

# Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) Democratic Engagement Action Plan

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## Executive Summary

Since joining The Democracy Commitment in 2011, the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) has become increasingly committed to reducing apathy, increasing community engagement and student voter registration rates, and graduating civic-minded students prepared to solve the community's, the nation and the world's most pressing challenges related to enhancing democracy and social justice. CCAC has four on-ground campuses, a virtual campus and three college centers. All students regardless of whether they are enrolled at one of the campuses, centers or online, are encouraged to participate in community and civic engagement activities. CCAC is proud to participate in initiatives such as the **ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge** and the **Campus Vote Project**, both of which empower colleges and universities to excel in nonpartisan student democratic engagement.

### 1. Who developed the plan:

Under the leadership of Dr. Jacqueline M. Cavalier, Professor of History and the College-wide Civic Engagement Coordinator, this nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed with input from the members of the College's Civic Engagement Team that is composed of students, faculty, and administrative staff from each of the College's campuses and centers. It is supported by student organizations and key stakeholders across the college.

### 2. Purpose of the plan:

The purpose of this plan is to foster an environment of civic learning and democratic engagement at CCAC. The plan aims to increase voter registration, enhance voter education, and promote active participation in democratic processes among students. While the main purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 Presidential election, this two-year plan was drafted also to provide a forum to reflect upon the outcome of the election, prepare for the inauguration in January 2025, and discuss concepts related to civic participation moving forward after the presidential election and subsequent inauguration. In addition, this plan will serve as a guide during the 2025-2026 academic year to better educate students on the significance of midterm, state, and local elections in shaping their communities and future.

### 3. Where the plan will be implemented:

This plan will be implemented across all CCAC campuses and centers and through the

institution's virtual learning environments, targeting both in-class and extracurricular activities.

#### 4. Goals of the plan:

The immediate goal is to increase student voter registration and participation in the upcoming election cycle. Long-term goals include a continuation of embedding civic learning into the curriculum and co-curricular activities to cultivate lifelong civic engagement and responsibility.

Our coalition of internal team members with help from our community partners will inform the goals outlined in this plan. CCAC's commitment to civic and community engagement is reinforced by the appointment of a college-wide Civic Engagement Coordinator to guide and oversee all related activities. The creation of this position, as an extension of the AFT Local 2067 Collective Bargaining agreement between the CCAC Faculty and Administration, is further evidence of consistency with respect to our goals and activities. The Civic engagement Coordinator serves a two-year term and must reapply at the conclusion of the term. Beginning in fall, 2024, civic and community engagement activities were heavily focused on encouraging and increasing student voter registration, as well as voter education in preparation of the presidential election in November 2024.

#### 5. Intended duration of the plan:

The plan covers the current election cycle (fall 2024) with a long-term horizon extending over the next 2 years to ensure sustained democratic engagement through the midterm election cycle (fall 2026).

#### 6. How the plan will be implemented:

The plan will be implemented through a series of strategic initiatives including voter registration drives, educational workshops, and election-related events. Collaboration with student organizations and the use of NSLVE data will inform its execution.

## Leadership

### Leadership team:

The Civic Engagement Leadership Team includes representatives from the faculty, student organizations, staff, and administration (see Appendix). The team is committed to inclusivity, making a conscious effort to involve underrepresented and marginalized communities to ensure diverse perspectives.

In addition to a commitment to student voter education and voter registration, the Civic Engagement Team works to increase civic learning and democratic engagement by identifying programs and services that will increase student involvement with legislative processes; working to increase efforts to improve the social, economic, political, and educational opportunities for students experiencing material needs; and/or providing services to improve the lives of citizens in the communities served by the College.

### Diversity and Inclusion:

A key goal is to ensure that all voices, particularly those from marginalized and underrepresented groups, are involved in the decision-making process and engagement activities. The team will reach out to various student organizations that represent diverse backgrounds and communities.

