Bethune-Cookman Campus Action Plan



Bethune – Cookman University Enter to Learn. Depart to Serve

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Executive Summary

On October 3, 1904, with \$1.50 to her name, a firm faith in God, and five little black girls along with her son Albert, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune's vision for an institution of higher learning dedicated to educating African Americans and transforming society became a reality. Despite adverse trials and tribulations, Dr. Bethune's resilience, creativity, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to service remained unwavering. Recognized both nationally and internationally for her accomplishments, to include, advisor to U.S. presidents, civil rights activist who played a pivotal role in the founding of the United Nations and the United Negro College Fund, Dr. Bethune was a transformative educational leader and social justice advocate, whose commitment to service remains a cornerstone and staple of the University's mission, vision, and core values. Since its inception, Bethune-Cookman College/University has graduated more than 19,000 student leaders who work in a range of fields, including the arts, business, education, government, sciences, and religion. Through its dedication to service and higher education, Bethune-Cookman University preserves and continues the legacy of academic excellence and civic engagement pioneered by its founder. As a testament to this legacy, a marble statue of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune was unveiled on July 13, 2022 in the nation's Capital, as she became the first African American represented in the National Statutory Hall Collection.

Given the university's unique history and the role marginalized college students have historically played in advancing social and political change across the U.S., Bethune-Cookman University is well positioned to promote a plan for sustained civic learning and democratic engagement. As reflected in the University's motto, "Enter to Learn. Depart to Serve," and our core values of faith, integrity, respect, service, and thirst for knowledge, civic engagement is a hallmark of Bethune-Cookman University. Bethune-Cookman University actively embraces civic engagement as a monumental facet of the University's mission and vision for academic excellence and student success. Like many Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Bethune-Cookman University has played a vital role in highlighting issues of social justice such as voting access and rights. Serving as an information hub within the city of Daytona Beach, the university through academic and extracurricular activities continues to foster political consciousness among students and the wider community. For example, our Center for Civic Engagement has long served as a polling site for local and national elections as well as a gathering place for collaborative community events focused on civic engagement, political and social discourse, and activism. Although current data on student voter registration was unavailable at the time of this report, previous data and antidotal evidence suggest student voter registration is moderately high while actual voting patterns appear lower.

To this end, the Bethune-Cookman University's Campus Vote Action Plan will serve as a blueprint for strengthening the University's current civic engagement efforts under the collaborative leadership of the University's Political Engagement Committee (PEC), the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE), and the Center for Law and Social Justice (CLSJ). More specifically, the purpose of this plan is to create actionable steps to bolster our culture of civic engagement, increase voter participation, and broader political consciousness. These actions are directed at the main campus located at 640 Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Blvd, which serves in-person and online undergraduate and graduate students. Bethune-Cookman University will continue to build upon this blueprint in hopes of establishing a sustainable plan that boosts the participation and engagement of students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community partners in the democratic process. This action plan will start in the beginning of the Spring semester, January 2025 and will run until December 2025. Action plans will be updated annually.

Leadership

Guiding Question 1: Coalition Members and Involvement

Several diverse entities throughout the campus including Student Affairs, Government Affairs, the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE), Student Government Association (SGA), Student and Greek life, the Center for Law and Social Justice (CLSJ) and other academic units housed within the College of Arts and Humanities have been working collaboratively to advance civic education and participation on campus and in surrounding communities.

The Bethune-Cookman University (B-CU) Political Engagement Coalition, which is comprised of a working group of student leaders, faculty/staff members, and university offices, serves as the key campus coalition responsible for collaborating, coordinating, overseeing, and shaping programming, approaches, and strategies for boosting civic education and democratic engagement on campus.

