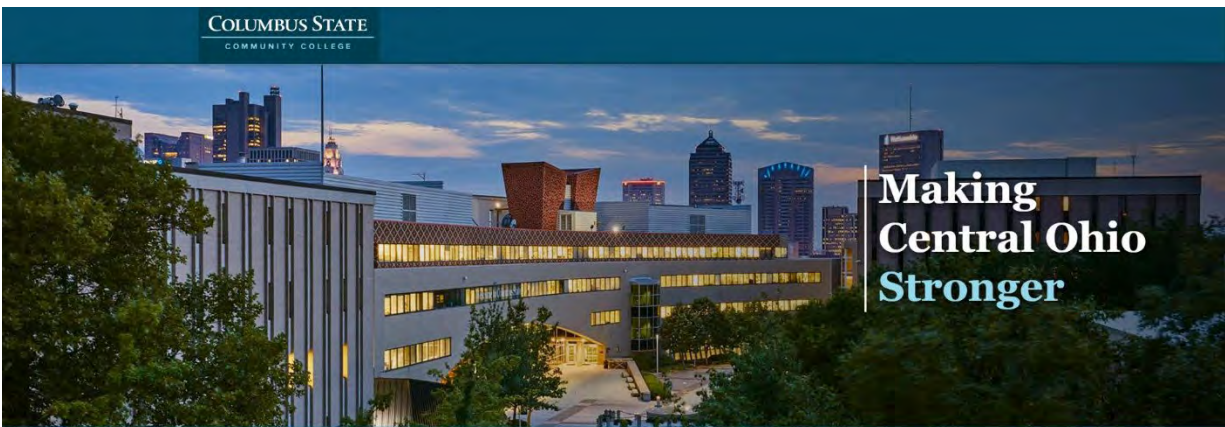


Columbus State Community College

Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan

2024



Executive Summary

Columbus State Community College is one of Ohio's largest and most diverse community colleges. We are located in Central Ohio, a dynamic region experiencing historic population growth and economic development. With two campuses (Columbus and Delaware) and several regional learning centers (Dublin, Bolton Field, and Westerville), we pride ourselves on being a community leader and a driving force for positive social and economic change in Central Ohio.

Making students aware of civic involvement opportunities, registering students to vote, and guiding students on how to become active citizens are key goals of Columbus State Votes (CSV), a nonpartisan community of students, staff, faculty, and community partners dedicated to helping our students be informed and engaged participants in the electoral process.

Written by the Columbus State Votes Committee, this report details Columbus State's efforts to educate and engage all our students in the democratic process. Our purpose is to document, evaluate, and improve our work by thoughtfully planning and implementing our efforts.

Columbus State has been involved in student voter education and engagement in a college-wide, coordinated manner since 2018. We have worked hard to institutionalize these efforts and have made noteworthy progress towards this goal.



Columbus State staff and League of Women Voters volunteers host a voter registration table at Columbus State's Delaware campus.

As outlined in this action plan, CSV made a concerted effort to be more intentional with our diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. Based on our recent National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) reports, it was evident that we needed to do a better job connecting with students from our minoritized communities. To help us achieve this goal, we diversified our Columbus State Votes Committee membership and are launching several new initiatives focused on DEI.

Our 2024 action plan will utilize a mix of in-person activities and virtual events, as well as on-campus and online marketing during the period of January-December 2024. It will be primarily implemented by the Columbus State Votes committee and updated in the 2025-2026 school year for the 2026 Midterm Elections.

Leadership

The energy behind Columbus State's student voter education initiative is the Columbus State Votes Committee. Its responsibilities include creating action plans and reports, providing feedback on engagement opportunities, supporting marketing and events, seeking out and applying for fundraising grants, researching best practices, working through ideas, evaluating goals, and working to institutionalize democratic engagement throughout Columbus State. Committee members meet monthly and communicate frequently between meetings.

Moving forward, we plan to incorporate working groups consisting of committee members for specific committee focuses, including engaging racial minoritized voters, event programming, and grant writing.

