



Democratic Engagement Action Plan  
Civic Engagement Committee,  
Colorado School of Mines

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## Executive Summary

This action plan was created by the Civic Engagement Committee at Colorado School of Mines. This committee provides transformative on-campus and community-based experiences to prepare students for leadership roles in the workplace, society, and the world. We do this by providing educational seminars and civic engagement opportunities, which allows students to understand positive social change from the individual, group, and community/society perspectives. Additionally, our committee focuses on increasing student voting participation at Mines, in Golden, in the state of Colorado, in home states and countries of our students, and in national elections in the United States.

The Civic Engagement Committee is made up of the following professional staff. We have also identified some potential collaborating partners to establish in the next year.

- Mary Elliott, Director of Residence Life
- Armando Manzanares, Administrative Coordinator for CASA
- Maggie Weir, CARE Coordinator
- Jessica Keefer, Director, New Student & Transition Services
- Caroline Fuller, Program Administrator for CLASS
- Samantha Ralston, Residence Life Coordinator

Potential Collaborating Partners:

- Mines Communication
- Undergraduate Student Government (USG)
- Graduate Student Government (GSG)
- Residence Hall Association (RHA)
- The Purple Club
- Fraternity and Sorority Life
- Department of Residence Life
- New Student & Transition Services
- Faculty at Mines

## Commitment

The Civic Engagement Committee was formed through the Office of Student Life with co-chairs from the department of Residence Life and the office of Student Activities, with encouragement from the Associate Vice President of Student Life. Each department in Student Life has learning outcomes and missions that include civic engagement.

As the Civic Engagement Committee was formed in the Fall 2020 term, educating for civic learning and democratic engagement is not yet a pervasive part of the institutional culture. However, by 2024, Colorado School of Mines hopes to educate and inspire students from all backgrounds, advancing knowledge and innovations. The Colorado School of Mines [mission statement](#) states that the Mines community will hold the aspiration “that our graduates, ideas, actions and innovations will have a transformative impact on individuals and society.” Although it doesn’t directly address civic engagement within the mission statement or institutional goals, it is an important part of having a transformative impact and one that our committee hopes to uphold for students, staff, and faculty at Colorado School of Mines.

In addition to the institution's mission statement, various departments have demonstrated or are working to incorporate various facets of civic engagement in their everyday work. One way the Registrar's Office supports civic engagement is through providing voting information on their [Voter Registration Information webpage](#). Through this webpage, students can educate themselves about voter registration and connect to online resources that assist them in becoming registered voters within Colorado. In addition to information provided by the Registrar's Office, Residence Life is moving toward a curriculum-based model. Although civic engagement has previously been included within Residence Life, this new model will be based in learning outcomes and assessment which will increase the measurable educational outcomes for Mines students.

Although civic engagement is not currently included in the general education curriculum at Mines, the Civic Engagement Committee is looking to add civic learning and democratic engagement topics to CSM 101 – an advising and mentoring program for first-year students at Mines. Through the partnership with New Student and Transition Services, the committee is working toward the inclusion of civic learning and democratic engagement in the Mines curriculum.

## Landscape

The Civic Engagement Committee was formed in early fall 2019 with higher administration approval and encouragement. Currently, staff within the Student Life Division at Mines participate in this committee.

For the 2019-2020 academic year, Mines does not have any NSLVE assessment information. However, the Civic Engagement Committee signed up to receive NSLVE reports for 2020 and beyond through Mines' President's Office and Associate Vice President of Student Affairs. The Civic Engagement Committee also contains members and students who have represented Mines at All In Voting Summits in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020.

In terms of student and faculty engagement, Mines has a handful of politically charged student organizations, but none are focused on a specific political party. Mines does have a Peace Corp Preparatory program, McBride Honors Program focused on policy and government, as well as a student-run newspaper which includes a political message board. In our division of Student Affairs, Mines has ongoing dialogue focusing on current events, diversity, inclusion, and access, which is an access point for this committee to use to continue discussion on voter engagement.