As reinforced by CCAC President, Dr. Quintin Bullock, "CCAC has long been committed to fostering a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion, and this is reflected in both our founding principles and institutional priorities." Evidence of our commitment to creating and sustaining inclusive and safe environments where members can learn and work without the fear of discrimination and inequality is found in **CCAC's "Five Commitments"** which include:

- A Commitment to Care
- A Commitment to Serve the Whole Community
- A Commitment to Build a Culture of Equity on Campus
- A Commitment to Identify & Dismantle Campus Structures That Breed Disparities & Then Redesign the College for Equity
- A Commitment to Fund What Matters Most

## Commitment

### Institutional Commitment:

CCAC is dedicated to promoting democratic engagement and civic learning as a core part of its institutional mission. This is the fourth action plan has developed for ALL IN and this plan aligns with the college's broader commitment to fostering social responsibility and developing informed, engaged citizens. CCAC President, Dr. Quintin Bullock, signing on to the ALL IN Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation, which makes visible and public their commitment and the commitment of CCAC to nonpartisan electoral engagement.

### Civic Learning and Engagement:

The college has already integrated aspects of civic learning into the curriculum through academics and extracurricular activities such as debates, panel discussions, and town halls. The institution aims to expand these offerings and continue to reinforce civic engagement as a key institutional value.

### ***CCAC's Civic Purpose***

The Community College of Allegheny County reinforces its Civic Purpose on the [Civic Engagement webpage](#):

CCAC's civic purpose is to cultivate a sense of community by:

- Promoting intentional service activities for students, staff and community.
- Bringing awareness of the issues associated with social justice and their impact on democracy.
- Helping students develop civil literacy as well as self-awareness as global citizens.

- Providing students with the necessary resources and civic education for them to better understand that their vote is their voice.

### ***Learning Outcomes and Relationship to General Education Curriculum***

The Community College of Allegheny County makes civic engagement central to its understanding of liberal education, including among its General Education Outcomes one specifically focused on Culture, Society, and Citizenship:

#### **Culture, Society and Citizenship**

Describe and explain behaviors and beliefs of various populations throughout the United States of America and the world.

1. Discuss the role of diversity and equity in the context of the United States of America and the world.
2. Review social and cultural conventions within their historical contexts.
3. Examine the interdependence of people in their respective environments.
4. Examine artistic and aesthetic values of various cultures.
5. Explain the nature of a democratic society.
6. Articulate the values of civic engagement, community involvement and the role of service.

#### ***Co-Curriculum***

CCAC's formal commitments are reflected in the activities of our past and present civic engagement efforts. And these efforts are proven to be successful. The Community College of Allegheny County received a Silver Seal from the **All IN Campus Democracy Challenge** for achieving a student voting rate between **60% and 69%** in the 2020 Presidential Election and a Gold Seal for a voting rate between **40% and 49%** in the 2022 midterm elections (as against the 2022 voting rate of 30.6% for all institutions participating in the challenge. Here are some highlights of plans for Fall 2024:

- In partnership with community organizations such as the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh, the Top Ladies of Distinction, and Pearls of Sisterhood (just to name a few), student voter registration drives have consistently been conducted on each of the four CCAC campuses as well as the centers in fall 2024. These efforts are on-going at the time this action plan was drafted with registration drives scheduled throughout the month of October until the last day to register in Pennsylvania, October 21.
- The CCAC Honors Program is hosting a panel discussion, **VOTE101**, on November 5, 2024, related to the upcoming presidential election. This panel discussion aims to educate voters on various aspects such as polling locations, how the Electoral College works, and an immigrant's perspective on voting in the United States.
- Because participating in our democracy is something to celebrate, CCAC has been selected as one of only five flagship community colleges by Civic Nation and the *When We All Vote* initiative, in partnership with MTV, to host a **Party at the Polls!** This event will bring CCAC and the larger community together and make sure all voices are heard in this pivotal election. The event is strategically scheduled for Monday, October 21 which is the last day to register to vote in Pennsylvania and will feature live music, free food, voter education and voter registration, student-led activities such as games and other election-related activities.

