

## Executive Summary

This Civic Action Plan formalizes existing initiatives across and throughout Middlesex County College, and extends those initiatives with deliberate planful new programming to further engage the college community in civic and democratic activity. It was developed by the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships but encompasses work that spans the College community; the most significant accomplishments and goals herein reported have been constructed in partnership with the campus-wide Civic Engagement Subcommittee. The Plan spans two academic years (2019-2020 and 2020-2021) and both serves to document areas of growth as well as formalizes initiatives intended to move the needle on civic learning and democratic engagement. This is a critical time for our democracy and for our communities, and the Plan has been created with the timeliness of these imperatives at the forefront.

The mission of Middlesex County College (MCC) is to provide access to a quality, affordable education for a diverse population, to support student success for lifelong learning, and to strengthen the economic, social and cultural life of the community.

In accordance with our Mission and the supporting strategic goals, in particular those following,  
Goal B. MCC Focused on Students

Strategic Initiative #1: Employ engaged pedagogy and provide stimulating learning environments that offer multiple approaches to learning

Strategic Initiative #2: Develop curricular and co-curricular activities and opportunities that expose students to new opportunities and horizons

C. MCC Engaged with Our Community

The basis of the Plan is derived from the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships' 2019-2020 Strategic Plan which has been approved by the Dean and reviewed by the Civic Engagement Subcommittee.

## *Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Leadership*

MCC created the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships and the position of Director, Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships in April 2019. Earlier that academic year in November 2018, the Civic Engagement Subcommittee was founded and chaired by two faculty members with the stated objective of connecting individuals on campus doing civically-engaged work in order to share ideas, successes, contacts and “spurring collaborative activities that support civic and community engagement and student learning”. In Fall 2019, the Director of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships joined the faculty members in co-chairing the Civic Engagement Subcommittee.

The Subcommittee spans the college community and currently includes:

Vice President, Institutional Advancement  
Acting Vice President, Academic Affairs

Faculty, History and Social Science  
Faculty, English  
Faculty, Dental Hygiene  
Director, Student Life  
Director, Library  
Director, New Brunswick Center  
Director, Perth Amboy Center  
Coordinator, Experiential Learning & Civic Engagement  
Coordinator, Student Life  
Coordinator, Democracy House Center for Civic Engagement  
Coordinator, Coordinator of Military and Veterans Services  
Counselor, Counseling Services

### *Evidence of Commitment*

Beginning with the College's Mission and Goals Statements (Appendix A) as prepared by the College community and approved by the Board of Trustees, the theme of engaging our students with the community through a variety of programming and opportunities, including civic and democratically purposeful ones, permeates MCC's aim. In addition to being woven into the fabric of the Mission and its supporting Strategic Initiatives, MCC's administration founded the Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships to aggregate, document, motivate and guide civically-engaged efforts already in existence in many areas of the College as well as to spearhead new initiatives. As evidence of both the existence of significant work already underway and of the value of a central focal point for civic engagement, in October 2019 Middlesex County College was named a NASPA LEAD Initiative Institution for the 2019-2020 year.

There is a history of democratic engagement at MCC. One example is work of the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) Club:

The Club's efforts in the voter registration drives started at Middlesex County College in the Spring 2004 semester. That year the efforts of our executive club leaders assisted the College, the Office of Student Life and the student body with the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) mandate. Our students have done voter registration at the Student Activities fairs at the start of each semester, at the College Center lobby during September and October and at the EOF office throughout the school year. (EOF Voter Registration, Appendix B)

Further, in Summer 2019, MCC became a member of **New Jersey Campus Compact (NJCC)** <https://www.njcampuscompact.org/> and hosted the Fall 2019 Quarterly Meeting of NJ Campus Compact member colleges and universities. We are also the site of the Student Conference on February 29, 2020: "Connecting Volunteering to a Meaningful Career". Participation in NJCC affords access to a substantial amount of research and resources as well as collaboration with member colleges across New Jersey.

