EVERYTHING you need for a successful Graduation Pledge program on YOUR campus!

The Pledge:
I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work.

The Graduation Pledge Alliance is a project of The Bentley Alliance for Ethics and Social Responsibility.
This Partner Schools Pledge-Pack is meant to help interested colleges and universities begin a Graduation Pledge Program on their campuses. Here’s what you’ll find inside:

**Background Information**
The Introduction (page 3), the one-pager summary (page 6), and the history of the Graduation Pledge (Appendix) together supply you with all the background information you might need about the Graduation Pledge.

**Starting a Pledge Program on Your Campus**
Beginning with a one-page list of things to keep in mind at the outset (page 5), the Partner Schools Pledge-Pack will give you lots of great information on what you can do to begin developing a great Pledge program on your campus, including the following:

- **Activities:** Options for different activities that might be part of your campus program.
- **Logistics:** How you get people to sign the Pledge.
- **Commencement:** Having your Pledgers recognized at Commencement.
- **Publicity:** Ways to get the word out on your campus and beyond.
- **Advanced Program Development:** Taking your program to the next level.

Throughout the Pledge-Pack you’ll find examples from schools across the nation, as well as useful templates for wallet cards, press releases, and flyers. In short, the Partner Schools Pledge-Pack has everything you need to get a Graduation Pledge program up and running on your campus!
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*William J. Benet, Introducing the Graduation Pledge Alliance*
Introduction

The Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility, started in 1987 at Humboldt State University, has since spread to many colleges, universities, and other schools around the world, under the guidance and coordination of the Graduation Pledge Alliance (GPA). The mission of GPA is to build a global community of responsible graduates improving society and the environment through the workplace. GPA’s vision is a world where every graduate, through the workplace, is an effective leader for social and environmental improvement. This document gives guidelines and expectations for GPA chapters so that the Pledge movement may continue to prosper, for the sake of promoting quality programs, and to develop continuity within the movement. GPA Partner Schools are expected to work towards the most robust effort possible on their campuses over time. Everything you need to get started is in this document!

Why the Pledge?
On average, the lives of current students will extend for many decades after their graduations. Given the challenges facing the next generation, it is imperative that fundamental shifts in societal values occur. The Graduation Pledge is a promise to consider the consequences of our workplace decisions and how we may begin to create a sustainable society, through our work, for generations to come. As forbearers of the future, students are in an ideal position to consciously make individual contributions and, collectively, can make all the difference in the world.

Respect for Individuals
The GPA is a nonpartisan and nonsectarian organization that recognizes and supports individual values and beliefs. Each campus program is considered to be autonomous, albeit within the framework of the movement. Groups that organize and facilitate the Graduation Pledge should not officially support or condemn any one cause over another. Furthermore, Graduation Pledge organizers should make sincere efforts to approach and involve individuals and groups of people from across a wide spectrum of values and beliefs concerning the meanings of social and environmental responsibility.

Pledge Content
While the GPA does have a standard Pledge statement, schools are free to alter this statement as they see fit, so long as the essential values of social and environmental responsibility in the workplace are included.

The Pledge
I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work.
Welcome and thank you for your interest in the Graduation Pledge. As you get started you’re your Pledge program this year, here are some things to keep in mind from the outset…

Don’t Go it Alone!
If only one person is responsible for most or all of the work, then the whole project may come to a halt if that person falters. Even though one person may be the driving force for a successful effort, getting more people engaged allows work to be distributed, as well as allowing different people to pick up the slack depending on the current situation for the different people involved. Get sophomores/juniors/faculty/administrators involved too, as it helps ensure future work on the project. It also means that each year those involved before know past history and can try to take institutionalization a step further each year. One school gets non-seniors on campus to sign up, as well, in a show of support; while another school allows alumni to sign the pledge.

Finding a Home for the Pledge on Your Campus
Your Graduation Pledge program needs a home on your campus. There are two main options:

1. **Find an existing group or office that can help take it on.** Get in touch with student groups related to social and environmental responsibility to see if there is one that wants to take it on as a program initiative. Also check with your student government group as it is often involved in making the Pledge happen on some campuses. You should also check in with your campus sustainability office if there is one. Many campuses have hired sustainability directors or coordinators. These folks are often charged with bringing together people from all across campus to coordinate sustainability activities. Because of this, they may have both the authority and the connections within the institution that can be very helpful in gaining a foothold for the Pledge on your campus.

2. **Form a standalone group or committee.** You can also try to form a standalone group that brings together the people most interested in seeing the Pledge happen on your campus. If you go this route, do your best to get a mix of people involved: students, staff, faculty, and even alumni. Find out what policies and procedures you need to follow on your campus so that your committee or group is recognized as being legitimate!

Unless you can guarantee that the Pledge will “automatically” happen every year, it is best if the project can be housed in some official program/office/council so it is assumed that someone will take charge each year, without a group of seniors having to start from scratch. Our personal hope always is that it is a community effort, with students, staff, and faculty involved in planning. Earlier in its history the Pledge was on a number of campuses but then disappeared because it wasn’t institutionalized. Don’t let this happen to your program – get people involved!

