



**SUBMITTED FALL 2019**

# **ENGAGE THE VOTE**

**A CAMPUS VOTING ACTION PLAN, 2020**

**COLLEGE OF THE CANYONS**





*Good citizens do things: they speak out, they vote, they volunteer, they organize. But to do those things well, citizens need to know things. Civic action requires civic knowledge.*

Russell Muirhead  
*Resuscitating Civic Education (2012)*  
Hoover Institute, Stanford University

## **Introduction**

Increasing rates of civic illiteracy and disinterest in civic engagement plague our nation's colleges. However, research shows that the earlier individuals embrace civic knowledge, as well as experience community service firsthand, the more likely they will become civically aware and engaged in voting and volunteerism throughout their lifetimes (Hollander and Burack, 2008). *Engage the Vote: A Campus Voting Action Plan, Fall 2018-Fall 2019* provided a first-time effort of College of the Canyons (COC) to create a long-term, sustainable campus wide plan to increase voter engagement. This document provides an updated and revised action plan for 2020.

The objective of this plan is to engage the entire campus community in greater civic awareness, especially regarding voter education, registration, and participation. Civic engagement is a concept which describes those philosophies and activities which bridge thought with action and provide meaningful service to communities. As Thomas Ehrlich (2000), former Carnegie Foundation Senior Scholar suggests, civic engagement means:

*“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:vi).

The decline in voter engagement has been well documented over the past three decades and is evidenced by plummeting rates of civic proficiency and increasing lack of participation in voluntary associations, electoral politics, religious congregations, and community-based organizations (Carnegie and CIRCLE, 2003 and National Taskforce on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012:6). The civic health of America has reached “anemic” levels; and,

when controlling for issues of race, ethnicity, and class, these rates are significantly worse than the rest of the population (Campus Compact, 2010).

### **America's Call to Action**

In response to this escalating problem of “civic unawareness,” the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), published *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future (2012)*. This work was written as a response, in part, to the increasing disengagement of our nation's citizenry from American Democracy. *A Crucible Moment (2012)* reflects its title, as it encourages transformative change within postsecondary education by emphasizing the need for civic learning and engagement. It has become the manifesto of a movement dedicated to increasing civic knowledge and community participation among our nation's college students. To make democracy and civic responsibility “central, not peripheral” within our colleges and universities is the desired outcome proposed by those scholars and organizations working in the field (Scobey, 2012). It is no longer the sole responsibility of disciplines like political science and history to serve as the primary conduits of civic knowledge and civic engagement. It is now the responsibility of *all* disciplines to transmit civic and political awareness (Smith, et al., 2010).

A “civic engagement movement” designed to redefine, revise, and recapture the interest of America's citizenry, especially among its young, is gaining momentum throughout the country (Saltmarsh and Hartley, 2011). This is especially true of the nation's community colleges, including College of the Canyons. Following the lead of The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (2012:15), by emphasizing the concepts of civic ethos, civic literacy, civic inquiry, and civic action, COC is working to excel as a “civic-minded” campus. We recognize that it is time for our nation's young people to understand their place in the “collective whole,” as well as to “serve a larger purpose” (Boyer, 1996:22).

*A Crucible Moment (2012)* is considered a seminal work in education which examines the need for America to “reclaim” its civic mission and to make civic learning at the postsecondary level expected, not voluntary. Its authors argue that such learning should be infused across the curriculum, as well as incorporated across the campus environment. By creating a campus “culture” of civic engagement, which supports the proliferation of civic literacy, inquiry, action, and a civic ethos, it will transcend institutional boundaries to include all venues of college life. This work has guided the vision of College of the Canyons' Civic and Community Engagement Initiative. At no other time in American history has it been as crucial for students--no matter their academic goals--to secure civic knowledge and skills in order to protect American Democracy. *A Call to Action: A Campus Voting Action Plan, 2020* recognizes the role COC will play in shaping an engaged civic mindset of a new generation.

## **College of the Canyons**

College of the Canyons (COC), founded in 1969, is a California Community College and Hispanic Servicing Institution located in Santa Clarita, California, north Los Angeles County. COC is one of 115 community colleges operating throughout the state of California. The College served 32,000 students between 2016 and 2017 and offers 80 certificate and 89 AA/AS Degree programs in a variety of vocational, technical, and academic disciplines. The College's programs articulate with programs at the University of California, California State University, and several private institutions. The student population has grown over 128% in the past 10 years; and, since 2000, COC has witnessed striking increases in diversity with the non-white population nearly tripling to over 63 percent representing a racial or ethnic minority group of traditionally under-represented minorities. COC, as previously mentioned, is a "Hispanic serving institution, with 47 percent of its students identified as Hispanic, many of whom are considered first-generation (COC Fact Book, 2017-18:23.) White students total 34 percent, 5 percent are African American, 10 percent Asian, with the balance including people of multiple or unknown race/ethnicity. The student body is 44 percent female and 55 percent male (COC Annual Report, 2016-2017:3). The great success of the College is a result of the vision of Chancellor Dianne Van Hook, who has served College of the Canyons for over 30 years. Dr. Van Hook is the longest serving Chancellor in the history of the California Community College System, and her commitment to civic engagement is great, as is evidenced by the College's support of its Civic and Community Engagement Initiative. The development of this initiative, along with the establishment of a Center for Civic Engagement provides the foundation of a voter engagement action plan.

## **COC's Civic and Community Engagement Initiative**

Applying the concept of civic engagement defined by Ehrlich (2000), especially with regard to community engagement, the need to increase electoral knowledge and participation among the campus community reinforces the goals of COC's Center for Civic Engagement's Civic and its Civic and Community Engagement Initiative (2016), which was influenced by *A Crucible Moment* (2012). Considered a seminal work in education, *A Crucible Moment* (2012) examines the need for America to "reclaim" its civic mission and to make civic learning at the postsecondary level expected, not voluntary. Its authors argue that such learning should be infused across the curriculum, as well as incorporated across the campus environment. By creating a campus "culture" of civic engagement, which supports the proliferation of civic literacy, inquiry, action, and a civic ethos, it will transcend institutional boundaries to include all venues of college life. This work has guided the vision of the College's Civic and Community Engagement Initiative.

