

Acting on AIDS in Academia

Why We Should Integrate AIDS into Academia

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.
—1 John 3:18 (NIV)

Acting on AIDS is more than simply an array of student activities; it is a way for students to fully integrate their personal passion for AIDS and other social justice issues with their academic and professional pursuits. AIDS, poverty, and injustice are global issues, and each academic discipline can have its own unique response to this pandemic, such as research on a specific subject or creative application to promote change.

This guide is designed to help you explore how you might respond individually through your unique skills, talents, and education, as well as become a change agent on campus—encouraging your university community to incorporate a passion for justice into the DNA of your entire campus.

Four Levels of Academic Engagement

1. Personal Engagement

- Educate yourself on HIV and AIDS in relationship to your specific area of academic study.
- Together with your faculty advisor, create a research project, independent study or creative application project that explores AIDS through the lens of your academic discipline.
- Conduct informational interviews with professionals who are currently active in AIDS and other social justice issues.

2. Peer Engagement

- Use the example of your own personal experience as a student to encourage students from all disciplines to explore HIV and AIDS.
- Introduce issues of HIV and AIDS in class, creating dialogue with other students and faculty.
- Create a forum or symposium in which students from various disciplines can share papers and projects on HIV and AIDS issues.

3. Faculty Engagement

- Identify faculty who are willing to promote proactively the integration of HIV and AIDS into academia, such as initiating a faculty task force.
- Help coordinate a forum in which faculty and outside experts from diverse disciplines can explore HIV and AIDS.
- Encourage faculty to include relevant issues in their curricula and to encourage in-depth study opportunities.



4. University Engagement

- Work with academic departments to introduce relevant issues around HIV and AIDS into all areas of study.
- Collaborate with your school's administration to create courses specifically addressing HIV and AIDS.
- Encourage your school's administration to focus on the global AIDS pandemic as a campus-wide core issue.

The Acting on AIDS Web site (www.worldvision.org/actingonaids) has resources and examples of how other students have begun to use their skills, talents, and education in this movement against HIV and AIDS. You are encouraged to communicate your own academic endeavors that incorporate the issue of HIV and AIDS to the national Acting on AIDS team. This will further expand the resources available to other chapters and promote collaboration in the nationwide network of chapters.

Making such endeavors as an individual student can be rather daunting, but the goal of Acting on AIDS is to create a movement of students uniting their voices to make a difference. It is best to approach university administration as an organization, especially if you have taken the appropriate steps to be recognized officially as an organization on your campus. It is also important to have a faculty or staff advisor to support you as you advocate for the integration of HIV and AIDS discussions into academics. Working to make a difference in your college or university is an excellent way to make your efforts sustainable. If the fabric of your school can be altered, it will influence students after you. You are setting an example for those who will succeed you. As Paul exhorts Timothy, *"Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe,"* (1 Timothy 4:12 NASB).