Make the Connection to Commencement
The sooner you can get administrative offices on board that have sway over the commencement activities, the better. One of the ultimate goals of the Graduation Pledge is to have those who have taken the Pledge recognized at Commencement in some fashion, whether that is announced from the podium during the ceremony, written up in the program, or some other way. This isn’t always possible in the first year of a program, but it will be easier to make it happen in the future if there is enough grassroots support across the campus. Every campus is unique in terms of how it handles Commencement, so start investigating this early in the year!

Use the one-pager introduction on the next page to find a home for the Pledge on your campus.
Graduation Pledge of Social & Environmental Responsibility: "I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work."

Students define for themselves what it means to be socially and environmentally responsible. Students at a hundred colleges and universities (and some high schools) are using the pledge at some level. The schools involved include liberal arts colleges (e.g., Bates and Grinnell); state universities (such as Colorado and Florida); private research universities (including Stanford and George Washington University); and schools outside the U.S. (e.g., Taiwan and Canada). The Pledge has also been at professional and high schools.

Graduates who voluntarily signed the pledge have sought out employment reflecting their values and visions, turned down jobs with which they did not feel comfortable, and worked to make changes once on the job. For example, they have promoted recycling at their organization, removed racist language from a training manual, worked for gender parity in high school athletics, and helped to convince an employer to refuse a chemical weapons-related contract.

The Pledge was initiated at Humboldt State University in California. Manchester College in Indiana coordinated the campaign effort for ten years, and Bentley University near Boston took over the reins in 2007-2008. The project has taken different forms at different institutions. For example, at Manchester, students sign and keep a wallet-size card stating the pledge, which is also printed in the formal commencement program, and students and supportive faculty wear green ribbons at commencement. (At a few schools, a different color ribbon is used.). At Bentley University the pledge is a "capstone" of its four-year Civic Leadership Program and at Humboldt State, student government funds a student pledge coordinator internship.

In a sense, the Pledge operates at three levels: students and graduates making choices about their employment; schools educating about values and citizenship rather than only knowledge and skills; and the workplace and society being concerned about more than just the bottom line. The impact is immense even if only a portion of the millions graduating from college each year sign and live out the Pledge.

The Graduation Pledge Alliance has a web site for campus organizers and pledge signers (www.graduationpledge.org). PLEASE KEEP US INFORMED OF ANY PLEDGE EFFORTS YOU ARE EVEN CONSIDERING TO UNDERTAKE, AS WE TRY TO MONITOR WHAT IS HAPPENING, AND PROVIDE PERIODIC UPDATES ON THE NATIONAL EFFORT (INCLUDING HINTS ON HAVING A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN). Contact GPA@Bentley.edu for more information, questions, or comments.
### Activities for Your Program

One of the things you should decide early on is what elements you want to have in your Graduation Pledge program. A mix of activities leading up to and including Commencement will help keep the commitment that Pledgers make by signing the Pledge front and center as they graduate! Here are some possibilities:

**What does social and environmental responsibility mean to YOU?**
Because the GPA allows students to define for themselves what it means to be socially and environmentally responsible, one simple but meaningful activity you can do is to start a dialogue on campus about how different people think about social/environmental responsibility and sustainability. You can do this in a high-tech way, creating an online website or bulletin board, or even an online survey, where people explain what social and environmental responsibility means to them. This can also be done in a low-tech way. At Antioch University New England, Pledge organizers put up a 10-foot long piece of paper in a main hallway on campus where folks could simply write their own thoughts about sustainability. After two weeks, this giant poster was entirely full of all sorts of great ideas giving life to the concept of sustainability!

**Speaker Series**
Organizing a Speaker Series is a great way to raise visibility of the Pledge on your campus. Speakers can be internal to your campus community, brought in from the outside or a combination of both. If you put together a Speaker Series, be sure to include a variety of speakers so that both environmental and social responsibility are covered during the series. Your Speaker Series could take place over the course of several weeks or a whole semester with speakers at regular intervals, say every Thursday evening or the fourth Wednesday of each month. Work with different departments or offices and student government to help you get the word out about your Speaker Series. Make sure you give a brief overview of the Pledge (see the one-pager introduction on page XX for information to mention). If you know any details about how the Pledge is being conducted on your campus, be sure to share that as well.

**Pledger Gathering/Celebration**
Another great thing you can do is put together a gathering or celebration for everyone who has taken the Pledge. This might occur in the spring as part of the lead-up to Commencement. Be sure to make a big announcement thanking everyone for showing their support for social and environmental responsibility, have lots of snacks and drinks, and just have fun!

**Connect with Service Projects**
Another way that Pledgers can show their support for social and environmental responsibility is to take part in any service projects your campus is coordinating. Connect with the office that is responsible for service projects (and there may be more than one!) and get the word out to your Pledgers about the options for engaging in service. This makes for great press, too!

**Career Fairs**
Most campuses have some kind of career or graduate school fair sometime during the academic year. Make sure the Pledge has a presence at this event where students can take the Pledge and find out about opportunities for fulfilling their commitment as well.
The most important part of your Pledge program is getting students to actually take the Pledge. This can be done in a variety of ways. Here are some options:

**GPA Online Pledge Signing**
The Graduation Pledge Alliance provides an online pledging option. The direct link to the form is [http://www.surveymonkey.com/graduationpledge](http://www.surveymonkey.com/graduationpledge). Students who take the Pledge there are automatically opting in to receive the monthly Pledge Support Bulletin, and e-newsletter that gives them lots of great tips on how to fulfill their pledge (they can opt out of that at any time as well). If your campus decides that this will be the primary method for getting students to take the Pledge, the GPA will provide you with periodic updates on who has taken the Pledge from your campus. This is important because as Commencement gets closer, you’ll want to be in touch with them to let them know about Pledge activities before, during and after the ceremony, which might include handing out green ribbons for them to pin to their gowns to show they’ve taken the Pledge, standing up to be recognized from the podium, special photo opportunities and so on. You can still conduct tabling Pledge drives using this method – you just have to have laptops at the ready for students to sign the Pledge on the spot!

