



**Talloires Network Leaders Conference,  
2-4 December 2014, Cape Town, South Africa**

**CALL TO ACTION**

We, leaders from 134 universities and higher education partner institutions from 40 countries across the globe, gathered in Cape Town to learn from each other's experiences of building and embedding the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education. Our gathering was enriched by the presence of a strong contingent of student leaders who provided inspiring and insightful perspectives on active citizenship, and asserted their central role in shaping university policies and practices.

We gathered at a time when both our societies as a whole, and universities as social institutions, are experiencing challenges that are unprecedented.

*Society* is experiencing deepening economic, ecological and social crises. Persistent inequality, poverty, disease and youth unemployment continue to challenge our societies and countries; our natural resources are under pressure due to irresponsible and non-sustainable use; while discrimination and intolerance based on race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion continue to divide and be a blight on our societies.

*Universities* in our time continue their goals of academic excellence but are increasingly defined by factors external to themselves and the local contexts in which they operate. There is increasing pressure towards instrumental ends and uniformity, in spite of the diverse contexts within which individual universities function and the pressing needs of their broader communities.

**Recognizing the magnitude of the challenges that we face,**

We reaffirmed the goals set out in the Talloires Declaration of 2005. In particular, we reaffirmed our view that universities, through their teaching and research missions, must contribute to the social and economic transformation of society and the promotion of democracy and social justice.

**We, who gathered in Cape Town, have the firm hope that:**

Poverty, unemployment, inequality and factionalism will not prevail; because we shall work hard to alleviate their causes and resulting conditions.

We can overcome the threat to universities by re-imagining and re-defining the university as a vibrant institution that has great potential to transform lives and livelihoods.

**As the outcomes of our commitment and endeavors, we envisage:**

Students, who are active citizens and agents for community change;

Academics, who understand the relationship between good scholarship and human development, and who pursue their academic endeavors for the common good;

Administrators, who in spite of the pressures of bureaucracy and compliance, will find ways to be responsive and flexible to support students and academics in their quest to contribute to human development;

Community partners with voice about their needs and conditions, with whom all of the above groups can interact in a spirit of mutual respect, partnership and reciprocity.



**Call to Action:**

We call upon the Talloires Network to take forward our discussions at TNLC 2014 and to further explore and take action on the following challenges and opportunities. We urge Talloires Network member institutions to work, in close collaboration with partner organizations and networks, to:

Expand and strengthen university efforts to prepare their students for civic and economic participation and active citizenship – to educate students who are effective and successful global citizens. With the widespread crisis of youth unemployment, the Talloires Network has a special opportunity to link education for active citizenship with education for launching careers, employment and entrepreneurship.

Expand access to higher education for under-represented groups, and seize the potential of university engagement programs to reinforce social inclusion initiatives.

Contribute to the ongoing efforts to measure the impacts of university civic engagement on student learning outcomes and on community conditions, especially through the exchange of information between researchers from diverse cultural contexts. It is essential to broadly disseminate the current body of knowledge, contribute to enhancing it, and promote comparative studies about what our engagement activities are achieving in different parts of the world.

Elevate public awareness of, and support for, university civic engagement. Communicate broadly and persuasively what university engagement activities are achieving. Influence the global university ranking systems to take civic engagement seriously and to reduce the negative effects of the ranking systems on the public service responsibilities of higher education.

Increase acknowledgement and recognition for professors who perform high quality community-engaged teaching and research, and public service.

Elevate and support student leadership in the planning and operation of university engagement programs. Develop mechanisms for student leaders to influence and be fully integrated into the leadership of the Talloires Network.

**Cape Town  
4 December 2014**