Committee members:

- Vincent Hill (co-chair): Assistant Director, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Jonathan Kreger (co-chair): Faculty, Political Science (Academic Affairs)
- MacKenzie Wilcox: Coordinator, Voter Education and Special Projects (Student Affairs)
- Jennifer Casteen: Librarian, Reference and Instruction
- Martha Crone: Faculty, Political Science (Academic Affairs)
- Mindy Hedges: Co-chair, Voter Service, League of Women Voters Delaware County (Community Partner)
- Vena Hill: Career Facilitator and Advisor for CSCC Black Student Union (Student Affairs)
- Kristine Kinzer: Coordinator, Delaware Campus Library
- Janet McDermott: Advisor, Advising and Career Services
- Liliana Santiago: Student, Democracy Fellow
- Elaine Van Winkle: Student, Democracy Fellow
- Ann Wennberg: Co-chair, Voter Service, League of Women Voters Delaware County (Community Partner)
- Laura Wittel: Senior Analyst, Institutional Effectiveness Office



This year we aim to expand our committee, focusing on increasing representation of faculty outside of political science (particularly Career Tech faculty), staff members, representatives from student organizations, and members of senior administration. To bring in those not yet involved with Columbus State Votes, we will send a general call out through the employee newsletter for those interested in

joining. We also send out individual invites to areas of the College needing to be represented either from lack of representation on the committee alone, or in lower turnout numbers in our NSLVE data.

Columbus State is grateful to have the support of many community and national organizations to encourage democratic participation:

- Campus Vote Project (CVP): grants, online resources, access to staff, workshops/seminars, regular updates and check-ins
- ALL IN: online resources, access to staff, student/staff workshops and seminars, regular updates
- The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE): collection and analysis of institution-level data on student voting registration and voting rates
- Franklin County Board of Elections: event partnership, printed resources
- League of Women Voters: event partnership, printed resources
- REV UP: Disability Voting Rights Week information, promotional items, printed resources,
- Ohio Student Association (OSA): event Partnerships, student workshops, printed resources
- Ohio Campus Compact: Community of Practices, updates, a network of colleagues,
- Rank Choice Voting: event partnership

The college's senior administration, including our President David Harrison, supports and encourages the work of Columbus State Votes. As one example, the Vice President of Student Affairs works with CSV to send out voter registration emails to all students from the VP Office.

Our two student Democracy Fellows are compensated financially through [Campus Vote Project](#), which is an immense help to our program. The Office of Student Engagement also financially supports Student Ambassador positions. Our ambassadors are increasingly involved with civic engagement, and we hope to have a more integrated partnership in the future.

To ensure that our efforts continue beyond individual tenures, we are working to institutionalize the committee's work and make it a priority for stakeholders across our college to make the work sustainable for years to come.

Fortunately, our committee has a low turnover rate. However, when members have stepped down, there has been someone in a similar role that has joined the committee to maintain the partnership of a certain office or department. Our current succession plan is as follows:



Columbus State 2024 Democracy Fellows, Elaine Van Winkle and Lili Santiago host a Voter Registration table during finals week

- If our faculty co-chair steps down from the Committee, there is another long-standing faculty committee member who will take over their responsibilities.
- If our staff co-chair steps down, the other co-chair and staff person will work to identify other staff persons to consider the role of co-chair.

Commitment

The commitment to student voter education and engagement cuts across all aspects of Columbus State from the President's office to our student leaders. Columbus State Votes' mission supports the College's institutional learning goal of "Cultural and Social Awareness," specifically helping our students to "demonstrate knowledge of democratic and civic values." This institutional learning goal is embedded in the course offerings at Columbus State.

A few years ago, the Columbus State Votes' co-chairs held several meetings with College President David Harrison and Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Desiree Polk-Bland to get buy in from the senior leadership of the College for our student democratic engagement work. They enthusiastically supported our efforts, support that continues to this day, and committed additional resources including funding for staff support. Dr. Harrison enthusiastically signed the "ALL IN Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation" pledge.

