

Columbus State University 2022 All In Action Plan

Executive Summary

Columbus State University is a diverse non-partisan sector of students that represent all political groups, organizations, and the student body. All In committee plans to promote student civic engagement, political literacy, and political involvement through a series of events and campaign projects. This committee strives to enhance the ability of all students to understand the political system, allowing them to gain a stronger comprehension of how the U.S. political system was designed. We aim to display how politics affects students' lives and how they can make a change in the future. We seek to explain political processes, including elections, policies, and other domestic issues. We function as a resource for Columbus State University students to understand U.S. politics without bias or inaccuracy.

Background

The Columbus State University All In committee was created in 2019. The committee was designed to develop a campus wide initiative to promote and encourage political literacy and civic engagement amongst the student body. Recognizing the lack of political awareness of many students, our committee centered itself to identify ways to improve how students see politics. Not only changing their perspective of politics in general, but clarifying parts of the system so that students are able to reach their own conclusions in discovering how they view politics and find their own ideologies.

Leadership

Jarrett Huckaby - Chair
Jordan Allen - Co-Chair
Savannah Wilder - Secretary
Chloe McArdle & William Keen - Staff Advisor
Muscogee County Board of Elections - Resource
New Georgia Project - Resource
CSU College of Letters and Sciences - Resource

Landscape

Established in 1958, Columbus College began serving students as a small entity, not yet accredited as a four year college. Progressing in 1965, the Regents approved the institution's application to become a four-year college. Following approval, Columbus College established itself as the home of the mighty rebels. The rebel mascot paraded in after the first successful four-year graduating class in 1970, masters and specialist degrees were soon added to the college. During those years, Columbus College had a completely different philosophy and has since changed. In 1996 Columbus College became Columbus State University, and is now home to the mighty Cougars. Now, Columbus State University philosophy is focused on diversity, inclusion, and an emphasis on empowerment and developing leadership. As an institution that heavily focuses on developing students as future leaders, it also empowers them to take charge in political activism, and political literacy. As a Committee we understand the campus climate and the low voter engagement in midterm elections. In the presidential election of 2020, CSU had around 4,796 students actually vote, compared to the midterm elections of 2018, CSU had around 3,373 students actually vote. We also see a lower number of

Undergraduates voting in midterm elections as in 2020 3,834 students voted, compared to 2,609 in 2018. The same thing can be said about Graduates students who have 962 students vote in 2020, compared to 763 in 2018. The same trend can be seen in almost all fields of study. We understand the historically lower voter turnout for midterm elections at CSU, and plan on assessing student voter knowledge by means of an initial Voter Engagement Survey. We also plan on increasing voter participation by stressing the importance of midterm elections to students and helping them to understand the resources available to effectively vote in the Fall.

Mission

The mission of Columbus State University is to cultivate a politically active student body that is capable of not only understanding, but acting on their political ideologies. It is our desire to help students develop their critical thinking skills by supplying accurate, non-partisan information in which the student is able to think for themselves. Creating a politically literate campus will allow students to become engaged in the political process and potentially develop future leaders. Our committee strives to also create an environment in which students feel comfortable in voicing their opinions, ideas, and solutions to various political scenarios. Fostering a campus that allows not only freedom of speech but one that supports having healthy dialogues which increase both political knowledge and understanding. Allowing students to become confident in their ideologies and willing to take action on their beliefs in a productive way.

Ballot Access

Recognizing that Columbus State University is not an authorized polling location, and noting Georgia's voting policies, our committee plans to promote ballot access in a strategic manner. First our committee plans to increase ballot access by addressing voter registration. Through increasing the amount of students registered to vote, a greater number of college students will be able to receive ballot access in times of an election. Secondly, our committee plans to inform students of voter requirements when they are to go to the polls. This includes but is not limited to, voter registration, voter identification, ballot previews, and voter verification. Our committee also plans to have a detailed list of where students can vote making sure to cover locations near both of our campuses. Another important topic our committee plans to cover is absentee voting. Which is key information for our students who are from out of state, highlighting a way they can vote in the upcoming midterms. This not only improves their confidence and willingness to vote as they are effectively prepared, but it also reduces the chance that students may be denied access to polling locations.

Voter Turnout

In order to increase voter turnout, Columbus State University plans to use this committee as a tool in educating and encouraging students to vote. Columbus State student voter turnout relies on voter confidence and understanding the system in which they are working in. This committee plans to address these issues by creating educational events and small projects that teach students how the political process works. Also having a source that includes all the information so those who cannot come to events are able to have access to the same material. By connecting with different groups on campus we hope to create channels of information. Our committee is working to better inform communities within the college that were underserved, underrepresented, and lack in resources and knowledge. When there is a greater understanding, there is a greater willingness to take action. By providing students with the

information, helping them understand it, and giving them the tools and means to act on their own beliefs, there will be an increase in student voter turnout.

