another finding worth extensive discussion is students’ observation that, if their institutions really want them to become involved with community problems, that expectation ought to be tied to their major. Putting these two observations together, educators might conclude that the most fertile ground for advancing civic learning and responsibility will be departmental programs and requirements.

Through its decade-long Liberal Education and American’s Promise (LEAP) initiative, in which the Core Commitments project is an integral strand, AAC&U has already pledged to work with higher education to move personal and social responsibility outcomes from the sidelines to the center of both public consciousness and campus action. Our goal is to graduate students who are both prepared and inspired to take lasting responsibility for the integrity, decency, and vitality of the world’s most diverse and powerful democracy. We thank the John Templeton Foundation and the scholars who made it possible for us to create this illuminating picture of what is working and what is not in our reach for this goal. And we encourage every one of our campuses to probe beneath the surface of their own work in fostering civic learning and examined responsibilities.

Carol Geary Schneider
President, Association of American Colleges and Universities
Introduction

“Being in an environment that cares about the rest of the world helps encourage you to do the same.”

Fourth-year student, Core Commitments Leadership Consortium campus

Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility, a signature initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), aims to reclaim and revitalize the academy’s role in fostering students’ personal and social responsibility. Supported by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, the project is designed to help campuses create learning environments in which all students reach for excellence in the use of their talents, take responsibility for the integrity and quality of their work, and engage in meaningful practices that prepare them to fulfill their obligations as students in an academic community and as responsible global and local citizens.

In fall 2007, on behalf of AAC&U, researchers at the University of Michigan’s Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education surveyed four constituent groups—students, faculty, student affairs professionals, and academic administrators—at twenty-three Core Commitments Leadership Consortium colleges and universities (see p. v). Each institution in the consortium agreed to administer a newly developed AAC&U campus climate survey called the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI): An Institutional Climate Measure. This survey assesses perceptions across these four groups regarding opportunities for education for personal and social responsibility along five specific dimensions, including contributing to a larger community. The latter entails having students recognize and act on their responsibility to their educational community and to the wider society, locally, nationally, and globally (see fig. 1).

Twenty-four thousand undergraduate students and 9,000 campus professionals (faculty, student affairs professionals, and academic administrators combined) completed the PSRI, which includes quantitative items plus open-ended items to capture the experiences of individual respondents (see appendix B for more detail). The PSRI responses regarding contributing to a larger community form the basis for this report.

FIGURE 1. The Five Dimensions of Personal and Social Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Striving for excellence: developing a strong work ethic and consciously doing one’s very best in all aspects of college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cultivating personal and academic integrity: recognizing and acting on a sense of honor, ranging from honesty in relationships to principled engagement with a formal academic honor code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Contributing to a larger community: recognizing and acting on one’s responsibility to the educational community and the wider society, locally, nationally, and globally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Taking seriously the perspectives of others: recognizing and acting on the obligation to inform one’s own judgment; engaging diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action: developing ethical and moral reasoning in ways that incorporate the other four responsibilities; using such reasoning in learning and in life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these five dimensions do not encompass all aspects of ethical responsibility to self and others, they offer a compelling claim as an initial focus for a widespread reengagement with issues of personal and social responsibility.
Context

Scholars, policy makers, and other leaders engaged in the ongoing dialogue regarding the aims and outcomes of college frequently note the important role that higher education can and must play in helping students to recognize and act on their responsibility to their educational community and to wider society (AAC&U 2007; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, and Stephens 2003; Pasque 2005). Analyzing the mission statements of the top 331 colleges and universities in the country, Meacham and Gaff (2006) found contributing to community to be one of the most frequently cited learning goals in their mission statements. Yet the authors note:

… few curricula have been implemented to facilitate the attainment by students of the propensity for contributing to the community …. Yes, many campuses are developing opportunities for service learning and more educational engagement in the community; [b]ut these tend to be on the margins of campus life and available to only a few students …. One wonders why these learning goals … are often neglected in actual programs of study (10).

Such a disconnect between stated goals and educational opportunities influences students’ civic development while at college. In Our Underachieving Colleges (2006), Derek Bok details the ways in which students are underperforming in public purposes such as civic engagement and ethical learning. In a similar vein, the National Leadership Council for AAC&U’s LEAP initiative recommends that our society give new priority to a set of educational outcomes that all students need from college—outcomes that are associated with the realities of our complex world. Students must possess wide-ranging and cross-disciplinary knowledge, a commitment to excellence, an active sense of personal and social responsibility, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge to real-world problems (AAC&U 2007).

The United States—as a democracy that is diverse, globally engaged, and dependent on citizen responsibility—requires college graduates to have an informed concern for the larger good and the ability to understand and navigate morally complex issues in a dynamic and often volatile world. Our democracy’s health depends on a widely shared commitment to ensuring that the next generation possesses not just knowledge, but also the moral discernment necessary to translate knowledge into informed choices and responsible actions.

How well is the academy meeting its civic purpose today? How well are campuses helping students recognize and act on their responsibility to their educational community and to the wider society? Using PSRI data, this report provides insights to help answer these questions. The data, while not representative of all colleges and universities across the country, is instructive precisely because the Core Commitments Leadership Consortium campuses were selected based on having substantial programs and practices related to education for personal and social responsibility in place at the time this survey was administered.