**Old-Fashioned Paper Method**
The GPA also has a simple Excel template that you can use for gathering paper signatures. On the template, students are able to indicate whether they want to receive the Pledger Support Bulletin or not. After your Commencement ceremony, you send the information in the spreadsheet to GPA headquarters so we can come up with the total number of students who have taken the Pledge across the country and the world! [Download the GPA Pledger Info Template](http://www.graduationpledge.org/pledge-organizers/schools-involved).

**Other Methods**
Some campuses come up with their own ways of having students sign the pledge. Below are a few examples. More at [http://www.graduationpledge.org/pledge-organizers/schools-involved](http://www.graduationpledge.org/pledge-organizers/schools-involved).

- **Appalachian State University** has a great page that includes its own on-line sign up. Check it out at [http://act.appstate.edu/graduationpledge](http://act.appstate.edu/graduationpledge). Notice how their Pledge effort is linked to the service arm of the institution called ACT: Appalachia & the Community Together.
- **Santa Clara University** also has a good page and its own on-line sign up form. Check it out at [http://www.scu.edu/sustainability/getinvolved/gradpledge.cfm](http://www.scu.edu/sustainability/getinvolved/gradpledge.cfm). Notice how their page has pictures of graduating students holding placards of their post-graduation career plans! Also notice how they have a nice listing of campus organizations that support the Pledge. The SCU effort is linked to their campus sustainability office.
- **Brandeis University** has its own page for the Pledge, also linked to its campus sustainability initiative and its own online pledge process, along with links to the GPA site. Check it out at [http://www.brandeis.edu/campussustainability/getinvolved/pledge.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/campussustainability/getinvolved/pledge.html).

**Wallet Cards**
If you want to give signers a physical reminder of having taken the Pledge, you can use the templates on the next two pages to create small wallet cards.
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**Recognition at Commencement**

One of the more important efforts as part of the Pledge movement is to have your Pledgers be recognized in some way at the campus Commencement ceremony. This really helps people remember having taken the Pledge and sends them off on a great note to start their careers or further education. Here are some ways to have Pledgers be a part of Commencement:

**Green Ribbons**

Handing out the green ribbons to graduating seniors at Commencement is one great way to show support for the Pledge. Apparently, some schools also offer a green tassel, which is also a great idea. Small schools or schools with tight budgets can make their own very easily by just picking up green ribbon from your local fabric store along with lots of little gold safety pins. If you have a small budget, or needs lots of ribbons, then your best bet is to order them. Here are few links that can provide you with the ribbons you need:

- **CRAFTS’N’SCRAPS:** [http://www.craftnscreaps.com/awareness/greenribbons2.html](http://www.craftnscreaps.com/awareness/greenribbons2.html)

Be sure to let supportive faculty, administrators and others wear them too! And don’t feel like they have to be green. Some schools do use different colors. Green is the most common.

**In the Program**

One way to recognize Pledgers is to have a small paragraph in the Commencement program. It could be as simple as this:

*The Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility:*

*I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work.*

The students wearing green ribbons on their gowns today are those who taken the Pledge.

**Posters/Flyers**

Post them around the venue for commencement pointing people towards where the can sign the pledge and get ribbons or cards.

**From the Podium**

There are lots of ways this can be handled, from a simple announcement about the green ribbons and what they mean, to a very active presentation of the Pledge and recognition of those who took it. Too see one way of how this can be a very significant and meaningful part of a commencement ceremony, see the 2010 video from Antioch University New England’s Commencement Exercises. As you can see, this is a surprisingly big piece in their ceremony, and it is important to them that it is presented by students (these are adult graduate students).

On the next page is an example of how this script was written for the 2010 ceremony. Note that multiple students are involved and it is used as a springboard for highlighting the institution’s overall commitment to social and environmental responsibility. Also note that the wording of the pledge here has been adjusted to fit the adult learners of AUNE who have already been in the workforce for years. Feel free to use some ideas from this script, but be sure to make it specific and unique to your institution!
2010 AUNE Graduation Sustainability and Social Justice Pledge
Script for Commencement

Part A (first student)
The core purpose of Antioch University New England is to provide “transformative education through scholarship, innovation, and community action for a just and sustainable society.” Antioch’s clear commitment to advancing sustainability & social justice is reflected in our school’s statement of values, which reads:

*Antioch University New England believes in ecological stewardship and social justice, cultivating local as well as global perspectives to educate students with diverse backgrounds and opinions to become leaders of change.*

Indeed, Antioch encourages students to become “change agents” and to graduate prepared to integrate social justice and sustainability work into their chosen professions.

Part B (second student)
At Antioch, social justice entails respect, care, and equity; with a consciousness about the impact of race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, family status, marital status, religion or spirituality, political conviction, pregnancy, age, and ability. By recognizing the dignity of each individual, we seek to build a diverse healthy community based on social justice.