## *Current Campus Landscape*

### *More about landscape – CSSEE*

Although experiential learning and cooperative education have been embedded in many academic programs of study for well over 20 years, service learning is a relatively recent addition to the curriculum. However, the concerted effort of key faculty coordinators who themselves have significant experience in community service and service learning (SL) pedagogy have launched SL as a prominent academic offering <https://www.middlesexcc.edu/service-learning/>. Key to that effort – and its success and growth- is the training and support provided to faculty and adjunct faculty members who want to include SL within the content of their courses. In Fall 2017, three (3) courses offered an optional opportunity for service learning at a partner site selected individually by each student from a list of approved partners. By Fall 2019, that number grew to thirteen (13) courses and the SL is more likely to be a mandatory component of the course with a specific partner/project connected to the course outcomes. In Fall 2019, SL courses included:

- Concepts of Business and Management (MGT-210)
- Contemporary Social Problems (SOC-131)
- Integrated Reading and Writing (ENG-096)
- Dental Health Education (DHY-207)
- English Composition (ENG-121)
- Methods of Social Casework and Counseling (SOC-210)
- Historical Geology (SCI-164)
- Introduction to Business (BUS-101)
- Introduction to Geology (SCI-155)
- Introduction to Meteorology (SCI-157)
- Introduction to Social Work and Welfare (SOC-141)
- Statistics II (MAT-124)
- U.S. National Government (POS-220)

For Spring 2020, service learning courses will be designated with the “-SL” section code to allow students to locate courses with SL included; we have discovered that students who experience SL express the desire to continue their community involvement through continued enrollment in academic coursework featuring this form of integrated service.

Census2020 is also a focus for the Spring 2020 semester. US Census Bureau has been a regular presence on campus throughout the Fall 2019 semester recruiting students to work on the census and thereby raising awareness about the import of participation. To further encourage continued focus, we have prepared a set of resources for faculty and students featuring not only information but specific opportunities to incorporate Census2020 into the classroom. A partnership with the College’s Library led to the creation of a LibGuide with these resources for ready availability and visibility to the College community.

## Goals and Strategy for Student Learning and Institutional Civic Culture

### Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships

*“... working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.”*  
(Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi)

### Mission

The Department of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships promotes a lifelong commitment to active citizenship and social responsibility among all students and members of the Middlesex County College community in order to enhance students’ own academic experiences and career clarity while contributing to stronger communities and an ever more engaged College. The Department enacts programs and initiatives intentionally designed to engage students, staff, faculty and the Middlesex County community. Our mission is to:

- cultivate community-aware and civically-engaged students through volunteerism, service and experiential learning
- develop co-curricular service projects
- encourage civic leadership and community connections
- foster social responsibility and nurture a campus-wide civic ethos that is infused through academics and student affairs in order to promote understanding of our responsibility to our greater community
- promote students’ personal, leadership and career growth including workplace skills and competencies
- collaborate across the College and local community to forge effective and mutually beneficial relationships.

### 2019-2020 Goals

**Goal 1:** Connect MCC students with experiential learning opportunities to cultivate community-aware and civically-engaged students through volunteerism, service and experiential learning. (MCC Strategic Initiatives A1, A2, B1, B2, C1)

**Outcome 1:** Increase the types of courses and number of course sections offering service learning (SL) in academic year 2019-2020.

**Measure 1:** Additional course sections offering SL and additional types of courses offering SL.

**Outcome 2:** Develop a multi-year initiative focused on voting, voter registration and Census 2020 to educate and engage students in the importance of their voice in these processes.

**Measure 2:** By collaborating with existing organizations on and off campus (e.g. League of Women Voters), develop programming and events that will maintain momentum and

engage students in these issues and/or work cooperatively in support of initiatives in these areas already planned by other departments or clubs.

**Outcome 3:** Empower students' civic leadership and professional development.

**Measure 3:** Provide a weekend leadership development/civic engagement experience for Democracy House Bonner Leaders in Fall 2019.

**Outcome 4:** Strengthen service learning outcome assessment by adopting standardized measures across all service learning courses/sections.

**Measure 4:** Identification of existing SL assessment tools/methodologies, review strengths/deficiencies of each and selection of a tool that will be incorporated into all SL course offerings as a standard for assessing the efficacy and impact of the learning experience.