COC's Civic and Community Engagement Initiative originated from a 2013-2014 AAC&U *Bringing Theory to Practice Grant*. As a result of this award, a day-long workshop was conducted to examine the concept of civic engagement at the College, as well as to discuss how to create a civic engagement action plan. A campus Civic Engagement Gap Analysis was performed, as well as a Civic Engagement S.W.O.T. Analysis. Participants included students, faculty, staff, and

administrators. The overall results rendered valuable information, which was shared with Dr. Van Hook. As a result, she determined it was important for the College to pursue the idea of establishing a Center for Civic Engagement. A campus team visited De Anza College in Northern California during spring 2015 to review its work, since the institution has an accomplished history of addressing civic and community engagement. By August, the position of Faculty Director, Civic and Community Engagement Initiatives was created, as well as space secured for a Center for Civic Engagement. A strategic plan, entitled, *A Call to Action: An Initiative for Civic Engagement, Self, and Society* (Robinson, 2015), was written and a Civic Engagement Steering Committee formed.

The initiative seeks to create a civic-minded campus culture among students, faculty, and staff while emphasizing their place in a global context. “If civic engagement is to gain real traction in today’s higher education,” suggests Barbara Jacoby, “it must be clearly defined, and civic learning outcomes must be established.” In other words, “Opportunities to learn about and practice civic engagement must be embedded throughout the curriculum and co-curriculum” (Jacoby, 2009:2). COC is doing just that. As stated in *A Crucible Moment (2012:15)*, a civic-minded campus will incorporate the following areas:

### **Civic Ethos Governing Campus Life**

The infusion of democratic values into the customs and habits of everyday practices, structures, and interactions; the defining character of the institution and those in it that emphasizes open-mindedness, civility, the worth of each person, ethical behaviors, and concern for the well-being of others; a spirit of public-mindedness that influences the goals of the institution and its engagement with local and global communities.

### **Civic Literacy as a Goal for Every Student**

The cultivation of foundational knowledge about fundamental principles and debates about democracy expressed over time, both within the United States and in other countries; familiarity with several key historical struggles, campaigns, and social movements undertaken to achieve the full promise of democracy; the ability to think critically about complex issues and to seek and evaluate information about issues that have public consequences.

### **Civic Inquiry Integrated Within the Majors and General Education**

The practice of inquiring about the civic dimensions and public consequences of a subject of study; the exploration of the impact of choices on different constituencies and entities, including the planet; the deliberate consideration of differing points of views; the ability to describe and analyze civic intellectual debates within one’s major or areas of study.

## **Civic Action as Lifelong Practice**

The capacity and commitment both to participate constructively with diverse others and to work collectively to address common problems; the practice of working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people's lives and the sustainability of the planet; the ability to analyze systems in order to plan and engage in public action; the moral and political courage to take risks to achieve a greater public good.

Guided by these four areas, the Civic Engagement Steering Committee is moving the discussion of civic and community engagement at College of the Canyons from margin to center. The Civic Engagement Initiative is working to breakdown campus silos and to offer a foundational framework for the entire campus to follow. Its basic principles include:

### **Mission Statement**

Democratic engagement fosters knowledge, responsibility, civility, and respect by encouraging greater awareness of the social, cultural, and political concerns affecting the public good. Through campus and community partnerships, social issues are addressed from a local, national, and global perspective while creating a citizenry of change agents. Civic transformation is achieved through critical thinking, reflection, and participation in “deep learning” experiences made available through curricular, co-curricular, and professional development opportunities.

### **Vision Statement**

Democratic engagement bridges theory with practice (e.g., praxis) to create a “civic-minded” culture which fosters representative thought and action to enhance the public good. Through collaboration, service, and reciprocity, students, faculty, staff, and community serve as civic leaders and help to inform others of social issues. Through civic awareness, a concerned citizenry can confront problems facing person, thing, and environment and create social change.

### **Philosophy Statement**

Democratic engagement exercises a philosophy of social action and personal responsibility through individual reflection to increase awareness and confront community, state, national, and global social problems to ensure greater well-being of the public good.

### **Core Values**

**Equity:** working to provide fair access and opportunity to all members of society by employing ways to eliminate the “civic opportunity gap.”

**Activism:** speaking on behalf of a person, place or thing for the purpose of bringing attention to a social issue affecting the larger collective whole and suggesting social change.

**Sustainability:** increasing awareness of environmental concerns and encouraging personal action in helping to protect the environment and the world's natural resources.

**Dignity:** understanding various cultural, social, political, and religious perspectives within the larger global context and respecting differences.

**Engagement:** creating opportunities to work with community members and organizations to achieve positive social change.

**Leadership:** guiding and inspiring others to contribute to the public good.

**Collaboration:** cultivating internal and external partnerships to address civic concerns through collaboration and shared responsibility.

**Integrity:** setting high standards and addressing issues with strong ethics while displaying consistency, honesty, and transparency of thought and action.

## **Voter Engagement and the Public Good**

With COC's recent work with voter engagement, greater awareness of how to get students involved in participatory democracy has become a priority for the Center for Civic Engagement. American Democracy is in crisis as many, especially the young, express less interest in the fundamental foundations of democracy, as well as the traditional values that have driven American society. Democracy is at a tipping point. However, by revisiting the original mission of "Democracy's Colleges" (President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947), higher education, especially among community colleges, can foster a "civic mind-set" which will reclaim the voice of democracy for new generation which is displaying interest for social change for the public good. As the traditional and historical underpinnings of American Democracy are examined, questioned, and challenged with regard to representing all groups, hearing all voices, and confronting all inequities. This is especially important in academia, since a "civic empowerment gap" exists throughout our nation's college and universities and is large as English and math gaps (Levinson, 2010). Most striking, however, is that this gap is most pronounced among underserved communities, including those affected by class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and first-generation status. In other words, participatory democracy is least likely used by those whose needs are most unheard; and, as a result, most ignored. Encouraging community colleges to get involved through voter awareness, education, and engagement is one way to have their voices heard through the political process.

