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. This plan was developed by Jarrett Huckaby and Jordan Allen. The purpose of this plan is to create a more politically involved campus here at Columbus State University. We hope to raise political literacy across both campuses. Our main goal is to have over fifty percent of the student body registered to vote for this midterm election but, we want to continue to raise political literacy for each election. A large reason many people do not vote is the lack of knowledge of politics. This will be accomplished through the use of informational events along with handouts that will have all the information. Columbus State strives itself on the diversity of the campus and its mission to provide a diverse environment.

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 (Student Government Director of Government Affairs) - Chair
Jordan Allen (Student Government President) - Co-Chair
Savannah Wilder - Secretary
Chloe McArdle & William Keen - Staff Advisor
Muscogee County Board of Elections - 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. Our long term goal is seeing a five percent increase of political literacy and engagement each election cycle.

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 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. On a smaller scale we plan to utilize social media to connect with the students. By advertising events and providing information on the election we can slowly raise political literacy. These events will include tablings during lunch and dinner times, educational panels, and a political potluck. The political potluck would be our main event where we have free food and pass out information on the registration process. We would also provide information on all elections from local elections to state elections. We would also work in any events that happen at the moment. We are open to following any possible leads we find during the semester. With our strategy that covers our broad scale down to the campus scale we feel we will be successful with our plan.

 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.

Democratic Engagement Action Plan Rubric

	4 | Established	3 | Progressing	2 | Emerging	1 | Undeveloped
Executive Summary Overview of the action plan explains: 1) Who developed it 2) The purpose of the plan 3) Where the plan will be implemented 4) The goal(s) of the plan 5) The intended duration of the plan 6) How the plan will be implemented.	Overview of action plan includes responses to all 6 of the suggested guiding questions.	Overview of action plan includes responses to 4-5 of the suggested guiding questions.	Overview of action plan includes responses to 1-3 of the suggested guiding questions.	Overview of action plan is not included.
Leadership Description, including names and titles, of the leadership coalition responsible for improving democratic engagement. 5 categories of participation are encouraged: 1) students 2) faculty 3) student affairs 4) community/national organizations 5) local elections office coordination.	A leadership team of all relevant stakeholders (across 5 categories) exists. The team includes academic affairs, student affairs, and students; as well as community partners and/or the local election office. The team includes diverse and marginalized communities.	A leadership team with many relevant stakeholders (across 3-4 categories) exists AND an effort is made to include diverse and marginalized communities.	A leadership team with a few relevant stakeholders (across 1-2 categories) exists, OR is in the process of being formed.	A leadership team has not yet been formed AND plans to develop one are not specified.
Commitment Description of institutional commitment to improving democratic engagement.	According to the plan, institutional commitment is visible and widely communicated – internally and externally. It is woven into the culture of the institution and is clearly reflected in the institution's mission, learning outcomes, curriculum, and co-curriculum.	According to the plan, institutional commitment is explicit, but is marginal – it is not woven into the culture of the institution, and appears in silos.	Institutional commitment is implied in the plan, but it is not explicitly described.	Institutional commitment is not apparent in the action plan.
Landscape Analysis of student data, campus climate, and current institutional efforts for improving democratic engagement.	The plan communicates a comprehensive understanding of its students, campus efforts, and climate; AND is using this information to inform its strategy.	The plan communicates an understanding of either its students, campus efforts, and/or climate; and may be using this information to inform its strategy.	The plan communicates that a landscape analysis is being developed.	The plan does not communicate that a landscape analysis exists or is being developed.
Goals Description of institutional short-term (e.g., by next election) and long-term (e.g., in next decade or two election cycles) desired democratic engagement results.	Short-term and long-term democratic engagement goals are described. Goals are also S.M.A.R.T.I.E.: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound, Inclusive, and Equitable.	Short-term AND long-term democratic engagement goals are described.	Only short-term OR long-term democratic engagement goals are described.	Neither short-term nor long-term democratic engagement goals are described.
National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) Free report providing campuses with their actual student registration and voting rates.	Summary AND detailed (e.g., demographic) NSLVE data are described and specific goals based on these data are set.	Either summary OR detailed (e.g., demographic) NSLVE data are described and general voting goals are set.	Participation in NSLVE is mentioned.	Participation in NSLVE is not mentioned.
Strategy Description of institutional efforts to reach desired democratic engagement results.	Strategy includes short-term tactics and long-term strategies. Tactics include a description of multiple voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout activities. Long-term strategies seek to make civic learning and democratic engagement an established part of the institution's curriculum and co-curriculum and go beyond the election.	Strategy includes short-term tactics. Tactics include a description of voter registration, voter education, and voter engagement activities. Activities occur inside and outside the classroom, but are not described as a systematic part of the curriculum or defined as long-term strategies.	Strategy includes short-term tactics. Tactics include description of voter registration, voter education, and/or voter engagement activities, but not all three. Activities predominantly occur outside the classroom. Long-term strategies are not described.	Institutional efforts to reach desired results in terms of voter registration, voter education, and voter engagement are not described.
Reporting Description of institutional efforts to make plans, data, and reports public.	Action plan, data, and reports are shared on campus AND are publicly available.	Two or more of the action plan, data, and reports are shared on campus and/or publicly.	One or more of the action plan, data, and reports is available either on campus or publicly, OR a plan to do so is being developed.	Institutional efforts to share plans, data, and reports or to make them public are not described.
Evaluation Description of institutional efforts to evaluate the action plan, implementation, efforts, and results.	The evaluation strategy describes how and what information will be collected and analyzed as well as how the results will be used to make improvements. Includes more than just looking at NSLVE data. Evaluation happens before, during, and after plan implementation. Evaluation strategy crosses several categories of participation from the Leadership Section.	The evaluation strategy describes how and what information will be collected and analyzed. Includes more than just looking at NSLVE data. Evaluation happens during and after plan implementation. Evaluation strategy crosses 1 category of participation from the Leadership Section.	The evaluation strategy describes what information will be collected. Evaluation mostly consists of NSLVE breakdown data. Evaluation is limited to post-election information.	Institutional efforts to evaluate the action plan, implementation, efforts, and results are not described.