Section I of the report discusses a series of gaps that surfaced between what campuses professed as their desired learning for students and what campuses actually offered educationally. Section II highlights differences in responses based on respondents’ demographic characteristics as well as type of institution. Section III describes findings about particular campus involvements that either enhance or detract from students’ understanding of and commitment to contributing to the greater good. Sections IV and V provide select qualitative responses from the survey respondents, and Section VI offers concluding thoughts about how colleges and universities can create a more intentional and pervasive campus climate to support students’ civic responsibility.
I. Perceived Institutional Emphasis on Contributing to a Larger Community

The PSRI survey first asks respondents if they believe the goal of contributing to a larger community is important enough to be a major focus of the campus. The survey then asks a series of questions regarding the degree to which the campus emphasizes this goal.

Finding 1: A gap exists between the aspiration and the actuality of this goal.
- Fifty-eight percent of students strongly agreed that contributing to a larger community should be a major focus of their institution, while the campus professionals indicated even stronger support, with 74 percent choosing the “strongly agree” response (see fig. 2). Moreover, there is near-universal endorsement from students and campus professionals (93 percent and 97 percent, respectively) when the “strongly agree” and “agree somewhat” responses are combined.
- Only slightly more than 40 percent of students (41.5 percent) and campus professionals (43.2 percent) strongly agreed that contributing to a larger community currently is a major focus at their institution, which for both groups is a substantially lower proportion than the percentage strongly endorsing this goal (see fig. 2).

FIGURE 2. Institutional focus on contributing to a larger community
Finding 2: A gap exists between the promotion of the generalized goal of making “contributing to a larger community” a major focus and the promotion of the specific knowledge needed to achieve this goal.

- Across all four constituent groups, approximately one-half (45 percent to 54.8 percent) strongly agreed that contributing to a larger community is a responsibility that their campus values and promotes. However, the percentages drop considerably when asked how much the institution promotes knowledge about U.S. social, political, and economic issues or awareness of global social, political, and economic issues, both of which are necessary to fulfill the more generalized goal (see table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI SURVEY ITEM</th>
<th>PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STUDENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing to a larger community is a responsibility that this campus values and promotes.</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The campus actively promotes awareness of U.S. social, political, and economic issues.</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The campus actively promotes awareness of global social, political, and economic issues.</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finding 3: A gap exists among the four groups about who is seen as a public champion of this goal.

- Respondents were asked who among the four constituent groups publicly advocates the need for students to become active and involved citizens. Nearly one-half (47.8 percent) of students said their peers frequently advocate for this goal in a public way, with lower percentages saying that campus professionals frequently advocate for this goal in a public way. In student responses, academic administrators and faculty fell notably behind student affairs professionals as advocates for this goal (see table 2).

- Among campus professionals, both academic administrators and student affairs professionals had a greater sense of their public advocacy role as compared to students’ perceptions of them. Nearly one-half (49.4 percent) of academic administrators reported frequent advocacy among their group, while only one-third of students (33 percent) perceived administrators as frequently advocating. Similarly, nearly two-thirds (58.4 percent) of student affairs professionals reported frequent advocacy among their group, while only two-fifths of students (43.5 percent) reported frequent advocacy among student affairs professionals.

- Faculty were not as optimistic about their own role in public advocacy, and the percentage reporting frequent advocacy among faculty more closely matched student views (42.0 percent and 35.8 percent, respectively). Faculty also held the dimmest view of students, with only 30.3 percent of faculty reporting students as being frequent advocates for this goal in a public way.
### TABLE 2. Perceptions of public advocacy for students' active and involved citizenship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI Survey Item</th>
<th>Percent Who Reported Frequently</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Academic Administrators</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Student Affairs Professionals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior campus administrators publicly advocate the need for students to become active and involved citizens.</td>
<td>33.0 49.4 42.4 46.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty publicly advocate the need for students to become active and involved citizens.</td>
<td>35.8 49.5 42.0 41.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student affairs staff publicly advocate the need for students to become active and involved citizens.</td>
<td>43.5 56.8 47.7 58.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students publicly advocate the need for students to become active and involved citizens.</td>
<td>47.8 42.2 30.3 35.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. Student and Institutional Differences

Perceptions of what is and what should be in terms of institutional emphasis on contributing to a larger community vary, with differences observed across student demographic characteristics as well as institutional characteristics.

Finding 4: Student demographic differences affect attitudes and perceptions.

Class Year

- As students move through their educational programs, their belief that their institutions should focus on contributing to a larger community is stable and strong, but their assessment of whether their institutions actually are focusing on that goal becomes increasingly pessimistic (see fig. 3).

With regard to specific questions related to institutional commitment, the percentage of students who strongly agreed that contributing to a larger community is a responsibility that their campus values and promotes declines markedly from first to senior year, as does the percentage of students who strongly agreed that their campus actively promotes awareness of both U.S. and global social, political, and economic issues. This is especially true in the global arena, where the number of seniors who “strongly agree” that their campus actively promotes awareness of social, political, and economic issues is roughly one-half of first-year students (22.9 percent versus 43.3 percent) (see table 3).
TABLE 3. Perceived institutional commitment to contributing to a larger community: First-year students vs. seniors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI SURVEY ITEM</th>
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<td></td>
<td>ALL STUDENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing to a larger community is a responsibility that this campus values and promotes.</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The campus actively promotes awareness of U.S. social, political, and economic issues.</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The campus actively promotes awareness of global social, political, and economic issues.</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

- Female students tend to be more supportive than male students about whether their campuses should be focused on contributing to a larger community. Three-fifths of women (60.7 percent) strongly agreed that this dimension should be a major institutional focus, compared to slightly more than one-half of men (54.7 percent). Female and male students, however, are more consistent in their agreement about whether this goal currently is a major focus, with 42.4 percent and 40.7 percent, respectively, strongly agreeing that it is.

