

Student Democratic Engagement 2020

Voter Friendly Campus Plan



COLUMBUS STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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I. Student Democratic Engagement Advisory Committee

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II. Voter Friendly Campus Plan Introduction



As one of the largest and most diverse community colleges in Ohio, Columbus State plays a pivotal role in the civic life of Central Ohio. We take this responsibility seriously. As a result, we are building on our student democratic engagement practices in a coordinated, organized, and impactful way across our entire institution.

The societal events of 2020 have put into sharp focus the critical need for our work and have infused a sense of urgency into our efforts to engage students in the political process. We want our students to see democratic engagement, of which voting is a key component, as a vehicle for social change. In our institutional learning goals, we specifically “recognize democratic values and civic, community responsibilities associated with a socially, politically, economically, and historically diverse world” in all we do inside and outside of the classroom.

In March 2020, Columbus State joined the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) initiative through the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University. This was an important step to learn more about our students’ voting registration and participation rates, which will provide us the necessary data to improve and measure student democratic engagement. We will have institutional voting data in August 2020. These data are essential for benchmarking our efforts as well as informing our strategies for increasing student voting rates, especially among student populations that historically have lower voting rates.

According to the 2016 NSLVE National Report: Democracy Counts studies, students at two-year institutions have lower voting rates than students at other institutions of higher education. This is

something that needs to be corrected and Columbus State is committed to doing its part.

Having the reach of two campuses and multiple regional learning centers, democratic engagement takes on many forms at Columbus State. As we seek to obtain the “Voter-Friendly Campus” designation, we are expanding our student outreach activities. Below is a brief description of highlighted events that have occurred:

- Welcome Fair student voter registration tables at the start of each semester;
- Voter registration tables at the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration and empowerment summit for justice-involved community members;
- Voter registration tables at Delaware Campus Constitution Day/Voter Registration Day;
- Email reminders to students regarding key election timelines;
- Semester-long educational series to educate students on exercising their constitutional and civic rights;
- Academic symposium on democratic engagement;
- Constitution Day celebrations embedded in coursework and co-curricular activities
- Pocket U.S. Constitutions distributed to students;
- Created and maintain a library guide (website) on Constitution Day/Voter Registration Day:
<https://library.csc.edu/constitutionday/about>.



III.

About Columbus State Community College



Columbus State Community College is the area's largest two-year educational institution, serving a diverse student body of over 40,000 students from multiple counties in Central Ohio. The Columbus Campus is located in the thriving Discovery District, home to a variety of other historical, arts, and educational institutions. Our Delaware Campus is located in one of the fastest growing counties in Ohio, with a mix of rural and suburban residents. In addition, Columbus State brings education to Central Ohio via six Regional Learning Centers that provide class schedules convenient to working adults and other residents.

Columbus State's commitment to diversity means voter outreach is critical. The student body represents a number of categories of citizens who are traditionally underrepresented among the voting population, including young people and ethnic minorities. As the table below demonstrates, Columbus State is far more diverse than our state population.

Race/Ethnicity	Columbus State	Ohio
American Indian	0.3%	0.3%
Asian	5.2%	2.5%
Black or African American	20.3%	13.0%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%
Hispanic	6.0%	3.9%
Two or More Races	3.2%	2.3%
White	54.1%	81.9%

Note: Columbus State respondents may have elected not to disclose race/ethnicity, hence percentages may not add up to 100%



In addition to racial and ethnic diversity, we have age diversity not common on traditional college campuses. Due to the popularity of our Credits Count Programs, which partner with area K12 school districts, 12.5% of our students are under age 17. We also serve students who are older than the traditional college student; adults make up 32.7% of our students. Over 1% of our student population is either active duty members of the military or veterans. We serve an international population as well, and each year close to 100 of our students are naturalized citizens who may be experiencing their first elections.

