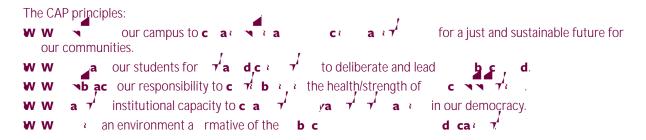# 2017 CIVIC ACTION PLAN

ı CIVIC ACTION PLAN

Partnership is a strong concept and the foundation for community engagement. At Western Carolina University (WCU) it is considered the highest level of engagement, reciprocation, and collaboration that is possible between two or more entities. This Civic Action Plan (CAP) seeks to articulate and frame the alignment and partnership that exists between WCU as a community-engaged regional comprehensive university and Campus Compact as a leader for advancing and supporting the public purpose of higher education institutions. Moreover, the CAP is aligned with WCU's current mission, vision, and strategic plan and seeks to stretch our imagination and our pursuit of deeper, intentional, and more mutually beneficial partnerships across and beyond campus. The CAP is also designed to stretch and advance our conceptualization and application of community-engaged practices in and out of the classroom and on and o campus where the real-world work, learn, and impact lives.

The CAP principles:

ꝡ Wꝑ ꝑ   our campus to **c ꝑa ꝑ ꝑ a   cꝑ   a ꝑ**   for a just and sustainable future for our communities.

ꝡ Wꝑ   a our students for ꝑa d cꝑ ꝑ   to deliberate and lead   **b ꝑ c   d**.

ꝡ Wꝑ   ꝑb ac our responsibility to **c ꝑ b ꝑ**   the health/strength of   **cꝑ ꝑꝑ ꝑ**.

ꝡ Wꝑ   a ꝑ institutional capacity to **c a   ꝑ   ꝑa ꝑ ꝑ   a ꝑ**   in our democracy.

ꝡ Wꝑ   ꝑ an environment a rmative of the   **b c   d ca ꝑ ꝑ**

From October 2016 – May 2017, our team included representatives from the student body, community, faculty, and administrative sta :

- Ms. Kelsey Woodford, Higher Education Student A airs (HESA) Masters student, Graduate Student Association (GSA) President
- Mr. Kevin Trudell, HESA Masters student
- Mrs. Rebecca Mathis, Director of Community Engagement, Blue Ridge Health and WCU alumna
- Dr. Patricia Bricker, Associate Professor, Teaching and Learning
- Dr. Beth Wall-Bassett, Associate Professor, Nutrition and Dietetics
- Dr. Ricardo Nazario-Colon, Chief Diversity O cer
- Dr. John Carzoli, Assistant Professor, Physical Therapy
- Dr. Amy Murphy-Nugen, Assistant Professor, Social Work
- Dr. Lane Perry, Director, Center for Service Learning (CSL)

The CAP is organized as follows:

ꝡ **PLAN RATIONALE CAP PRINCIPLES MATTER NOW**

ꝡ **INSTITUTIONAL BASELINE INFRASTRUCTURE ALIGNMENT AND STRETCHING OURSELVES**

ꝡ **TIMELINE AND ACCOUNTABILITY WHEN WHO AND HOW?**

ꝡ **OUTCOMES ARTICULATED THROUGH STRATEGIC AREAS**

PLAN RATIONALE CAP PRINCIPLES MATTER NOW

WCU was established as a normal (teaching) school in 1889 to bring education and career/social development opportunities to the western region of North Carolina (southern Appalachian mountain region). Like many institutions founded in rural areas, WCU was established to infuse one of the most important components and resources for community development and social stabilizing – education, specifically higher education. The founders of WCU recognized the importance of formalized higher education for their community's and state's development and continue to invest on these fronts today. This regional institution quickly outgrew its facilities and increased its faculties, but never lost its roots and purpose. That purpose is boldly stated and pursued through the 2020 mission, vision, and strategic plan (addressed in this section) created in 2012.