Public good suggests that democracy is a commodity which is non-excludable and non-rivalrous to all within public higher education. Although correct, barriers of race, class, ethnicity, sex, and gender, among other characteristics, greatly impede many from fully utilizing participatory

democracy for personal and community well-being (See Kezar, et al., 2005). This is especially true for California's community college students, most of whom experience the "civic empowerment gap" based on marginalized status (Levinson, 2010). Considering that 2.1 million students are enrolled in California's 115 community colleges, these individuals are most in need of having their voices heard (CCCCO, 2019). Civic work is siloed throughout the curricular and co-curricular fabric of the campus community. As a result, whether a student fully recognizes the importance of participatory democracy is left to random choice, rather than to integrative, intentional planning. As statewide initiatives shape the public good of education, it is timely that the civic engagement movement becomes part of the overarching discussion of Guided Pathway, equity, and workforce readiness. It is time to re-examine the primary meaning of a college education rooted in economics to one centered in civic meaning, purpose, and responsibility. This means instilling a sense of civic professionalism (Peters, 2010) among faculty who are able to encourage students to identify their values, voice their opinions, and listen to the ideas of others. Voter engagement is one way of accomplishing this goal.

### **Creating a Voter Engagement Action Plan**

The overall mission of the College's Civic and Community Engagement Initiative fits perfectly with the need to create and implement a voter engagement action plan. Although College of the Canyons is supportive of voter awareness and participation among its student body, the campus has neither created nor facilitated an organized voter engagement action plan in its history until last year. In other words, a formal plan has never been institutionalized for the College nor plans evaluated on a regular basis. Although students are provided a "register to vote" link when enrolling in classes, as well as encouraged to stop by voter registration tables, this is the second year of a full-scale effort to create a year-round focus on *Engage the Vote*. In addition, the campus has primarily focused on voter registration only, while charging the Office of Student Engagement with this task. Associated Student Government (ASG), for example, has also supported debates between local Board of Trustee candidates. Although student voter registration is extremely important, this is only one part of voter engagement. When placing voter registration under the larger umbrella of civic engagement, it is also imperative for the College to address voter awareness, education, and participation.

Working with *Engage the Vote* through Campus Compact's Democracy Commitment Initiative for Community Colleges, along with Tufts University's National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) Initiative, Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV), Civic Nation, #VoteTogether, and All-In Campus Democracy Challenge, COC did much during fall 2028 to create a "civic mind-set" focused on political engagement. In fact, when realizing that of 12,944 of COC's eligible voters, only 1,636 actually voted; or, stated differently, only 12.6 percent of students cast a ballot during the 2014 midterm election—much work has been accomplished but much remains needed. Interestingly, 6,935 students at COC registered for the first time in 2014 while 53.6 percent voted. However, of those who voted, only 23.6 percent were between the ages



of 18-24, the age group whose voice is most lacking at the polls. NSLVE data clearly show that COC's current action plan must continue to attend to voter education and participation year-round, not solely during voter registration cycles (NSLVE, 2018).

### ***Engage the Vote 2018—It Worked!***

The Center for Civic Engagement became actively involved with *Engage the Vote* through a grant received by Campus Compact in August of 2018. As a result, the campus worked to increase voter awareness, education, and participation throughout the 2018 midterm elections. This included working with Young Invincibles, #VoteTogether, Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV), Civic Nation, All-In Challenge, Band of Voters, and the League of Women Voters of the Santa Clarita Valley, Office of the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, and Tufts University, as part of the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE).

During the fall elections, COC held a bronze seal in comparison with 844 colleges and universities nationwide that were involved in Civic Nation's All-In Campus Democracy Challenge (see All-In Challenge Homepage). Through the efforts of many campus members, the College pledged to increase student voter registration for the 2018 midterm election by 10 percent (e.g., 691 students) and voter participation by 10 percent (e.g. 164 students). In addition, voter engagement goals were set for the next two years. Lastly, Band of Voters, working with Young Invincibles, worked to author California Assembly Bill 963 (AB 963), *Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act—California Public Universities*. The bill was introduced by Assembly member Cottie Petrie-Norris, 74<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, on April 26, 2019, to the California State Assembly Higher Education Subcommittee. College of the Canyons provided testimony in support of the bill. The Center also worked with the Office of the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk to make COC a Mega-Vote Center for the upcoming 2020 elections.

Evaluating whether the campus-wide effort to increase voter education, awareness, and participation made a difference by 2018, COC can emphatically answer yes. As a result of the dedicated work of the campus community, College of the Canyons received multiple awards at the November 12, 2019 All-In Awards Ceremony in Washington, D.C. These honors included Overall Most Improved Voting Rate at a Community College and Most Improved Voting Rate Large Community College. In addition, COC's voter participation seal was elevated from the status of Bronze to Gold, recognizing campuses with voter participation rates between 40 to 49 percent. In fact, the College's rate increased from 12.6 percent (2014 midterm elections) to 43.4 percent (2018 midterm elections), resulting in a 30.7 percent improvement. In addition, the campus served as a vote center for the Santa Clarita Valley, as the Office of the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk held its first-ever Mock Election throughout the county to inform the public of new voting processes for 2020. Lastly, Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 963 into law on October 9, 2019, signifying significant support to increase voter participation among

California's 3.1 million students enrolled at 147 public universities and colleges (Feminist Newswire, 2019). The campus' *Engage the Vote Voter Action Plan* was also recognized.

