



College Presidents for Civic Preparedness Communications Toolkit



CITIZENS & SCHOLARS
COLLEGE PRESIDENTS
FOR CIVIC PREPAREDNESS

How to Use This Kit

College Presidents for Civic Preparedness is a unique coalition of more than 125 presidents committed to strengthening civic culture on their campuses. At a time when higher education faces heightened public scrutiny, it is more important than ever for colleges to demonstrate—not just describe—how they prepare students to engage thoughtfully with complex issues and contribute to their communities.

Strong stories are one of the most effective ways to show that impact. But finding and telling those stories isn't always easy.

This guide helps presidents, communications teams, and campus leaders surface the strongest stories already happening across

campus—and shape them into clear, compelling examples of how students are learning to engage across differences and collaborating to solve problems in their communities.

Use the tools in this kit to identify promising story leads, capture student experiences, and share those stories through speeches, social media, fundraising appeals, alumni newsletters, media outreach, and campus communications.

And don't forget to submit your stories to press@collegepresidents.org

Have questions?

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Stories are the most powerful way to show the real impact of civic learning on campus—and we know many of you already have strong examples happening every day. This guide is designed to help you surface those stories and refine them so they clearly show how students are learning, collaborating, and strengthening their communities.



College Presidents for Civic Preparedness is a coalition from C&S.

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Boilerplate Language & Visuals

Below is a collection of boilerplate language and topline messaging you can copy and paste into your materials (and edit as needed). You'll also find downloadable visuals that can support your communications and storytelling about your participation in College Presidents for Civic Preparedness.

College Presidents for Civic Preparedness is a national coalition that unites over 125 college presidents in a shared mission: to equip the next generation of students with the tools they need to solve civic problems in their communities.

- Presidents join the national coalition and champion the Three Civic Commitments:
 - » Educating for democracy is central to our mission.
 - » We will prepare our students for a vibrant, diverse, and contentious society.
 - » We will protect and defend free inquiry.
- College doesn't just prepare students for careers; it shapes them into the citizens they will become.
- Too often civic readiness is treated as optional, or as a one-off class, project or workshop. Students need spaces to practice core civic skills—and conditions to make this culture of civic readiness possible.
- Our students will graduate ready to strengthen their communities and tackle the challenges of their generation.



Downloadable Resources

- 1 [College Presidents for Civic Preparedness logo.](#)
- 2 [College Presidents for Civic Preparedness badge for professional uses \(e.g. staff webpage, LinkedIn\).](#)
- 3 [PowerPoint slide for inclusion in presentations.](#)

Tag us when you post: [LinkedIn](#) X [Facebook](#)

Plug-and-Play Speech Inserts

Sample copy to use (edit to fit) when referencing your membership in College Presidents for Civic Preparedness in speeches or remarks.

Short Insert (30 seconds)

Our [University/College] is part of a national coalition called College Presidents for Civic Preparedness, a network of more than 125 college leaders committed to strengthening civic culture on our campuses.

Through this work, we are ensuring that students graduate with the skills they need to navigate differences, evaluate information, and collaborate to solve problems in their communities.

Preparing students for careers is essential. Preparing them for citizenship is just as important.

Medium Insert (1 minute)

At [University/College], we believe college should prepare students not only for careers, but for the responsibilities of citizenship.

That's why we are part of College Presidents for Civic Preparedness, a coalition of more than 125 presidents working to ensure that students develop the skills needed to navigate today's complex civic landscape.

Across our campus, students are learning how to engage in productive conversations across differences, evaluate credible information, and collaborate to address real-world challenges.

These are the skills that strengthen communities, strengthen workplaces, and ultimately strengthen our country.

Long Insert (2 minutes)

Higher education has always played a critical role in preparing students for citizenship.

But today that responsibility is more important than ever.

Students are navigating a world shaped by rapid technological change, deep political polarization, and an overwhelming amount of information competing for their attention.

Our job as educators is not to tell students what to think. It is to ensure they have the tools to think critically, engage constructively, and work together to solve problems.

That is why [University/College] is part of College Presidents for Civic Preparedness, a coalition of more than 125 college and university presidents committed to building strong civic culture across campuses.

Through this work, we are creating opportunities for students to practice three essential civic skills: productive conversations, credible information, and collaborative problem solving.

Here are three examples of that work brought to life on our campus:

- Insert example 1
- Insert example 2
- Insert example 3

When students graduate with these skills, they are better prepared not only for careers—but for leadership in their communities.



Op-ed, Blog Post, and Commentary Framing

Framing ideas for referencing your commitment to building a campuswide civic culture.

Framing the Argument

Across the country, Americans are asking important questions about the value of higher education.

Those conversations often focus on jobs and return on investment. Those questions matter. But they miss another essential role colleges play: preparing students for citizenship.

At [Name], we believe that preparing students to contribute to their communities is just as important as preparing them for careers.

Signaling Your Commitment

That belief is why we joined College Presidents for Civic Preparedness, a coalition of more than 125 college and university presidents committed to strengthening civic culture on our campuses.