The CAP principles matter now as they serve as a set of stars, and together a constellation, for assisting institutions in navigating both charted and uncharted waters by illuminating a core purpose of higher education – *_e_ a ing an engaged ci_i en f_ a la__ing dem●c ac* . At WCU, citizenship and civic

Vision

To be a national model for student learning and engagement that embraces its responsibilities as a regionally engaged university.

Relevant Strategic Directions Advancing Community Engagement

1. Fulfill Educational Needs of Our State and Region – WCU's faculty, staff, and students together make the University's academic mission paramount.
2. Enrich the Total Student Experience – Every WCU student's experience reinforces high standards and expectations, incorporates meaningful external engagement, and instills pride.
3. Enhance Our External Partnerships – WCU is recognized as an active partner within the Western North Carolina region, its communities, organizations, and business.

Relevant Institutional Goals and Outcomes Associated with Community Engagement

WCU has identified the following goals in relation to its commitment to community engaged outreach:

1. Deliver high-quality academic programs designed to promote regional economic/community engagement.
2. Fully integrate into the general education program and into each major and minor at both undergraduate and graduate levels an emphasis on those core abilities expected of all WCU students [including]: to practice civic engagement.
3. Foster active citizenship among WCU students.
4. Strengthen relationships and communication between the University and its external partners.
5. Position the University as a key leader in regional economic and community development efforts.
6. Align internal processes and reward systems to foster external engagement.
7. Adequately support scholarship and creative activities in support of WCU's mission as a regional comprehensive university.
8. Facilitate a shared understanding of [our] strategic vision among WCU's external communities.

Institutional Commitment to Community Engagement

WCU defines community engagement as the "alignment and application of University goals and resources to local and regional issues through the development of reciprocal, collaborative partnerships and exchanges" (engagement.wcu.edu). Community outreach and engagement include the exploration and application of knowledge, information, and resources and are prioritized in university mission and vision statements as well as articulated in university core values.

INSTITUTIONAL BASELINE INFRASTRUCTURE ALIGNMENT AND STRETCHING OURSELVES

Strategic planning on the topic of community and civic engagement is deeply rooted at WCU. There is a history of well-organized systems, processes, and documents for capturing information and the pulse of our campus and community culture to inform our next steps as a regionally-engaged institution. A brief review since 2012 (which was the year of adoption for our strategic plan) demonstrates the thoughtful and informed work that has framed and inspired new directions, programs, ideas, and partnerships.

2012 - Western Carolina University 2020 Strategic Plan;

2013 - Center for Service Learning Program Review;

2014 - Center for Service Learning 2020 Strategic Plan;

2015 - Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching: Community Engagement Classification;

2016 - SACSCOC Reaccreditation: Effectiveness on Community/Public Service (p. 66-78);

2017 - Western Carolina University Campus Compact Civic Action Plan

The CAP has come at the perfect time for WCU to pause, reflect, and regroup as a collective and inform our next set of tactical steps for advancing our civic and community engagement mission. The previously mentioned resources, planning processes, and documents have informed this plan.

The current engagement framework includes the collective work of 10 offices that are tasked with implementing community engagement and outreach in its many forms and establish and act on goals and outcomes that support the institutional commitment to community engagement. These offices analyze their progress toward meeting these goals and provide evidence of improvement as part of their annual reports and the strategic planning process. Additionally, these offices range from being focused at the college-level to the institutional level. Select examples of programs at the college level include the Small Business and Technology Development Center (College of Business), the Public Policy Institute (College of Arts and Sciences), and the Center for Rapid Product Realization (College of Engineering and Technology). Select examples of programs at the institutional level include the Center for Service Learning, Center for Career and Professional Development, Office of Community and Economic Engagement and Innovation, and the Division of Educational Outreach.

These principles are very much alive across our campus. The plan seeks to chart a course that is practical, warranted, and valuable in advancing the community and civic engagement message of WCU in a meaningful way.