Our students have diverse interests and areas of academic study as well. Within seven diverse academic pathways, students can earn certificates or one of the following degrees:

- Associate of Arts and Associate of Science (Degree-to-Degree Transfer Programs)
- Associate of Applied Science (Career Programs, including certificates)
- Associate of Technical Studies (Career Programs individualized degree)

Political scientists have demonstrated time and again that having a college degree greatly increases the likelihood of a citizen becoming a regular voter. Our large and diverse campus means we have the potential to increase that likelihood for our students by making strong efforts to become a Voter Friendly Campus.

IV.

Autumn 2020 Student Democratic Engagement Efforts



To accomplish our expanded student democratic engagement goals for Autumn 2020, we have invested resources in the following areas:

Voter Registration

Engage Faculty

Provide faculty with voter registration syllabus language, slides, etc. to utilize in their courses. Encourage lead instructors in key gateway courses (e.g. ENGL 1100, MATH 1099, POLS 1100, COLS 1100, etc.) to bring voter registration to students' attention.

New Student Orientation

Staff a table during the new student orientation program to provide information, answer questions, and on-the-spot voter registration to new students. Create a

voter registration video and flyer for virtual student orientations.

Welcome Week

During the College's regularly scheduled Welcome Week at the beginning of each semester, a table devoted to voter registration will be set up. Representatives will be there to review options, go over the information needed to register, answer any questions, and provide an opportunity to register to vote on the spot. Students who register to vote will also be asked if they would like to be a part of student organizations related to democratic engagement.

Voter Registration Assistance Permanent Locations

Students will have permanent places of assistance with voter registration on campus. Librarians and other student services personnel will be provided with training to assist students with online voting-related actions and provide easy access to related websites and videos on computers in their areas.

National Voter Registration Day and Political Engagement Week

Columbus State will sign up to be a Partner in National Voter Registration Week and embed this work in a week-long focus on democratic engagement. Activities may include voter registration on the campuses and at regional locations, emails, social media campaign, a webinar, and close collaboration with our community partners.

In conjunction with our library, books will be selected and recommended in advance to students who want to read more about democratic engagement and attend follow-discussions.

Video Messaging

A short video will be created about voter registration and disseminated to faculty and staff and through social media to share with students.

Student Communications

Official college emails will be sent to all students on National Voter Registration Day, and other key dates, reminding students of their right to register to vote and providing information on how students can register.

Programming and Outreach

The Democratic Engagement Advisory Committee will coordinate and assist with other voter registration initiatives on the campuses, serving as a hub of information and resources for students, faculty, and staff.

Incentivize Student Groups

The College will provide various incentives to have student groups compete to get students registered. Student leaders will be engaged in idea generating related to voter registration competitions.

Voter Education/Ballot Access

Embed Voter Education in Key Work of College

Work within Columbus State's Academic Council will explore adding democratic engagement to our vision, mission, and/or values. Create a proposal relative to this cause and provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to participate.

Democratic Engagement Newsletter

A student editorial group will be created to produce and distribute a democratic engagement newsletter running weekly up to election.

Columbus State Student Democratic Engagement Website

The Democratic Engagement Advisory Committee will work with Columbus State's Marketing and Communications Department to maintain an up-to-date website under the Student Life tab on all things related to political engagement efforts on campus. This will include information on registering to vote, where to vote, how to get an absentee ballot, upcoming events and opportunities to get involved. In addition, student feedback will be routed to a member of the committee so that students can share their ideas for how to increase engagement.



Information and Assistance on Absentee Ballot Process

During campus events, walk-up locations will be available to guide students through the absentee ballot application and ballot submission process and can mail ballots on students' behalf.

Video Campaign about the Importance of Voting

Existing voter education videos (Examples: LOWV College Voting 101, College Voting 101, Make Calls Not Comments, The 411 of Off Year Elections, YelloPain My Vote Don't Count, etc.) will be shared through Columbus State's social media platforms and website.