### **Continue the *Engage the Vote* Work**

COC has elevated its seal from bronze to gold, meeting its proposed increase in voter registration rates during the 2018 midterm elections; however, voter engagement goals over the year remain focused and include:

- 1) Provide greater student outreach, participation, and mobilization of voter registration. In addition, think in terms of how to reach families, especially those of first-generation students. Many parents of our students are not registered; and to assist with this process, provide voter information in English and Spanish. This also includes disseminating information regarding the Census, especially dispelling myths regarding immigrant or undocumented populations.
- 2) Work with existing partnerships established during the 2018 midterm elections, including Campus Compact, Civic Nation, All-In Challenge, NSLVE, as well as with those partners who have helped Get Out the Vote (e.g., NextGen America, Young Invincibles, #VoteTogether, Voices for Change, SLSV Coalition, Band of Voters, etc.). In addition, continue to build an ongoing partnership with the Office of the Los Angeles County Register-Recorder/County Clerk, as well as foster a new partnership with the Bureau of the Census.
- 3) Organize voter engagement activities throughout the year and provide ways to connect to Community-Based Learning (CBL). The formation of an Engage the Vote Social Action Team will create an ongoing group of students who will address issues of voter registration and participation throughout the year. This team will also address the topic of the Census in its work, since peer to peer education is most effective. Overall, while working in tandem with the Civic Engagement Steering Committee, CBL, Honors, and ASG, as well as with academic departments, the campus will keep the subject of voter engagement highly visible.
- 4) Connect issues of voting to the various events, presentations, and workshops organized by the Center for Civic Engagement, Civic Engagement Steering Committee, and Community-Based Learning program. When topics of homelessness, food insecurity, sexual assault, gun violence, mass incarceration, mental health, etc., are discussed, include an aspect of how important it is for students to have their voices heard by getting involved in their communities, as well as by taking part in voter engagement through participatory democracy. And given 2020 is a Census year, discussion will also include the importance of being counted.

As the Center for Civic Engagement revises its current COC Campus Voting Action Plan, which will include voter engagement and Census participation as the ongoing foci of its overall efforts, it will work closely with Academic Affairs, Office of Student Engagement, and the Associated

Student Government to promote voter education throughout the academic year, not several weeks out before an election. This is especially important as the 2020 election is close at hand with Millennials and Gen Z representing 37 percent of the nation’s electorate, falling behind Boomers (Cilluffo and Fry, 2019). And given that the California Primary has moved from June to March, it is extremely important to mobilize young voters.

## **Leadership and Civic Engagement**

Civic engagement and its related topics, including the College’s new campus voting action plan is a result of the work of the Center for Civic Engagement and its faculty director. The faculty director also oversees the Community-Based Learning program and works hand-in-hand with COC’s Civic Engagement Steering Committee, which represents a diverse group of campus stakeholders. Members include students, faculty, staff, and administrators from the following areas:

➤ **Academic Affairs**

- Dean, Integrative Learning

➤ **Academic Departments**

- Anthropology
- Business
- Chemistry
- Communication Students
- English
- English as a Second Language
- Graphic Media Arts
- History
- Psychology
- Sociology

➤ **Other Departments/Programs**

- Academy of the Canyons
- Office of Student Engagement
- Associated Student Government
- Community Partners
- CBL Community Partners
- COC Chapter of the National Society of Leadership and Success

The creation, facilitation, and implementation of a campus wide Civic and Community Engagement Initiative over the past four years has provided COC with the opportunity to experience its own “crucible moment.” Currently, faculty members infuse issues of political awareness throughout their classes while the campus offers many courses that examine social, cultural and political diversity. Some of the work accomplished by the Center for Civic Engagement is listed below.

## Select History of Civic Engagement Work at College of the Canyons from Fall 2015 to the Present

- Joined The Democracy Commitment.
- Agreed upon use of Thomas Ehrlich's (2000) definition of civic engagement.
- Established Civic Engagement Steering Committee.
- Attended 5<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary Celebration of The Democracy Commitment.
- Formed regional, state, and national partnerships and networks.
- Developed COC civic engagement strategic plan (e.g., *A Call to Action: An Initiative for Civic Engagement, Self, and Society*).
- Awarded three AAC&U *Bringing Theory to Practice Grants*.
- Re-branded Service-Learning program to Community-Based Learning.
- Organized deliberative dialogue trainings and dialogues based on support from The Democracy Commitment and Kettering Foundation.
- Presented at state and national conferences, including AAC&U Annual Conference, California Community College League of California, and Association of California Community College Administrators.
- Joined Imagining America—Southern California Cluster.
- Organized the statewide *California Community Colleges Civic Engagement Summit*, as well as *California Community Colleges Civic and Community Engagement Student Summit*.
- Supported three COC Foundation annual student scholarships related to civic engagement.
- Created Civic and Community Engagement 15-unit Certificate along with the new courses of Introduction to Civic and Community Engagement and Introduction to Community-Based Learning.
- Awarded a Zonta Grant.
- Hosted 2016 Candidate “Meet and Greet” of Assembly and Senate Candidates, as well as COC Board of Trustees Candidate “Meet and Greet.”
- Received Foundation for California Community College *Civic Impact Grant*.
- Awarded seven *COC Foundation Mini-Grants* and four *COC Associated Student Government Grants*.
- Nominated four COC students who served as Civic Impact Scholars with the Foundation for California Community Colleges *Civic Impact Project*.
- Formed the League of Women Voters of the Santa Clarita Valley (LWVSCV), which includes several members of the CE Steering Committee.
- Organized 2016 Presidential “Debate Watch.”
- Established “*Making the Invisible Visible: Telling Their Stories*” theme to guide Civic Engagement.

- Collaborated with classified staff to create opportunities for professional development opportunities related to civic and community engagement.
- Constructed and administered COC's own *Civic Engagement and Mutual Respect Survey (2016)*. In addition, Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) data have been collected.
- Commitment by Chancellor Dianne Van Hook to dedicated space (e.g., 1500 sq. fee) for a permanent Center for Civic Engagement.
- Connection to California Community College System groups like the California Community College Success Network (3CSN) and statewide initiatives like Guided Pathways, "Doing What Matters," Student Equity, and "Vision for Success."
- Presented at LINKS 2018 Conference for 3CSN (California Community Colleges' Success Network), which has proposed a statewide 3CSN Community of Practice for Community-Based Learning.
- Participated on the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) 2018 Annual Conference planning team, including faculty director and student intern.
- Organized presentation by League of Women Voters of the United States National President, Chris Carson, in collaboration with the LWVSCV.
- Planned multiple events with the LWVSCV, including "Cookie and Conversation—Understanding the Propositions" and "Sips and Civility"—A Community Dialogue on the "America We Want to Be."
- Administered Civic Engagement/Mutual Respect Surveys: Fall 2016. Results published in Civic Engagement/Mutual Respect Report #313.
- Joined California Campus Compact.
- Awarded AAC&U *Civic Learning in the Major by Design Grant*.
- Awarded funding to assist with voter registration and election awareness, including support from Campus Compact and The Democracy Commitment Initiative, #VoteTogether, and Young Invincibles.
- Joined Tufts University's *National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)* initiative.
- Joined All-IN Campus Democracy Challenge.
- Invited to participate in Campus Compact National Community College Planning Team convening.
- Participated in third-year discussion of the Kettering Foundation and The Democracy Commitment community college deliberative dialogue project.