B-CU Political Engagement Coalition Members

- Sagal Buchannan, B-CU Democracy Fellows, Political Science (Student)
- Reann Baptiste, Fall 2024 B-CU Democracy Fellow, Criminal Justice (Student)
- Tamara Barnes, Fall 2024 B-CU Democracy Fellow, President, B-CU NAACP (Student)
- Kamiah Nunn, Fall 2024 B-CU Democracy Fellow, Political Science (Student)
- Dr. Frank Wood, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, College of Arts and Humanities; Faculty Advisor, B-CU Democracy Fellows (Faculty)
- Dr. Kideste Yusef, Associate Dean of Research, College of Arts & Humanities, Associate Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, Director, Center for Law and Social Justice (CLSJ), Faculty Advisor, B-CU Democracy Fellows (Faculty/Staff)
- Dr. Claudette McFadden, Professor, Communication Studies; Director, Thurgood Marshall Speech and Debate Society (Faculty)
- Davita Bonner, Director, Community and Civic Engagement (Staff)
- Kelvin Mayner, Director, Student Initiatives (Staff)
- Jermaine McKinney, Dean of Students (Staff)
- Jared Brooks, Government Relations and Strategic Initiatives (Staff)
- Dr. Clarissa West-White, University Archivist (Staff)
- Dr. Tasha Youmans, Dean of Library (Staff)
- Dr. Bradley Gardner, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Humanities; Associate Professor, Political Science and International Studies (Faculty/Staff)
- Dr. Dorcas McCoy, Associate Professor, Political Science and International Studies (Faculty)

Furthermore, several community partners have provided additional supports and resources to complement the University's civic engagement efforts. These community partners include, Campus Vote Project, Black Voters Matter, Equal Ground Florida, Black Youth Vote, the Daytona Beach Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCPCP), Black Youth Vote (BYV), the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC), several Greek Lettered Organizations, The Links Inc., and

the ALL IN Democracy Challenge. Several student organizations also partner in our civic engagement efforts including the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice, Student Chapter of the NAACP, Iota Phi Theta Inc., The B-CU football team, and the B-CU band fraternity. The Volusia County Supervisor of Elections Office also partners and engages with the B-CU Political Engagement Team to organize and host voter registration drives and voter registration training.

Guiding Question 2: Reporting and Compensation

The B-CU Political Engagement Coalition reports to various members of the University's Administration, to include, but is not limited to, academic deans and associate deans as well as department chairpersons, and University leadership. The B-CU Democracy Fellows report to Dr. Frank Wood and Dr. Kideste Yusef who serve as faculty advisors for the B-CU Democracy Fellows. All faculty and staff members of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition engaging in civic engagement efforts on campus do so without additional compensation. External funding from the Campus Vote Project (CVP) is used to compensate the B-CU Democracy Fellows.

Guiding Question 3: Coalition Strength and Responsibilities

All members of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition possess an unwavering commitment to boosting student engagement in activities and programs focused on civic engagement. This strength has afforded Bethune-Cookman University the opportunity to secure external funding, develop and maintain relationships with several community partners, and facilitate civic engagement programming on campus. Additionally, several members of our coalition have access to many students, including student athletes. As well, several members of our coalition have access to diverse communication channels for disseminating voter education materials and showcasing on-campus civic engagement programming.

Guiding Question 5: Inclusivity

The B-CU Political Engagement Coalition is comprised of a diverse group of faculty, staff, and students who hail from various fields of study, departments/units, social networks, and communities. This strength enables the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition to ideate and implement a variety of civic engagement programs that are tailored for students attending a historically Black college and university (HBCU).

Guiding Question 7: Who Else Needs to be Involved?

The Office of Admissions at Bethune-Cookman University represents a unit on campus that need to be involved in the civic engagement efforts advanced by the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition. With their addition to the coalition, this unit will assist in institutionalizing civic engagement by incorporating voter registration on the admissions application. Additionally, the Center for Collaborative Experiential Learning (CEL) needs to be involved in the civic engagement efforts of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition. The addition of the CEL to the coalition will open the door for more opportunities to integrate civic engagement in various

curricular and co-curricular programs and/or activities, thus allowing for more student involvement and institutionalization of civic engagement on campus.

