

Barry University

Civic Action Plan

Deepening and Strengthening Civic Engagement
to Maximize Impact

Commitments

- 1** *We empower our students, faculty, staff, and community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships in pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable future for communities beyond the campus—nearby and around the world.*
- 2** *We prepare our students for lives of engaged citizenship, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in pursuit of the public good.*
- 3** *We embrace our responsibility as a place-based institution to contribute to the health and strength of our communities—economically, socially, environmentally, educationally, and politically.*
- 4** *We harness the capacity of our institution—through research, teaching, partnerships, and institutional practice—to challenge the prevailing social and economic inequalities that threaten our democratic future.*
- 5** *We foster an environment that consistently affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education by setting high expectations for members of the campus community to contribute to their achievement.*

Barry University's Civic Action Plan

Barry University is a Carnegie-classified community-engaged institution with an enduring commitment to the civic purposes of higher education. Grounded in Catholic values, the Barry experience integrates study, reflection, and action to “foster individual and communal transformation where learning leads to knowledge and truth, reflection leads to informed action, and a commitment to social justice leads to collaborative service.”¹

University President Sister Linda Bevilacqua, O.P., Ph.D., is a member of Campus Compact, the national coalition of higher education leaders who are committed to deepening the ability of their institutions to educate students for civic and social responsibility and to improve community life. Sister Linda was one of the early signers of Campus Compact's 30th Anniversary Action Statement of Presidents and Chancellors. Signing the Statement on November 25, 2015, Sister Linda affirmed five commitments regarding the University's public purposes and civic action. All signers have agreed to “redouble our efforts with a renewed commitment to preparing students for democratic citizenship, building partnerships for change, and reinvigorating higher education for the public good.”


In this Civic Action Plan,² we outline the actions we will take and indicate the outcomes we aim to achieve. The development of this Plan has provided an opportunity to articulate our renewed efforts to maximize the impact of engagement primarily for our students and the communities we serve. The focus of this Plan is not the creation of programs but, rather, the improvement of teaching and learning, research, and service as integrated elements of comprehensive institutional action designed to advance the public good.

The actions outlined in this Plan were derived from the five commitments made by the University: mutually respectful partnerships, engaged citizenship, contributions to community, capacity to challenge inequities, and centrality of public purposes. The implementation of this Plan will demonstrate how we at Barry will deepen and strengthen our work to realize the commitments articulated in Campus Compact's 30th Anniversary Action Statement.

Glenn A. Bowen, Ph.D. – Executive Director
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Barry University
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¹ From Barry University's Mission and Core Commitments.

² Preparation of this Plan was delayed so the University could focus on addressing urgent institutional priorities such as the annual budget and the Strategic Agenda for 2017–2022.



“Barry is committed to serving local and global communities through collaborative and mutually productive partnerships. The University accepts responsibility to engage with communities to pursue systemic, self-sustaining solutions to human, social, economic and environmental problems.”

– From Barry University’s Mission Statement

Vision

Barry University will be known widely as a community-engaged institution committed to the pursuit of social justice through reciprocal partnerships and collaborative service. Students attending this University will develop knowledge, understanding, values, and skills to lead lives of civic engagement and social responsibility.

Approach

Our Civic Action Plan uses the following definition of civic engagement, approved by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and widely accepted in higher education: “Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.”³

Civic engagement includes individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Such actions may include community service projects, advocacy, voting, letter-writing campaigns, public deliberations, and public demonstrations.

Our approach to developing this Plan was to map the assets and resources available for civic engagement and to review current programs and projects, both curricular and co-curricular. We also examined policies and procedures pertinent to community engagement. Then we decided on a course of action that would be focused on the enhancement and expansion (rather than the creation) of programs and projects with a view to deepening and strengthening engagement for increased impact.

Our Civic Action Plan supports the improvement of teaching and learning, research, and service as integrated elements of comprehensive institutional action designed to create a positive impact on campus and in the wider community. Further, this Plan supports sustainable change, primarily through building lasting capacity and enhancing programs and procedures.

The priorities indicated in this Plan were derived from the five commitments made by the University – namely, to develop mutually respectful partnerships, prepare students for lives of engaged citizenship, embrace our responsibilities as an institution contributing to community well-being, leveraging institutional capacity to challenge social and economic inequalities, and consistently affirm the public purposes of higher education. The implementation of this Plan will demonstrate how we at Barry are deepening and strengthening civic engagement to realize the commitments articulated in the Action Statement of Presidents and Chancellors.

³ Thomas Ehrlich (Ed.), *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*. Phoenix: Oryx Press, 2000, p. vi.