### ***Most Recently...***

#### ***Association of American Colleges (AAC&U) Department by Design***

COC was recently awarded an AAC&U *Department by Design Grant*, which focused on the departments of Anthropology, Communication Studies, Culinary Arts, and Sociology to embed

civic engagement throughout their departments. In addition, departments also related their work to the 17 Sustainable Goals of the United Nations. Based on this work, “*Designing Community Colleges for Democracy*” is scheduled for publication in AAC&U’s Winter 2021 edition of *Diversity and Democracy*. Currently, COC is waiting to hear if an interdisciplinary team will participate in the January 2020 AAC&U *Department by Design Workshop* at California State University, Los Angeles.

### ***Deliberative Dialogues and the Kettering Foundation***

COC has received both funding and training from Kettering to foster dialogues on campus, including the discussion of whether to arm campus safety officers. Early work was part of a national community college grant and the results of COC’s dialogues are discussed by Carrie Kisker, John Theis, and Alberto Olivas in “*Enacting Democracy in ‘Democracy’s Colleges’*” published in Nicholas Longo and Timothy Shaffer (eds), *Creating Space for Democracy: A Primer on Dialogue and Deliberation in Higher Education* (2019), Stylus Publishing.

### ***National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS)***

COC established a chapter of NSLS in January 2019 and is one of only three community colleges in California to maintain this national honor society on its campus. Since January, 143 students have fulfilled the requirements for induction, including participating in an Orientation Session and Leadership Training Day, attending three Speaker Broadcasts, completing three Student Network Team (SNT) Meetings, and submitting three SNT Reflections

### ***The PLACE Collaboratory: A Proposal for Listening and Action by Communities and Educators***

College of the Canyons (COC) has been selected to participate in a nationwide Collaboratory examining an issue directly affecting its campus and community. This project is part of a Mellon Foundation grant entitled: *The PLACE Collaboratory: A Proposal for Listening and Action by Communities and Educators*. David Scobey, Director, Bringing Theory to Practice, is the Principle Investigator of this study. Although COC is part of the Southern California Collaboratory, which includes the University of Southern California, University of La Verne, and Pitzer College, each institution is addressing different community concerns. COC will focus on housing insecurity and affordability while entitling its project: “*Making the Invisible, Visible--Telling Our Stories: Housing Insecurity and Affordability.*” Our goal is to create opportunities for dialogue, storytelling, reflection, and problem solving, as we examine this topic from all perspectives, including student, faculty, staff, and community voices. Through collaboration with campus members and community partners, we can gain a better understanding of how this issue is affecting our personal, campus, and community well-being.

### ***California Community College (CCC)-California State University (CSU) Civic Engagement Coalition***

The Center for Civic Engagement is working to create a CCC-CSU Civic Engagement Coalition to work to create an intersegmental partnership between the two systems of higher education. At this time, little communication or collaboration exists among community colleges, much less between systems with regard to practices concerning Community-Based Learning and Civic Engagement.

### ***Afternoon with the Professors and Friends***

The Center for Civic Engagement continues organize and facilitate the 18-year-old tradition of this well-loved lecture series for the Santa Clarita Valley and its older adult communities of Belcaro and Friendly Valley. What originated with presentations by faculty only has grown to include staff and students.

### ***Haas Center for Public Service, Stanford University***

College of the Canyons has recently partnered with the Haas Center for Public Service to participate in an international working group to advance the understanding of students' interests and pre-dispositions regarding approaches to social change. This specifically involves administering the public service diagnostic tool to determine a student's level of interest in the following six categories: community engaged learning and research, community organizing and activism, direct service, philanthropy, policy and governance, and social entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility. The working group's goal is to focus on implementation, analysis, use, and refinement of the Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement Tool.

### ***Campus Compact and Community Colleges for Democracy (CC4D)***

**Campus Compact is a relationship-driven organization** with its national office located in College of the Canyons is working directly with the national office's work with Community Colleges for Democracy (CC4D). COC's Faculty Director, Civic and Community Engagement Initiatives, serves as a Regional Facilitator, Western Region Cohort, for CC4D's Community of Practice in Service Learning. In addition, "*Democracy's Colleges Revisited: Creating an Inter-Segmental Civic Engagement Pathway between California Community Colleges and the California State Universities*" is slated to appear in an edited volume produced by Campus Compact focused on community colleges and civic engagement scheduled for a May 2021 publication date.

### ***Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP)***

BTtoP works to advance this mission through innovative practice, research, advocacy, and institutional change. It is the premier national organization fostering civic engagement throughout higher education. College of the Canyons has received a total of five grants over the years with its two most recent addressing:

### **Amplifying, Disseminating, and Increasing the Public Reach of Reach and Practice Grant**

- *“Now is the Time to Create a Crucible Moment: Addressing the Civic Empowerment Gap Among California’s Community Colleges.”* Working in partnership with California State University, Los Angeles and the University of La Verne.

### **Multi-Institutional Innovation Grant**

- *“Democracy’s Colleges Revisited: Creating an Inter-Segmental Civic Engagement Pathway between California Community Colleges and the California State Universities.”* Working in partnership with Cerritos College, California State University, Northridge and California State University, Dominguez, Hills.

### ***Engage the Vote***

(See discussion above.)

### ***California Campus Compact Student Engagement Fellowship***

Two COC students were recently selected to participate in the program over the 2019-2020 academic year. Working on projects examining the topic of homelessness, individual projects will reflect fall and spring semesters. Each is receiving a \$500 stipend.