**Goal 2:** Partner with employers and local organizations to provide leadership, career and employment opportunities to students and alumni while contributing to the viability of these community partners. (MCC Strategic Initiatives A2, B2, C1)

**Outcome 1:** Create community partner reception to recognize and honor those who have participated in our programs or offered opportunities to students.

**Measure 1:** Event is hosted and well-attended by partners.

**Outcome 2:** Market MCC and our students/graduates to the local community in order to create pipeline of internships, apprenticeships and jobs in all career fields.

**Measure 2:** Increased availability of internships and other experiential career opportunities in CCN, job fairs and employer partnerships.

**Outcome 3:** Collaborate with community partners to provide leadership and advocacy development for MCC students.

**Measure 3:** Host workshops, training, information sessions and programming featuring community experts.

**Goal 3:** Foster social responsibility and nurture a campus-wide civic ethos that is infused through academics and student affairs in order to promote understanding of our responsibility to our greater community. (MCC Strategic Initiatives B1, C1)

**Outcome 1:** Survey the College community to assess existing activities within the realm of civic engagement.

**Measure 1:** Survey results.

**Outcome 2:** Implement Campus Compact tenets to strength/grow existing programs.

**Measure 2:** Completed Campus Civic Action Plan within one year of MCC signing the Campus Compact Action Statement as a member organization.

**Outcome 3:** In partnership with Marketing Communications, update and develop Civic Engagement and Community Partnership functional webpages to inform students, the College community and members of the local community.

**Measure 3:** a) Redesigned webpages for career services-related functions housed within Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships.

b) New webpages for Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships functions and information.

**Outcome 4:** Partner with MCC faculty and staff to identify opportunities for collaboration and teamwork to promote civic engagement.

**Measure 4:** Support, sustain, create and advertise initiatives that document an increasingly civically-engaged and aware MCC community.

### Reporting: *Sharing Accomplishments and Action*

In January 2020, the survey of the College community's existing civic engagement activities (Goal 3, Outcome 1 above) will be distributed to faculty, staff, and adjunct faculty members through the College's Department of Institutional Research. Armed with the results, the Director of Civic Engagement and Community Partnerships, Institutional Research and the Civic Engagement Subcommittee will determine how to make information out of the collected data via a to-be-identified vehicle that enables all interested parties to access and update contacts, accomplishments, partners, initiatives and more. In addition, the information will be added to the College's assessment tool, TaskStream for reporting and broad accessibility. The goal of the information repository is to guide new initiatives, provide ready access to civic engagement data to the College administration, and identify gaps in our offerings where additional focus is required.

We also need information from our students. To that end, we intend to evaluate Stanford University's **Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement** tool in Spring 2020 as a vehicle to gauge interest areas and motivation of our students in order to further ensure that our initiatives and their interests align, and that we incorporate their interests in our ongoing planning.

In Fall 2019, we participated in the New Jersey Secretary of State's Ballot Bowl 2019 voter registration initiative as we did in 2018; the Secretary launched Ballot Bowl 2019 at our Mobilize MCC Rally on September 17, 2019. As a result of club participation, service learning partnership with the League of Women Voters, support from the Office of Student Life and more, we finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in our Ballot Bowl 2019 division behind a larger 4-year public university. We were able to obtain voter registration numbers through these efforts but voting numbers are another matter. To that end, we have filed an application to join **NSLVE** and plan to review Democracy Works' **TurboVote** <https://www.democracy.works/tools-for-voters> through the TECC (Technology-Engaged Community College) program in Spring 2020 for potential roll-out to our students in early Fall 2020.

## *Evaluation of Impact and Progress*

In addition to assessment metrics utilized internally to assess program efficacy, there are several national standards that are applicable. As part of our continued work, we intend to borrow and/or model additional assessments on these highly relevant standards in order to demonstrate to stakeholders that this Civic Action Plan and Civic Engagement and the Community Partnerships' Strategic Plan is making progress and reaching established goals.

We have established a goal of applying for the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement during its next open application cycle. The framework of that application will undergird our work and planning.

