



Cleveland State Community College Civic Engagement Action Plan

2020 – 2021

Prepared by the Civic Engagement Group

Cleveland State Community College

Cleveland, TN



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Executive Summary

Cleveland State Community College aims to be an active part of our community and to instill lifelong civic engagement habits in our students. As a campus we take seriously our responsibilities to our students and to our community. This commitment can be found in the multiple mentions of strong communities, service and service learning, and lifelong learning in the [CSCC Mission Statement](#) and the [2015-2020 Community First Plan](#).

A Civic Engagement Group has been created to help plan civic engagement activities for the 2020-2021 Academic Year, with specific emphasis on voter registration education, and turn out for the 2020 Presidential election. At this time activities will be planned for our Cleveland and Athens campuses, with digital aspects aimed to include all CSCC community members regardless of campus location and time spent on campus.



CSCC Campus Civic Engagement Group

Our Civic Engagement Group and Civic Engagement Action Plan will take into account the fluid nature of the situation we find ourselves in due to Covid-19, the value of Freedom of Speech balanced against fostering inclusivity, and a desire to include as many diverse and distinct populations on campus as possible (including but not limited to, students, faculty, staff, club and organizations, and academic departments).

To date the Civic Engagement Group consists of members from multiple departments.

- Library: Tamara Greer
- Athens Campus and Humanities Department/Faculty: Robert Ellis
- Service-Learning Department: Sherry Holloway and April Sakowski
- Advising Center: Michele Wollert
- Student and Honors College: Quentin Kaus
- Athletics: Lee Cigliano and Evelyn Thompson

The Civic Engagement Group continues to be an open group, eliciting and allowing any current student, faculty or staff member to join who wants to participate in the process. The group is continuing to actively recruit members from additional departments from within CSCC to increase diversity and inclusivity. We hope to enlist the help of people from other academic departments (science, nursing, etc.) as well as campus organizations (Student Government Association, Phi Theta Kappa, etc.).

Currently the Civic Engagement Group meets digitally twice a month. The group will likely continue to meet digitally due to the geographically diverse nature of the group. Meeting frequency will likely increase during the Fall Semester in particular. Group members also communicate via email and through the use of shared Google Documents.

The group also hopes to include or enlist the help of community members. These members will hopefully include election commission officials and local and/or local/state politicians.



CSCC Civic Engagement Goals

In the last Presidential election CSCC had a 60.5% voter registration rate, 67.9% voting rating of registered students, and 41.1% voting rate (voting of registered and non-registered voters). The registration rate was down from the last Presidential election, but both sets of voting rates were up from the previous presidential election. The opposite is true for the mid-term elections with voter registration up (63.3%) and voting rates down (registered 52.2% and all 33.2%). In the past there has also been a trend of lower voting in the younger age groups, and more early voting than on the day voting.

Additionally, for this election, there will be several external pressures that will likely be intimidating for first time voters. These challenges primarily stem from the ongoing and uncertain Covid-19 Pandemic. These issues could include health concerns when voting in person. The rules for voting by mail and how to actually go about that. Long waits at polling places or a scarcity of polling places requiring others to travel farther. There is also the possibility that voting rules and laws could be changing until fairly close to the election.

The Civic Engagement Group has created several goals to help combat these challenges, and that demonstration the campus wide mission and help CSCC meet its goals.

Short Term Goals

Fall 2020 Semester

These goals will be geared toward helping our students through all aspects of the November Presidential election.

Goal 1 – Ensure that 69% of students are registered to vote. This represents a 5% increase from the last Presidential election.

Goal 2 – Increase the voting rate of registered student voters to 72%, and the overall voting rate to 46%. Again, this represents a 5% increase form the last presidential election.

Goal 3 – In addition to our voter registration day event, conceive and implement two programs, activities, or class projects that address voter education prior to the November election.

Long Term Goals

Spring 2021 and Beyond

These goals will be geared toward creating and maintain civic awareness between major elections.

Goal 1 – Continue to improve on the Voter Registration Drives on campus. This should include increases in number of students registered as well as increases in number of volunteers.

Goal 2 – Integration of a Civic Engagement (importance of voting, voting issues, voter education) servicing learning project into First Year Seminar (or similar class).



Strategy (Or Activities and Events)

To reach these goals the CSCC Civic Engagement Group will plan and implement a wide range of actions.