The College's top leadership is routinely updated on the progress of our work and are involved at events and meetings to demonstrate the importance of this work. For example, Dr. Harrison keeps the Columbus State's Board of Trustees abreast of what the College is doing to educate and engage our students in the democratic process. Also, he expresses his support for our work and gives Columbus State Votes Committee members the opportunity to present during "First Wednesday," a monthly college-wide meeting. His support, along with the support of other senior administrators, is the foundation of Columbus State's commitment to student democratic engagement.

To further institutionalize our student democratic engagement efforts, we launched a faculty resource organization in Blackboard, the College's learning management system. This organization provides faculty with ready-to-use resources (e.g., lecture materials, assessments, informational videos, etc.) in their classrooms. This organization allows us to quickly disseminate student voter educational materials to faculty.

To keep our community informed, the Columbus State Votes partners with our Marketing Department to send regular communications in the student and staff in the newsletters, Cougar Connect (the College's computer program for student information), emails, social media, and the Library's Voting Information Webpage. This information is vital in keeping our entire College informed and engaged in the electoral process.

Landscape

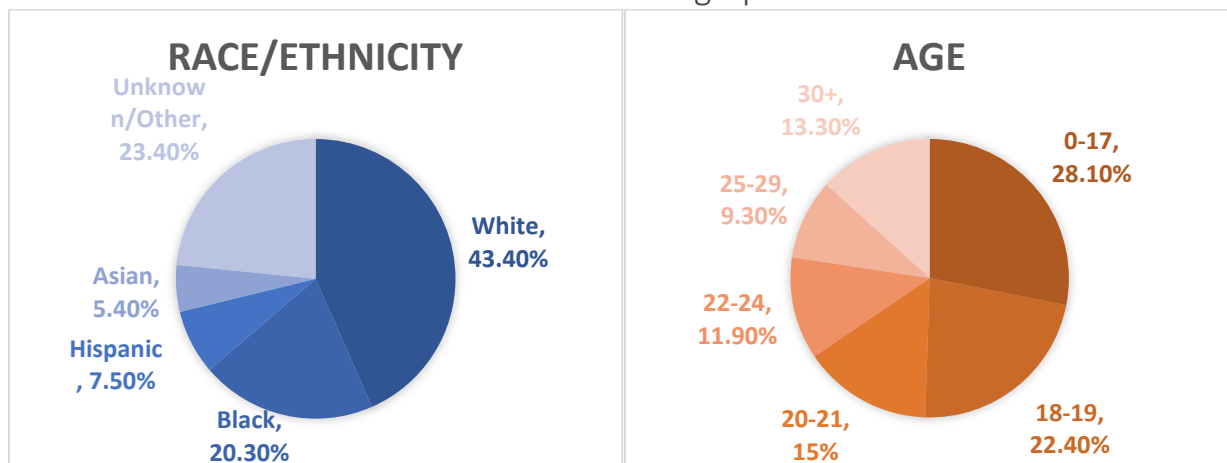
Columbus State serves a diverse group of over 41,000 students, including high school students, from multiple counties in Central Ohio.

Within seven academic pathways, our students can earn certifications or one of the following degrees, in various areas of study:

- Associate of Arts and Associate of Science (Degree to Degree Transfer Programs)
- Associate of Applied Science (Career Programs and Professional Certifications)
- Associate of Technical Studies (Career Programs and Individualized Degrees)

The College's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion means voter outreach to all our students is critical. The student body represents several categories of citizens who are traditionally underrepresented among the voting population including young people, and ethnic and racial minorities. More than 28% of our students are under 17. Hundreds of students are active or retired military veterans. For many of our students who are recently naturalized, this may be their first election.

Columbus State Student Demographics Autumn 2023



Fall of 2022 brought a cohort of students with the first semester of the Columbus Promise program. Columbus Promise is a joint initiative of the City of Columbus, Columbus City Schools, I Know I Can, and Columbus State to boost college attendance, student success, and social mobility for Columbus area students. The program provides free tuition to Columbus State to Columbus City School graduates. The majority of this cohort identifies as Black (51.8%), followed by 14.5% identifying as Hispanic. Nearly 80% of Columbus Promise students qualify for full or partial Pell Grants.