We view our sustainability challenge as how we meet the needs of the present in a socially just and economically sensible manner without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to do the same. This requires engaging in self-examination, gauging assumptions and judgments in order to foster attitudes of respect that invite members of our community into relationships, instead of alienation.

Part C (third student)
Graduates of Antioch University New England and all members of the Antioch community have been invited to commit to continue this work by taking the Sustainability and Social Justice Pledge. For the third year in a row, Antioch graduates, who voluntarily choose, join those at more than 125 other colleges and universities around the world in signifying this commitment by wearing green ribbons on their graduation gowns. The pledge reads:

*I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any activity I practice and will strive to improve these aspects of my personal life, and of any communities, ecosystems, and organizations with which I participate.* Antioch University New England recognizes that sustainability and social justice are ongoing processes that require commitment and reflection. Although we pledge individually, this is work that is often done in partnership with others. We invite you all to share in this sustainability and social justice work.
Publicizing the Pledge

A big chunk of a campus organizer’s time goes into publicizing the pledge to be sure everyone knows that it is happening and how they can participate. Here are some strategies:

Endorsements on Campus
Get campus groups to endorse, participate, and get out word to their constituencies. Include (a) student groups—e.g., social service (like a social work club), community service (including service learning), environmental, peace, human rights, and political (say College Republicans or Democrats); (b) programs/departments/schools within the university—social work, sociology, environmental studies, women’s studies— or any socially concerned active ones on campus; and (c) offices/councils/centers—career services, community services, women’s centers. Student governments have led the way at several schools. Another approach is to get senior class officers or reps involved, as they often have good channels of communication with all seniors.

Commencement
Because all graduating seniors have to be told about details for commencement (attire, time, place, etc.), this is a great way to let them know about the Pledge as well. If you can get the Commencement organizers on board, then information about taking the Pledge can be incorporated into every communication they receive from Commencement organizers!

Press Releases
Get as much publicity as you can, both on and off campus (local newspapers and TV often take an interest). This will get people’s attention and lead to more student participation. It will also help spread the idea to the general public and to other schools. There could be posters, displays in glass cases, materials at the alumni office, events at homecoming, etc. Probably the best time for press releases will be in the Spring leading up to the Commencement ceremony. If you’ve already had folks signing the Pledge during the Spring, plan on sending a press release out to local papers and TV stations two weeks before Commencement, that way they can decide to run a story right away, or cover the Pledge at Commencement.

Below are two sample press releases about the Pledge by different campuses:

Appalachian State University

Greens pin symbolizes graduates’ commitment to social and environmental responsibility
Posted May 11, 2010 at 12:01 pm · By ASU News

BOONE – Appalachian State University students are joining an international movement to commit to individual social and environmental responsibility in any job or career they pursue. Students who voluntarily took the Appalachian State University Graduation Pledge for Social and Environmental Commitment wore a green pin on their graduation gowns May 8-9. They joined thousands of graduates from more than 100 colleges and universities around the world
who are part of the Graduation Pledge Alliance, based at Bentley College in Massachusetts. Appalachian and UNC-Wilmington are the two UNC schools participating in the alliance so far.

Sign-up on campus began this spring and is continuing for recent graduates and younger students. The pledge states: “I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences, and the civic and community responsibilities, of any job or career I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work.”

Students take the pledge voluntarily, and determine for themselves exactly what they deem being socially and environmentally responsible requires of them.

“Even in hard economic times, I’m hearing students say they’re committed to this. I think people are becoming more aware of the importance of considering how their choices in jobs may affect the environment and other people,” said Shari Galiardi, Appalachian’s director of service-learning and coordinator of the project at Appalachian.

The Graduation Pledge Alliance says instituting the pledge “gets at the heart of a good education and a good educational institution… the Pledge operates at three levels: students making choices about their employment; schools educating about values and citizenship, rather than only knowledge and skills; and the workplace and society being concerned about more than just the bottom line.”

Examples from the alliance of the pledge in action include graduates turning down jobs with which they did not feel comfortable and working to make changes once on the job, such as promoting recycling at their organization, removing racist language from a training manual, and helping to convince an employer to refuse a chemical weapons-related contract.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

**Green ribbons signify responsibility pledge**

Stephanie Schorow, News Office Correspondent  
June 6, 2007

Wearing a little green ribbon during the 2007 Commencement ceremonies may not change the world. But, say MIT organizers of "The Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility," the effort might change a few minds. And that might start students thinking in new directions.

Something like that happened to Christopher J. Sequeira, a graduate student in the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics and the Technology and Policy Program, who is coordinating the pledge effort.

As a member of the MIT Student Pugwash organization--which encourages students to understand how their work impacts society--Sequeira learned about the graduation pledge in a lecture last fall from a professor who led the pledge in the 1980s.
"Maybe it's time to do it again," thought Sequeira, 24, who is graduating in February 2008.

The Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility was launched in spring of 1987 at Humboldt State in Arcata, Calif., by students then concerned about the nuclear arms race. The pledge itself is simple: "I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organization for which I work." Students recite the pledge and wear a green ribbon at graduation ceremonies.

The concept soon spread to other schools, including MIT. In 1988, the Coalition to Humanize MIT implemented the pledge in collaboration with the newly formed Graduation Pledge Alliance, Sequeira said. Pledges were also taken at MIT in the early 2000s.