Guided Question 8: Coalition Meetings and Communication

Due to the demands of their respective departments, colleges, and units, the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition does not have regularly scheduled meetings. Dr. Frank Wood and Dr. Kideste Yusef will meet with the B-CU Democracy Fellows on a regular basis to plan and implement civic engagement events or activities. In most cases, Dr. Frank Wood will provide updates and/or solicit the involvement and assistance of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition for civic engagement events on campus. This, however, occurs on an as needed basis.

Guided Question 9: Keeping the Coalition Engaged

The B-CU Democracy Fellows are required to engage in civic engagement activities or events on campus. Dr. Frank Wood and Dr. Kideste Yusef, as mentioned before, are responsible for overseeing and supervising all activities or events proposed and executed by the B-CU Democracy Fellows. Other members of the coalition, given their dispersion across campus and respective demands, engage in civic engagement activities or events as their schedules or availabilities permit. No matter their level of effort or engagement, all members of the coalition are given thanks and gratitude for their service and involvement.

Guided Question 10: Coalition Turnover

If members of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition experience challenges in their capacity to carry out or meet the needs of the coalition, Dr. Frank Wood and Dr. Kideste Yusef will seek additional assistance from student volunteers and/or take it upon themselves to oversee and carry out the work that was needed.

Guided Question 11: Leadership Succession Plan

If key members of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition leave the University, other members of the coalition will be able to take the lead in maintaining the current momentum on campus.

Commitment

Guided Question 1: University Mission & Vision Statement

The mission of Bethune-Cookman University is to educate a diverse community of learners to become responsible, productive citizens and solution seekers through the promotion of faith, scholarship, creative endeavors, leadership and service.

Bethune-Cookman University will define new standards for academic excellence and student success by educating and empowering learners who will seek their own solutions; advocate opportunities for all citizens to improve their quality of life; and inculcate global perspectives and realities to people worldwide.

In alignment with the University's mission and vision, the Bethune-Cookman University's Action Plan will help our students develop and expand their skills and competencies, prepare for their role as global citizens, and facilitate change in society through their active involvement and participation in their respective fields as well as civic life.

Guided Question 2: Role of Senior Leadership

Despite experiencing several changes in executive leadership, the current Interim President and Acting Provost, William Berry, PhD has been supportive of our civic engagement initiatives. He and Dean Jan Boulware, of the College of Arts and Humanities, have been kept abreast of ongoing civic engagement activities, including asking for updates on the number of newly registered students which resulted from our targeted events and have shared this information with the Board of Trustees. Additionally, we have received verbal support for the inclusion of voter registration information to be institutionalized as part of the admission and enrollment practices of the university by senior administration. Though this has yet be implemented, Dr. Frank Wood was invited to present to all incoming freshmen and transfer students on the importance of civic engagement and share registration information. The Executive Vice President & Chief Innovation Officer, Dr. Karen Bearden has also supported and participated with her team in past voting and civic engagement efforts including our previous March to the Polls event and Candidate forums. Several emails have also been shared university-wide to gather information to reflect current registration and voting statistics.

Guided Question 3: Institutional Culture

While difficult to assess, the university has been involved in sustained civic engagement efforts with numerous community and campus partners for at least the last 5 years including in the Florida HBCU "Ready, Set, Vote" campaign, Flagler Tiger Bay Club Young Tigers program, and March to the Polls events which has been supported across programs, departments, and other units such as B-CU Athletics and the Dean of Students. Many members of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition have led or participated in these activities.

Guided Question 6: Student Learning Outcomes and Curriculum

Currently, and to the knowledge of the authors of this Action Plan, there are no learning goals nor assessment measures included in the general education curriculum or co-curriculum that focus on civic education or engagement.

Still, several faculty members, including those who are a part of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition, integrate aspects of civic education and civic engagement in their respective courses. This is particularly true for professional seminar courses in criminal justice and communication studies.