Utah Campus Compact has identified several other standards that are applicable:

For campuses committed to engaging with their communities, several frameworks can be useful. Barbara Holland's Levels of Commitment to Community Engagement provides a vision of the engaged campus in which engagement is fully integrated as strategy to accomplish the campus mission and goals. The elective Carnegie Community Engagement Classification documentation framework can be used to help institutions identify specific strengths and areas for quality improvement as an engaged campus as you review your institution's community engagement commitments and activities. The President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll recognizes higher education institutions that reflect the values of exemplary, impactful community service. Applying can be a useful learning process as campuses identify their work. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education has developed a specific set of standards that should be considered in developing Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Programs, as well. The Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford University has developed a set of public service pathways that are useful in exploring different forms of community engagement. Finally, if engagement is included as part of the campus core themes for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and University a campus should develop specific community engagement benchmarks.

<https://compact.org/resource-posts/civic-action-plan-engagement-assessment/>

As stated previously, we already intend to evaluate Stanford University's **Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement** tool in Spring 2020 and will augment the results of our analysis with additional metrics to ensure we understand progress or lack thereof as well as impact and gaps for future programming. The cycle of assessment will be ongoing.

## Appendix A: Middlesex County College Vision and Mission

### Middlesex County College Vision and Mission

#### Vision and Mission

Middlesex County College puts learning first and measures its success only by the success of its students. All members of the College community contribute to student success.

#### Our Mission:

The mission of Middlesex County College is to provide access to a quality, affordable education for a diverse population, to support student success for lifelong learning, and to strengthen the economic, social and cultural life of the community.

### Middlesex County College Strategic Plan 2018-2021

#### A. MCC Gateway to Success

MCC guides students through their transition to college, supports them in selecting and completing a pathway to achieve their goals, and prepares them for post-MCC success

- Strategic Initiative #1: Enhance support of the Guided Pathways to Success model
- Strategic Initiative #2: Build bridges between economic trends, demographic needs, and educational options

#### B. MCC Focused on Students

MCC promotes learning opportunities that broaden the boundaries of higher education and support access

- Strategic Initiative #1: Employ engaged pedagogy and provide stimulating learning environments that offer multiple approaches to learning
- Strategic Initiative #2: Develop curricular and co-curricular activities and opportunities that expose students to new opportunities and horizons
- Strategic Initiative #3: Undertake initiatives to support access and affordability

#### C. MCC Engaged with Our Community

MCC connects with employers, organizations, and individuals and establishes partnerships and collaborations that improve learning and services for students throughout the community

- Strategic Initiative #1: Broaden public awareness and support by expanding MCC's role in the region's educational and cultural landscape through comprehensive programming, marketing, and fundraising strategies
- Strategic Initiative #2: Expand community engagement through a Community Advisory Committee

#### D. Pride in Our Welcoming Environment

MCC offers a spacious campus and two well-equipped centers with facilities and technologies that support teaching, learning, and student success

- Strategic Initiative #1: Ensure that the College operates in an environment that is accessible to all
- Strategic Initiative #2: Update existing facilities to support pedagogical and academic needs



## Appendix B: EOF Club Voter Registration History

**From:** Vega, Victor  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 05, 2018 1:28 PM  
**To:** Illa, Arianna  
**Cc:** McCormick, Mark; Marius, Louis; Stowe, Flora  
**Subject:** RE: Voter Registration Drive

Greetings Ariana E. Illa,

Thanks again for the previous communication regarding your fall voter education project. I am glad to know of your efforts, and that of Professor Thompson's along with the League of Women Voters to help students become voter education advocates in and outside of the classroom.

I am in support of your efforts to establish voter registration activities. You would not be stepping on anyone's toes and collaboration from all supporting MCC groups is good for the democratic spirit. Here is how the EOF club and I, as advisor, became involved with the on-campus voter registration process.

In response to the voting controversy in the 2000 U.S. presidential election, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) was instituted in order to provide systematic and lawful procedures to support all voters. One concern of the HAVA mandate was voter registration education for students. This concern prompted government, public and business officials to create civic engagement opportunities to support students in the democratic process. In the Spring of 2004 the former New Jersey Attorney General, Peter C. Harvey and his office sponsored outreach initiatives in support of HAVA. One of the initiatives was called the "Be Powerful, Be Heard" program designed to educate students on the significance of voting and the need for proactive voter registration.