Finding 5: Institutional characteristics can make a difference in attitudes and perceptions about the institution’s focus on contributing to community.

Private versus Public Institutions

- With respect to an institutional focus on contributing to a larger community, students and campus professionals at public and private institutions have very similar expectations for what should be. Approximately three-fifths of students at both public and private institutions strongly agreed that this should be a major focus (57.7 percent and 58.9 percent, respectively), while approximately three-fourths of the campus professionals held the same views (72.6 percent and 76.9 percent, respectively).

- Despite this similarity in aspiration, fewer students at public institutions strongly agreed that their campus currently makes contributing to community a major focus, compared to those at private institutions (41.0 percent versus 46.9 percent). The contrast is even starker for campus professionals (38.2 percent at public institutions versus 53.5 percent at private institutions strongly agreed) (see table 4).

Institutional Type

- A higher percentage of students and campus professionals at religiously affiliated institutions strongly agreed both that contributing to community should be an institutional focus and that it currently is an institutional focus, compared to private secular institutions (see table 4).

- In general, fewer students and campus professionals at community colleges strongly agreed that contributing to community should be an institutional focus, compared to other types of institutions. Fewer students at master’s institutions strongly agreed that contributing to community currently is a major focus on their campus compared to students at other types of institutions, though community colleges also have low percentages of students and campus professionals who strongly agreed that this dimension currently is an institutional focus (see table 4). In contrast, the highest percentage of
students and campus professionals with strong agreement about institutional focus—both “should be” and “is”—occurs at liberal arts colleges.

- The gap for campus professionals between “should be” and “is” is particularly striking at research institutions, with 74.6 percent strongly agreeing that contributing to community should be a major institutional focus, compared to just 41.9 percent strongly agreeing that this dimension currently is a major focus (see table 4).

### TABLE 4. Perceptions of institutional commitment by type of institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI Survey Item</th>
<th>Percent Who Strongly Agreed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of contributing to a larger community <em>should be</em> a major focus of this campus.</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of contributing to a larger community <em>is</em> a major focus of this campus.</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Campus Professionals</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of contributing to a larger community <em>should be</em> a major focus of this campus.</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of contributing to a larger community <em>is</em> a major focus of this campus.</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Beyond Perception to Involvement

Moving beyond perceived institutional focus, the PSRI data also indicate the extent to which students report engaging in activities related to contributing to the larger community, as well as the extent to which campus professionals believe students are engaging in such activities. It is important to examine whether students feel they are developing the skills and commitment necessary to effectively contribute to community, and to consider what specific activities seem to have a positive or negative influence on students’ commitment to community.

Finding 6: Offering opportunities to students is no guarantee that they will seize them.

- One-half (49.9 percent) of students strongly agreed that their institution offers opportunities for contributing to a larger community, yet only one out of five (18.9 percent) students reported frequent participation in community-based projects as part of their coursework. Likewise, only one in four (25.6 percent) students reported frequent participation in community-based projects that are unconnected to their courses (see fig. 4).
  
- Similarly, nearly one-half (48 percent) of students reported that their peers frequently publicly advocate for students to become active and involved citizens, yet only slightly more than one-quarter (28 percent) reported that they frequently have conversations with their peers about the need to contribute to the larger community.

**Figure 4.** Opportunities for contributing to a larger community versus students’ engagement in community-based projects, in and out of class
When asked if they officially include community-based projects with their courses or programs, only one-fifth of faculty (22.4 percent) reported doing so frequently, and only two-fifths (36.8 percent) of student affairs professionals reported doing so frequently.

More faculty and student affairs professionals reported frequently having meaningful discussions with students about the need to contribute to the greater good (39.5 percent and 40.3 percent, respectively) and encouraging students to participate in community-based projects that are not connected to courses or programming (29.6 percent and 41.7 percent, respectively).

Finding 7: Colleges are not increasing most students’ skills and commitments related to contributing to community.

While nearly one-half (46.1 percent) of students strongly agreed that they came to college aware of the importance of contributing to the greater good through community involvement, only one-third (32.9 percent) strongly agreed that their awareness of this importance had expanded while in college. Just slightly more (36.4 percent) strongly agreed that their commitment to this goal had increased during college. Likewise, only one-third (31.5 percent) strongly agreed that their campus had helped them learn the skills necessary to effectively change society for the better (see fig. 5).

Campus professionals are somewhat more optimistic that students have a stronger awareness of the importance of contributing to community at the end of their college careers compared with the beginning, ranging from two-fifths (41.6 percent strongly agreed) of faculty to nearly one-half of academic administrators (49.5 percent strongly agreed).

Figure 5. Student perceptions of growth in awareness, skills, and commitment toward contributing to community

This campus has helped me expand my awareness of the importance of being involved and contributing to the greater good. (Strongly agree)

This campus has helped me learn the skills necessary to effectively change society for the better. (Strongly agree)

My commitment to change society for the better has grown during my time on campus. (Strongly agree)
Finding 8: Certain activities at colleges can enhance students' commitment to community.

