



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM *of* MARYLAND

Thursday, November 8, 2018
Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic
2018 Presidents' Institute
Chancellor Robert L. Caret
(AS DRAFTED)

Good afternoon. I am very pleased to be with you today for this Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic Presidents' Institute. Let me quickly thank Nancy Grasmick for her comments. She is always an interesting and insightful speaker.

Let me begin my comments by thanking our “host” campus, Gallaudet University, the premier institution of learning, teaching, and research for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. And an institution where service and community engagement are a way of life.

My thanks as well to our campus sponsors, including those from the University System of Maryland: Coppin State University; Frostburg State University; the University of Baltimore; and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. I want to note that it says a great deal about ALL our campus sponsors that they do not just lend their name as sponsors, they are active and involved in this event and in the life of Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic.

My thanks also to our K-12 **partners**—Maryland State Department of Education., D.C. Public Schools, and the Delaware's Department of Education.

Which brings me to my final words of thanks, which go to Madeline Yates, Executive Director of Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic. Madeline, your energy, enthusiasm, and leadership are among this organization's greatest assets.

For more than three decades, Campus Compact has been leading the way in student involvement, with more than 20 million students—from more than 1,200 colleges—engaged in service and service-learning since 1985. That is truly remarkable. Moreover, the power of Campus Compact's message and methodology lies in the fact that those **providing** the services benefit just as much as those receiving it. It is a true win-win situation, with students gaining experience and insight while communities grow healthier, stronger, and more economically robust.

Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic boasts a membership of forty-four institutions from Maryland, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. These include two-year and four-year, public and private, small liberal arts colleges and large research universities, HBIs and comprehensive institutions, and seminaries. You really do encompass the entire higher education spectrum. In fact, Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic is the largest higher education association in the region and is leveraging that size, strength, and diversity to meet key challenges.

Which brings me to crux of my comments today. Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic holds as its mission to mobilize the collective commitment and capacity of higher education to actively advance our communities through civic and community engagement. And your theme for this year's Presidents' Institute—Systemic Action: Advancing Equity Through College, Career, and **Civic Readiness**—echoes that mission.

For my part today, I want to focus on that third element: "civic readiness". Late last year, I was invited to give an address on this topic at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities Annual meeting. I believe many of the points I made there are equally applicable for today's gathering.

I often summarize my vision for the USM in a single sentence: To graduate educated, enlightened citizens who are ready to go to work in all facets of life to make their lives, their communities, and our nation better. From a higher education perspective, this requires us to multi task.

In today's economy, skills and knowledge are the most valuable of commodities. This is especially true in Maryland—a leading STEM state—where the future is driven by innovation in the life sciences, cybersecurity, autonomous vehicles, and other areas. So, I certainly make no apologies for pursuing a strong economic development agenda as USM Chancellor. And I have been expanding USM partnerships with the private sector from day one.

At the same time, however, we must always remember that the value of colleges and universities is far broader than simply educating people to qualify for jobs. Education for its own sake must always be a central to our mission. Knowledge of history, an appreciation of art and literature, insight into philosophy, and an understanding of world cultures are indispensable aspects of a civilized society.

We must ask ourselves if we have put such a premium on skills and workforce development—the "secular" side of higher education—that our broader mission of providing educated citizens—the "spiritual" side of higher education—is in danger of being lost. Many of our majors and programs are critical to our nation, but do not pay high wages: elected officials, social workers, teachers, and many others. Do they not deserve the same support, encouragement, and respect of our highly-paid graduates?

Yes, we have an obligation to ensure that our graduates are prepared to meet the rigorous challenges of the new economy armed with the knowledge and skills they need to compete. At the same time, we have an obligation to make sure our society is provided with the graduates it needs, graduates that have the education, the cultural and intellectual underpinnings, and perspectives necessary to enable them to take their place as enlightened and progressive members—and leaders—of society.

To accomplish this, we need to reestablish higher education's critical leadership role in promoting the ***we versus the me*** through civic education, civic engagement, and civic responsibility.

We need a greater emphasis on civic **education** to ensure an informed, knowledgeable, and responsible citizenry that understands the origins, impact, importance—and *fragility*—of democracy.

This goes well beyond understanding the Electoral College or how a bill becomes a law, which absolutely must be part of the K-12 curriculum, but we must do more. From a higher education perspective, impactful civic education means helping students develop a powerful “civic skill set.” They need to become thoughtful consumers of news and information, able to differentiate between fact and opinion, to see relationships and make connections, and to draw conclusions that are warranted from the data. This is almost a textbook definition of “critical thinking.” In addition, they need learning opportunities that shape their outlook and experiences to position them as informed, engaged members of their communities. And while they need to support freedom of expression and tolerance for different thoughts, they must also learn to temper that support with a commitment to a rigorous pursuit of fact and inquiry into truth.