- The Civic Engagement coordinator in partnership with the CCAC Marketing and IT Departments, developed a “[Vote 2024: Make Your Voice Heard](#)” repository of resources related to voter registration, voter education, ballot access, and “get out the vote” that are accessible to CCAC students, faculty, staff, and administration directly (as well as the larger community) through the CCAC homepage, the CCAC Blackboard learning platform, and through the CCAC college-wide library system.
  - Developed by the CCAC librarians, the [Election 2024-Vote Lib Guide](#) contains a variety of resources to assist students with voter registration including (but not limited to):
    - PA online voter registration
    - “How To” instructions from the League of Women Voters Of Greater Pittsburgh
    - FAQs related to voter registration, deadlines for mail-in and absentee ballots, and polling place locations.
  - The CCAC *Vote 2024* webpage included a variety of educational resources related to government, politics, and specifically, voting. These resources include:
    - Fact from Fiction” – a list of voting resources from the League of Women Voters.
    - Find your legislator and your polling place.
    - Learn more about absentee and mail-in ballots.
    - Student Poll Worker information from Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

## Landscape Analysis

### 2024 General Election:

Tuesday, November 5, 2024 is General Presidential Election Day. Polling places in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania are open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm, voters in line as of 8:00 pm on Election Day will be allowed to vote. Mail-in and absentee ballots must be received by 8:00 pm on Election Day in order to be counted. Voters may only drop off their own ballots. A completed ballot cannot be dropped off at a polling place ([Allegheny County Elections Division](#)). It is worth noting that [CCAC’s Homewood-Brushton Center](#) is ballot return and satellite voting site.

### Key Dates – Allegheny County, Pennsylvania:

1. Voter Registration Deadline:

October 21, 2024 – Last day to register to vote in the 2024 General Election.

2. Mail-in & Absentee Ballot Request Deadline:

October 29, 2024 (5:00 PM) – Deadline to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot.

3. Mail-in & Absentee Ballot Return Deadline:

November 5, 2024 (8:00 PM) – Deadline for county election offices to receive mail-in and absentee ballots.

#### 4. Early Voting:

October 21 - November 5, 2024 – Early voting period for Pennsylvania voters (exact dates may vary by county).

#### 5. General Election Day:

November 5, 2024 – Election Day, polls open from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM.

#### 6. Voter Registration Check:

It is recommended to check voter registration status ahead of October 21, 2024 to ensure eligibility.

### **Location & Geography:**

Allegheny County, located in southwestern Pennsylvania, is the second-most populous county in the state. The county seat is Pittsburgh, the second-largest city in the Commonwealth. Allegheny County is part of the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Area and is known for its historical significance as a center of steel production, though the economy has diversified in recent decades to include healthcare, education, technology, and financial services.

### **Population:**

As of 2023, Allegheny County has an estimated population of around 1.2 million people. The county is home to a diverse population, with Pittsburgh serving as a hub for culture, business, and higher education. While the overall population has slightly declined in recent decades, the area remains a vibrant, urban-suburban community with strong regional ties.

## **Key Demographics**

### **Age Distribution:**

The median age in Allegheny County is approximately 40 years, reflecting a balanced mix of younger adults, middle-aged professionals, and an aging population.

### **Racial and Ethnic Composition:**

- White (Non-Hispanic): ~75%
- Black or African American: ~13%
- Asian: ~4%
- Hispanic or Latino: ~3%

The county has seen an increase in its racial and ethnic diversity over the years, with various immigrant communities enriching its cultural fabric.

### **Educational Attainment:**

About 92% of residents aged 25 or older have a high school diploma, and over 40% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. This high level of educational attainment is bolstered by the

presence of numerous colleges and universities, including CCAC, the University of Pittsburgh, and Carnegie Mellon University.