Community Service
- Students who participate in community service activities (45 percent of all students surveyed indicated spending at least one to two hours per week on community service) were more likely to strongly agree about every item pertaining to contributing to a larger community than those who do not participate. Differences between these two groups range from a low of 1.9 percentage points for the item asking students whether the campus actively promotes awareness of U.S. social, political, and economic issues to a high of 36.9 percentage points for the item asking students about the frequency with which they participate in community-based projects not connected to courses.

- As noted earlier, students indicate they engage in community-based projects both through and outside of the formal curriculum. Community service, regardless of whether it is initiated through students’ own pursuits, through student affairs, or through their coursework, enhances their overall inclination toward contributing to the larger community.

Praying/Meditating
- Students who report regularly praying or meditating (54 percent of all students surveyed) were consistently more likely to strongly agree about all aspects of contributing to a larger community represented in the survey. Among all items, the largest margin of difference is 11 percentage points, for the item asking students about the degree to which they participate in community-based projects not connected to courses. For this item, 30.9 percent of students who regularly pray/meditate said they frequently participate in these projects, compared to 20.0 percent of students who do not regularly pray/meditate.

Employment
- Few substantial differences exist between students who indicated they were employed and those who did not. Exceptions were for items related to participating in community-based projects not connected to courses and growth in commitment to change society for the better. In these cases, students who work more than thirty hours per week on campus or who work off-campus (17 percent of all students surveyed) were — by 6 percentage points — more likely to frequently participate in community-based projects unconnected to courses and to strongly agree that they have grown in commitment to change society for the better than those who are not employed at all.

Campus Life Activities
- Students who participate in campus life activities (46 percent of all students surveyed) such as student government, fraternities and sororities, and student organizations, were more likely to strongly agree that their commitment to change society for the better has grown during their time on campus (a difference of 15 percentage points compared to nonparticipating peers). Additionally, they were more likely to strongly agree that the campus has helped them to learn the skills necessary to effectively change society for the better (a difference of 12 percentage points compared to nonparticipating peers). Finally, they are more likely to report that they frequently engage in meaningful discussions with other students about contributing to the larger community (a difference of 12 percentage points compared to nonparticipating peers).

Faculty Interactions
- Students who interact with faculty outside of class (70 percent of all students surveyed) tended to have a much greater sense of contributing to the larger community than students who do not interact with faculty beyond class (see table 5). Also, a greater percentage of students who engage
with faculty outside of class reported frequently participating in meaningful discussions with other students about contributing to the greater good, suggesting that students who reach out to their faculty members also reach out to their peers.

**Finding 9: Certain activities detract from students’ commitment to community.**

**Partying**
- Among all of the activities that students were involved in outside of the classroom (e.g., community service, commuting, working, religious life, campus life, partying, domestic responsibilities), partying six or more hours per week (17 percent of all students surveyed) appears to detract the most from students’ sense of contributing to the larger community.
- In comparison to their peers who party less than six hours per week or not at all, those who party more were consistently less inclined to strongly agree that their campus promotes contributing to community or that their own commitment to changing society for the better has grown. For example, higher percentages of students who party less than six hours per week (35.1 percent) and who forego any partying on a regular basis (32 percent) strongly agreed that the campus has helped them to expand their awareness of the importance of being involved in the community. This is in contrast to just 29.6 percent for students who party more heavily.

**Lack of Faculty Interaction**
- Students who do not interact with faculty outside of class (30 percent of all students surveyed) were less likely to say they frequently have meaningful discussions with their peers about contributing to the larger community, with a difference of 12 percentage points (see table 5). Fortunately, the PSRI findings demonstrate that over time, students are more inclined to explicitly solicit faculty feedback to improve their work. This is not surprising given that first-year students may be more tentative about approaching faculty, while seniors have experienced the classroom environment for the longest amount of time. Still, only four out of ten seniors reported frequently explicitly soliciting faculty feedback.

### TABLE 5. Differences in students’ sense of contributing to community associated with student–faculty interactions outside of the classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI Survey Item</th>
<th>Percent Who Strongly Agreed</th>
<th>Students Who Interacted with Faculty Outside of Class</th>
<th>No Interaction with Faculty Outside of Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This campus has helped me expand my own awareness of the importance of being involved in the community and contributing to the greater good.</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have meaningful discussions with other students about the need to contribute to the greater good.</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This campus has helped me learn the skills necessary to effectively change society for the better.</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My commitment to change society for the better has grown during my time on campus.</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Qualitative Insights—Students

In each section of the PRSI, respondents were invited to include qualitative commentary to explain or expand upon their survey answers. Analyzing those responses reveals new insights that complement the quantitative data. When asked about campus experiences that have helped strengthen their sense of contributing to a larger community, students’ responses overwhelmingly clustered around specific programs and courses, suggesting a series of themes, which are highlighted below.

Courses and Programs Motivate Students to Continue Contributing
Consistent with the quantitative data reported above, campus activities that involve volunteering or community service (such as student government, fraternities or sororities, and varsity sports) allow students to experience making a contribution in a way that has motivated them to continue to do so on their own time. A first-year student noted, “Our softball team participated in a fundraiser to promote fitness in the lives of small children. It was a rewarding experience and made me want to continue to volunteer.” Another student, a senior, described a similar spark: “I became involved with [a community-service student organization] as a first-year, actually became the commissioner my second year, and have continued to be a part of it until now. The people involved and the issues we face as an organization have taught me a lot about being a dedicated citizen who needs to work toward social change.”