Democratic Engagement Action Plan Rubric

DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT = CIVIC LEARNING + POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT + STUDENT VOTER PARTICIPATION

This rubric was developed to supplement the publication, Strengthening American Democracy: A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voter Participation Among College Students (3rd Ed.).

Language in the rubric can and should be adapted to the language of the individual campus.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	is any act intended to improve or influence a community through deliberation, collaboration, and reciprocal relationships and community-building.
CIVIC LEARNING	is promoting the education of students for engaged citizenship through democratic participation in their communities, respect and appreciation of diversity, applied learning, and social responsibility.
CURRICULUM	is an academic course of study; the knowledge students are expected to learn in the classroom.
DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT	is a combination of promoting the education of students for engaged participation through democratic mechanisms and principles in their communities, respect and appreciation of diversity, applied learning, and social responsibility.
DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION	is civic engagement that involves democratic processes (e.g., when an organization puts a matter to a vote and there is individual participation).
FULL PARTICIPATION	this occurs when all students are asked to participate in the democratic process
NATIONAL STUDY OF LEARNING, VOTING, AND ENGAGEMENT (NSLVE)	offers colleges and universities an opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates and, for interested campuses, a closer examination of their campus climate for political learning and engagement and correlations between specific student learning experiences and voting. https://idhe.tufts.edu/nslve
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	is civic engagement that emphasizes governmental institutions and/or power (e.g., voting in a local, state, or federal election). Participating in the political process also occurs by making one's own opinions and beliefs known outside of the electoral process (e.g., protesting, campaigning, performing jury duty, running for office, community organizing).
S.M.A.R.T.I.E.	is an acronym used to guide goal-setting: Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.
VOTER REGISTRATION	is the process of successfully completing the application to be able to cast a ballot in an election.
VOTER EDUCATION	is the curricular and co-curricular activities offered to students and designed to facilitate civic learning, political engagement, and increase participation in elections.
VOTER MOBILIZATION	the act of implementing tactics to encourage potential voters to follow through with becoming voters.