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# BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS

Civic Engagement, Leadership, and  
Philanthropy Centers

April 2023

In the following report, Hanover assesses trends among civic engagement, leadership, and philanthropy centers at 10 institutions in the nation.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its analysis, Hanover Research recommends that the institution:



### Offer a large portfolio of service-learning courses that are integrated with the center.

Across benchmarked centers, nearly all offer a large portfolio of service-learning opportunities that are integrated into academic courses at the institution. Exemplars include Bentley University's "[4th Credit Option](#)," Cornell University's portfolio of 398-course options, and High Point University's integration of service-learning courses into its liberal arts core curriculum, liberal arts majors, and professional schools.



### Consider including philanthropy in the center's mission and focus.

Relative to centers that focus on civic engagement and leadership, there appear to be few centers that fully or partially focus on philanthropy. A center that focuses on all three pillars (civic engagement, leadership, and philanthropy) would be a differentiated offering.



### Offer first-year service-learning experiences to appeal to prospective students.

If seeking to leverage its center in recruitment, the institution should develop service-learning experiences and scholarships that are specifically designed for first-year students. Similarly, Elon University's Kernodle Center for Civic Life offers first-year experiences and scholarships that it promotes to prospective students on its [webpage](#).

## KEY FINDINGS

**None of the benchmarked centers offer associated degree programs.** Outside of academic degree programs, High Point University offers a Social Innovation Minor, and Bentley University awards a Service-Learning Certificate. In both cases, institutions associate their programs with their centers. To differentiate itself, the institution could integrate degree programs into its center.

**Carnegie's Elective Classification for Community Engagement is a recognition commonly achieved by benchmarked institutions.** Seven out of 10 benchmarked centers have achieved this recognition. The institution may wish to apply for this designation and highlight the recognition in its marketing messaging.

**All benchmarked centers target current students, though some also target prospective students, faculty, staff, and researchers.** Half of the profiled centers are designed for faculty and staff in addition to current students. The centers that focus on philanthropy are the only ones that target researchers, likely due to their high research activity. Notably, Elon University targets prospective students by touting its service-learning experience and scholarship opportunities that are specific to first-year students. The institution could target all five of these groups, thus aligning itself with [Carnegie's definition](#) of leadership for public purpose.

**Benchmarked centers employ an average of seven staff.** On average, the distribution of staff at profiled centers is two executive directors/directors, one associate director, one assistant director, one coordinator, and two additional "other" staff members.

**Most centers do not have significant physical resources aside from on-campus facilities.** However, Berea College and Elon University provide transportation to students participating in service learning, and the Rochester Institute of Technology offers service-learning projects that participants can complete on-campus.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

## METHODOLOGY

To assist the institution as it considers the launch of a new Civic Engagement, Leadership, and Philanthropy Center, Hanover conducted a benchmarking analysis of similar centers at institutions throughout the nation. The analysis explores trends in areas such as academic offerings, personnel structure, target audience(s), marketing, and more.

The following analysis is primarily based on a review of institutional websites (see below for embedded hyperlinks). Institutions were chosen based on [U.S. News and World Report \(USNWR\) Co-ops/Internships rankings](#) in addition to input from the institution.

## BENCHMARKED PROGRAMS

Institution	Center	Location
Bentley University (Bentley)	<a href="#">Service Learning and Civic Engagement Center</a>	Waltham, MA
Berea College (Berea)	<a href="#">Center for Excellence in Learning through Service</a>	Berea, KY
Cornell University (Cornell)	<a href="#">Einhorn Center for Community Engagement</a>	Ithaca, NY
Denison University (Denison)	<a href="#">Alford Community Leadership and Involvement Center</a>	Granville, OH
Drexel University (Drexel)	<a href="#">Lindy Center for Civic Engagement</a>	Philadelphia, PA
Duke University -- Sanford School of Public Policy (Duke)	<a href="#">Center for Strategic Philanthropy and Civil Society</a>	Durham, NC
Elon University (Elon)	<a href="#">Kernodle Center for Civic Life</a>	Elon, NC
High Point University (HPU)	<a href="#">Center for Community Engagement</a>	High Point, NC
Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)	<a href="#">Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement</a>	Rochester, NY
University of Pennsylvania -- School for Social Policy and Practice (UPenn)	<a href="#">The Center for High Impact Philanthropy</a>	Philadelphia, PA

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS



What trends exist among college or university-based civic engagement, leadership, and philanthropy centers with regards to areas like academic programs, mission/focus, target audience(s), and marketing?