One-time or annual campus events also inspire students to contribute to a larger community. Many students cited their institutions’ Make a Difference Day and Diversity Day events as motivating experiences to become involved with their local communities. Other popular campus events include blood drives, fundraisers, lectures by prominent public speakers, and political rallies.

Numerous students mentioned courses as a catalyst for ongoing contributions to the greater good. One student noted, “I visited an elderly gentleman last semester to teach him how to use a computer (community service project for my computer class) and I continue to visit him weekly and e-mailed over the summer because he has no one else. I brighten his week; he says I am something to look forward to.” Similarly, a second student explained, “Some of my professors included service learning as part of the [course] requirements. I volunteered [in] child care and have continued volunteering ever since. I have realized that I cannot possibly go through life without knowing that I have given back to the community.”

Courses with Community-Based Projects Help Students Make Connections
Courses with community-based projects also impact students beyond continuing their volunteer work. One student described how service helps to bridge academics and “real life,” noting, “… the service-learning component of my humanities class allows me to go out in the community and help the less fortunate while also helping me make connections between what we are learning and real life.” Another student described a class report that could lead to tangible outcomes: “I am enrolled in a fieldwork class, where our focus is to help a nonprofit organization that is trying to make its city a livable city. Our class is providing a report [about] whether or not the industrial zone is following all regulations.”

Larger External Issues Prompt Students to Contribute to the Greater Good
Students across different institutions cited larger external issues as motivating factors for their contributions to a larger community. Many students, for example, noted that their institutions had organized activities to aid communities devastated by hurricanes, floods, and other catastrophes. Among these events, students frequently referenced Hurricane Katrina.
In their responses, students discussed activities ranging from fundraisers and food and clothing drives taking place on campus to alternative spring breaks and other trips to provide more direct assistance to communities. One student noted that such trips “help me to experience life as I never had before. They open my eyes to the lives of others as well as their hardships.” Another student remembered, “When Hurricane Katrina happened, I could see the difference a community can make when they work together toward the same goals. It truly strengthened my sense of responsibility in knowing that.”

Another student referenced a strategy one campus used to focus attention on Katrina among students who did not travel to the Gulf Coast, noting that “watching … videos and reading the [online] journals … of those who went [to the affected areas] helped me to realize the importance of contributing to the greater good.” Not surprisingly, students continued to reference Hurricane Katrina several years after the event since rebuilding and fundraising efforts are ongoing. It will be interesting to see whether students cite Katrina in future surveys, as a way to gauge any long-term influence of that disaster on the ethos of college campuses.

Political involvement is another commonly shared concern for students. One student acknowledged that “the college has a very political atmosphere, with many visiting guest speakers and campaigns.” Many students noted that various political science courses, history courses, and campus political awareness programs caused them to register to vote, when otherwise they would not have done so. As one student noted, “My history teacher encourages us to vote. He makes me want to get involved in government issues. So, thanks to him, I think I will vote.”

Many students also expressed an interest in caring for the environment. Campus programs about “going green” have encouraged students to take the initiative to make a difference in smaller ways (e.g., adding a recycling bin at home) and in larger ways (e.g., serving on a campus task force for making the switch to eco-friendly residence halls). This education has not been limited to campus programs, as academic courses have also encouraged students to think about how to care for the environment. One student mentioned that “Environmental science has really shown ideas and solutions to help make communities better.” Another student pointed out that “my environmental science class has taught me the importance of helping in the community, and adding to the greater good,” while another contended that “my natural science class has made me more aware of [the] environment, and what I can do to protect it.”

**Faculty Influence Students a Great Deal**

While students discussed numerous discrete programs and events offered through student organizations, student life, and off-campus groups, responses about faculty suggest they can play a critical role in helping students deepen their commitment to contributing to community as well as their understanding of root causes of social problems. As one student noted, “Discussions with professors in many different departments have strengthened my sense of responsibility toward contributing to the larger academic community through reading, research, and publication. They have stressed the importance of joining in a conversation—rather than just asserting one’s views fervently—so that my contributions benefit the community and the ongoing conversation.”

Another student discussed the faculty advocacy role in her major, noting, “In my education classes, professors advocate for us to make a difference in the lives of the students whom we will teach and to establish a relationship with their parents and to make the community in which we teach a better place because we were there.”

**Community-Based Projects Need Greater Integration into Courses, Including in the Major**

A number of student responses indicated the need for greater integration of community-based efforts into courses. One reason for greater integration sprung from many students’ lack of time for involvement outside of courses. As one student noted, “Our teacher made it a requirement for community service in Intro. to Judaism. I wish more teachers made requirements for community service because I really enjoy helping out
the community but I do not have the money and time to spend unless it is a necessity or requirement for class. I believe that this experience has strengthened my sense of responsibility for being involved."

Without incorporating them into courses, community-based efforts can also come to be viewed as competing with academics, rather than as a mechanism that allows students to apply their learning and to deepen their skills, commitment, and understanding of issues. One student suggested, "I see many other students getting involved with volunteer work in the community and that is great but I have never gotten involved. I always feel like I don’t have time with my schedule. I always worry about my school work to get too involved and get over my head."

Other students put it even more bluntly. "I personally do not have time in my schedule," one explained. "If I did want to volunteer it would very negatively affect my grades, and I am at [this campus] for my grades," while another said, "I don't pay attention to anything that's going on around me! I only come to school for my classes and studies." Another student lamented a downturn in involvement: "I came to college wanting to be an active part of the community, as I was in high school, but the course load in college is so heavy that I have not had any time."