The community college structure informs both how we do our civic engagement work and the challenges we face in this area. For example, compared to our four-year counterparts our students spend less time on our campus; we do not have on campus housing, and many of our students are only here for two years or less, so we have high student turnover. Columbus State serves students from eleven counties which means that our campus does not have a central polling location available, and students may have different voting experiences with different county Boards of Elections. We're also facing a time

of limited funding and limited employee resources at the College. We do not have fully dedicated staff members (Voter Education Coordinator splits time with other projects, and we no longer have a Civic Engagement position) or a line in the College budget for this work. There are also a few external barriers for our students, as Ohio voters, including 30-day registration deadlines and new voting ID laws.

A big step in the direction of institutionalizing this work was when College leaders agreed to include a learning module on student voter education in our COLS 1100 First-Year Seminar, a course all students complete at Columbus State. Columbus State Votes created (and regularly updates) the module. The feedback received from instructors and students alike has been positive.

Columbus State has been a leader in civic engagement for community colleges and has received the Voter Friendly Campus designation in 2020 and 2022, as well as being recognized by ALL In as a “Most Engaged Campus” in 2022. *The Washington Monthly* also listed Columbus State on the 2022 Best Colleges for Student Voting Honor Roll.

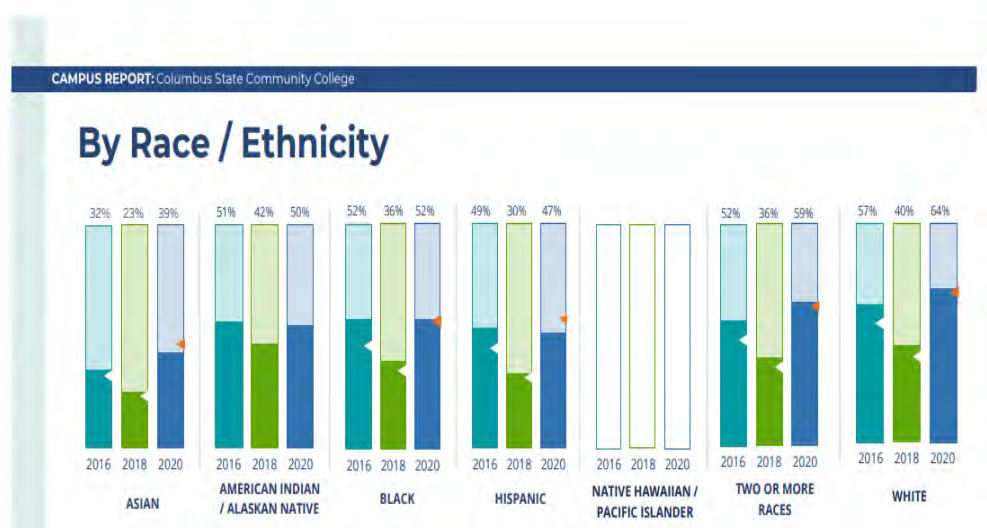
Goals

Columbus State Votes' long-term vision is to nurture active citizenship and foster a vibrant democratic culture for our students. We work tirelessly to empower our students with the knowledge, skills, and values essential to meaningfully engage in civic life. By promoting values such as freedom, equality, inclusivity, diversity, and collaboration, we aim to cultivate a campus environment where every voice is heard, respected, and valued. We envision students not only becoming informed and active participants during their time with us, but also life-long agents of positive change within our community. By instilling a sense of civic responsibility among our students, our vision aims to cultivate a generation of leaders who are committed to advancing democratic ideals in our society.

Columbus State Votes is a well-established initiative that has been operating since the 2018 election cycle. Some areas in our college were involved in student democratic education and engagement work prior to this, but Columbus State Votes helped coordinate and institutionalize these efforts. Since 2018, we have made tremendous strides towards our long-term goals but recognize there is more work to do. Also, this initiative is not just another project but rather a living organism that needs constant nurturing. The goal is to continue Columbus State Votes indefinitely.

Our short-term goals include bringing Columbus State's voting, registration, and yield rates in line with the national rates. For example, our 2020 election National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) data measured our voting rate at 58.4% (a 4.1% increase from 2016), below the national 66% rate for all institutions. Closing that 7.6% rate gap is a top priority for us.