Key Data Points for 2015-2016

WCU has established many important and valuable measuring, monitoring, and tracking mechanisms to help determine the extent of community engagement across campus:

- **WCU CSL Service Learning Courses Database** – 61 course sections
- **WCU NSSE Percentage of Students Participating in High Impact Practices Service Learning Courses and UNC System Institutions**
  - WCU First Year Students – 74% vs. (UNC-System First Year Students – 52%)
  - WCU Senior Year Students – 77% vs. (UNC-System Senior Year Students – 64%)
- **WCU NSSE Civic Engagement Standard Module**
  - WCU First Year Students – 2 of 14 items measuring civic engagement were statistically significantly higher than the UNC-System comparison group
  - WCU Senior Year Students – 12 of 14 items measuring civic engagement were statistically significantly higher than the UNC-System comparison group
- **University of North Carolina General Administration Community and Economic Engagement Standard Module**
  9,182 students enrolled in community-based learning courses and 918 enrolled in community-engaged learning courses (SLC)
- **Service Learning Course Assessment** (n = 170)
  - Personal Growth Impact Outcome – 3.31 of 4.00 (agree)
  - Community Engagement Impact Outcome – 3.29 of 4.00 (agree)
- **Leadership Community Engagement Assessment and Program** (n = 280 across 20 CSL sanctioned programs)
  - Personal Growth Outcome – 4.49 of 5.00 (strongly agree)
  - Community Engagement Outcome – 3.99 of 5.00 (agree)

Annual assessment of WCU's progress toward meeting the established goals and outcomes of community outreach and engagement is accomplished by the University's strategic planning process that incorporates unit level analysis and improvement. For every strategic initiative, including those for community outreach and engagement, a coordinator is assigned the role of overseeing progress toward achievement, documenting improvements resulting from action on the initiative, and ensuring an annual progress report is submitted.

TIMELINE AND ACCOUNTABILITY WHEN WHO AND HOW?

The rough timeline for full implementation of the CAP is scheduled from August 2017 – July 2020. This timeline will focus on each of the three strategic areas associated with the CAP. These areas include: **Student Engagement Strategic Area** which seeks to develop an emphasis on student leadership, professionalism, cultural responsiveness, and teamwork development as tools for preparing our students for engaged citizenship to deliberate and lead for the public good. This strategic area commits to working towards the best interest of the region and the preparation of educated citizens who can make a difference in their respective fields and communities; **Community Partnerships Strategic Area** focuses

OUTCOMES ARTICULATED THROUGH STRATEGIC AREAS

Student Affairs Strategic Area

Develops an emphasis on student leadership, professionalism, cultural responsiveness, and teamwork development as tools for preparing our students for engaged citizenship to deliberate and lead for the public good. This strategic area is committed to working towards the best interest of the region and the preparation of educated citizens who can make a difference in their respective fields and communities.

Subcommittee Members: Kelsey Woodford (Graduate Student Association, President), Kevin Trudell (Higher Education Student Affairs MEd Student), Ricardo Nazario-Colon (Chief Diversity Officer), and Lane Perry (Center for Service Learning)

Student Strategic Area Delivery Points: These delivery points serve as initiatives designed to operationalize the student strategic area in practical ways.

- Intentionally engage students with structured community-based projects in curricular and co-curricular capacities that respect an order of increasing intensity of experiences.
- Develop initiatives that guide students to make meaning of new learning through the combination of direct experiences, academic instructions, and structured reflection.

DegreePlus – Is WCU's Quality Enhancement Plan (2017) and represents an initiative focused on a holistic approach to student education in which students are encouraged to learn transferable skills through participation in extracurricular activities. It is an optional program for all students, but for those who choose to participate, *DegreePlus* will complement curricular learning and build on the premise that learning is not restricted to the classroom.

The four transferable skills associated *DegreePlus* are student leadership, professionalism, cultural responsiveness, and teamwork development, which are directly related to many of the skills necessary for engaged citizenship and employability.