Other students cited the importance of community-based efforts extending past the first year, and, particularly, relating to their majors. One student recalled, "Freshman year, there was a required service project during the first week at college [but] other than freshman year, I feel that it's all simply lip service and no one really gets involved."

Concerning the major, one student noted, "I was involved with [an organization] last year where accounting students volunteer a couple nights a week to help lower-income families file their tax returns. That really helped me see that I can contribute something through my major/future profession." Another student perceived the need for greater integration, saying "If the campus wants to get people involved, they should design activities and help students design their own activities that directly relate to a person's major and interests."

Overall, it is clear that courses and programs are playing an important role in raising students’ awareness about contributing to a larger community. As is noted in the quantitative findings, it is less clear how well all of these activities deepen students’ learning, skills, and commitment to change society for the better. Many responses reflected what one student called a “hodgepodge of charitable and volunteer events,” rather than an integrated, cohesive approach to fostering students’ contributions to community. The time may be ripe for campus leaders to take account of the current activity that exists at an institution, analyze the type and level of participation among students, and begin the work of gauging how well current approaches move students beyond awareness and into commitment, competence, and deep understanding.
V. Qualitative Insights—Campus Professionals

Faculty, administrators, and student affairs professionals also provided candid responses that highlight their views of their institutions’ efforts to prepare students to contribute to community. Like the students on their campuses, these educators cited service-learning courses and cocurricular community-related activities as the clearest examples of programs that help strengthen students’ sense of responsibility toward the community and the greater good. These qualitative responses also pointed to a number of additional themes and certain cautionary concerns. Within the qualitative responses, some faculty believed that contributing to community detracts from, or even contradicts, the academic purpose of higher education. As one faculty member noted, “[Students] should be paying for education, not for community involvement. That should not be the function of the university.” However, the majority of comments spoke of the positive influence such curricular and cocurricular programs have on students’ contributions to community.

Course-Based Service Learning and Community-Based Research Enhance Student Learning

Across the twenty-three campuses as well as across the three professional classifications (faculty, academic administrators, and student affairs professionals), the most commonly cited programs to enhance students’ learning about contributing to community were course-based service-learning programs. These credit-bearing service-learning programs were consistently praised for helping students to develop habits of contributing to the larger community by connecting them with local communities, helping them better understand community needs, and fostering a sense of responsibility. One administrator summarized the benefits to students of these service-learning programs, saying, “The service-learning component of many courses is a strength of the institution. It promotes the sense of responsibility for others and gives students the experience of serving others in some capacity.”

Faculty members at one institution, for example, frequently mentioned a service-learning requirement for all students as part of their capstone experience. One faculty member said that the program “help[s] to incite action for the greater good” and another said that the program is “helping them to learn about their communities [and] to see that just small things can make a difference.” Student affairs professionals recognized the importance of such course-based experiences as well. One student affairs professional said, “There are many faculty that seem to integrate community-based learning into their courses, and there is a huge interest in continuing to do so.”

Many faculty pointed to how service-learning programs can help students to apply and deepen their learning and have tangible effects for the larger community, as well. One faculty member noted, “We are conducting research about our wastewater treatment plant and the [effect] of sewage sludge on human health in our county. [O]ur study caused the city to change from a Class B to a Class A sewage sludge facility, at a onetime cost of $7 million. We are now monitoring to see if there are fewer health effects reported. Our results have been accepted for publication. At least fifteen students at our university have worked on this grant.” Another faculty member mentioned capstone courses in one department, noting, “[These] courses encourage students to relate professional issues to particular social issues, and enable students to conduct research in the local communities and work with community leaders.”

Other campus professionals commented upon particular components that they feel strengthen student learning. One student affairs professional discussed the need for “a comprehensive approach to service [with] infrastructure and support to get students and faculty into the community in an organized, principled way.” A faculty member believed in “programs with end results that students can actually see and measure,” while one administrator advocated programs that help move students “outside of their comfort zones.” One faculty member stressed that students need “time for the academic reflection necessary to increase depth of learning,” while another urged “more formal mentoring … to reinforce the values of community involvement and prevent stereotype reinforcement.”
Still others discussed the importance of assessment and evaluation. A faculty member noted, “I have seen only indirect evidence—just student survey responses—that indicates that the program is especially effective at helping students strengthen their sense of responsibility toward being involved in the community. We need some direct assessment that allows one to answer [this] question.”

**Cocurricular Programs Can Enhance Learning**

Of activities and programs that are not course-based or affiliated with the academic departments on campus, professionals most often mentioned offices that coordinate community service as a source for students’ community engagement. Other programs, such as campus-wide community service days, community service activities of student organizations, and alternative spring break programs, were also cited. One faculty member said, “I think campus organizations … are effective in helping students strengthen their sense of responsibility to the community.”

In addition, campus professionals also credited religious programs. For example, one administrator cited faith-based “solidarity trips” that occurred over spring break, which “challenge students to broaden their perspective and explore connections between faith, service, and issues of justice while partnering with organizations serving those in poverty.”

**Some Campus Professionals Worry about the Depth of Involvement among Students**

While professionals cited and frequently praised service learning and community-based cocurricular programs as activities that can motivate students to contribute to community, some also worried about a lack of depth with some activities. One faculty member cited an institutional focus on enhancing the global community, for example, acknowledging, “Students are not encouraged to consider what that really means—or how to really go about it other than in the most superficial of ways.” Similarly, another faculty member noted, “It seems the students have difficulty distinguishing between feel-good projects and any substantive involvement in programs of social change.”