There is no shortage of good, effective ideas on this front. The challenge is really in the embrace and the implementation; which are issues I will circle back to toward the end of my comments.

A vital companion to civic education, civic **engagement** turns our needs and aspirations into actions. It strengthens connections to one another and inspires a commitment to work to make a difference in the life of our communities—the we versus the me. We need a two-pronged approach, first with the university itself active and engaged, and second with students (and faculty and staff) experiencing and internalizing public action and engagement.

This concept that higher education institutions must not simply be **IN** communities, but rather part **OF** communities must be our standard. It is certainly something the USM has embraced throughout the state.

It is, however, important to differentiate between actions that are little more than volunteerism, or public service, or service learning, and genuine *civic engagement*. Not to denigrate any efforts that target critical social needs. If anything, we could use much, much more of that. But what I am referring to is civic engagement that requires students to come to terms with their individual **duty** as citizens, to become active participants in democracy itself, to understand the work of citizenship, to understand that citizenship is more than *rights*; it is also *responsibilities*. Connecting teaching, research, and service to community engagement will more effectively yield civically engaged students, scholars, and institutions.

The third leg of the stool supporting democracy is civic **responsibility**—an idea first recorded by the ancient Romans and embedded in our Constitution—that directly acknowledges our obligation to make contributions for the good of the whole society.

If we consider a campus as its own society—its own democratic society—what do we want to see? We want to see a learning environment that features open, reasonable, respectful discussion of political, social and other issues. We want to see the student/faculty relationship evolve to one where faculty do not simply serve as objective experts, but rather as intellectuals who catalyze debate and forge relationships among diverse constituencies. And we want to see students with a more active role in campus decision-making. In such an environment, students—regardless of major—will graduate with the intellect, skills, experience, and perspective they need to be active and engaged citizens.

I would contend that civic responsibility would essentially become an “automatic outcome”—would be baked into the cake—for our students if we embraced enhancing civic education and provided opportunities for civic engagement as a truly institution-wide or system-wide priority.

Of course, a call to action is almost always easier than the action itself. So, with my remaining time, let me do two last things: Outline the approach we are taking in the USM and highlight one absolute necessity for success across the spectrum.

There are certainly challenges when it comes to integrating civic education into core requirements across disciplines. As we all know, disciplinary specialization is a prominent feature of the modern American public university. Our faculty and students are more and more creatures of specialization. And while that has some positive aspects as far as preparing students for careers, it falls short in terms of educating the **whole** student.

At the USM we are digging into this issue. As I mentioned, almost all of our campuses are fully engaged in Campus Compact. In addition, earlier this year we updated our strategic plan, with perhaps the most significant change being the elevation of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and **Civic Engagement** as a new, stand-alone goal.

Most importantly, earlier this year the USM Board of Regents endorsed new recommendations to help USM students graduate as more active and engaged citizens. These recommendations were the outcome of a yearlong Regents’ Workgroup examining the statewide commitment to civic education and engagement. In essence, the board established civic literacy as a core expectation for all students and called for fostering an ethos of civic engagement and participation across the USM.

Implementation on USM campuses began this fall, with every system institution taking part on three separate fronts:

- Associate Vice Chancellor Nancy Shapiro is heading up **Voter Engagement** efforts, examining barriers and other issues that impact our students.
- Deb Moriarty, VP for Student Affairs at Towson University, is leading efforts to expand the number of USM institutions with **Carnegie Community Engagement Classification**. Currently TU is the USM’s only institution with that designation.
- Karen Olmstead, Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Salisbury University, is focusing on the **Curricular Integration** of civic education and civic engagement throughout system institutions.

All three committees—and the steering committee—feature representation from every USM campus, giving us a fully integrated “civic investment team” at each institution that will help make our efforts sustainable.

Lastly, the necessity I want to highlight is simple, but without it success is virtually impossible; it is Presidential Leadership. All the steps necessary to reestablish public higher education as a force for teaching and promoting civic engagement and responsibility—changing policy, changing behavior, changing resource allocation, etc.—all require broad institutional support and commitment.

Overcoming inertia, resistance, and even fear will take real leadership. Likewise, investing in high-quality faculty development that enables faculty and students to engage in **civil discourse** will be driven by presidential leadership.

Leaders of institutions of higher education must not shy away from these challenges. This is where leadership matters. It will not be easy; but it is essential. The fact that so many aspects of our civic life have become dysfunctional makes this effort all the more important and imperative. If we are committed, it can be our efforts that help move us from civic dysfunction to civic enlightenment.

Thank you.

###