Landscape

Bethune-Cookman University is a small private, Historically Black College and University located in Daytona Beach, Florida with an enrollment of approximately 2,900 students. The university's demographic makeup is nearly 80% African American/Black, followed by 6% Latino/Hispanic, 3% two or more races, and less than 1% of all other racial/ethnic groups. The majority of the students are female (63%). While the vast majority of B-CU students are from within the state (75%), 22% are from outside of Florida, and 3% are from the Caribbean Islands. We currently do not have accurate information on the levels of engagement based on demographics.

As reflected in the University's motto, "*Enter to Learn. Depart to Serve*," and our core values of *faith, integrity, respect, service,* and *thirst for knowledge*, civic engagement is a hallmark of Bethune-Cookman University. Through the University's Student Affairs unit which houses the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE), Student Government Association (SGA), and all other student-led organizations including Greek life, and the Center for Law and Social Justice (CLSJ) housed within the College of Arts and Humanities, Bethune-Cookman University actively embraces civic engagement as a monumental facet of the University's mission and vision for academic excellence and student success.

To bolster civic participation, numerous campus events and initiatives have been held including March to the Polls events in 2017 and 2018, which featured local candidates, university-sponsored political debates in 2018 and 2020, faculty participation as moderators and interviewees during non-partisan candidate forums in 2020, student political education Professional Seminar sponsored by the Department of Justice and Political Studies in 2020, voter registration drives, and the use of the CCE as a main voting location for Daytona Beach. During the Fall 2021 semester, for example, Bethune-Cookman University participated in the Florida HBCU Ready Set Vote Bus Tour, an initiative organized by Florida Memorial University's Social Justice Institute (FMU SJI), the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC), the Black Youth Vote (BYV), and the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). Through this collaboration led by the Center for Law & Social Justice (CLSJ), to include the involvement of Student Government Association (SGA), Government Affairs, and Student Life, Bethune-Cookman University was able to educate, energize, and engage our students and the surrounding community on the importance of social justice and voting rights, as well as mobilize our students and the surrounding community to pledge and cast their votes in the upcoming elections.

Additionally, since 2019 the Center for Law & Social Justice has collaborated with the Flagler Tiger Bay Club, which is a nonpartisan organization where adherents to all political views are encouraged to listen and understand different perspectives, to foster student engagement and participation in local events. A B-CU Young Tigers group was formed in 2020 through the Center of Law & Social Justice and every semester, students participate in several political education luncheons sponsored by the Club.

During Fall of 2021, B-CU participated in the Ready, Set, Vote campaign on November 8, 2021 in partnership with the United Negro College Fund, Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, FMU SJI, and Black Youth Vote as part of the Ready, Set, Vote HBCU Tour. Then, in 2022, Bethune-Cookman University (B-CU) organized the *"Lift Every Voice and Vote"* event, a partnership between B-CU

Student Government Association (SGA), the Center for Law & Social Justice, and Black Voters Matter (BVM) that mobilized students to register and pledge to vote in the November 2022 elections. Each year, Bethune-Cookman University partners with the Volusia County Supervisor of Elections Office and other student and local organizations to participate in National Voter Registration Day, where representatives from various civic engagement organizations, to include volunteers from student organizations on campus, assisted students, faculty, and staff with voter registration and education. Additionally, during homecoming games, Bethune-Cookman University participates in various HBCU voting bus tours that aim to educate, energize, and engage our students and the surrounding community on the importance of social justice and voting rights, as well as mobilize our students and the surrounding community to pledge and cast their votes in the upcoming elections.