### ***Imagining America (IA)***

COC has been actively involved in the Southern California Regional Cluster of IA for over two years. In addition, three students accompanied the faculty director, civic and community engagement initiatives this year to participate in a panel presentation with students from the University of California, Irvine and University of California Southern California at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary National Gathering in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The session was entitled, *“Reflecting on Undergraduate Learning through Community Engagement.”* IA has traditionally comprised membership from 4-year colleges and universities; however, it is actively supporting participation of 2-year colleges.

### ***Action Research Teams***

These student-driven teams are examining a variety of topics under the larger umbrella of Community-Based Learning, including 1) Biodiversity, 2) *Engage the Vote*, 3) Homelessness, and 4) Sexual Harassment and Assault.

### ***Engaged Scholars (e.g., PLACE Fellows)***

As the Center for Civic Engagement moves forward with its participation in the PLACE grant, it will engage the assistance of eight PLACE Student Fellows who will serve as student leads in



connecting with the COC student body in addressing the topic of housing insecurity and affordability. In addition, five faculty will serve as PLACE Faculty Fellows.

### ***Water Talks***

College of the Canyons has partnered with California State University, San Bernardino and the City of Santa Clarita to engage in a project addressing water use, awareness, and education of five underserved areas of the Santa Clara water region of the Santa Clarita Valley. Faculty leads will supervise a team of students to develop, organize, and facilitate a community engagement event(s) to provide information to residents regarding water education, as well as to collect information regarding water habits and usage.

### ***Honors Program***

Honors students are encouraged to participate in projects associated with Community-Based Learning. In addition, many, especially through the work of Phi Theta Kappa and honors faculty, will engage in work associated with the PLACE grant.

### ***Makerspace 100 Pilot***

Makerspace has served over 3,300 student, faculty, staff, and community members and show a usage of over 12,480 hours since opening in May 2016. This activity has allowed the Makerspace to build awareness and support of the campus and community. Most recently, Makerspace 100 provided internships to over 20 students working on two projects, including the 1) NASA High Altitude Student Payload (HASP) and 2) Santa Clarita Storm Water Storage Program.

### ***Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) on Project-Based Learning (PBL)***

COC was selected to send a six-member team to participate in the 2019 WPI Project-Based Learning Institute. As a result, this team is now spearheading a movement on campus to eliminate the earlier model of Service-Learning with a focus on hours to a PBL model focused on impact. COC will hold a day-long PBL training in January 2020, as well as submit an application to attend the June 2020 WPI PBL Institute.

### ***Curriculum Development***

COC's Faculty Director, Civic and Community Engagement Initiatives is working with faculty and administrators from California State University, Northridge (CSUN), to create a civic and community engagement pathway between COC and CSUN. Focusing on CSUN's Civic Engagement Minor, COC is developing a 15-unit Civic Engagement Certificate which will allow community college students to complete nine of the 18 required units of the CSUN minor before transferring. This also includes the introduction of two new courses: Introduction to Civic Engagement and Introduction to Community-Based Learning.

### ***Conference Presentations***

Various conference presentations have been made over the past year, including those at the RP Group's Student Success Conference, Campus Compact's Western Region of Continuums of Service, Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Annual Meeting, and the California Community College Association of Occupational Educators (CCCAOE). Additional presentations are planned for National Campus Compact and the National Community College Conference on Service Learning and Community Engagement. COC is also participating in the California Community College Success Network (3CSN) and its BASLI Professional Engagement training.

### ***COC Foundation Mini-Grant***

Awarded a mini-grant to host a Spring 2020 Civic Engagement Student Summit. This event will also address voter engagement.

### ***Mellon Foundation Community College Instructor Fellowship***

The faculty director applied for a Mellon Foundation Community College Faculty Fellowship: *Revisiting the Mission of California's Democracy's Colleges: Civic, Community, and Political Equity Reclaimed*. The proposed project, if accepted, will provide a system-wide analysis among the State's community colleges and their participation in civic, community, and voter engagement.

### ***Rebranding COC's Service-Learning Program***

COC is working to "rebrand" Service-Learning to Community-Based Learning. However, as strategies are reviewed on how to revitalize the program among faculty and students, the High Impact Practice of Project-Based Learning now appears to best fit the community college model. As a result of attending the WPI training on PBL, the work of Civic Engagement will now focus on reframing, redesigning, and redefining the earlier model of Service-Learning. (The COC team recognizes the long-term possibilities of this pedagogical emphasis, especially as related to Guided Pathways, equity, success, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. Our plan is to integrate Design Thinking, Action Research, and Asset Based Community Development throughout the program. This change is also being discussed between the *Bringing Theory to Practice* partners.)

- The faculty director has written a White Paper arguing for a paradigm shift within the earlier model of Service-Learning. Working to emphasize impact over hours, the authors hope to provide a concept paper which will emphasize greatly needed large, programmatic changes. Her goal is to change the narrative on America's community college campuses to address social action, not volunteerism. We hope to create greater awareness of how to encourage our students to become "stewards for global change."

*In addition, the Center for Civic Engagement is working to:*

- Administer the Democracy Commitment Higher Education Civic Outcomes Survey during fall 2020.
- Create several non-credit certificates, including a focus on social entrepreneurship, community organizing, leadership, and Street Law.
- Organize a student leadership academy with multiple community partners, as well as formulate plans to establish a “Civility Counts” campaign for the Santa Clarita Valley.
- Develop a Civic Engagement and Community-Based Learning (CBL) 9-hour hybrid course module as part of COC’s Teaching and Learning Certificate program.

***Engage the Vote and Making the Census Count 2020***

Building on many of the 2018 activities which proved effective, COC will build upon them again, as well as partner with the newly formed League of Women Voters of the Santa Clarita Valley (LWVSCV). These activities included organizing, supporting, hosting and/or facilitating:

- Voter Registration Tables
- Constitution Day
- National Voter Registration Day
- Rock the Polls Community Concert
- Deliberative Dialogues
- Deliberative Dialogue Student and Faculty Trainings
- Santa Clarita City Council Candidates Forum
- Candidates “Meet and Greet”
- “*Understanding the Propositions*” presentations and discussions.
- “*Cookies and Conversation: Let’s Talk About the Ballot with the League of Women Voters of the Santa Clarita Valley.*”
- Campus Dialogue: “*The America We Want to Be.*”
- Ballot Box Party Pre-Election Day
- Ballot Box Party Day of Election and Voices for Change Concert
- Election Watch Party
- Local media coverage
- Cougar News (COC Broadcasting students) covering many of the above events.

