

Antelope Valley College
Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan
2024 – 2026

Executive Summary

Antelope Valley College (AVC) is deeply committed to promoting civic engagement and enhancing student participation in the democratic process. In partnership with the Associated Student Organization (ASO) and the Civic and Voter Engagement Committee, this 2024 – 2026 Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan (CVEAP) aims to increase voter registration and education. The plan will be implemented by the Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator (CVEC) alongside Student Development. To ensure equity, outreach strategies will focus on underserved populations, ensuring all students have access to civic engagement resources and events. To ensure inclusivity, AVC will partner with student organizations such as Umoja, the Dreamer Center, and Basic Needs to tailor civic engagement efforts to marginalized and underserved communities. We will hold targeted voter registration events for these groups, provide bilingual voter resources, and offer flexible participation options through online and in-person activities to accommodate diverse student needs.

Leadership

The Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan (CVEAP) is coordinated by the Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator (CVEC) with support from a dedicated team of faculty, staff, and student leaders.

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Landscape

To assess Antelope Valley College's (AVC) effectiveness in promoting civic engagement, we analyze past voting data and participation rates by participating in the California University and College Ballot Bowl a friendly competition friendly competition where higher education campuses compete to register the most students to vote. In the 2022 elections, AVC registered over 70 new voters through various initiatives, including voter registration drives and candidate forums. Most recently, AVC made the top 10 of the Ballot Bowl competition for a brief period. AVC has fallen in the rankings since but efforts to register new student voters have not waived.

However, challenges remain, such as limited engagement in off-cycle elections and barriers to understanding registration processes. Moving forward, AVC aims to collect comprehensive data on student voting behavior through the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), allowing for informed decisions and targeted outreach strategies.

Reflection

Over the past two academic years, Antelope Valley College (AVC) has made notable progress in its civic engagement efforts, but there are also key areas for growth. Events such as the Juneteenth celebration and candidate forums were successful in engaging students and led to over 70 new voter registrations. The college's involvement in the California Ballot Bowl, which placed us in the top 10 recently, highlights our growing impact.

Despite these successes, several challenges emerged. Increasing participation in off-cycle elections proved difficult, and some students struggled with understanding the registration process. These barriers underscored the need for clearer communication and more consistent outreach. We also recognized the importance of integrating civic discussions into academic settings, which helped foster awareness but could be expanded further.

Looking forward, our goal is to refine our strategies, ensuring more targeted outreach and continuous collaboration with student organizations and faculty. Building on the lessons learned, we plan to enhance both the digital and in-person voter engagement experiences while expanding our reach across campus.

The Civic and Voter Engagement Committee consisted of a team that organized and hosted AVC's Congressional Candidate Forums. Fritz Hemker, Tina McDermott, and John Vento facilitated the forums asking questions submitted by the students and community. The committee was also active in making flyers and posting while also posting and passing them out on campus. They also tabled at various events to drive voter registration and promote the forums. They effectively worked alongside student volunteers and the ASO to get the job done. Furthermore, the committee secured support from ASO for the upcoming school year and semester.

The Associated Student Organization (ASO) funds the annual Constitution Day essay competition. This competition is facilitated by Political Science Faculty, John Vento. This year students are invited to showcase their writing and critical thinking skills with a chance to win a grand prize of \$500 during the annual Constitutional Essay Contest.

The essay topic requires participants to analyze the Constitutional provisions and historical perspectives to argue whether the Electoral College is the most effective method for electing the president while reviewing Alexander Hamilton's The Federalist Papers #68.

Tina Leisner McDermott continued to advocate for civic engagement through her Public Speaking courses. Her students research topics related to voting, and any issue impacted by voting, for their informative speech assignment. Some examples of topics students choose to speak about are LGBTQIA+ rights, California ballot propositions, issues in the prison system, the Electoral College, Supreme Court cases, amendments to the Constitution, DACA, immigration issues, mail in ballots, women's fight for suffrage, age requirements for voting, etc. Students who take this course learn the importance of voting and the impact of it on their lives from local, state, to federal policies. Throughout the semester, Professor McDermott continuously encouraged students to register to vote and shares any relevant links or voting information with her classes. Students in her classes consistently stated that they gained a greater awareness and appreciation for the importance of voting through this course.

Goals

Short-term (2-year)

- **Increase Voter Registration by 10%:** Through targeted voter registration events like Welcome Week, Club Rush, and campus celebrations (e.g., Juneteenth), AVC aims to register more students, particularly first-time voters and those from underrepresented groups.
- **Expand Voter Education Efforts:** Host two workshops per semester on the importance of local, state, and national elections. Topics will include voter logistics, understanding ballot measures, and the impact of civic participation.
- **Strengthen Campus Coalition:** Build upon existing relationships with campus groups such as ASO, Umoja, and faculty to ensure more comprehensive outreach and engagement in voter registration and education activities.

Long-term (5-year)

- **Increase Voter Turnout by 15%:** In the next five years, AVC aims to increase overall voter turnout by leveraging early voting and absentee voting education

campaigns. These efforts will focus on making voting more accessible and raising awareness of voting deadlines.

- Foster Continuous Civic Awareness: Implement a series of ongoing civic engagement events, including speaker series, student debates, and public forums to maintain a consistent focus on the importance of civic participation, both in and outside of election years.
- Expand Community Partnerships: Develop and deepen collaborations with local election offices and civic organizations to provide students with up-to-date information and more opportunities to engage in elections at the local, state, and national levels.

Outreach

AVC will utilize social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to share voter registration deadlines, voting tips, and promote events. Additionally, email campaigns and class announcements will ensure that both in-person and remote students receive key information.

- A-Frame Posters
- Candid Conversations
- Canvas Announcements
- Syllabus Announcements
- Flyers

Events

8/27/24 & 8/28/24	ASO Hosts Water Hydration Event & Promoted Voter Registration
8/28/24	Civil Rights scholar Dr. Megan Ming Francis Hosted by Civic and Voter Engagement Committee
9/3/24 & 9/4/24	ASO Hosts ICC Club Rush & Promoted Voter Registration
9/24/24	National Voter Registration Day
10/1/24	Discussion with Congressional Candidate Mike Garcia Hosted by Civic and Voter Engagement Committee
10/1/24	ASO Hosted Homecoming Pep Rall & Promoted Voter Registration
10/8/24	Discussion with Congressional Candidate George Whitesides Hosted by Civic and Voter Engagement Committee

10/16/24 Sabor Latino: A Taste of Heritage
ASO Voter Registration Tabling Event

10/18/24 Voter Registration Deadline

10/22/24 Early Voting Deadline

10/31/24 - 11/5/24 Election Day – AVC Official Polling Place in Student Lounge