Recently, through partnerships with the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC), Black Youth Vote (BYV), Black Voters Matters (BVM), the Daytona Beach National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Volusia County African American Leadership Council (VCAALC), Bethune-Cookman University hosted the We Won't Go Back! Bus Tour on Tuesday, September 17, 2024 – Thursday, September 19, 2024. This bus tour engaged and mobilized B-CU students, faculty, and staff around voter registration and voter education. On Tuesday, September 17, 2024, several community partners were present to engage and encourage our students to register and pledge to vote in the upcoming elections. Additionally, representatives from the Volusia County Supervisor of Elections Office were present to verify, update, and complete voter registration for our students. Then, on Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at 12pm – 3pm, various civic engagement organizations were on campus on the Quad to further engage and network with our students. The centerpiece of this event was the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition's Big Bus that will be parked on the Quad. Finally, on Thursday, September 19, 2024, at 4:30pm-6:00pm, Bethune-Cookman University hosted *Wildcats V.O.T.E. – A Voting Simulation* in the President's Banquet Hall in the Center for Civic Engagement. This simulation immersed students in an engaging first-hand experience that educated them on identifying who and what they are voting for, locating a polling location, and successfully completing their ballot. At the end of the simulation, students were given a sticker, indicating that they casted their vote. Furthermore, students networked and engaged with the community partners.

Challenges

In light of these civic engagement efforts, there are still opportunities for increases in student engagement in civic activities, trainings, and/or events. Specifically, there are several internal and external factors that impede on the success of civic engagement efforts on campus. Internally, civic engagement is not institutionalized, which fosters apathy and disengagement amongst students, student organizations, as well as faculty, staff, and administration.

Strengths

Despite these challenges, members of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition have taken steps to institutionalize civic engagement and promote a climate and culture of voting. For instance, in Fall 2022, Bethune-Cookman University, under the leadership of Dr. Frank Wood and Dr. Kideste Yusef, partnered with Campus Vote Project to establish the B-CU Democracy Fellows. Through

the Campus Vote Project, B-CU Democracy Fellows are trained on the history of voting rights, current voting rights issues, and equitable and inclusive campus organizing, which includes, but is not limited to, community/campus canvassing, legislative forums, and candidate forums. In this capacity, B-CU Democracy Fellows have played an instrumental and critical role in organizing and hosting student-led panels around the importance of voter turnout and voter registration, partnering with several community partners, to include the Volusia County Supervisor of Elections Office, to conduct voter registration drives at campus-based events, in the student cafeteria, on the Quad (i.e., a central meeting place for students at Bethune-Cookman University), and in the classrooms. Through their collective efforts, the B-CU Democracy Fellows, since their inception in 2021, have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to mobilizing and galvanizing their peers around civic education and democratic engagement. Additionally, Dr. Frank Wood and Dr. Kideste Yusef have secured more than \$17,500.00 in external funding to support civic engagement activities or events. Dr. Frank Wood has established sustainable partnerships with several civic engagement organizations, to include, but is not limited to the Daytona Beach Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Black Voters Matter (BVM), Equal Ground Florida, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCPCP), Black Youth Vote (BYV), and the Campus Vote Project (CVP). As a result of these partnerships, this has enabled the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition, under the leadership of Dr. Frank Wood, to organize and execute several civic engagement events and activities, particularly those previously mentioned.

Goals/Strategy

"I leave you finally a responsibility to our young people [...] We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may divert their power towards good ends." - Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, Last Will and Testament

The B-CU Political Engagement Coalition has identified two goals for its civic engagement efforts. For each goal, the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition identified several strategies.