Sequeira wanted to revive the concept. The 2007 effort was implemented by a coalition of MIT groups, including Pugwash, Muslim Students Association, Laboratory for Energy and the Environment, Technology and Culture Forum, and Students for Global Sustainability. On May 16, MIT pledge-takers were honored in a ceremony and received certificates and wallet cards. About 50 of them—a mix of graduates and undergraduates from a variety of disciplines—will walk across the stage on Commencement on June 8 wearing green ribbons. Organizers hope to express to students that they can make positive impacts in the world by first being mindful of their actions.

The pledge now addresses nanotechnology, biotechnology, climate change and other issues. The goal is to emphasize that "science and technology are driven by human values and affect human values," Sequeira said, adding, "The nuclear issue hasn't gone away."

His work for Pugwash and the pledge has changed Sequeira's own mindset and challenged him to look at aeronautics in new ways, going beyond building a better airplane to aviation fuel efficiency, sustainable design and the impact of air travel on people and the environment. The new mindset "has opened up my job prospects a lot," he said.

He hopes to set the groundwork for other students to organize a larger pledge effort in 2008.

**Posters and Flyers**

It’s always helpful to put up flyers around campus in places where people look for events and information. The next page has a basic flyer template laid out for you to make use of in publicizing the Pledge and related activities. The text box is where you can put in information specific to an event.
Graduation Pledge of Social & Environmental Responsibility:
"I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work."
\textit{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{Taking your Program to the Next Level}}}

\textbf{Campus Integration}

Effective Graduation Pledge programs will engage students and inspire them throughout their educational experience, to be aware of how our individual and collective actions impact society. Effective Graduation Pledge programs will also actively demonstrate social and environmental responsibility in the very conduct of their campus program.

Graduation Pledge organizers should make every effort to get the Pledge institutionalized at their school by integrating with the campus community through programs such as campus orientation programs, first-year experience classes, class presentations, school advertising literature, brochures, web-pages, commencement exercises, and materials/presentations made by the alumni and career service offices. This type of integration will allow students to fully understand, consider, and take the Pledge with integrity and commitment in mind, and will help ensure the continuation of the Pledge program at the school. Bentley College (currently the location of GPA headquarters) serves as one example of how the Graduation Pledge fits within a wider context and academic school program that encompasses various ethical and social responsibility components (http://www.bentley.edu/alliance/).

\textbf{Backward Planning} (contributed by Matt Nicodemus, GPA Taiwan)

Where do you want to go with this Pledge? That's the first question you need to take some time to carefully consider, because you can't make much progress if you don't have a clear sense of what goals you want to make progress toward! For the purposes of planning your future work, you need to go through a process which includes reflecting on aims for your pledge-related work.

Here's one simple framework into which you can place potential goals, an eight-box matrix. Its columns divide possible goals into categories of 1) goals for yourself, 2) goals for your group (how you'd like your group to benefit from your activities), 3) goals for your school, and 4) goals for the wider world outside your school. The rows are: a) goals for deepening people's understanding of the Pledge and strengthening their ability to live out their pledge commitments; and b) goals for widening societal awareness of the Pledge and expanding the graduation pledge movement. A picture of the matrix is on the next page.

Believe me, within this framework, there are many, many dozens of excellent goals you could envision and take on. It would certainly be an instructive activity for you as developing activists to try and at least fill in each box of the matrix with two or three goals. But it will also be fine to start off with a smaller number of goals, or to generate a long list and then, in the next stage, prioritize. Personally, I'd go with the latter approach, because then I could create a more comprehensive, compelling big picture of desired future and leave many goals to be taken on by people we recruit in the future.

Now, I know it could seem tedious to sit down, both by yourselves and with others in your group, to thoughtfully examine and hash out all of these goals, but it's work that you absolutely must do if you want to achieve any real growth and success. And in fact, the process of figuring out what it is you really want can -- and should -- be enormously invigorating, and just plain fun!
It's where you get to imagine a world exactly as you would like to see it, even if that world is only within the confines of your campus (for a very broad-picture example of this, see the "Future Vision 2015" piece that GPA-HSU wrote just one year after starting the Pledge). Save the practicalities, the "How are we going to overcome all of the different barriers?" issues, for the next step. First you've got to get those stronger and more detailed inner and shared understandings of where it is you're most wanting to go, at all of the abovementioned levels and dimensions. Then, when that's firmly and energetically in your minds, all of your activities can be directed toward those aims, and you'll be so much better able to approach and interest others to join in the grand project! Going through this process, you're preparing yourselves to be powerful, exciting leaders (and, by the way, enhancing knowledge and skills for your own future job-hunting!).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS FOR WHOM &amp; WHAT</th>
<th>Yourself</th>
<th>Your Group</th>
<th>Your School</th>
<th>The Wider World</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Deepening understanding &amp; strengthening ability to live out the Pledge</td>
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<td>Widening awareness &amp; expanding the movement</td>
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From goals, we move on to planning how those goals will be reached. It may be that a number of projects will have to be undertaken and completed to accomplish one goal, and it may be that some projects will need to be continuing ones, to match existing realities (e.g. recruiting new group members, fundraising, liaison with school administrators). To keep things simpler here, in the interest of efficiency, I'll introduce one key concept that's used by successful organizers the world around: backward planning. In the context of reaching any one of the goals you've set, what backward planning means is mentally placing yourself in the future and starting with the assumption that that goal has been reached (why work for a goal you know can't be achieved?) and then, working step-by-step backwards in time from that envisioned future success, asking yourselves, "What all had to take place so that the success could happen? And what all before that first what all had to happen had to happen before that could happen? And..." and so on, all the way back in time to where you are right now. The last set of "what all" becomes the first steps you should take, the first activities you need to pursue, toward reaching your specific goal. It's during this part of your process that you can face some of the possible barriers to success; the great thing about backward planning, though, is that you get to imagine that each of those obstacles has been overcome and then figure out how you were able to do that!
Here's an example of backward planning:

**GOAL WE IMAGINE HAVING BEEN ACCOMPLISHED:** Our school allows public signing of the pledge during the commencement ceremonies.

**STEPS THAT OCCURRED IN THE PROCESS OF ACCOMPLISHING THE GOAL** (starting with the step just prior to success and going backwards in time):

The administrator in charge of commencement arranged for a signing table to be placed where graduates could stop and sign on their way back to their chairs after receiving their diplomas and pledges. S/he also announced the pledge signing option to seniors at the graduation practice, explaining how the process would work. S/he also directed that a paragraph explaining the pledge and pledge signing options be included in the commencement handbook that gets handed out to all participants and guests at the ceremony.

The principal/president of the school directed the administrator in charge of commencement to include the pledge signing option in the school's graduation ceremonies, and to make sure that everyone involved with the ceremony -- students, faculty, administrators and guests -- is fully aware of the pledge and pledge signing options. The administrator in charge of commencement is given a detailed to-do plan adapted from one created by the graduation pledge group.

The team of graduation pledge group members met with the principal/president of the school, presenting to her/him both the various statements of student, faculty, staff, and community support for public pledge signing they'd received and a detailed plan for how the pledge signing could be smoothly, tastefully fit into the graduation proceedings. The pledge group members had clear, well-thought-out responses to all of the concerns and questions raised by the principal/president.

A small team of several members was chosen by the graduation pledge group to make the case for pledge signing in the ceremony to the school's principal/president. They met a number of times to gather together evidence of school and community support for the pledge signing option (the many signed petitions) and to prepare their arguments and a detailed plan for how the pledge signing could be smoothly, tastefully fit into the graduation proceedings. At the same time, other pledge group members wrote responses to several opinion pieces opposing the pledge signing option which had appeared in the local media. Some of these same members appeared on the campus radio station's weekly news & views call-in discussion program to present and defend the group's proposal to the school and inform listeners about how they could help the campaign.

The graduation pledge organizing group recruited supportive students, faculty, staff and community members to circulate petitions calling on the school to include the pledge signing option in the commencement. They also found people to place thoughtful supportive opinion pieces in several local newspapers and magazines, including the student newspaper, the faculty newsletter, and the campus online publication. For writers who weren't sure what to say, the organizers supplied list of possible arguments that could be made, emphasizing that it was important for each writer to add their own personal perspective.
The committee of pledge group members leading the campaign to get pledge signing into the commencement met, backward-planned a detailed strategy, and analyzed who they would need to approach about getting involved with the project and what each of those people would be asked to do. A timeline for action was set, using commencement as the obvious endpoint, and the committee decided to meet weekly (in addition to the larger group's regular meetings) until its goal was accomplished.

The graduation pledge organizing group discussed at two consecutive meetings the idea of the school allowing graduates who wanted to the option of publicly signing their pledges during the commencement. Between meetings, a couple of members went online to the GPA website and searched out information on other campuses with graduation ceremony pledge signing. By the end of the second meeting, the whole group was eager to try and get the pledge signing into the graduation ceremony, and a committee of volunteers formed to focus on the project.

The above paragraph is what would be the first set of steps your group would take if it were going to follow the backward plan I've outlined. I can't overstate the importance of this sort of planning. It just took me about 30 minutes to create and type out the plan, and the result is a clear, logical path to victory that you could keep in mind, share with others, and, if need be, alter as changing situations require. By showing, step by step, all of the different things that will need to be done to reach your goal, such a plan permits you to judge how much of the work you're going to be able to take on yourselves and how much you'll need to recruit extra help for.

And the more explicitly you're able to make and present such action plans, the much more likely you'll be able to do that recruiting. This addresses what I know is a big concern that many of you have: how to find more people to help organize the pledge with you. The fact is -- and I'm offering this based on more than 25 years of experience working with students and all kinds of other busy people -- there are SO many folks who want to get involved with making some part of the world a better place, who want that experience which will really make a difference and will add meaning to their lives. If you are able to show them that your ideas are clear, your aims are noble and realistic, and that you have a well-mapped-out plan for success, you'll have no trouble getting ALL of the people you need. I'm not kidding. This applies to your classmates, your teachers, your administrators, and members of the communities around your schools. I don't care what anyone says about Taiwanese students -- and people in general -- being selfish and overburdened with the work that's been loaded onto them; I'm certain, from my own experience here since 1993, that if you have the good goals and the good plans to achieve them, you'll find more than enough good people just aching to help you change the world.