DegreePlus is set up to expose students to each of the four competencies listed previously (Level 1), provide a space for the participants to reflect and articulate their perspective on each competency (Level 2), and finally to integrate and apply one of the four competencies in an experiential way (Level 3). In other words students would be required to attend 5 events related to each competency (e.g., cultural responsiveness) before they would be able to move on to Level 2 of that specific skill. Level 2 is programmed through *DegreePlus Day*. Led by trained faculty and staff mentors, small group-based discussions will revolve around sharing experiences from the 5 activities with the main goal of getting students to think critically about their experiences. The final component (Level 3) will require students to complete a capstone project. Students can choose any experience that they feel exemplifies the application of any one of the four skill areas.

DegreePlus is designed to support students' "whole" university experience in which they focus on the academics of their specific programs while also growing through their involvement in extracurricular activities, and ultimately become prepared to be engaged citizens of the world.

Associated Goals
- Increase students' participation in extracurricular activities that promote transferable skill development.
- Enhance students' cultural responsiveness, leadership, professionalism, and teamwork skills.

Review Tools
- Participation Data
- Event descriptions and student surveys of events
- Level 2 DegreePlus Day Reflections (using rubrics)
- Level 3 DegreePlus Day Presentations (using rubrics)

Champions
DegreePlus Office, Center for Career & Professional Development, Center for Service Learning, and other programming partners across campus.

Student Democracy Coalition – Has built from the ground up a massive campus-wide operation of voter engagement encompassing every corner of the institution. It was formed to provide a space for engaged students to capture the spirit of community and civic engagement and harness the spirit of youthful members of a democracy. The Student Democracy Coalition (SDC) was created when the Andrew Goodman Foundation and Campus Vote Project brought their organizations and an intentional partnership to WCU and the Center for Service Learning. The SDC achieved their set goals using the REAC(+) MODEL and advance the coalition to organize around engagement.

The SDC created seven goals to achieve during the fall semester of 2016. These goals included;

- Establishing and maintaining an early voting polling place on WCU's campus in the University Center,
- Registering 2,000 voters across campus through TurboVote, tabling efforts, classroom presentations, and other initiatives such as resident hall drives,
- Educating voters through 15 programs, such as debate watch parties and Raise Your VOICE program,
-

purple LCEA with distinction honors cord (with a GPA of 3.25 or above), a commemorative accolade, and the opportunity to showcase your LCEA capstone project.

The LCEA has been developed to encourage students to participate in a wide range of co-curricular community engagement opportunities.

Associated Goals
- Increase student's participation in community engagement opportunities within the greater WCU region.
- Encourage critical reflection among students on their variety of their community engagement experiences.

Review Tools
- Number of students receiving Lily Award
- Number of students receiving Lily Award with distinction
- Number of programs/initiatives associated with points

Champions
Center for Service Learning and Higher Education Student Affairs Master's Program Graduate Assistant

Jacob Medford Fellowship Program – The family of Jacob Spencer Medford, a Western Carolina University student from Marion who died in July 2002 from injuries received in a hit-and-run accident, contributed more than $126,000 to endow a scholarship fund in his memory. The Jacob Medford Service Scholarship will provide five $1,000 awards annually. The scholarship is intended for student leaders with an interest in continuing their leadership development and involvement in civic engagement. To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants must document significant previous involvement in community service activities, submit an essay on the importance of community service, and indicate a willingness to participate in service learning programs during fall and spring semesters.

The students selected to receive the Jacob Medford scholarship will become Jacob Medford Fellows. The goal of the fellows is to develop the participants into servant leaders on Western's campus and beyond. The fellows will have opportunities to develop as individuals and as a team and help foster an environment at WCU that promotes service, inclusion, and helping others.

Requirements of the fellowship program are: fellows must be enrolled full-time; have a 3.0 GPA; be active in community engagement; attend a fall weekend leadership retreat, participate in at least one student organization on campus, read and engage in a required leadership reading, and attend one leadership seminar per semester. Fellows will also be encouraged to participate in peer-to-peer mentoring, apply to present at the annual Whee Lead Conference, as well as seek out leadership roles within a student or community organization.