Meeting the Five Commitments: Action Steps

I. Mutually Respectful Partnerships

We empower our students, faculty, staff, and community partners to co-create mutually respectful partnerships in pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable future for communities beyond the campus—nearby and around the world.

1. Strengthen the role of Community Engagement Liaisons in community partnership development and evaluation.
2. Amplify the voice of the community by involving the Community Advisory Committee more fully in the implementation and evaluation of community engagement programs.
3. Engage community partners in program planning and course delivery, especially as co-educators in service-learning and other high-impact educational practices.
4. Feature exemplary University partnerships with nonprofit organizations, social service agencies, selected K–12 schools, and local government departments during the annual Community Engagement Awards.

II. Engaged Citizenship

We prepare our students for lives of engaged citizenship, with the motivation and capacity to deliberate, act, and lead in pursuit of the public good.

1. Intensify the implementation of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to foster personal and social responsibility as a hallmark of a Barry undergraduate education.
2. Develop and propose an interdisciplinary, special-topics course focused on leadership and diversity competencies for civic engagement.
3. Accelerate the development of the Barry Service Corps as a high-quality, innovative program that is instrumental in increasing student access, persistence, and success through civic learning and engagement.
4. Implement the Campus Democracy Project more intentionally to deepen students' understanding of political issues.
5. Emphasize vocational discernment opportunities that encourage students to connect their gifts and talents to the needs of communities, from local to global.
6. In University publications, feature students contributing significantly to community impact; report the academic achievements of civically engaged students (including student-athletes); and highlight the participation of community-committed alumni in collaborative service projects.





III. Contributions to Community

We embrace our responsibility as a place-based institution to contribute to the health and strength of our communities—economically, socially, environmentally, educationally, and politically.

1. Create a Community Garden on campus to complement Barry FairShare, a community-supported agriculture project, to help combat food insecurity and inadequate nutrition in selected Miami-Dade neighborhoods.
2. Engage students, faculty, and staff in community health projects, locally and abroad (mainly in Haiti), using a holistic and coherent framework that addresses the social determinants of health.
3. Participate more fully in the work of PACT (People Acting for Community Together) to encourage Miami-Dade city and county officials to make and meet commitments to address identified public issues such as housing, public safety, juvenile justice, and immigration.
4. Support the educational and economic development efforts of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and similar organizations.

IV. Capacity to Challenge Inequities

We harness the capacity of our institution—through research, teaching, partnerships, and institutional practice—to challenge the prevailing social and economic inequalities that threaten our democratic future.

1. Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion through experiential learning activities; an ongoing partnership with Church World Service Miami (a refugee resettlement agency); and the proposed civic engagement course.
2. As part of the QEP, guide students toward recognizing the extent to which cultural standards, institutional practices, and values oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create/enhance privilege and power.
3. Continue to offer small grants in support of community-based research projects designed to address social and economic problems.
4. Enhance the deliberation aspect of the Deliberative Dialogue forums to generate suggestions for sustainable solutions to current social issues.

V. Centrality of Public Purposes

We foster an environment that consistently affirms the centrality of the public purposes of higher education by setting high expectations for members of the campus community to contribute to their achievement.

1. Promote the Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program as a major professional development opportunity.
2. Reenergize the Faculty Learning Community for Engaged Scholarship with emphasis on building competencies for the successful practice of community-engaged scholarship.
3. Maintain the website of the Center for Community Service Initiatives with up-to-date information on civic engagement programs, projects, and events.
4. Celebrate and reward the accomplishments of students, as well as faculty and staff, who demonstrate good citizenship and lead lives of civic responsibility.

Outcomes

The outcomes of programs, projects, and related activities will be documented and assessed systematically to gauge their impact on students, the community, and other stakeholders. Performance measures will be based on student survey data, course-embedded assessment scores, student work products, faculty scholarly products, and community partner questionnaire and focus-group responses.

Implementation

The Civic Action Plan will be implemented as a five-year strategic endeavor. The Center for Community Service Initiatives will coordinate the implementation of this Plan with oversight by the Office of the Provost.

The University units that will play key roles in the implementation of the Plan include Campus Ministry, the Career Development Center, the Center for Human Rights and Social Justice, the Center for Student Involvement, the Office of International and Multicultural Programs, and the Office of Mission Engagement.

Communication

Regular communication is important for maintaining momentum and sustaining success. Reports of Plan implementation and the achievement of goals will be disseminated regularly, internally and externally.

The Department of Marketing and Communications will publish bulletins, reports, and feature stories on programs and projects that are part of the Civic Action Plan. Reports will include institutional action, partnership development activities, success stories, and outcomes indicating community impact. Publication outlets will include the University website, newsletters, the Barry Magazine, and the Annual Report of the Center for Community Service Initiatives.



Barry University

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