

## Step Forward for the Tennessee Campus Compact

On September 3, 2005, I published an article in the Tennessean's *Nashville Eye* column urging Tennesseans to explore the establishment of a Tennessee Campus Compact (TNCC) as one possible solution to higher education challenges. The TNCC is governed by a voluntary presidents' council, an executive board, and an advisory committee. It serves as the statewide coordinator, convener, and catalyst to advance civic engagement, service-learning, and community service. Service-learning, community-based initiatives and other forms of civic engagement, when done well, tend to improve student learning outcomes while addressing issues of access, diversity, retention, and workforce development. Elements of engagement are being incorporated into Carnegie classifications, regional accreditation standards, and major research funding criteria. National indicators of engagement themes encompass institutional culture, curriculum and pedagogy, faculty roles and rewards, mechanisms and resources, and community-campus exchange.

By fall 2007, I stepped forward and procured seed grants from the National Campus Compact, Volunteer Tennessee, Learn and Serve America, and the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce toward this end through Vanderbilt University. President Melvin N. Johnson of Tennessee State University volunteered to serve as founding president and offered TSU as host institution. Since April 2007, an AmeriCorps\*VISTA project through the Tennessee Office of the Corporation for National and Community Service under the leadership of Dr. Jerry Herman has assisted in providing capacity building for service-learning infrastructure support. This spring the TNCC became a reality as the 33rd State Campus Compact in the United States. Governor Bredesen and the leadership of the Tennessee Board of Regents signed a TNCC resolution. Tennessee higher education system leaders of THEC (Dr. Richard Rhoda), TBR (Chancellor Charles W. Manning), UT (President John Petersen), and TICUA (President Claude O. Pressnell) signed the TNCC founding charter. Presidents and chancellors of thirty public and private, two- and four institutions have pledged annual membership.

By fall 2008, TNCC will begin providing programs and services. Faculty will receive training in service-learning curriculum integration. Campuses will receive technical assistance to guide practice and increase efficiency. Administrators, faculty, students, and community partners will receive funding for campus engagement initiatives, stipends, scholarships, and recognition awards. Service-learning experts will conduct research and evaluation on the value of public service programs. TNCC will document service activities and outcomes across the state to enhance Tennessee's reputation in volunteerism. Stakeholders will engage with statewide P-16 initiatives to improve teaching and learning and better prepare students for the marketplace. In affiliation with 32 other State Compacts in the country, TNCC will contribute to the development of best practices in service-learning pedagogy, assessment, and community impact.

Today, I am urging Tennessee organizations, agencies, and individuals to step forward and become engaged in the development and implementation of TNCC programs and services to achieve the above goals. The TNCC is a voluntary start-up organization and invites contributions. After all, civic engagement has many forms and manifestations. Please contact me if you wish to help Tennessee live up to its name as the Volunteer State.

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