Drilling down further into the NSLVE data, we have identified additional gaps to close. Specifically, the voting gap between white students (64% in 2020) and minoritized communities (approximately 47% across these communities). This is a significant gap and one we have begun aggressively addressing for the 2024 election as noted elsewhere in this report. This goal, among all our goals, is guided by Columbus State's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Community colleges in general, and Columbus State in particular, have a more diverse student population than four-year institutions. This is one of Columbus State's greatest strengths and it informs our work with Columbus State Votes.



Columbus State's 2020 NSLVE Data report

Also, we have set a goal of closing the gap between our students based on their fields of study. According to our 2020 NSLVE data, our Arts and Sciences students' voting rate is about 65%, while our Career and Technology and Health and Human Services students average 53% and 56%, respectively. This double-digit gap provides a good opportunity for Columbus State to focus its efforts in these fields of study. (Percentages in this paragraph were calculated by combining NSLVE fields of study into Columbus State pathways.)

Closing these gaps are our three-to-five-year goals. We will use our future NSLVE data to measure goal achievements, as we will have specific student voter registration and voting rates to compare election-to-election. We will modify our student democratic engagement work as appropriate based on the NSLVE data.

Our five-to-ten-year vision for Columbus State's student democratic engagement is to create a permanent "Student Democracy Center" that is the driving force behind this critical work by integrating all the various student democratic efforts around the College into one unified office. This center would have dedicated staff, supported by faculty and student workers, implementing what truly is year-round efforts to educate and engage our students in the democratic process.

As mentioned earlier in this report, Columbus State has institutional learning goals (ILG) that steer all our academic work. These ILGs create the framework for college-wide learning expectations embedded in all our courses. They include critical thinking, ethical reasoning, quantitative skills, scientific literacy, technological competence, communication competence, cultural and social awareness, and professional and life skills. Throughout their time at Columbus State, students will learn and be able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, in a measurable way, in these areas. These ILGs are the bedrock for students' success in society, including their active political participation.

