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QuickTakes!

William Paterson University Has Civic Engagement In Its DNA

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William Paterson University in Wayne, a commitment to civic engagement sits at the heart of the institution, with students, faculty and staff throughout the campus active participants in a wide array of programs and opportunities.

William Paterson University was among the first institutions in the country more than a decade ago to commit to the American Democracy Project, an initiative of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The university also is one of the founding members of Campus Compact New Jersey, the statewide affiliate of the national Campus Compact that promotes public and community service to develop students' citizenship skills. Civic engagement is a university core value, and William Paterson is the first and only public New Jersey college or university that requires new undergraduates to complete at least one course that includes embedded engagement.

More than 2,000 William Paterson students completed such a course during the last academic year, and the university is creating additional opportunities to enhance the student experience by embedding experiential learning components. One example offered during spring 2016 was a unique interdisciplinary course, Hurricane and Rebirth: New Orleans Before and After Katrina. This course included a spring break service learning trip to New Orleans where students participated in community service activities and interacted with historians, community activists, musicians and documentarians.

Outside the classroom, civic engagement is growing. During the 2015-2016 academic year, students contributed more than 7,200 hours to community service projects. On-campus service projects include blood drives, toy and clothing drives, and care package preparations for the Passaic County Women's Shelter; off-campus, students have volunteered for the Hillside Food Bank, painted at Father English Community Center, and participated in trail clean-up events at the Great Falls National Park in Paterson. During spring break, 40 students helped to renovate a summer camp in Sussex County for homeless children from Newark.

Service opportunities and resources are available on the university's civic engagement website, wpunj.edu/civic-engagement, and a hashtag, [#DoGoodWP](https://twitter.com/DoGoodWP), provides the community with a way to talk about and share experiences on Twitter and Instagram.

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