Many other efforts greatly assisted the campus to *Engage the Vote* in 2018 and will continue during 2020, including the following--

- An interdisciplinary team of faculty developed the *Youth Wave* campus wide initiative to encourage students to register to vote and to cast their ballots. Students who provide proof of registration and voting receive extra credit points.

- A faculty member from Political Science, along with a team of students created a Quick Response (QR) Code linked to the California Secretary of State's Office, which provided online voter registration. The QR code was emailed to the entire campus community, as well as printed on bookmarks distributed throughout the campus.
- Several faculty presentations addressed issues or topics concerned with current affairs, political engagement, and issues related to self and society, including the departments of History, Humanities, Sociology, and the Institute of Ethics, Law, and Public Policy.

*In addition, the Center for Civic Engagement facilitated (and will continue to facilitate) the following:*

- Worked with the Office of the Los Angeles Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk to place a Vote-by-Mail ballot box on the COC campus. Students registering for the first time were encouraged to Vote-by-Mail to take advantage of not having to cast their ballots at a polling location. The setting of the Drop-Off Ballot Box is clearly identified by large signs posted at two individual entrances. *(This process will likely change with the possibility of COC serving as a designated Vote Center. See below.)*
- Created a variety of marketing materials, including banners, flyers, bookmarks, and announcements posted on campus wide digital monitors. Assistance provided by the Public Information Office.
- Constructed an Engage the Election letter, as well as Engage the Election handout which was sent to almost 2,700 individuals who are listed on the coc-all distribution list. These items provided important links to COC's NSLVE data, as well as to voter registration and voter education information and deadlines. In many cases, faculty not only verbally announced this material but also posted it on their Canvas course shells.
- Provided additional information to coc-all concerning election-related topics (e.g., legal to take photos at the ballot box, as well as ballot guides, proposition descriptions, county registrar video clips on "how to mark a ballot," etc.).
- Emailed a series of "Voting and Election Fun Facts" sent daily to coc-all for one week. This activity will increase from one to at least two weeks in advance, since it proved very popular. (This will occur for both the primary and general election.) In addition, Census facts will also be disseminated throughout the months before Census Day 2020.
- Created a campus hashtag of #COCVotes to promote efforts via social media.
- Developed the tag line of "*Democracy. Everyone's Responsibility.*" to reflect the Engage the Vote campus wide campaign.

### ***Future plans for 2020:***

While these items are not categorized by calendar dates at this time; however, once the Engage the Election Social Action Team meets in January 2020, a formal timeline will be created. Tentative goals include the following:

- Work with students in Graphic Media Arts to create a visual image to complement the Engage the Election Vote effort for 2020. Display image throughout the campus community.
- Meet with the Public Information Office to create a *Engage the Vote* publicity plan for the campus, including hanging banners around campus, displaying important voter information on campus monitors and classroom computer screens, and ongoing Public Service Announcement (PSAs) regarding voting deadlines, activities, and presentations. This includes placing related events on the COC Event's Calendar, which is accessible to the general public. And, if COC serves as a Vote Center, include information on the roadside marquees.
- Incorporate some aspect of voter education into COC's First Year Promise program.
- Increase voter registration tabling during "off seasons" to include important days of recognition like Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Cesar Chavez Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Patriot Day, Citizenship Day, and Veterans Day, as well as Heritage Month themes.
- Organize an "Action Team Rush" at the beginning of spring semester to recruit students to work on various social issues, including Engage the Election.
- Contact Andrew Goodman Foundation and discuss possibility of creating an Andrew Goodman scholar position at COC.
- Encourage COC students to apply for the Ronald Reagan Leadership Foundation Scholarship.
- Involve COC with additional Get Out the Vote Organizations like Campus Vote Project (CVP) and Rock the Vote.
- Administer Campus Election Engagement Project Campus Electoral Engagement Assessment.
- Distribute information (as done in 2018) regarding important registration and voter dates and deadlines, as well as helpful voting tips. Send via coc-all, as well as work directly with the Public Information Office to expand the College's outreach into the local community.
- Provide faculty with examples of how to engage students in the upcoming election by including examples of assignments and projects. Encourage faculty to infuse some aspect of political engagement into their course.
- Advertise websites (as done in 2018) of organizations dedicated to increasing the vote among college students.
- Infuse some aspect of Engage the Election in Community-Based Learning courses and projects.

- Organize a “Department Challenge” Campaign. Departments will work to create ideas of how to politically engage students in their areas
- Encourage students to participate in campus wide dialogues by using issue guides available by the National Issues Forum Institute (NIFI) and Living Room Conversations.
- Create a repository of *Engage the Vote* resources for faculty, clubs, and ASG.
- Organize “Meet and Greet” sessions throughout the year with local elected officials.
- Develop Civic Engagement/Engage the Election mini-workshops to address a variety of topics related to American history and government.
- Confirm COC as a Vote Center (see below).
- Work to hold a naturalization ceremony in COC’s Performing Arts Center, while encouraging student observation and participation.
- Connect efforts of campus civic engagement movement to WE Day.
- Send a campus-wide “Message from the Chancellor” regarding the importance of registering to vote, as well as voting.
- Create large display board to highlight photos of COC campus community members with a short response to the question, “I vote because....”
- Instruct greater number of students, especially from ASG and student clubs in the techniques of dialogue. Encourage students to lead dialogues on various topics related to political engagement.
- Increase number of students participating in the annual Reagan Foundation Leadership Conference.
- Create a COC Votes Instagram account.
- Work with campus (e.g., *The Monday Report*) and local media sources (e.g., radio, newspaper, television) to publicize events.
- Include voter information in the annual college catalogue.
- Create a “Fact Bits” weekly email blast providing information on historical and political voting and election facts, as well as interest information about the Census. In addition, this election cycle we hope to include 100 days of “civility matters” sending out quotes from George Washington’s 100 rules for civility.
- Train students who work registration tables on how to effectively engage students.
- Work with Academic Senate to create a campus resolution committed to fostering civic engagement and electoral awareness among our campus community.
- Send reminder texts (e.g., voter registration deadline, Election Day) to students from Admissions and Records.
- Organize an *Engage the Vote* film series.
- Work with the Office of the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/Clerk to provide on-campus education and instruction on the mechanics of voting (e.g., how to read a ballot and use new interactive voting devices, etc.).