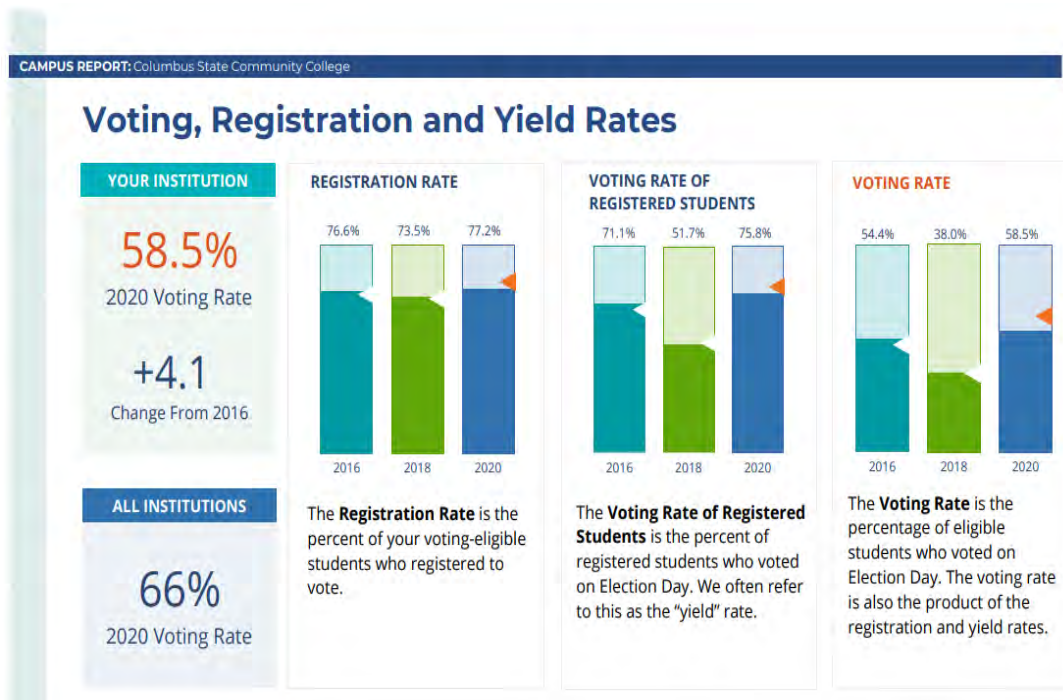
NSLVE

In 2020, Columbus State officially joined the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) initiative, unlocking institution-specific election data from 2012 onward. Our NSLVE reports are invaluable. While Columbus State was involved in student democratic engagement before 2020, our work didn't have the benefit of being guided by data. Today, we use our NSLVE data to inform all that we do with student democratic engagement as outlined throughout this report.

As a side note, our 2022 NSLVE data have not been released by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University as of the writing of this action plan. Our 2022 data will provide the insight we need to measure if the steps we have taken since 2018 have improved our student registration and voting rates.

Because we have elaborated on our NSLVE data throughout this action plan when appropriate, we'll provide a brief overview of the topline data for this section of the action plan. According to Columbus State's 2020 NSLVE report (most recently accessible report):

- The voting rate among our eligible students during the 2020 election was 58.5%, an increase of 4.1% from 2016.
- The number of eligible students registered to vote also increased from 76.6% in 2016 to 77.2% in 2020.



Columbus State's 2020 NSLVE data report

Strategy

Columbus State employs a broad range of strategies and programming to encourage our students to become active participants in democracy. As noted earlier in this report, our voter education initiative is branded “Columbus State Votes.”

Events

Spring/Summer Semesters

MLK Day/Black History Month Events—tabling at events on campus hosted by our DEI office

- Responsibility: Committee volunteers
- Audience: Students, faculty, staff, and community members
- Goal: Connect with the campus and community and share the committee’s work

Spring Fling—a campus wide resource and culture fair

- Responsibility: Staff person
- Audience: All students
- Goal: Register students, share resources and let them know about what CSV does on campus

Summer Orientations—tabling or presenting at new student orientation breakouts

- Responsibility: Staff person and committee volunteers
- Audience: new students (recent high school grads)
- Goal: get new, younger students registered for the first time and answer their question

Fall Semester

Involvement Fair—a campus-wide event for student resources and organizations on campus

- Responsibility: Staff person
- Audience: all students
- Goal: Register students, share resources and let them know about what CSV does on campus

Constitution Day/National Voter Registration Day—host an event for the civic holidays in partnership with other departments on campus

- Responsibility: staff person, Democracy Fellows, committee,

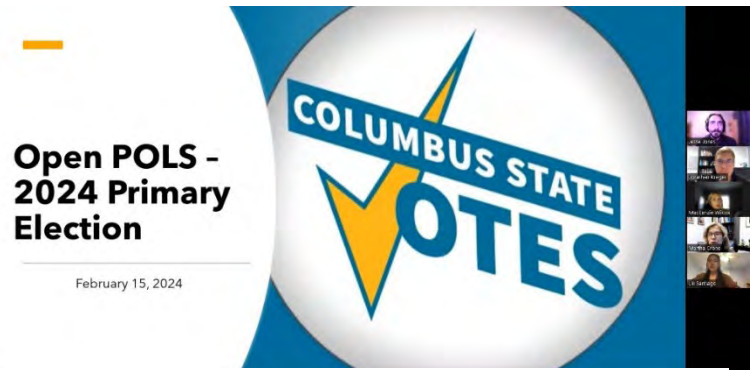


Voter registration table at Columbus State’s Spring Fling Resource Fair

- Audience: all students
- Goal: register students, inform students about voting and voting roles

Open POLS—informative webinar with political science faculty on important voting topics and ballot information

- Responsibility: political science faculty, Democracy Fellows
- Audience: all students
- Goal: inform students on what will be on their ballot and important election information



Columbus State Open POLS Primary Election webinar

Voter Turnout Event(s)—events between the registration deadline and Election Day to encourage Early Voting and voter mobilization

- Responsibility: staff person, Democracy Fellows
- Audience: all students
- Goal: encourage students to make and act on their voting plans, answer questions on the voting process