The scholarship and fellowship program are intended for student leaders with an interest in continuing their leadership development and involvement in civic engagement.

Associated Goals
- Medford Fellows will gain an understanding and be able to apply the servant leadership model both personally and professionally.
- Medford Fellows, as both individuals and a group, work towards advancing a culture of service among the Western Carolina community.

Review Tools
- Number of Medford Fellows obtaining the Lily Community Engagement Award
- Number of Medford fellows attending semester leadership programs
- Number of Whee Lead conference presentation from Medford Fellows
- Number of Medford Fellows involved/holding leadership positions in student organizations

Champions
Center for Service Learning and Higher Education Student Affairs Master's Program Graduate Assistant

Critical Cultural Competence Certificate (CCCC) – The Certificate in Critical Cultural Competence will help students to develop an understanding and appreciation for their own identities and become critically reflective of their lenses in relation to other identities as defined by, for example, gender, class, sexual orientation and race. The certificate provides students with the foundation, knowledge, demeanor and skills to improve their ability to relate across differences in an increasingly diverse global setting.

The Critical Components are: The Foundations of Diversity and Inclusion, Queer Community, Mental and Physical Health, People with Disabilities, Global Perspectives, Military Experiences, and Spirituality, which are necessary for engaged 21st century citizenship.

The Certificate in Critical Cultural Competence is set up to expose students to the aforementioned competencies. Each competency will have a dedicated workshop designed to expose, discuss, articulate and reflect on and manage implicit biases.

Students will be required to complete all competencies and a capstone project. For the capstone, students can choose an activity which requires them to engage with a community related to one of the competencies and develop a presentation about that experience.

The Certificate in Critical Cultural Competence is designed to enhance students' complete university experience. They will focus on the academics of their specific programs while developing skills necessary to critically and competently engage as global citizens.

Associated Goals
- Engage students with diverse communities on and off campus.
- Enhance students' cultural responsiveness, leadership, and professionalism.

Review Tools
- Number of participants
- Number of participants who complete it within 12 months
- Number of participants who complete it within 18 months
- Number of participants who engage in multiple projects
- Number of participants who volunteer to be mentors

Champions
Office of the Chief Diversity Officer and Higher Education Student Affairs Master's Program Graduate Assistant

Community Partnership Strategic Area

The issues/opportunities of our region and the resources we as a university have access to represent two different, but inextricably bound points. These two points can be bridged through intentionally focused community engagement approaches and processes.

Subcommittee Members: Rebecca Mathis (Blue Ridge Health), John Carzoli (Doctor of Physical Therapy Program), Amy Murphy-Nugen (Social Work), and Lane Perry (Center for Service Learning)

Community Partnership Strategic Goal & Delivery Points: These delivery points will serve as initiatives designed to operationalize each strategic area in practical ways.
- Establish and implement a system for inventorying, assessing, refining/prioritizing, engaging, and reviewing campus-community partnerships with the region.
- Establish and develop space within online platforms, for community partners to create a presence for connecting with faculty and students in order to facilitate the management of volunteers and the co-creation of mutually beneficial partnerships.

Campus-Community Collaborative Exchange – This initiative will focus on the development of an inventorying system platform for determining and connecting campus and community resources and opportunities. The focus will initially center on a systematic approach to inventorying current initiatives within the community and the many ways the campus is engaged within these initiatives. After inventorying is completed an assessment of the information will help identify already established campus-community focus areas, areas where the community is already organized itself, and untapped areas for collaboration between the university and the community. These untapped areas will then be refined and strengthened to pursue new initiatives where a strategic partnership could help address needs and connect resources for campus-community impact. Through this strategic, evidence-based approach, the alignment of opportunities, partners, and resources will be made and goals will be collaboratively established. An iterative review process will be established to determine the impact of the partnership on the focus area. Simplified, this process will seek to systematically achieve the following:

- Inventory Campus & Community Partnerships
- Assess and Identify Focus Areas
-