### **Income and Employment:**

The median household income in Allegheny County is approximately \$65,000, though there are notable income disparities across the region. The economy is driven by healthcare, education, technology, and financial services, with large employers like UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center), PNC Financial Services, and Highmark Health headquartered in the county.

### **Unemployment and Poverty:**

The unemployment rate hovers around 4-5%, aligning closely with national averages. Approximately 12-13% of residents live below the poverty line, a figure that highlights the ongoing economic challenges for certain communities within the county.

### **Student Population:**

With CCAC as one of the largest community colleges in Pennsylvania, Allegheny County's student population is substantial. The college serves over 40,000 students annually, many of whom are first-generation college students or come from underserved backgrounds. 82% of CCAC graduates live and work in the Pittsburgh region. Since 2000, CCAC has served 612,047 students, of whom 452,020 were Allegheny County residents—45% of all county residents 18 years of age and older. [CCAC – At A Glance](#) provides important student data that helps to inform our Civic Engagement plan.

### **Cultural and Civic Engagement:**

Allegheny County is also a center for civic engagement, with a growing emphasis on voter participation and community involvement. Institutions such as the Community College of Allegheny County play a vital role in fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry, particularly through initiatives like voter registration drives and civic education programs.

### **Goals**

- CCAC's 2022 action plan included a goal of **80% voter registration and 75% voter turnout for the 2024 Presidential election**. Once this data is collected and reported, we will evaluate our successes and failures in this regard.
- Achieve a 47% to 50% **voter participation rate** within 2 years (midterm 2026), as measured by NSLVE data. Given our 2022 rate of 42%, a 5-8% increase is ambitious but achievable with strong engagement efforts.
- Achieve a 77% to 80% **voter registration rate** within 2 years (midterm 2026), as measured by NSLVE data. To push beyond our 2020 peak of 76.7%, this target would require comprehensive voter registration drives and campaigns.
- Student Data and Campus Climate: A college-wide survey of student attitudes toward voting and civic participation will be conducted to assess the current



political climate and levels of engagement. The survey will help identify barriers to student participation, including lack of awareness, accessibility, or civic education.

- Analysis of Existing Efforts: Current voter registration efforts are largely faculty-led, with major events tied to national election cycles. The analysis will also focus on how the broader political climate may influence student engagement, and how those trends can inform future strategies.
- Establish an annual '**Civics and Civility Week**' event preferable during the spring semester to engage students in civic learning and responsibility beyond the election cycle.

## National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

NSLVE Participation:

CCAC is actively participating in the [NSLVE](#) to obtain data on student voter registration and voting rates. This data will be used to track progress in achieving the institution's democratic engagement goals.

Data Usage:

NSLVE data will be analyzed to identify which student demographics are less engaged and to tailor outreach efforts accordingly. The goal is to use this data to increase voter turnout among underrepresented student populations.

## Strategy

Tactics for Voter Registration:

As noted in the previous section, CCAC will conduct a series of voter registration drives throughout the year, particularly during student orientation and major campus events. A variety of tools such as [TurboVote](#) will be used to facilitate online voter registration.

Voter Education:

The college will host workshops and panel discussions focused on educating students about the voting process, including how to register, where to vote, and the importance of local and national elections. These will be led by faculty members, students, external experts and community partners. In addition, students will be recruited to serve as Democracy Fellows through the Campus Vote Project initiative. Two CCAC students have served in the past and our goal is to recruit more students not only so they may directly benefit from the experience and financial award of this position, but to help foster voter education among their peers at CCAC. Peer to peer communication in those student-led initiatives often help to incite larger participation from the student body.