How is civic engagement best defined?

# BENCHMARKING TRENDS

# DEFINING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

## ANALYSIS

As part of its civic engagement efforts, the institution should apply for Carnegie's Elective Classification for Community Engagement (CCCE), as nearly all (70 percent) of benchmarked institutions have achieved this classification. If seeking to apply to the 2024 cycle, institutions need to submit an application by May 1, 2023. Otherwise, application cycles for the classification occur every two years; 2025 would be the next year for application.

### CLASSIFICATION ATTAINMENT AT BENCHMARKED INSTITUTIONS

CCCE

Berea

Cornell

Denison

Drexel

Duke

Elon

UPenn

Non- CCCE

Bentley

HPU

RIT



### CARNEGIE DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*“Community engagement describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.”*

### 2024 CYCLE TIMELINE OVERVIEW



Image Source: [Carnegie Elective Classifications \(2022\)](#)

Source: [Carnegie Elective Classifications \(2022\)](#)

# DEFINING SERVICE-LEARNING

## ANALYSIS

When defining service-learning at its proposed center, the institution may consider definitions of service-learning used by other centers. HPU offers a particularly comprehensive understanding of how service-learning informs its Center for Community Engagement:

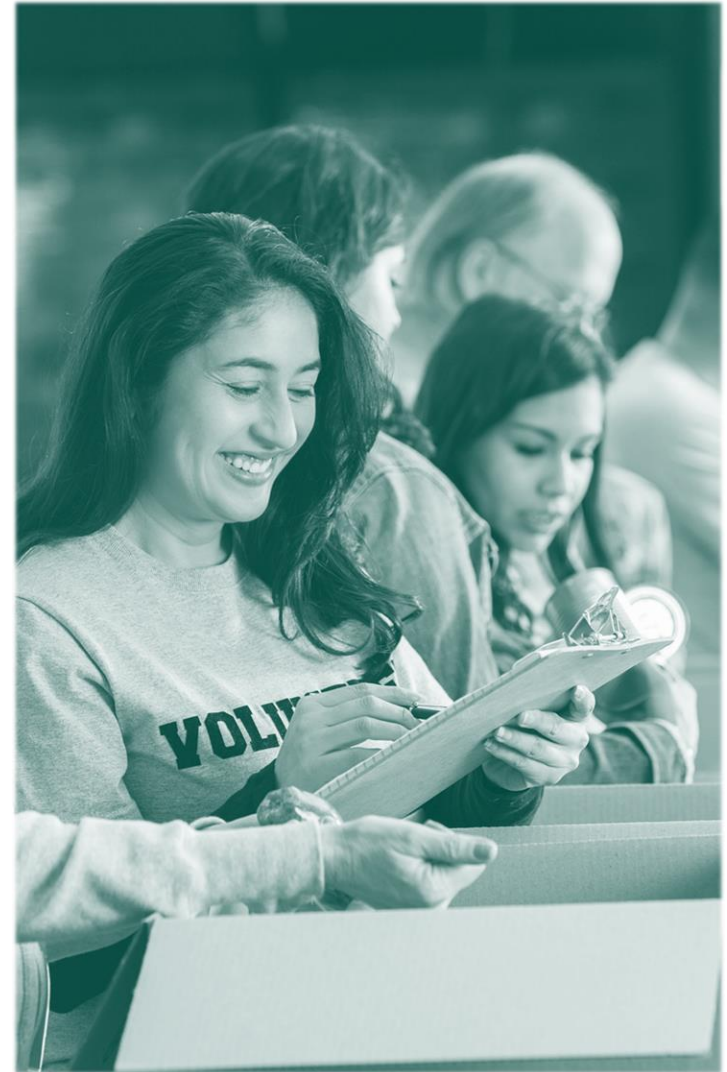
“ Service Learning at High Point University is an experiential and interdisciplinary teaching strategy. It intentionally aligns and integrates a course’s academic objectives with meaningful community service so the academic goals drive the service and the service enhances the academic goals. Service Learning courses especially emphasize the ethical dimension of the subject matter and the subject’s relevance to the students’ lives. The courses add an experiential aspect that deepens students’ academic experience while benefiting our communities, with the aim of developing greater understanding across cultural, racial, and economic barriers and educating students for lives of civic and social responsibility.