Also in that vein, a student affairs professional at one campus stressed the importance of “anything that involves more than just a march/walk,” while a faculty member considered how “meaningful” campus-wide fundraising events really are and wondered “whether student participants actually become long-term advocates.”

Other campus professionals expressed concern about a “public relations” approach to service. One faculty member noted, “understanding about the community and being a better citizen aware of critical U.S. and global issues should be a component of solid education and character building, not used instead to simply engage [students] in local community service projects to generate good public relations.”

**Concern about Definitions and Bias**

Some campus professionals stressed the importance of clarifying terms before developing programs. As one faculty member noted, “the notion of ‘the greater good’ is terribly vague and in dire need of clarification and specification before anyone can talk meaningfully about our responsibility for contributing to it.” Another discussed the importance of defining “what this institution means by greater good. Does this mean going with the flow of the majority?”

Another faculty member argued for expanding terms beyond their current meanings: “This college … has a very limited concept of what constitutes ‘community’ or ‘contributing to the greater good. The arts, scientific and humanistic research, and other disciplines need to be recognized as equally valuable to community and the ‘greater good’ as are the ‘social, political, and economic issues’ and the ‘community-based projects’ that the college administration emphasizes.”

Still others balked at perceived political bias in the terminology. One faculty member asked, “What is meant by greater good? I don’t want my responses to be interpreted that I am promoting political activism in my classes.”
Interestingly, other faculty members found too much—or too little—in the way of liberal political bias. One faculty member argued, for example, “that the political content of the vast majority of these community projects are left-liberal in their political leaning, and the sum of them adds up to an attempt at political indoctrination” while another faculty member argued, “by and large, the most pressing and important social issues are raised by a handful of students and faculty, but not sanctioned (and sometimes slightly discouraged) by the university. These issues are ... too politically ‘hot’ to be supported by the administration since that might offend powerful politicians, corporate benefactors, etc.”

Faculty Cite Contradictions between Espoused and Actual Support

Faculty were also more likely than the other two professional groups to share their perceptions of contradictions between espoused and actual support for their involvement in these efforts. One faculty member discussed a new institutional focus on the scholarship of engagement, noting, “I think the scholarship of engagement line was meant to help encourage being involved in the community, but has thus far failed to do so meaningfully. It isn’t specific enough for students and faculty to get behind.” Another pointed to administrators, in particular, saying, “I think there is a big disconnect between how the university wants to be seen and how administrators behave.”

Others pointed to tenure and promotion issues, in particular. One faculty member noted, “The university encourages all departments to make community connections. It is not, however, valued during tenure review for new faculty.” A second faculty member argued, “Unless something like service learning is explicitly tied to the promotion and tenure system (as an allowance that would be rewarded), I don’t see any way to indicate that the university is serious about this. Most faculty will simply agree that it’s important (how could they not) and then go on to ignore it. The power for making this part of [the institution] is primarily in the hands of the administration, then.”
VI. Conclusion

The findings from this study indicate that there are serious gaps that need to be closed before all students are able to engage in significant learning opportunities, over time, that foster their civic awareness, skills, and commitments. While the majority of students and campus professionals strongly agreed that their campus should be educating students to contribute to community, far fewer feel as strongly that contributing to community currently is a major focus at their institutions.

Also notable is the fact that as they progress from first to senior year, students are less optimistic about whether their institution is successfully promoting the goal of contributing to the larger community. This underscores the importance of sincere programmatic and curricular opportunities that communicate institutional values and goals consistently across students’ time in college.

Yet even when institutions offer opportunities to increase student awareness and skills in this dimension of personal and social responsibility, only one-quarter of students reported frequent participation in those activities. Overall, only one-third of students strongly agreed that college has increased their skills and commitments to contributing to community.

There are encouraging findings that certain activities can enhance students’ awareness about the importance of contributing to community. These include community service opportunities, campus life opportunities with service components, and courses where community engagement is part of the requirements. Qualitative comments suggest that the curriculum exercises an important influence on this outcome. Courses and programs can also motivate students to continue contributing and help students make connections between academics and “real life.” Similarly, a revealing finding comes from students who report frequent interactions with faculty outside of the classroom—they are also more likely to report an increased sense of the importance of contributing to community.

There are also findings about institutional type that suggest ways that sectors can learn from one another. A greater percentage of students and campus professionals at religiously affiliated institutions, for example, strongly agreed that contributing to community is currently a major focus on their campuses. What lessons might be gained here about the role of an explicit institutional mission and ethos in creating greater congruence between aspiration and reality?

The findings from this Core Commitments report illuminate students’ and campus professionals’ views of what is and what should be a major focus of college in terms of educating students about the value and practice of contributing to community. These findings point to very specific choices institutions can make to enhance student learning and set expectations for faculty, student affairs professionals, and academic administrators. There is strong support for campus leaders to map a developmental arc for civic learning across the curriculum and cocurriculum and throughout students’ college experiences, but this arc is not yet clearly charted.