Which brings me to a last couple of points for you to consider. First, each of you ask yourself, "How and why did I first become involved with the Pledge, and how and why have I stayed involved?" If you can answer that with some detail, then you'll have some great ideas for how to get -- and keep -- others involved. Secondly, let's be sure to have an amazingly rich, wonderful, learning-filled, love-filled, and FUN experience as we work on the Pledge! We want this for at least two reasons: 1) It's great for us! 2) When others see us having such a good, meaningful, life-promoting time being involved with this grand venture, they're much more likely to be attracted -- powerfully attracted -- to jump on the Pledge-organizing train with us.
Introducing the Graduation Pledge Alliance
William J. Benet, PhD

You have just graduated from college. You are young and bright. And you believe in the promise of America: That God gave each of us two hands to grab all we can with them. And so, when Environmental Pollutants & Death Rays Inc. offers you a job with a starting salary of $75,000 a year, six weeks’ vacation and your own car phone, you jump at it, right? Wrong. (Simon, 1987, p. A-1).

With those words, Roger Simon introduced the readers of the Chicago Tribune to the Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility (the Graduation Pledge). The Graduation Pledge was founded that year at Humboldt State University in northern California. Matt Nicodemus, a co-founder of the Pledge, was (and still is) a self-described “full-time peace activist” (Simon, 1987, p. A-1). From its start at Humboldt State, Matt’s stated vision was that “colleges across America will be handing out the pledge and graduates will be adhering to it” (Simon, 1987, p. A-1).

Today, that vision is a reality and Matt is still a vital part of the Graduation Pledge Alliance, the coordinating body for schools across America and around the Globe where the Graduation Pledge has become an important part of the culmination of many students’ academic careers. Modified somewhat over the years, the Graduation Pledge now reads: “I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work” (Graduation Pledge Alliance, 2012b, p. 1).

Matt notes that the Graduation Pledge Alliance became a reality in 1988 when the Graduation Pledge spread to 20 campuses, mostly in California, but as far away as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York (M. Nicodemus, personal communication, November 30, 2012). The Graduation Pledge received its most visible boost when Stanford University President Donald Kennedy encouraged signing of the pledge in his commencement address to 30,000 attending the Stanford stadium ceremony in June of 1988. Kennedy stated:

First, please do go to work on the world's problems. They look much more overwhelming when one cannot envision oneself as part of the solution... It is not for nothing that Hippocrates led off his string of aphorisms with: "First do no harm." Evaluate what you do in terms of all its consequences so that you have confidence in the worth of your commitments. It is that context in which I view the Commencement pledge idea. It asks that we consider outcomes - not that we declare allegiance in advance to some normative standard it supplies. It should be as acceptable to the political conservative as to the liberal, because it does something we all need to do more of- that is, it helps us focus on the consequences of what we do, urges us to estimate them, and urges us to try to decide whether they are acceptable (Kennedy, 1988, p. 9).

As the Graduation Pledge spread throughout the country in 1988, this led to many statements of support such as this endorsement from Dr. Helen Caldicott:
I think the pledge is truly magnificent. I’m very proud of the students for doing that. It reminds me of the Russian doctors who now include in the Hippocratic oath that they will not work in any way, shape or form to prepare for nuclear war or for saving people after nuclear war (Caldicott, 1988, p. 24).

In 1996, the national headquarters for the Graduation Pledge Alliance moved from Humboldt State College to Manchester College in Indiana, home of the first U.S. peace studies program (begun in 1948). This move was led by Dr. Neil Wollman, a professor of psychology at Manchester, who had helped to bring the Graduation Pledge to Manchester in 1988 in that first wave of the spread of the Graduation Pledge (M. Nicodemus, personal communication, November 30, 2012). Manchester College then served as the national home for the Graduation Pledge Alliance for the next eleven years. Over that time, the Graduation Pledge spread to over 100 colleges around the world with a strong presence in Canada and Asia (Hsiu-Chuan, 2005; Milcetich, 2007; Sequeira, 2007; Yan-Chih, 2005).

Under Neil’s guidance, and through the national attention given the Graduation Pledge by news sources such as USA Today, Business Week, The Washington Post, and the Associated Press, an estimated 300,000 plus students at more than 300 campuses have signed the pledge (Graduation Pledge Alliance, 2017). Some of the most significant accomplishments occur when alumni work to change the conditions of their workplace. Among the many ways in which these students have lived out the pledge are: (a) promoting recycling at their organization, (b) removing racist language from a training manual, (c) working for gender parity in high school athletics, and (d) convincing an employer to refuse a chemical weapons-related contract (Graduation Pledge Alliance, 2017).

Then in 2007, the Graduation Pledge Alliance national headquarters moved again, this time to Bentley University in Massachusetts, where it started out as a program of the Bentley Alliance for Ethics and Social Responsibility. The Bentley Alliance was created by Dr. Anthony (Tony) Buono. Today, the Graduation Pledge Alliance, while still at Bentley, is now a program of the Bentley Service Learning Center under the guidance of Dr. Jonathan White.

On many campuses the Graduation Pledge still follows the original model. The Graduation Pledge is promoted throughout the year; students sign at graduation; students, faculty, staff may wear Green ribbons in support; and speakers are encouraged to support signing of the pledge (Graduation Pledge Alliance, 2012a). Yet there is great diversity among individual campuses, with individual schools able to shape the Graduation Pledge to their particular focus, and some using alternative language for the pledge (Graduation Pledge Alliance, 2012a).