### To know what Service Learning is, it helps to know what it is not:

- It must never compromise or replace the disciplinary content or rigor of a course
- It is not students volunteering
- It is not a regular course with volunteer hours added on
- It is not an internship or practicum
- It is not a professional ethics course
- It does not mean being merely free labor to community organizations
- It cannot include students being paid for their work
- It is not about using community partners to give students a good experience, but doing nothing of value for the community partner’s own mission
- All Service Learning courses fulfill the experiential learning requirement in the General Education Requirement. Some SL courses may also fulfill other General Education or major or minor requirements.



Source: [HPU](#)



# CENTER NAMES AND MISSION

## ANALYSIS

**Most centers focus on community and civic engagement in their naming conventions.** Some center names highlight service-learning or leadership, such as the Center for Excellence in Learning through Service at Berea or the Alford Community Leadership and Involvement Center at Denison.

**Relatively few centers have a focus on philanthropy.** Compared to centers focusing on civic engagement and leadership, few centers exist that fully or partially focus on philanthropy, based on targeted searches for related centers. A center that focuses on all three pillars (civic engagement, leadership, and philanthropy) would be unique in the competitive landscape.

**Centers with unique missions include Berea, UPenn, Denison, and RIT.** The mission of Berea's Center for Excellence in Learning through Service is integrated into its no-tuition labor model, where students participate in a required labor program in exchange for free tuition. Berea allows students to meet their labor requirements through service-learning. UPenn's Center for High Impact Philanthropy is particularly unique, as the center produces applied research that provides guidance on how to make philanthropic funds as meaningful and impactful as possible. Finally, Denison and RIT have notable centers: each identifies their local communities in their mission statements, underlining the centers' prioritization of local impact.

## NOTABLE MISSION STATEMENTS BY INSTITUTION

**Berea**

"Berea College has a long history of service. This is reflected in the College motto: 'Learning, Labor and Service.' Service was embedded in the dream of the founders: to create a community where blacks and whites, men and women, could learn together as equals."

**UPenn**

"The Center for High Impact Philanthropy provides actionable and evidence-based guidance for individuals who want to ensure that their philanthropic funds make the greatest possible difference in the lives of others."

**Denison**

"... [the] Center (CLIC) exists to support and collaborate with students, faculty, and staff as they actively engage in service and interact with people in our local Licking County community and beyond, through our partnerships with community-based organizations and with local schools as we work together to address community needs and issues."

## Center Naming Conventions Word Cloud





# ASSOCIATED ACADEMIC OFFERINGS

## ANALYSIS

Typically, centers offer service-learning opportunities that are integrated into required or optional academic courses. For instance, students at Bentley can complete a “4<sup>th</sup> credit option” offered by over 100 faculty across disciplines at the institution. In this option, a one-credit service-learning component is attached to a three-credit course. Bentley students can also earn a [Service-Learning Certificate](#). Finally, Cornell’s Einhorn Center for Community Engagement has a robust portfolio of associated courses, offering [398 courses](#) in which service-learning is baked in.

Only one of the benchmarked institutions (HPU) offers a minor in connection with its center, and none of the profiled centers have an associated academic degree program. HPU offers a [Social Innovation Minor](#) consisting of 21 credits. According to HPU’s description of the minor, “Through a diverse set of interdisciplinary courses, students develop knowledge of ethics, social and individual identity, civic life, and the tools for social innovation.”



### SPOTLIGHT: HPU’S CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At HPU, [service-learning courses](#) require students to participate in 25 hours of service in partnership with community organizations selected by the professors. Students can get creative with their service-learning requirements with the option to develop their own project that addresses a community need. This project is developed in conversation with their professor and community representatives. Service-learning classes can be found in:



HPU’s liberal arts core curriculum



Liberal arts major courses



Throughout HPU’s professional schools



### SPOTLIGHT: UPENN’S HIGH IMPACT PHILANTHROPY ACADEMY

According to the institution, “UPenn’s [High Impact Philanthropy Academy](#) is designed for individual donors, professional Grantmakers, and other philanthropic leaders seeking greater impact.” The goal of the course is to teach enrollees how to use philanthropic funds to make the biggest impact possible, given the amount of capital invested. Examples of required courses include:

