



Action Hub Description

Advancing Public Trust in Higher Education (APT Coalition)

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Problem Statement: U.S. public polling suggests that confidence in democratic institutions is at a historic low. While higher education ranks higher than other democratic institutions, declining public confidence in higher education at a national level feeds into state and federal actions to strip sector autonomy, squash academic freedom, and reduce efforts to make the sector more equitable. Through the APT Hub, we hope to better understand and address the sector's challenges in order to build greater public trust and resilience.

Purpose: Convene leaders and experts from across higher education, democracy, business, and civil society space to discuss and address declining public trust in higher education. The APT Hub works to improve public perceptions of higher education by promoting shared understanding, meaningful collaboration, community and student engagement, and institutional innovation in developing and implementing trustworthy practices.

Goals:

- Refine our working definition of “public trust” to reflect variation across institution type and the influence of local and national narratives.
- Build on elements of AAC&U's [The Trust Agenda: A Framework for Advancing Public Trust in Higher Education](#), to co-create a public trust in higher education values statement
- Co-create toolkits, processes, and policies colleges and universities can adopt to become more trustworthy.
- In collaboration with a higher education researcher, inform AAC&U's development of metrics that institutions can use to self-evaluate public trust.
- Hold webinars/roundtables on public trust in higher education.
- Provide input on Democracy's Campus 2036.
- Hold an APT Summit (in person January 2027, tentative).