Constitution Day

We will host an annual Constitution Day event to promote civic responsibilities. The Columbus State Library will purchase pocket U.S. Constitutions to distribute to students at the Columbus and Delaware locations. The library will create a research guide and a photo booth with an iPad, props, and a flag. The campuses will host a voter registration drive with guests from the League of Women Voters to share information about voting, issues, and registration forms.

Get Out to Vote

Communication to Students

Two campus-wide emails will be sent out during Autumn Semester. The first will be to remind faculty, staff, and students to register to vote before the Oct. 5, 2020 deadline. The second will be to remind students to vote in the general election. Educational information on how to vote, voting by mail, etc. will also be included in the communications. The committee will utilize social media platforms to remind students when and where they can vote.

Tabling, Handouts, Posters, Table Cards, Blackboard

Opportunities to encourage students to vote in the days leading up to Election Day will be arranged with the goal of getting students excited to vote. From bathroom stall posters to electronic scrolling in Blackboard, students will receive messaging to get out and vote.

Voting Challenge

We will explore partnering with the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, which serves all 23 Ohio community colleges, to establish and participate in an annual "All Ohio" voting challenge competition. The annual "Big Ten Voting Challenge" among four-year colleges and universities in the Big Ten would be the model for our efforts that will focus on community colleges in Ohio.



V.

Autumn 2020 Calendar of Events

August 1-27 – New Student Orientation voter registration efforts

August 31 – Launch Columbus State Student Democratic Engagement website

August 31-September 5 – Week of Welcome student voter registration tables

August 31-November 3 – Student assistance with voter information

September 17 – U.S. Constitution Day events

September 21-25 – Political Engagement week

September 22 - National Voter Registration Day events

September 28-October 5 – Student communications about last day for voter registration

October 5 – Last day to register to vote for general election

October 6-November 2 – Early voting period with ongoing voter education

October 6-November 3 – Ohio Community Colleges Voting Challenge

October 26-November 3 - Student communications about general election voting

October 31 – Absentee ballot requests due

November 3 – Election Day

VI. Longer-Term Goals and Projects

In addition to our initial plan for 2020-2021, the Student Democratic Engagement Advisory Committee is considering longer-term goals and projects. This list will remain fluid as we continue to assess current projects and receive additional feedback from the larger college community.

We believe the topic of democratic engagement is another educational opportunity to engage students to become well-rounded leaders in our community.

Many of the activities that we listed for the immediate semesters could become ongoing activities in the future. For example, updating materials when necessary to continue to utilize and have a presence at New Student Orientation. Encouraging student groups and college organizations to remind members of civic engagement could be done on a yearly basis. Similarly with each of our activities part of our assessment at the end will be considering how best we can continue these events in the future.

We also recognize that our ongoing efforts could be better supported with more financial support and a permanent Student Democratic Engagement Office. With this in mind, we will begin to explore additional avenues to provide specific funding for both programs and staff as opposed to relying on current budgets which are also designated for many priorities and activities. This funding could be dedicated to the creation, maintenance, and assessment of these democratic engagement efforts. With democratic engagement tied to our vision, mission, and values, we believe there could be an increase in institutional financial support.

VII. Plan Evaluation

The Student Democratic Engagement Advisory Committee views our plan as a living document. To that end, we engage in continuous evaluation of our efforts and measure the progress of our work. These important steps will allow us to adjust our plan in real time to maximize our impact on student democratic engagement.

Our evaluation methods include:

- Holding at least one committee meeting each month;
- Utilizing Columbus State's NSLVE baseline data to determine:
 - increases in voter registration among our students;
 - increases in the number of contacts with our students;
 - relative comparisons with other community colleges using NSLVE;
- Conducting debriefings and anonymous surveys after every event;
- Publishing event summaries for review with the Columbus State community;
- Completing and submitting the Voter Friendly Campus Report by January 31, 2021.

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