

Campus Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rates

Executive Summary

Civic engagement is a distinctive of an Alfred State education and a fundamental element of ongoing strategic initiatives related to applied learning, student success and local/regional impact. The following comprehensive campus action plan is focused on registering, educating, and turning out student voters. This politically neutral initiative will focus on co-curricular and curricular pathways to enhance the likelihood of pervasive outreach and substantive impact among students. Implementation will be rely on collaborations across departments and divisions engaging internal and external stakeholders in data informed election and non-election related programming.

The plan will be implemented on both the Alfred and Wellsville campuses as well as integrated into the online platform for web based students. The timeline will run one academic year from summer 2020 through summer 2021. A key goal will be a 15% increase in the voting rate for the 2020 election. An inclusive committee of students, staff, and faculty will inform actions taken to achieve short and long term goals for engagement.

Leadership

The leadership team for this initiative include the following individuals:

Barbara Broughton, Deputy Commissioner, Allegany County Board of Elections
Leslie Buckley, Coordinator, Accessibility & Tutoring Services, Academic Affairs
Marcy Crawford, Deputy Commissioner, Allegany County Board of Elections
Baylee Durantini, Student Senate Vice President of Student Life, Student
Haleigh Golish, Civic Engagement Advocate, Student
Jonathan Hilsher, Director of Civic Engagement, Student Affairs
Spencer Peavey, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs
Melanie Ryan, Office of Accessibility, Academic Affairs

Externally, the Allegany County Board of Elections is a key community partner in exchanging information and coordinating efforts to maximize student engagement. In addition, the Center for Civic Engagement's Community Advisory Board serves as a valuable resource. This board is made up of leaders from key sectors within the region who provide input on the activities and direction of this office. Their inclusion provides additional insight for future effective action.

Commitment

Alfred State College has a long tradition of community engagement, outreach, collaboration, and service. This tradition is exemplified in the institutional seal with the words ““Enter to Learn, Go Forth to Serve”. Currently, this outward focus is core to an institutional strategic plan

AlfredState.edu 1-800-4-ALFRED

Hit the ground *running*® . . .

that highlights applied learning, local & regional impact, and student success as priorities. A campus wide Civic Action Plan further enhances this orientation to civic leadership and applied learning.

The Center for Civic Engagement provides dedicated infrastructure and leadership to civic initiatives. The mission of the Center is to promote a culture of civic engagement on campus preparing students to be civic leaders in their community. This Center will continue to serve as a catalyst for political engagement efforts on campus in collaboration with a representative leadership team.

Landscape

The 2018 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) report provided significant insight into the voting patterns of Alfred State students. This report highlighted substantial increases in the percentage of students registered to vote and the voting rate nearly double from 2014.

This report also highlighted a need to invest renewed effort in accelerating our positive trajectory. Alfred State student voting metrics have not yet achieved average benchmarks of like institutions. More specifically, students in certain majors are a significantly disengaged compared to their peers in other majors. Focused efforts on connecting with students in these majors promise to generate the most momentum in adjusting overall metrics upward.

Our next step is to convene our planning group to discuss the report and leverage it to develop and fine tune strategies for the coming two years. We will also begin identifying new goals to continue the positive momentum.

Goals

Alfred State has identified three primary goals for democratic engagement for 2020-2021 that focus on efforts to maximize student involvement in the electoral process. These goals include:

1. Enhance knowledge on the pathways to political engagement
2. Develop a greater understanding of candidates, parties, and platforms.
3. Increase voter participation in general to maximize the political impact of the student body.

The first goal is to enhance knowledge on the pathways to political engagement. Many students are confused by the paperwork, regulations, and other similar barriers that depress young adult turnout and participation in New York. Alfred State plans to continue making significant traction in achieving this goal by leveraging multiple platforms and events throughout the year. Examples include:

- Register students during new student orientation in January and July
- Embed voter registration in the move-in process for returning students
- Embed voter registration materials in the parking decal procurement process for commuter students
- Embed voter registration in the Pioneer Cup residence hall competition

- Conduct bi-weekly voter registration events by tabling at key campus intersections such as the Central Dining Hall and the Student Leadership Center
- Leverage National Voter Registration Day, Constitution Day, and other key events to initiate pushes for new registrations
- Utilize social media, emails to students, tabling, hand-outs, and other platforms to publicize key dates, resources, and websites
- Create posters and design informational bulletin boards in residential halls focusing on the impact of voting
- Explore embedding voter registration opportunity within the class registration process for returning students
- Continue leveraging the Office of the President to send reminders to students on registration and participation

The second goal for 2020-21 is to develop a greater understanding of candidates, parties, and platforms. Consistent avenues for non-partisan information will be designed to raise awareness around important local, regional, and national issues. A few examples include:

- Distribute and display non-partisan information on candidate positions. Make available straightforward party platform posters and handouts
- Leverage Constitution Day programming to register and share voter education materials
- Held mock ballot election around election days in March and November to help students better understand the voting process
- Made available resources so students knew their electoral rights. For example, the “Student Voting Guide for New York”, produced through the Fair Elections Legal Network, could be made widely available
- Leverage platforms like Rock the Vote and other apps designed to make involvement and engagement easier for online oriented students
- Hold debate watch parties in the residence halls
- Design informational bulletin boards and posters in residence halls & academic building with important election oriented dates
- Collaborate with faculty to engage students via courses

The third and final goal is to increase voter participation in general to maximize the political impact of the Alfred State student body. A few examples of specific programs designed to enhance voter participation include the following:

- Partner with food services to decorate the Central Dining Hall with voting paraphernalia and information on election day
- Partner with Student Senate to have a van shuttle students to the polling station throughout election day
- Leverage the student newspaper to share information and feature student voices on why they are voting.
- Encourage students to sign a “Pledge to Vote”
- Use chalk to clearly mark out the footpath through village from campus to the local polling station to make it as easy as possible for students to locate this venue.

Strategy

The goals above represent a student focused strategy designed to deliver resources where they are most effective. This would include the classroom, residence halls, co-curricular venues, dining locations, and other settings. Incorporation into ongoing competition's such as the Pioneer Cup and ongoing events such as Constitution Day reduce duplication of effort and enhance effectiveness.

Reporting

This action plan, as well as National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) reports, will be shared broadly in the interest of transparency and accountability. Specifically, information will be shared on the Alfred State College website as well as posted internally within the institutional intranet. Utilizing both platforms will ensure easy access to the public as well as internally with faculty, staff, and students. This effort to make plans, data, and reports public will not only demonstrate a commitment to broadening and deepening civic learning and democratic engagement, but may inspire ideas and input from stakeholders that can benefit ongoing efforts.

Evaluation

Effectiveness of methods and strategy will be evaluated by collecting key metrics such as event participation and voter registrations completed. Student survey data will also be leveraged to inform effectiveness and efficiency of efforts. Finally, data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement will continue to play a central role in measuring progress over time and developing benchmarks to further streamline goals and objectives of this effort. The political engagement team will utilize this ongoing feedback loop to inform programming focus and communication strategies throughout the year.