Black History Month Voter Registration Poster

Student Advocacy

Two Democracy Fellows in partnership with Campus Vote Project

Marketing and Communications

- Social media posts
- Cougar Connect (student engagement platform)
- YouTube videos
- Promotional materials (giveaways)
- Lobby slides (tv slideshows in various buildings)
- Student and Employee Newsletters
- Monthly posters celebrating different voting rights heroes or highlighting different civic holidays
- Vice President Email

Curriculum

- COLS 1100 module (first-year seminar taken by all students)
- Faculty training and resources
- Faculty registration competition

Resources Utilized

- Student Heat Map
 - Internal data of when students are most likely to be on campus and what buildings are most frequented
- TurboVote
 - QR codes
 - Custom links
 - Background data
- Ask Every Student Framework
 - Faculty resources
 - Committee resources
- Grants
 - Ask Every Student
 - We received an Implementation Grant from Ask Every Student in 2022 which helped us add the building block of the framework to our institution. We have applied for the 2024 round of Implementation Grants to continue in this work.
 - Campus Vote Project
 - We have received two mini-grants from Campus Vote Projects to support our engagement projects and continue our work.
 - Internal Mini Grant
 - We have applied for Columbus State Foundation (a nonprofit organization that works with members of the community to secure resources to advance the mission, educational opportunities, and services for our students) grant to assist us with meeting the financial needs of implementing our 2024 Voter Friendly Campus action plan.

Our biggest need for resources in our work is funding. Our committee and our voter education work is not currently funded by the institution so we rely on external grants.

Reporting

Action and strategic plans, reports, data, and awards are made available internally through newsletters, Cougar Connect (an online student engagement tool), and Blackboard (CSCC's learning management system), and are internally and externally available through our webpage: Columbus State and Voting.

Columbus State Votes continuously shares information, efforts, and progress across the institution through:

- Columbus State Votes Committee monthly meetings
- Department meetings (Academic departments, student affairs departments, student services departments, etc.)
- Leadership meetings (Supervisors and above, Faculty Chair meetings, etc.)
- First Wednesday (CSCC's monthly state of the College by the President with an open announcement section, which all employees can attend in person or virtually)
- Employee Resource Group meetings
- Voter education faculty training events showcasing data, resources, and event information
- Staff and student newsletters

This action plan will be shared both internally and externally. Internally we will share a copy with the President of the College, and we will add it to our committee page on our student engagement platform, as well as our Blackboard. Our committee will have access to the Action Plan through email, and the committee SharePoint page. Externally, we will make our Action Plan available on our library's voting site, and the ALL In and CVP websites.

Evaluation

Columbus State Votes recognizes that evaluation should happen before, during, and after our efforts each semester, which informs when we conduct evaluation. Our evaluation efforts aim to inform our plans moving forward, allowing for adjustment and growth. We are interested in learning how effective our work is, and how many students we engage in the democratic process on our campus, and sharing that with our committee, community partners and college administrators. Evaluation is carried out by the Columbus State Votes committee.

Ongoing

Columbus State Votes Monthly Meetings

- Columbus State Votes Committee meets every month and during each meeting, voter education efforts that have taken place are reported and evaluated through discussion of the members present.
- Upcoming events are also discussed to anticipate needs and any changes that need to be made and/or addressed.

Before

Action Planning

- At the beginning of the election cycle, Columbus State completes its ALL In and Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan. This creates a natural opportunity to evaluate previous efforts and adjust plans based on that evaluation.

During

Action Plan feedback

- During the middle of the election cycle, Columbus State will receive feedback from the submitted action plan. This allows the committee to re-evaluate the plan and adjust according to the feedback.

After

NSLVE

- After the election, Columbus State will receive its NSLVE data and begin to evaluate the data to find growth, decline, and important engagement gaps.

ALL In/VFC Action Plan

- The Columbus State Votes Committee reviews previous action plans, and uses action plan feedback to inform its implementation of the plan, and its adjustments in the future

TurboVote

- TurboVote allows the Voter Education Coordinator to make referral codes, which allow individual links to be used for different modes of engagement. This allows us to see which engagement efforts are effective at getting students to register to vote online.