- **Strengthen** the University's civic engagement efforts in the areas of voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout.
 - Strategy 1: B-CU Democracy Fellows
 - B-CU Democracy Fellows will organize and host voter education forums and panels with student leaders across campus.
 - B-CU Democracy Fellows will partner with Residence Life and Student Life to disseminate information and resources about voting and voter registration, post regular communication materials stressing the importance and value of voting for HBCU students on social media platforms, and mobilizing students to the polls with incentives.
 - B-CU Democracy Fellows will also organize and host several student-led panels around the importance of voter turnout and, in partnership with the Volusia County Supervisor of Elections Office, conduct voter registration drives at campus-based events, in the student cafeteria, on the Quad, and in classrooms; wherever students congregate, B-CU Democracy Fellows will ask each of them about their voter registration status and register those who need to vote.
 - B-CU Democracy Fellows will organize several voter registration student organization rushes, where each student organization, to include Greek Life, will be charged with asking every member about their voter registration status and register those who are not.
 - B-CU Democracy Fellows will partner with several communitybased civic engagement organizations, student organizations, and the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition to organize and host campus-wide events and activities, including, but are not limited to, National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day. In the past, these collaborations have resulted in a March to the Polls as well as a three-day civic engagement activation that featured a voting simulation, where students were immersed in an engaging first-hand experience that educated them on identifying who and what they are voting for, locating a polling location, and successfully completing their ballot.
 - Strategy 2: Integrated Voter Registration in Admissions Application
 - Bethune-Cookman University's Office of Admissions will be

integrating voter registration into the Admissions process for the upcoming academic school year. Specifically, the Admissions Office will include a question on the admissions application that asks students about their voter registration status.

- Strategy 3: Increased Attention and Participation in Civic Holidays
 - Student led- collaborations with community partners for National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day
- Strategy 4: Integrated Voter Registration in Admitted Students' Day and New Student Orientation
 - B-CU Democracy Fellows will partner with the Admissions Office, to include the Volusia County Supervisor of Elections Office, to organize voter registration at Admitted Students' Day and New Student Orientation.
- Enhance the civic knowledge, competencies, and skills of students and the wider campus community
 - Strategy 1: Wildcat Student Voter Guide
 - In collaboration with the B-CU Democracy Fellows and various community partners (i.e., Daytona Beach National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Black Voters Matter, Equal Ground Florida, Black Youth Vote, Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, Campus Vote Project, ALL IN Civic Nation, and the Florida Coalition for Black Civic Participation), the B-CU Political Engagement Team will develop a student voter guide that provides students, faculty, and staff with accurate information on voting in Volusia County, specifically, and the state of Florida, broadly.
 - Strategy 2: Institutionalizing Civic Education in General Education Curricula and Co-Curricular Activities
 - The B-CU Political Engagement Coalition will collaborate with faculty, department chairs, and deans to integrate civic education and civic engagement learning activities into general education curricula.
 - The B-CU Political Engagement Coalition will collaborate with the Center for Collaborative Experiential Learning (CEL) and Student Life to integrate civic education and civic engagement learning activities into co-curricular activities and/or programs.

Reporting

This Campus Action Plan will be shared with members of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition, community partners, student organizations, and University administration. Members of the B-CU Political Engagement Coalition with direct access to student organizations will share the Campus Action Plan with student organizations and leaders in student government (SGA). Given the intent to share the plan with university administration, this means that the Campus Action Plan will be shared with department chairs and academic deans to discuss during their respective departmental and/or college meetings. Furthermore, the Campus Action Plan will be shared with community partners. It is our hope to participate in and complete the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) during this Action plan cycle (2025 academic year). Toward transparency and accountability, the authors hope to also share the results of the NSLVE report on the university's website, along with the Action Plan. The results of the NSLVE will also influence our goals and strategy on the next Action Plan.

Evaluation

For this Campus Action Plan, success will be evidenced by increased student voter registration, voter participation, and increased student attendance and participation in campus civic engagement events. The establishment of university-community partners will also be a measure of success. The B-CU Democracy Fellows can also assist in this process by interviewing students and/or utilizing a survey to assess student engagement and awareness. Lastly, the committee hopes to begin the institutionalization of civic engagement across multiple university units. This should include a streamlined process to advance civic engagement from university recruitment and acceptance through graduation. For example, voter registration forms can be included with Admission documents via a QR code, voter education can be included as part of Freshmen Seminar, and student organizations can be required to participate in at least one campus civic engagement event. Efforts should also be made to evaluate these objectives both externally and internally. The evaluation should be conducted by members of the Political Engagement Coalition and outside faculty who are not a part of the Coalition.