In addition, CCAC employs technology in a variety of ways such as the Civic Engagement webpage, the Vote 2024: Make Your Voice Heard webpage, the Election 2024 LibGuide, all CCAC social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok as well as weekly electronic communication from Student Life and Engagement to assist students and members of the College community. The CCAC Civic Engagement webpage also highlights



participation in Civic Holidays such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, or Vote Early Day,

#### Voter Engagement:

To increase turnout, CCAC has organized campus-wide events like debate watch parties, mock elections, and open forums where students can discuss political issues. Social media campaigns and partnerships with local civic organizations will further promote student involvement.

### **Reporting and Evaluation:**

We plan to employ a variety of measures to assess the effectiveness of our efforts. Among the data we hope to collect are:

- Participation rates in civic engagement activities
- Evaluations from selected civic engagement activities
- Voter registration and voting data from the NSLVE
- Individual meetings and in-depth interviews with key participants in the process
- General Education assessment data

#### Sharing Plans and Data:

The action plan, along with data on student engagement and voting rates, will be made publicly available on the college's Civic Engagement website, and shared with the campus community via newsletters and announcements. This will ensure transparency and encourage campus-wide participation. In addition, our action plan will be posted on our CCAC page on the ALL IN website along with the NSLVE report. A link to the CCAC ALL IN page is available on the CCAC Civic Engagement webpage.

#### Public Engagement:

Reports will also be shared with external partners, including local civic organizations, to foster a collaborative approach to democratic engagement within the broader community.

#### Evaluation Strategy:

Evaluation of the plan will be ongoing and will include both quantitative (e.g., voter registration rates, NSLVE data) and qualitative (e.g., student feedback) methods. Assessments will be conducted before, during, and after elections to adjust strategies as needed.

#### Continuous Improvement:

The results of each evaluation will be used to refine the plan for future elections, ensuring that the college is responsive to student needs and changes in the political landscape. Regular reviews will be conducted by the Civic Engagement Leadership Team at the conclusion of the Fall 2024 semester and the Spring 2025 semester. This information will inform plans for the 2025-2026 academic year and those activities that are on the horizon for the 2026 midterm election cycle.

**Appendix**  
**CCAC Civic Engagement Team**

Dr. Quintin Bullock, CCAC President  
Dr. Stephen Wells, Provost & Chief Academic Officer  
Dr. Irma Hunt, Vice President and Dean of Faculty  
Dr. Valery Keibler, Academic Dean, Humanities, Math, and Social Sciences  
Dr. Simeon Saunders, Academic Dean, Humanities, Math, and Social Sciences  
Dr. Ketwana Schoos, Vice President, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer  
Dr. Evon Walters, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Community Engagement  
James R. McMahon, Chief Executive Officer, CCAC Educational Foundation  
Elizabeth Johnston, Public Relations & Marketing Executive Director  
Noel Knille, Vice-President and Chief Facilities Officer  
Bonita Richardson, Chief of Staff and Assistant to the Board of Trustees  
Dr. Jacqueline Cavalier, Professor of History and Civic Engagement Coordinator  
Dr. Ebony English, Endowed Professor for Teaching and Learning  
Dr. Srujana Kajulik, Professor of Political Science and Honors Program Coordinator  
Dr. Laurie Sprankle, Professor of History  
Dr. Aaron Hoffman, Professor of History  
Prof. David Manel, Professor of Political Science  
Prof. Drew Van't Land, Professor of Humanities  
Dr. Tiffany Evans, Dean of Students and Student Success  
Daniel Duffy, Dean of Students and Student Engagement  
Benjamin Williams, Director of Student Life and Engagement  
Andrew Thames, Student Engagement Specialist  
Beenah Moshay, Vice President of Assessment, Institutional Effectiveness and Research  
Elora Cunningham, Librarian  
Donald Breitbarth, Full Time Academic Advisor & AFT COPE Representative  
Dr. Stacey Warfield, ITS Director of Learning and Development  
CCAC Student Representatives (TBA each semester)

## References

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[CCAC at a Glance](#)