Current Philanthropic Ecosystem	Principles of High Impact Philanthropy
The Law and High Impact Philanthropy	Evaluation and High Impact Philanthropy
DEI and High Impact Philanthropy	Aligning Capital for High Impact Philanthropy
Philanthropic Culture, Structure, and Decision-Making Practices	Funding Strategies for High Impact Philanthropy

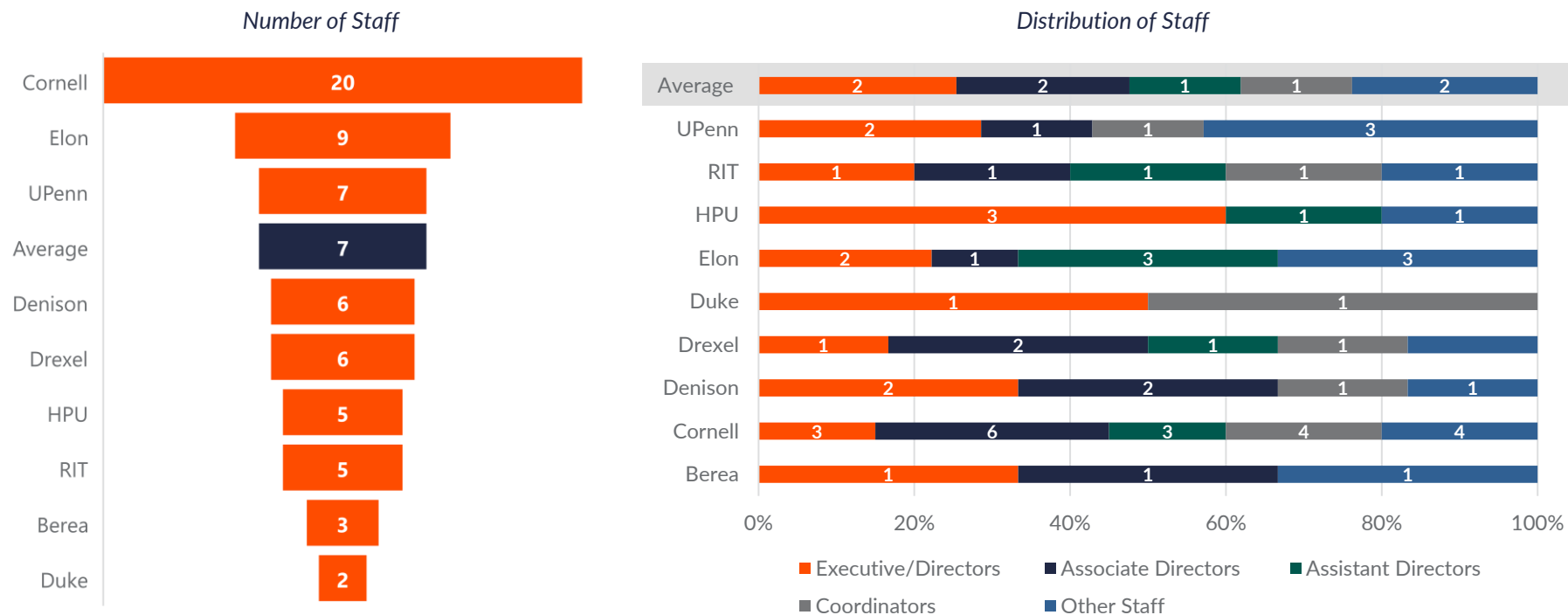
# PERSONNEL STRUCTURE AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES

## ANALYSIS

Centers average seven employees, with an average staff distribution of two executive directors/directors, one associate director, one assistant director, one coordinator, and two additional “other” staff members. Staff size ranges from two employees at Duke to 20 staff at Cornell, likely dependent on the breadth of the center’s services and programs. In addition, many centers have student staff and affiliated faculty advisors who are not included in staff counts.

In terms of physical resources, most centers have on-campus facilities, but otherwise do not have notable resources. Exceptions include Berea, Elon, and RIT; Berea and Elon both provide transportation to service activities, and RIT offers on-campus service-learning projects. Unique to Elon is its [“Get on the bus” program](#) where students can take the bus to a community partner for an afternoon of service on Fridays.

## NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF STAFF BY BENCHMARKED INSTITUTION



# TARGET AUDIENCE AND MARKETING

## ANALYSIS



Benchmarked centers primarily target current students who seek to participate in service-learning and leadership programs, though some also promote participation to faculty, staff, researchers, and prospective students.