Confirmed Primary Actions

- The CSCC Library will create a Subject Guide, accessible via the library web page. The Subject Guide will include relevant voting information. This will include (but not be limited to):
 - Polling Locations for all counties in the CSCC community
 - Official state and county election commission web pages
 - Webpages of helping voting groups
 - Pictures from past voting drives
 - Voter FAQs
 - Testimonials from CSCC students
- There will be Voter Registration Drives at both primary campuses on Voter Registration Day. These drives will include multiple tables at the busiest locations on campus, a social media presence pre- and during the event, groups of students to walk around campus and interact with students who may not see or be close to a table.
- Work with our communications department to create an overarching look to our voter efforts. This is to include social media pictures, flyers, posters, etc.
- Creation of a service learning, debate project. The Civic Engagement Group is collecting the issues that matter to our CSCC students. From this we will determine the top five issues. Students will then as groups (class groups or groups from student organizations) be assigned one issue to research and present. These presentations will occur during an event where all groups come together and present to each other. Or the presentations will be filmed and made available in a centralized location for all to view.

Unconfirmed Primary Actions

- Message from the President that can be disseminated through multiple channels.
- The invitation of election commission officials (either county or state) to come onto campus to talk about voting and/or to provide sample ballots.
- The invitation of local or local/state politicians to come on campus to talk to students about the importance of voting. This could also be completed in a pre-recorded video format.
- Debate watching party (or parties) with possible debated beforehand, or discussions to follow.

Unconfirmed Secondary Actions

- Arranging transportation to polls from campus during the early election window.



- Work with faculty and FYS coordinator to create an ongoing Civic Engagement assignment to be included in all FYS classes to continue in all semesters going forward, not just during election years.
- Discuss and investigate the possibility of having a polling location on campus.



Covid-19 Adaptations Strategy

With the fluid aspect of the Covid-19 situation it is only prudent to create back-up plans for our planned Civic Engagement actions and activities. Whether or not campus will need to close down during the Fall 2020 semester is unclear, but the Covid-19 virus itself will still be present meaning basic precautions will need to be taken.

Confirmed Primary Activities

- Since the Course Guide will exist in a digital environment there will be no changes needed due to Covid-19.
- Due to Covid-19 extra precautions will need to take place for the Voter Registration Day. These precautions will have to cover issues like social distancing, keeping items that need to be shared (like iPads, pens, and clipboards) safe for all users. This could mean mask requirements, pens for each participant, and special electronic disinfectants. The group will stay updated with the current recommendations for such aspects. There is also the possibility of having our registration tables be outside weather permitting.

If the campus is closed, then email and social media will be used to direct people to where voter registration can be done online. We will also explore the possibility of having students or other civic engagement volunteers speak in digital classes about the importance of voting and how to register digitally.

- Communications will already be working on some things that will be posted digitally. If conditions require more digital interaction, then the focus on digital materials will increase.
- The service-learning project can already be done in a digital environment. If campus needs to be closed, then the event associated with the projects can transition to a town hall style digital event, via a platform like Zoom.

Unconfirmed Primary Activities

- The message from the President would already be scheduled for delivery through YouTube so no change would need to be made.
- All other unconfirmed activities can be changed to something like an online town hall via Zoom or some other meeting software. Additional information can be added to the Subject Guide as well to cover information that is, or was, intended to be covered in person. These town halls/meetings could be pre-recorded and placed on a YouTube channel or the Subject Guide for anyone to view at their leisure.



Evaluation and Reporting

This plan will serve as a guidepost for the Civic Engagement Group for the 2020-2021 Academic Year. It is understood that changes or adjustments may need to be made based on any number of factors. The group will keep in contact via twice monthly meetings, email, and shared Google documents.

When the CSCC Civic Engagement Action Plan is completed, the plan will be shared with all group members, as well as with select administration officials. The group will then decide when and how to share the plan with the rest of campus.

Throughout the duration of the plan and for any events, the group will collect data that will help with the planning and implementation of further events. This could include participation information (number of participants and volunteers, etc.) and post-participation survey.

It may also be possible to conduct surveys before, or between events to find out what issues and activities our community feel like are important, and what the group could do to encourage civic engagement in our community.

In the future we will use new NSLVE data to help determine the plans effectiveness.