- Connect early to statewide challenges for colleges, especially as developed by the Office of the California Secretary of State and California Community Colleges Office of the Chancellor.
- Organize a campus wide student “I Am a Voter” pledge card campaign.
- Continue efforts to organize *Making the Invisible Visible* themed civic engagement events while connecting to social and political concerns.
- Create a series of short one minute “Telling Their Stories” video clips highlighting COC students and staff discussing “Why I Vote,” “My First Time to Vote,” etc.
- Train peer advisors seated at information desks to assist with voter registration.
- Include more information on COC Homepage, as well as include QR code to assist with voter registration.
- Train *Engage the Vote* Students to make short presentations in classes regarding the importance of voting, as well as being counted for the Census.
- Generate a campus-wide competition to beat our 2016 NSLVE data results.
- Organize a Civic Engagement Student Summit with a portion of the event devoted to voter awareness, education, and engagement.

Besides the endless hours of support provided by COC’s Associated Student Government officers and many faculty and academic departments, the campus plans to continue partnerships with local, regional, and national groups, including the League of Women Voters of the Santa Clarita Valley, Canyon Country Advisory Committee, NextGen America, Feminist Majority Foundation, #VoteTogether, All-In Campus Democracy Challenge, Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, Young Invincibles, Band of Voters, NextUp, 25 Up, Voices for Change, and Campus Compact. Additional partnerships will include those associated with the Bureau of the Census.

### **COC as a Los Angeles County Vote Center**

Voting in Los Angeles County will change greatly beginning in 2020. Voters will now have up to 11 days to vote. Los Angeles County has nearly 5 million registered voters, making it the largest voting jurisdiction in the United States. To accommodate these changes, registered voters will no longer go to neighborhood polling places but to preselected large, county-wide Vote Centers. Voters can now vote anywhere in the county, as well as drop-off their vote-by-mail ballots. These centers, having met a strict regimen of requirements, will offer the public new, easy-to-use voting devices that will especially assist multilingual voters and voters with disabilities. Working directly with the Office of the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, COC served as one of 50 sites throughout the county to hold a two-day Mock Election, September 28-29, 2019. Over 30 new voting stations were assembled in the Student Center and provided the community a “practice” session to tryout the new equipment. As a result, COC has been officially asked to serve as a 2020 Vote Center for the Santa Clarita Valle. (Approval is currently pending from COC’s Department of Facilities.) In addition, Deborah Aschheim, LA County Registrar-Recorder Artist-

in-Residence, is working with several COC faculty to capture the “face” of new voters, as the “stories” of why we vote.

## **Include the Census**

College of the Canyons has partnered with the Bureau of the Census to increase awareness, provide education, and foster participation in the 2020 Census. While information has been disseminated through the entire campus regarding employment opportunities, come January 6, a campus-wide campaign will launch to provide ongoing information about the Census processes, timelines, and FAQs. This will include disseminating information from the U.S. Census and California Census Bureaus. This strategy proved extremely successful in providing weekly election “fun facts,” and a similar process will occur during winter and early spring of 2020. In addition, speakers from the Census Bureaus will provide multiple campus presentations, as well as work with the Center for Civic Engagement and the League of Women Voters of the Santa Clarita Valley. We hope to have students make short presentations in classes, as well as garner new voter registrations. In addition, we hope to dispel many of the myths surrounding census counts, since many of our students are first-generation and immigrant parents may fear participation.

## **Reporting**

Updates and revisions to this plan will be made by the Faculty Director, Civic and Community Engagement Initiatives. Working directly with members of the Civic Engagement Steering Committee, as well as with ASG and the Engage the Vote Social Action Team, she will guide participants in ongoing reflection of successes and challenges. Review will occur every six months while strategies to meet the above goals will remain fluid, as ideas will shift. Our 2018 NSLVE data were shared with the campus community. Findings will help shape future voter registration, education, and participation strategies for the upcoming 2020 election cycle. In addition, using outcomes derived from evaluation, new strategies will be created and old ones revised, changed or discarded. Progress reports will be made available to the Chancellor, Board of Trustees, and Executive Cabinet. In addition, members of the Civic Engagement Steering Committee will disseminate updates to the entire campus community.

## **Evaluation**

While COC continues to create an evaluation process which will accurately measure the impact of civic engagement and its related activities on participants, we will continue to monitor headcounts of participants or attendees. The Center is currently reviewing a variety of publications that discuss evaluation measures for civic engagement, as well as AAC&U’s Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric (AAC&U, 2019). However, comparisons between past and current NSLVE data will assist greatly with evaluation of the Center’s overall action plan. In addition, the new *Democratic Action Plan Rubric* created by the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition will provide much guidance (Students Learn Students Vote, 2019: 27-28).



## Conclusion

As an institution of higher education, College of the Canyons can no longer allow its students to observe as spectators nor to watch as bystanders, especially as local, national, and global problems escalate. To address social issues collectively is a basic tenet of democracy, as John Stuart Mill proclaimed in 1859, since the sovereignty of a nation resides in its people or, more precisely, its citizenry (Mill, 2002). In fact, “A morally and civilly responsible individual recognizes himself or herself as a member of a larger social fabric,” suggests Ehrlich and “considers social problems to be at least partly his or her own.” (Ehrlich, 2000:xxvi). Therefore, to take action, especially through voter engagement, is paramount to ensure the continued wellbeing of society (Bowen, 2010). The Center for Civic Engagement and the Civic Engagement Steering Committee has done much to bring attention of social concerns to the campus community by organizing presentations, events, workshops, summits, and dialogues. Each of which has been framed, as previously mentioned, around the ongoing theme of *Making the Invisible Visible*. It is time that political engagement becomes visible. With the help of *Engage the Election: A Campus Voting Action Plan, 2020*, we are confident that an increased number of student voices will be heard during the next election cycle.

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