But at Bentley University, the Graduation Pledge has been brought to a whole new level. Through the Bentley Civic Leadership Program (BCLP), the Graduation Pledge is infused throughout the curriculum, where it is now the “capstone” of the four year Bentley experience (Bentley Alliance for Ethics and Social Responsibility, 2012).
The BCLP provides students with the opportunity to develop into civic leaders. The BCLP, which is student initiated and led, has three foci: campus involvement, civic engagement, and ethical and responsible behavior. Building on these three areas, students compile an interactive co-curricular eportfolio of experiences, emphasizing reflective practice and encouraging them to understand and appreciate how their involvement both improves their communities and makes them better citizens. Students who complete the BCLP requirements then take the Pledge prior to commencement.

The Graduation Pledge Alliance is seeking to build upon the 30 year success of the Graduation Pledge by encouraging students to apply the social and environmental concerns they have learned in college to the rest of their lives, especially in their professional careers. In October of 2012, I was brought on board to serve as Executive Director for the Graduation Pledge Alliance and implement a transformation effort that was initiated in 2010 (Graduation Pledge Alliance, 2010). In 2013, the Graduation Pledge Alliance established a process goal intended to strengthen the ability of the Graduation Pledge to operate at three levels:

- Campus chapters of students who seek to incorporate the Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility as a part of their graduation experience in order to make choices about their employment and other aspects of their lives in a more serious and life-influencing way.

- High Schools, Colleges, and Professional Schools using the Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility as a vehicle for integrating or strengthening values and citizenship education throughout their curriculum and the entire student experience along with the teaching of traditional knowledge and skills.

- Pledge signers and alumni impacting the workplace and society to become concerned about more than just the “bottom line.”

At the same time that the process goal was established, the Graduation Pledge Alliance modified its Vision and Mission statements as follows:

**Vision:**

The Graduation Pledge Alliance’s vision is of a world where every high school, college, and professional school graduate is an effective leader for social and environmental responsibility, linked in a common effort to determine for themselves how their actions in the workplace and in the rest of their lives intertwine and contribute to the development of a more healthy, sustainable, and just world.

**Mission:**

The mission of the Graduation Pledge Alliance is to build a global community of graduates whose commitment to social and environmental responsibility in the workplace and in the rest of their lives is helping to build a healthy, sustainable, and just world.
The Graduation Pledge Alliance hopes to make the pledge a truly international phenomenon. Our goal is to institutionalize and expand pledge activities at schools worldwide, building on those schools in major population areas that are already involved with the Pledge. The intention of these partnerships is to motivate and educate campus Pledge organizers and potential supporters to ensure that the Pledge is actually lived out following graduation, by increasing the involvement of academic departments, administrative offices, students, faculty, staff, and alumni in the Graduation Pledge effort. If only a small minority of the millions of college graduates each year sign and live out the Pledge, the impact can be immense.

Today, the Graduation Pledge Alliance is working to carry out this effort by partnering with national and international efforts in support of healthy, sustainable, and just communities. Two of our most important partnerships are with the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) and the Center for Democratic Values.

The Graduation Pledge Alliance has been a Partner Organization and Technical Advisor for AASHE’s Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System™ (STARS) since 2011. The STARS system has been used by AASHE as a self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance. Those campuses with Graduation Pledge programs automatically are recognized and receive credit in the Student Life section of the STARS assessment process (https://stars.aashe.org/pages/about/governance.html#partner_organizations).

In March of 2016 the Graduation Pledge Alliance adopted an exciting partnership agreement with The Center for Democratic Values (CDV) to promote social change projects. The CDV is a NYS nonprofit incorporated in 1984. The mission of the CDV is to promote the Polarities of Democracy as a theoretical framework for progressive social change initiatives that build healthy, sustainable, and just communities (http://www.polaritiesofdemocracy.org/).

The Polarities of Democracy was developed at the University of Toronto in 2006 as a framework to promote social change projects. These projects will primarily emanate from Walden University doctoral graduates who used the Polarities of Democracy model as the theoretical framework for their dissertation. Walden University requires that all dissertations have a theoretical framework that promotes positive social change.

Finally, students affiliated with the Bentley Service Learning Center have been working over the past two years to develop student led social change projects might be rolled out through the Graduation Pledge Alliance partner schools. We are now seeking relationships that will allow us to gain the resources to implement these social change projects.

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**About the Author**

*Bill Benet is the Executive Director of the Graduation Pledge Alliance. Dr. Benet is an educator/researcher/activist who developed the Polarieties of Democracy theory at the University of Toronto in 2006. He has over 50 years’ experience in politics, peace & justice organizing, union activism, community development, small business management, organization development, social economy entrepreneurship, fostering collaborative community/campus partnerships, and advancing the democratization of public education. Following three years in the US Army (1965-1968), he served 28 years in the Monroe County Legislature as an elected representative from Rochester, New York, including five years as Majority Leader.*

*Dr. Benet currently holds academic appointments as a Dissertation Committee Chair with Walden University’s School of Public Policy and Administration, a Visiting Scholar with the University of Toronto’s Adult Education and Community Development Program, and a Senior Fellow with Bentley University’s Service Learning Center. In addition, Dr. Benet serves as the President and Senior Fellow of the Center for Democratic Values.*