In the Spring of 2005 the Office of the Attorney General put into action the "Be Powerful, Be Heard" program by doing an online student voter education from Perth Amboy high school. The city of Perth Amboy was selected by the Attorney General's office because of a significant historical moment. Thomas Mundy Peterson, an African American who was employed by the Perth Amboy school system, was the first person of African descent to vote in a municipal election after the instituting of the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. March 31, 1870 was the historical date that Peterson cast his vote.

I remind EOF students that this was a major victory in civic engagement for a member of an enslaved and oppressed group, seven years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1863. Beyond Peterson's historic contribution in Perth Amboy, are the years of struggle to give oppressed African Americans the same voting rights made available to other American citizens. Thanks to the contributions and sacrifice of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and many civil rights organizers, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was realized. In short, our students should learn the importance of voting rights and the benefits of voting that are tied to equitable education.

The Club's efforts in the voter registration drives started at Middlesex County College in the Spring 2004 semester. That year the efforts of our executive club leaders assisted the College, the Office of Student Life and the student body with the HAVA mandate. Our students have done voter registration at the Student Activities fairs at the start of each semester, at the College Center lobby during September and October and at the EOF office throughout the school year.

President Dr. Perla-Morales appreciated the advocacy of our club with the HAVA mandate. In September 2008, I was called to her office to participate in a 45-minute telephone interview with an independent journalist who wanted to know how MCC was introducing voter registration to the student body.

Beyond our campus community service the club has engaged in other civic opportunities to support their leadership growth. Off-campus our students have visited civil rights organizations and participated in civic engagement presentations.

They had participated in the HIP HOP SUMMIT II Youth Vote Conference in Trenton, New Jersey. At the summit students were able to hear former Attorney General Peter C. Harvey, HIP HOP mogul Russell Simmons and HIP HOP ACTION SUMMIT CEO and former NAACP Executive Director Benjamin Chavis speak on the importance of the electoral history. What stood out at the summit were poetic presentations by high school and college student artists, poets and speakers on the importance of the youth vote.

Each spring semester our students participate in the EOF Statewide Student Day in Trenton at the New Jersey State Capitol to advocate for higher education needs with key NJ State legislators. Outside of New Jersey our students have visited The Library of Congress, The Thurgood Marshall Institute and The Leadership Experience in Washington, DC to network with civic engagement advocates and other college peer leaders.

Our club and student leaders have visited the Youth Political Participation Program at RU's Eagleton Institute of Politics in New Brunswick. I highly recommend that you contact their year round voter education programs. They have an excellent community building program with RU students and New Brunswick High School. They provide workshops on civic engagement, voter registration drives, political leadership and online voter education website. You can check out their website and programming at <http://cyp.p.rutgers.edu/ru-ready/>. Please feel free to contact Dr. Elizabeth Matto at [ematto@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:ematto@rci.rutgers.edu) to discuss your classroom and programming interests.

### RU Ready | Center for Youth Political Participation

[cyp.p.rutgers.edu](http://cyp.p.rutgers.edu)

About RU Ready. A civic engagement initiative, the mission of RU Ready is to provide students with the motivation and the civic, political, and expressive tools they need to address public problems in their community.

Our club leaders have hosted the Honorable Mayor Wilda Diaz during Hispanic Heritage month. They have visited City Hall in Perth Amboy to hear her lecture on Urban Political Leadership. Along with that visit, they were treated to a historic re-enactment presentation in recognition of Thomas Mundy Peterson, the first African American to vote in an 1870 municipal election in the USA.

The club has hosted civic leaders from the New Brunswick and Perth Amboy towns to present on community organizing and civic engagement. Lecture presentations have been done by former professionals from the Office of Civil Rights, Environmental Protection Agency and the Public Defender's Office.

Lastly, the development of our current Student Government Association (SGA) was aided by the EOF club's leadership visit, training and organizing session with the Student Life Office and student senate at Northern Virginia Community College in 2012.

Again, thank you for reaching out to inform me on your project. I hope to see other students engaged in their voter registration drives in the fall. Our efforts in this community service will continue to support the mandates of HAVA at MCC.

Regards,  
Victor Vega, Ph.D.  
Counseling Professor, Educational Opportunity Fund  
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Edison, NJ 08818-2050