Some of the barriers that could prevent this committee from being successful include the following:

- Lack of interest after the presidential election
- Lack of historic engagement in this area (Golden, Colorado and on campus)
- Election fatigue
- Few political science or history course work (Majority STEM-focused academic programs)
- Student mentality: Students at Mines historically weigh academic commitments over cocurricular experiences due to a rigorous course-load and high-achieving mindset
- Historically uncomfortable conversations/topic. We have learned from our students and staff that the culture of discussing politics and voting can feel uncomfortable.
- COVID-19: COVID-19 may limit in-person dialogue and learning academically through Summer and Fall 2020 terms; this includes staff gatherings and events.

Overall, Mines has a number of individuals in Student Life who are committed to advancing this work as outlined below in our goals, with the idea that we will expand to include faculty and other campus

departments. This committee has also identified many opportunities for growth in civic engagement and learning at Mines:

- Location: We are located close to Denver, the capitol of Colorado. Our own administration building, Guggenheim Hall, used to be our state capitol!
- We have been identified as a new polling location as of 2019. We now have a ballot box located outside of our main library.
- Students in the Residence Hall Association and New Student & Transition Services are interested in working with the Civic Engagement Committee.

## Goals, Strategy, and Timeline

As the Civic Engagement Committee continues to promote civic engagement and learning at Colorado School of Mines, the goals of the committee will shift to address the needs of the campus population. Below the committee has outlined short and ongoing goals and strategies that the committee hopes to work toward in the next 1-2 years. Each long-term goal is followed by a collection of short-term goals that will assist the committee in achieving the desired impact at Mines. Note: some goals may need to be shifted to support continued civic involvement during COVID-19.

### Goal: Encourage participation in local politics

Strategy	Timeframe
Engage with Oredigger newspaper to have publish articles related to local political issues	Summer 2020 ongoing
Contact League of Women Voters to get information on local issues	Summer 2020 ongoing
Create print and post flyers for upcoming election days (SAIL weekly email Mines Communications Canvas pages	Summer 2020 ongoing

### Goal: Make voting opportunities more accessible to students

Strategy	Timeframe
Absentee ballot stamps, envelopes with social distancing options in halls and community centers/desks in Residence Life	Fall 2020
TurboVote	Fall 2020
Trips to local city/town council meetings	Fall 2020
Roundtables with local political leaders with students	Fall 2020

Goal: Encourage student group participation in hosting dialogues surrounding political engagement

Strategy	Timeframe
Residence Hall Association (RHA) will host national president election debate viewing parties.	August-November 2020
Residence Life student-staff training on dialogue, debate, and discussion surrounding civic and political engagement	Fall 2020 (had previously been planned for spring 2020)
Civic engagement committee reach-out to all student orgs on receiving above training or similar (how to engage civically/politically as student leaders)	Summer/Fall 2020

Goal: Provide intentional opportunities for group and individual reflection, debriefing, and self-assessment surrounding developing a personal political ideology

Strategy	Timeframe
Work with Residence Life to incorporate voter engagement into at least one residence hall meeting each semester	Fall 2020/Spring 2021
Recruit the local election clerk to educate/train students at a panel or political round table.	Fall 2020
On-campus tabling opportunities – table in the Plaza or the Student Center once every couple of weeks to gauge students’ understandings of the political process as well as current political events/happenings.	Fall 2020/Spring 2021

Goal: Building noneligible voter engagement

Strategy	Timeframe
Promote and host info session to encourage engagement	Fall 2020
Encourage Poll Worker positions (especially bilingual individuals)	Fall 2020
Volunteer for a candidate/ campaign/ issue	Fall 2020

Goal: Creating long term practices and policies to carry on post-election timeframe

Strategy	Timeframe
Share information regarding voting through various online platforms; provide information to New Students and Transition Services for Canvas; provide information to Residence Life for their webpage.	Summer 2020
Increase social media practices. Including a social media takeover for election day – partnership with Joe Delnero (Mines Communications)	Fall 2020
Promote partnerships with non-partisan voting groups (i.e. League of Women Voters) to disseminate information within the Nonpartisan voter guidebook FAQs.	Fall 2020