Our nation and our world need graduates who are aware of the importance of contributing to the greater good and who are poised and ready to do so. It is hoped that this report will spur a new commitment to making civic learning an essential component of all students’ college education, now and in the future.
References


APPENDIX A. Essential Learning Outcomes for the Twenty-first Century

AAC&U’s Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative is organized around a robust set of essential learning outcomes, which are best developed through a contemporary liberal education. These essential outcomes provide a new framework to guide students’ cumulative progress beginning in school and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies. Key groups—the higher education community, accreditors, employers, and civic leaders—agree that students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by developing:

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

Intellectual and Practical Skills, including
- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

Personal and Social Responsibility, including
- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

Integrative Learning, including
- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems
APPENDIX B. About the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI)

The Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI): An Institutional Climate Measure is a campus climate survey developed as part of the Core Commitments initiative. It is designed to gauge participants’ perceptions about opportunities for learning and engagement with issues of personal and social responsibility across an institution.

The PSRI is comprised of two versions of the survey, one for students and the other for campus professionals. These forms are parallel in their structure, with items in each of the two forms that capture respondents’ impressions of the extent to which their campus is educating students for personal and social responsibility.

There are three types of items:

- **Attitudinal items.** Participants choose the degree to which they agree with a statement about the institution (choosing from: strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, strongly disagree, and no basis for judgement)

- **Behavioral items.** Participants choose the frequency with which they experience a particular phenomenon at the institution (choosing from: frequently, occasionally, never, and no basis for judgement)

- **Open-ended items.** Participants provide comments related to experiences, programs, and practices at the institution that help students to develop personal and social responsibility

Additional survey items are included that ask respondents to provide basic demographic and background information.

**PSRI Development and Administration**

Supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, the initial inventory was developed in 2006 by L. Lee Knefelkamp, Teachers College, Columbia University, and Richard Hersh, Council for Aid to Education, with research assistance from Lauren Ruff. The survey items were designed to measure aspects of a campus climate that are related to each of the five dimensions of personal and social responsibility (see fig. 1). This work began with a thorough review of the psychology and developmental literatures to clarify the definitions, identify the character traits, and record the relevant behavioral manifestations of each of the dimensions. The authors then examined the climate and congruence/dissonance literatures to identify reasonable markers for each dimension, with the goal of establishing ten markers of campus climate. The authors devised a multifaceted sampling strategy to survey four different constituents: students, faculty, student affairs professionals, and academic administrators. This approach would provide comprehensive data regarding how well institutions are embedding education for personal and social responsibility.

The initial inventory was then refined in cooperation with Eric L. Dey and associates at the University of Michigan’s Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, and the instrument was piloted on three campuses in spring 2007. In fall 2007, data were gathered from the twenty-three institutions composing the Core Commitments Leadership Consortium. The responses were of sufficient size and variety to be representative of the four populations on participating campuses. The overall survey response rates were 28 percent for students and 47 percent for campus professionals, and these were statistically significant.
adjusted to account for bias in response patterns. However, since the project design did not randomly select institutions to participate in the consortium, the overall sample is not representative of the four populations, nationally.

A Note about the Data
Campus climate data are self-reported data that focus on participants’ perceptions of the campus environment. They do not capture what an institution is actually doing with regard to the phenomena under investigation. The PSRI results may point to (1) a lack of awareness about existing programs and practices related to personal and social responsibility, (2) a lack of impact of these programs and practices on the overall institutional culture, or (3) actual gaps in programs and practices. The Leadership Consortium institutions are using their own data to probe the situation on their individual campuses.

The data are disaggregated where relevant by factors such as students’ year in school, professional category (faculty, student affairs professionals, and academic administrators), and institutional type. To better highlight comparisons with student responses, several graphs combine faculty, student affairs professionals, and academic administrators into a single campus professionals category where such group differences were found to be inconsequential.

All student data presented in this document are reported in a weighted format. Weights were determined for each student using the framework suggested by Dey (1997), a common procedure to adjust the individual responses in the sample to more closely resemble the population of interest, lending more validity to inferences made from the data. Campus-specific response rates were calculated for eight subgroups of students: men, women, minority students, white students, first-year students, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. A weighted value for each subgroup was calculated by comparing the known campus population with the value of the sample population on each dimension of interest. In total, there are 184 subgroup weights (twenty-three campuses, each with eight student subgroups). PSRI data previously reported were not in the current weighted format.

Also, the research team chose to focus on “strongly agree” and “frequently” responses for this report because these were leadership institutions chosen for their activity and commitment to the five dimensions. As such, the most prominent results from this study can be disseminated to the broader higher education community in an effort to spark deeper conversations and ultimately increase and enhance opportunities for students to contribute to the larger community.
About the Authors

ERIC L. DEY is a professor at the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, University of Michigan and director of research and assessment for Core Commitments. Dey earned his PhD in higher education from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and holds master of education and bachelor of general studies degrees from Wichita State University. Prior to joining the University of Michigan faculty, he directed the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) as an associate director of the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). Dey’s research focuses on the ways that colleges and universities shape the experiences and lives of students and faculty. He was a member of the team of social scientists that provided research on the educational effects of diverse student bodies, which was foundational to the Supreme Court’s decision supporting the continuing use of affirmative action in college admissions. In 1998, Dey was selected as one of forty “Young Leaders of the Academy” by Change magazine and received the Early Career Achievement Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). More recently, ASHE also honored his work on the University of Michigan’s Affirmative Action Legal Defense team with a Special Merit Award in 2003.

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CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY: What Is the Campus Climate for Learning?

Eric L. Dey and Associates
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Core Commitments:
Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility
An initiative of

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