Goals

We recognize the complexities in which the United States political system is currently in, and acknowledging the overwhelming amount of news spread through multiple forms, the primary long term goal of this committee is to simplify politics for our students. The overwhelming amount of information and the insecurity of knowing whether or not the information provided is accurate causes many students to either stress or become frustrated when discussing politically related topics. In order to reduce this issue, Columbus State will first strive to simplify political information so that it is understandable for the students of Columbus State University. By decreasing the amount of information thrown at students and evaluating sources for accurate news articles, our committee acts as a filter for students to interpret political information for themselves without causing strains. Have a public source of nonpartisan information on each candidate that goes through their ideals and platform. In addition, this will help students to become more politically engaged as they are better able and comfortable in the facts they receive. Thus making them more likely to discuss politics with other students, and develop a cycle of effective political dialogue. Columbus State not only wishes to increase student political literacy, but also strives to make students politically active. With this our committee sets our short term goal, to increase registered voters amongst the student body. Following educating students on the political process, the simplest form of political activism would be to exercise their right to vote. In order to do so, students must first be registered voters within the state they reside. To increase student voter participation within upcoming elections, it is important to note complications which we expect to face. Being that many students of Columbus State University do not reside within the Columbus or Muscogee County area, students may register on campus, but must vote within their designated districts. Recognizing Georgia's strict voter fraud prevention laws, students will be expected to vote within their home districts as shown when they register to vote. Election day voting also serves as a barrier in which many students may procrastinate in voting. By doing so, students are forced to wait in typically long lines, brace for unforeseen weather, and potentially be denied the opportunity to vote with no time to make the needed corrections. In addition, other barriers for student voting include proper voter registration and completion within the given time, and identification to be shown at polling locations. These serve as barriers to our efforts as the voting process, while highly secure, is also confusing and excessive to many students attending Columbus State University. By increasing the amount of students that are registered voters on campus, we in turn increase the amount of students that become politically active through voting. To further encourage students to become politically active, our committee strives to promote a greater campus discussion of politics. Students are given the right to express their beliefs on campus and our committee would like to present opportunities for students to do so in a safe and open-minded environment. By engaging in open dialogue students will be able to become comfortable in speaking what they find to be important in relation to the political system. It also offers a time for other students to learn about different perspectives while discussing their differences in an appropriate manner. Our committee hopes to see over fifty percent of students registered to vote in certain areas, colleges, and fields of study, which our committee feels is a plausible goal.

Reporting

We want to make sure all aspects of our efforts to achieve our goals are public for anyone to see. In the same digital source that will contain our information on the nominees and their

platforms we will include this information. Throughout the webpages we will include sections on the action plan, data we have collected, and reports that have been completed. By having all this information public the students are able to know the plan and understand what we are doing.

Strategy

To combat low midterm voter turnout, we understand that increasing political literacy and voter knowledge is essential. Using non-partisan information we will update and inform students on ballot information, candidate information, and essential election day information. As it stands more students are willing to vote in presidential elections than midterm elections as they deem them more important. To remedy this, we will inform students on the importance of midterm elections through a variety of channels including advertising materials, emails, Cougar Connection, CSUInvolve, and SGA events geared towards voter knowledge and political literacy. As we empower students with a knowledge base, it's integral to get them registered to vote. Our committee plans to implement several voter registration drives in the Fall in which all members and facilitators are properly trained and can assist students in registration. We will also inform them on potential ways to check their registration status via Georgia Online Voter Registration. We will also partner with state-wide, non-partisan voter registration campaigns such as New Georgia Project's Agenda for Young Georgians, which focuses on civic engagement, voter knowledge, and voter registration for young voters. We will work with the New Georgia Project with a series of social activities aimed at capturing the young voters attention. Hopefully, the result is we make the voter registration process easier for CSU students. To increase voter turnout, we will host a variety of events around campus to make students aware of election day. Informing them of Georgia Online Voter Registration will allow them to find mail-in applications, poll locations, voting locations, and sample ballots. To promote early voting, we will also work in conjunction with Muscogee Co. Board of Elections to help facilitate voting booths on campus. In addition, we plan to post reminders and updates for students as we near election day. To promote engagement beyond this year's midterm and to solidify strong voter knowledge on campus for the future we will continue to work with New Georgia Project as we find more interesting ways to engage students and to promote democratic engagement. We will work internally with the College of Letters and Sciences and its various departments to better understand how we can continue to promote civic engagement on campus.

Evaluation

To better understand the slump in students voting in midterm elections we will evaluate based on a few categorical variables. We will collect information based on Age, Education Level, and Field of Study. We will analyze these variables to see which group of students this action plan effectively helped and which group of students were underrepresented or still had a decrease in the overall voting base. Will also set a secondary endpoint to analyze the effects of the Action Plan as it pertains to individual colleges, and which colleges overall have a lack in registered voters and low voting rate percentage. The committee will also send out surveys pre- and post-elections via Qualtrics to measure the effectiveness of the Action Plan on voter knowledge. Using the given measures, All-In can alter its course of action to better reflect what is most effective from its evaluations.