Goal: Foster political dialogue between students, faculty, administration, and political officials

Strategy	Timeframe
Add faculty representation to Civic Engagement Committee	Summer 2020
Continue events where local officials are invited to participate whether it relates to an election or not	August-November 2020
Committee reach-out to NHV (human values-oriented) faculty. Go to class(es) to discuss civic engagement as it relates to class	Spring 2021

Goal: Continued Programming for Students, Faculty and Staff

Strategy	Timeframe
Presidential Debate watch and recap	Fall 2020
Voter themed cookies, décor, etc. from Sodexo to help people get excited	Late Oct, early Nov., 2020
Election day extravaganza with Blaster and Marvin	Presidential Election Day

Residence Hall floor education programs	Throughout the fall
Blue Book Explanation event with Golden’s Mayor	Early to Mid-October 2020

## Reporting

The plan created and maintained by the Civic Engagement Committee will begin by being shared internally with senior administrators including Paul Johnson, President of Colorado School of Mines, Rebecca Flintoft, Associate Vice President of Student Life, as well as the committee leadership. Results gathered from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) will be shared with this group to assist the committee in bringing civic learning to Mines.

Once the committee has established an internal form of sharing this data, the committee hopes to be able to share NSLVE data as well as goals, strategies, and internal evaluations with external entities. This information will be made public through a Mines webpage that will be easily accessible to students as well as outside individuals.

## Evaluation

The committee outlined various methods to evaluate the effectiveness of the committee as well as the need for various areas of civic learning and engagement. The purpose of evaluating our goals and events is to provide continued growth for the Civic Engagement Committee as well as the general Mines population. Mines is a majority STEM institution and, as such, civic engagement is not an intrinsic need within the current curriculum. Through events and provided information, the committee hopes to be able to provide students, staff, and faculty with the means and education to become more civically engaged in both local and national politics.

The audience of our evaluation will be the students, faculty, and staff who the committee is attempting to educate and motivate through continued outreach. The committee will carry out various evaluations, testing the methods in which information is disseminated as well as gathered. The committee hopes to continually develop internal evaluations throughout this year, utilizing the data to further grow as a committee as well to continually determine the needs of our audience, creating and editing goals as needed.

As each strategy is implemented, different tools of assessment will be used. We will heavily rely on pre- and post-assessment surveys with our audiences of each goal, particularly for any goal that includes learning outcomes. As an example, one of our strategies for implementing the encouragement of student participation in democratic processes is to train our Resident Advisor student-staff in dialogue on difficult conversations. We would like to implement an assessment testing the learning outcomes of that presentation. We would also like to use informal assessment practices by having civic engagement committee members at each of our hosted events or strategies to engage with attendees by asking more about Mines’ culture of participating in democracy, as well as asking what people found useful or what they learned.



As mentioned above, Mines has had low engagement in the democratic process, as our audience is not intrinsically motivated to be involved. An indicator of success for our committee and the goals above would be seeing more participants at each of our events, as well as having more students and faculty engage with our committee. We have appreciated the buy-in so far from a variety of departments within Student Life, but an additional indicator of success would be an expansion of our group so we can have more touch points of information, knowledge, and access on voting in the classrooms here.

As we analyze our surveys, informal data, as well as taking stock of the goals outlines above through the next year, we will re-assess what our needs, wants, and hopes are within this group. We would like to share our results with the Vice President of Student Affairs and Associate Vice President of Student Life, as they both are stakeholders who financially back this committee. In regard to the NSLVE, we are very much looking forward to getting data next year and sharing those results with our campus! We know our audience can be competitive within departments (staff and students) as well as with other Colorado institutions. Students and staff here also appreciate data-driven decisions, which we will be able to provide as we continue to receive more data from our surveys as well as the NSLVE data. We do not at this time have the capacity in staff or time to create a campus-wide survey for voting, but we know in the future that we would like to focus on specific learning outcomes from this committee to assess within the entire campus.