Together, we are working to ensure that every student has opportunities to practice the skills that make constructive civic participation possible.

Offering Campus Examples

At [Name], we are putting this commitment into practice by [insert example: dialogue program, community partnership, course redesign, student initiative].

Students are learning not just about civic responsibility, but how to practice it.

Social Media Content

For use to promote your membership in College Presidents for Civic Preparedness. Options for institutional accounts as well as for college presidents, faculty, and staff.

Institution Accounts

We're proud to share that [Name] is a member of College Presidents for Civic Preparedness!

College Presidents for Civic Preparedness brings together campus leaders from colleges across the country. Together with more than 125 other presidents, [Name] is committed to creating a culture of curiosity and collaboration on campus—one that leaves students ready to strengthen their communities and tackle the challenges of their generation.

Ideas to personalize the post:

- A quote from your president on the importance of college campuses in developing effective citizens.
- Spotlight an activity or initiative on your campus.
- Share a story from students, faculty, and staff on their experiences.

President/Chancellor Accounts

I am proud to join College Presidents for Civic Preparedness!

College Presidents for Civic Preparedness brings together campus leaders from colleges across the country. Together with more than 125 other presidents, [Name] is committed to creating a culture of curiosity and collaboration on campus—one that leaves students ready to strengthen their communities and tackle the challenges of their generation.

Ideas to personalize the post:

- Spotlight an activity or initiative on your campus
- Share a story from students, faculty, and staff on their experiences

Faculty Accounts

I am proud to be a Faculty Fellow of the College Presidents for Civic Preparedness coalition.

Faculty play a key role in creating a culture of curiosity and collaboration on campus—one that leaves students ready to strengthen their communities and tackle the challenges of their generation.

Ideas to personalize the post:

- Spotlight how you've brought to life in your classroom or on your campus
- Share a story from students about their experiences



Story Creation Guide

Use the prompts below to identify initiatives, moments, and people on your campus that illustrate how students are learning to engage across differences and contribute to their communities. The next page highlights five civic stories every campus already has.

The strongest stories center students taking action, not institutions making statements. Instead of describing programs, focus on:

- A student encountering a real challenge
- A moment of learning or transformation guided by a faculty member
- President's personal reflection on the impact in the community

Good stories answer three questions:

- What challenge did the student, faculty, or staff face?
- How did the work to practice productive conversations (civil discourse) or collaborating across differences help?
- What changed as a result?

Whenever possible:

- Center student voices
- Use plain speak, avoid jargon, and lean heavily on visuals over words
- Show action, not intention



5 Civic Stories Every Campus Already Has

A Student Who Brought People Together

Look for a student who helped bridge divides on campus. These stories show that students themselves are shaping campus culture.

Examples:

- A student leader organizing conversations across political differences
- A club hosting events, such as dialogue dinners, where students discuss complex issues respectfully
- A student initiative focused on listening and connection

A Moment When Students Found Unexpected Common Ground

Sometimes the most powerful stories come from a single moment of connection. These stories capture the transformational impact of college experiences.

Examples:

- A student reflecting on learning from people with different life experiences
- A group project where students with opposing perspectives worked together
- A campus event that encouraged listening rather than debate

A Faculty Member Changing How Students Learn

Many faculty are redesigning courses to connect learning with real-world issues. These stories highlight teaching innovation that strengthens civic skills.

Examples:

- A professor redesigning assignments to include collaborative problem solving
- Courses incorporating dialogue or community engagement
- Faculty experimenting with new teaching approaches that help students examine complex issues

A Program That Connects Students and the Local Community

Some of the strongest stories show students engaging with people outside campus walls.

Examples:

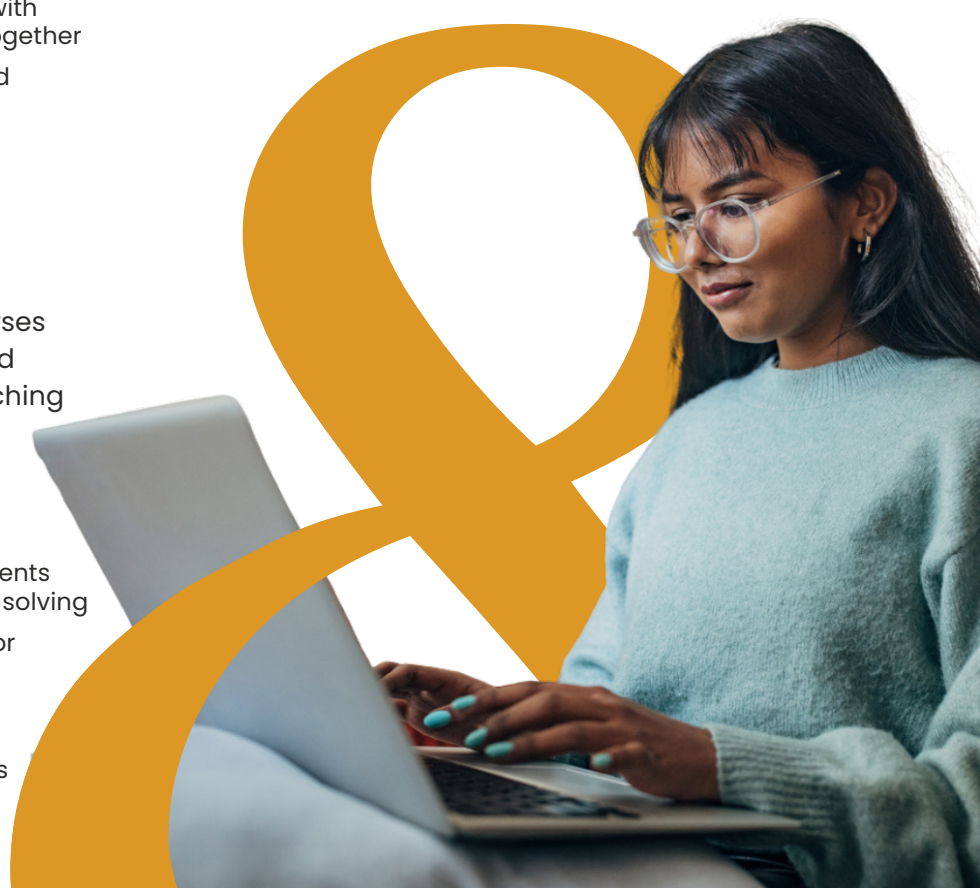
- A student reflecting on learning from people with different life experiences
- A group project where students with opposing perspectives worked together
- A campus event that encouraged listening rather than debate

A Student Applying Civic Skills After Graduation

Alumni stories can powerfully demonstrate long-term impact.

Examples:

- Graduates using dialogue skills in their workplaces
- Alumni working in public service or community leadership
- Former student leaders continuing civic work in their communities



The 15-Minute Story Interview Guide

Great stories rarely appear in a press release or program description. They emerge when you talk directly with the people involved—especially students.

This quick interview guide helps your team capture the moments, experiences, and outcomes that bring civic learning stories to life. In most cases, a strong story can be gathered in a short 15-minute conversation. Focus on experiences and moments, not institutional descriptions.

Step 1: Start with the Spark

Begin by understanding how the experience started.

Ask:

- What first drew you to this program or experience?
- What problem or issue were you hoping to address?
- What did you expect going into it?

These questions help establish why the story began.

Step 3: Capture the Turning Point

Strong stories often hinge on a moment of realization, challenge, or connection.

Ask:

- Was there a moment when something clicked for you?
- Did anything surprise you during the experience?
- Did you encounter a challenge or disagreement?

These moments often produce the most compelling quotes.

Step 5: Show the Impact

Finally, understand the broader impact.

Ask:

- Did this experience change anything on campus or in the community?
- Are you using these skills elsewhere now?
- Would you encourage other students to participate?

This helps demonstrate why the experience matters beyond one student.

Step 2: Understand the Experience

Next, learn what actually happened.

Ask:

- What did you actually do as part of this program or project?
- Who did you work with?
- What was the most memorable moment?

Encourage interviewees to describe specific moments or interactions.

Avoid general answers like:

“Students had important conversations.”

Instead look for:

“I was nervous facilitating my first discussion, but once people started sharing their perspectives, the room changed.”

Step 4: Identify What Changed

Next, focus on what students learned or how they grew.

Ask:

- What did you take away from this experience?
- Did it change how you think about working with people who see things differently?
- What skills did you develop?

Look for connections to the core civic skills:

- engaging across differences
- evaluating information
- collaborating to solve problems

We want to hear your stories so we can amplify them with the press and across our broader community—please send links, clips, or documents to press@collegepresidents.org

Quick Tips for Great Story Interviews

- ✓ **Look for moments, not summaries**
The best stories capture specific experiences.
- ✓ **Center the student voice**
Student quotes should drive the story.
- ✓ **Ask follow-up questions**
If someone gives a general answer, ask: *"Can you give me an example?"*
- ✓ **Listen for emotion**
Excitement, nervousness, discovery, and connection often signal a strong story moment.
- ✓ **The One Question That Often Unlocks the Best Quote**
If time is short, ask this:
"What moment during this experience stayed with you the most?"

This question frequently reveals the core of the story.

The Power of & **125+** presidents **850k+** students **30+** states





Great Examples of Stories from Our Coalition

Unscripted Campus Conversations highlight the people who are sparking a new generation of productive conversations—in their own words. From classrooms to auditoriums to residence halls and beyond, they’re asking questions, sharing ideas, and challenging conventional wisdom. Take a look and get inspired.

Real Talk: Across Campus, Across Divides is a collection of short stories that spotlights the University of Pittsburgh’s commitment to building the motivation, skills, and social permission for dialogue across difference.

Send us your stories at press@collegepresidents.org

Tag us when you post: [LinkedIn](#) X [Facebook](#)



College Presidents for Civic Preparedness is convened by
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