These include the centers at Cornell, Drexel, Duke, Elon, HPU, and UPenn. The institution may wish to also target these groups, as Carnegie's classification for Leadership for Public Purpose emphasizes that the institution develops leadership abilities in [all institutional stakeholders](#). The centers that focus on philanthropy (i.e., Duke and UPenn) place a greater emphasis on researcher participation than do centers that only focus on civic engagement and leadership. This is likely attributed to the applied research conducted by these centers that provides guidance on philanthropic impact. See [page 12](#) for more details on how Elon targets prospective students.



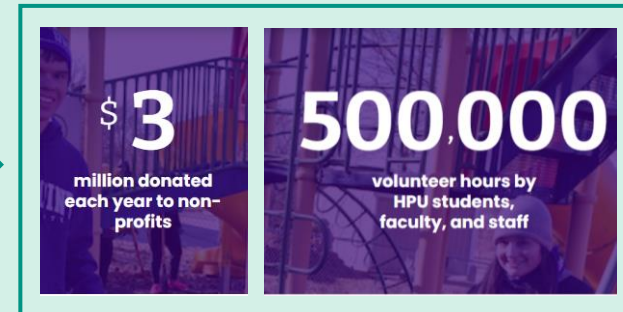
Marketing messaging highlights the different ways in which service-learning benefits participants, especially regarding academics, personal fulfillment, and community involvement.

Examples of opportunities highlighted by the benchmarked centers include social justice initiatives, community projects, leadership training, and scholarships. For instance, Berea and HPU were both selected to participate in the [Bonner Scholars Program](#), and Berea discusses how it was the first institution selected to participate in this program. Many institutions also highlight leadership and paid positions that students can undertake at the centers. At Berea, students can serve as program managers and staff, and Cornell has a primarily student-run program with over 100 student staff. **Finally, many institutions also underline concrete examples of their impact, illustrated on the right of the page.**

## MARKETING MESSAGING AROUND IMPACT

"Started by Bentley students, [BUILD](#) is a week-long initiative to raise awareness about global poverty and to raise money to help bring sustainable development to communities in poorer regions of the world. In its inaugural year, BUILD raised over \$10,000, enough to build an elementary school in Ecuador, and during the second year, students began raising money toward bringing a sustainable clean water source to the same community." - Bentley

HPU highlights concrete data around its impact on the center's main webpage.



"Annually, the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement awards over \$50,000 in scholarships to returning students who are actively engaged in leadership and service on campus and in the community." - RIT

# SPOTLIGHT: ELON'S KERNODLE CENTER FOR CIVIC LIFE

## ANALYSIS

[Elon's Kernodle Center for Civic Life](#) is the only benchmarked center with substantial offerings for first-year students. The center also directly targets [prospective students](#) on its webpage. If seeking to promote its proposed center in recruitment, the institution may wish to review Elon's messaging that is specifically tailored to prospective students. The institution promotes how service is a core value at Elon and is one of five "Elon Experiences." The following figure summarizes the service-learning opportunities designed for first-year students.

### ENGAGE FIRST-YEAR SUMMER EXPERIENCES

Designed to help incoming students feel confident and prepared for their first year at Elon, [first-year summer experiences](#) are held in July on the Elon campus and allow students to engage in a week of service-learning as they become familiar with the university. Students reside in Elon's residence halls while volunteering with multiple community organizations and exploring the local area. Students have the chance to meet other first-year students, current student leaders, faculty, and staff. Elon charges \$300 for these experiences.

### SERVICE LIVING AND LEARNING COMMUNITY

The [Service Living and Learning Community](#) (Service LLC) is for incoming first-year students who wish to integrate community service-learning into their on-campus experience. Through the Service LLC, students can become familiar with the local community and volunteer with campus and community organizations. Members of the community have a specific orientation at the beginning of the school year and can participate in other social events such as floor dinners and trips to Greensboro.

### CHANGE MAKER SCHOLARS

First-year students can also apply to Elon's [Change Maker scholarship](#), which is a selective, merit-based scholarship geared toward students interested in civic engagement and solving real-world problems. Change Maker Scholars participate in the program throughout their four years at Elon and live in Elon's residential hub for civic engagement and social innovation in year one. Other program activities include twice-monthly dinners, mentoring other Change Makers, a domestic internship or study abroad experience, and more.

