

# Community College of Allegheny County

**Democratic Engagement Plan, 2022-2023**  
All-In Challenge



OUR GOAL IS YOUR SUCCESS.

# Executive Summary

CCAC has been a participant in this program for approximately ten years. Over the course of that time, civic engagement—particularly as measured by voter participation in the NSVE—has expanded dramatically. We are proud of the efforts that have led to that increase and seek to maintain and expand on them.

However, we also seek to expand our efforts beyond voting. For example, we are looking at programming on how to work with elected officials. Getting someone into office is important, but knowing how the legislative process works, and how to work with elected officials at a variety of levels, is also significant. So, this proposal focuses on maintaining and solidifying the actions we have taken to improve student voter participation, but it also seeks to take our program beyond simply voting and into a greater participation with the political process and our political structures.

We address these issues through enhanced programmatic efforts. So, there is a focus on maintaining voter registration and mobilization efforts that have so far proven effective. Then there is a focus on expanding our efforts to greater participation in political systems outside electoral activities.

# CCAC's Engagement in the All-In Challenge

The Community College of Allegheny County is a regional community college with approximately 13,000 annual enrollment. This includes full-time and part-time students who have matriculated and are working on some kind of academic or work-force-related credential.

CCAC has been part of the All-In *Democracy Commitment*, since 2011. The key aspects of CCAC's commitment to these projects have revolved around engagement with voter registration and mobilization. These efforts have been highly successful. From 2016 through 2020, voter registration has improved from 73% to 77%, and voter participation has increased from 58 to 63%. There is definitely room for improvement, and we intend to focus on increasing both of those numbers

In the future, CCAC intends to maintain a focus on its voter registration and mobilization efforts while also increasing voter education efforts. Our emphasis is on a broader definition of democracy, such as issues surrounding engaging with elected officials and organizing within local communities will see an expanded emphasis. While the emphasis on registering and mobilizing voters is central, engaging student-citizens beyond the ballot box will be an increasingly important aspect of the Civic Engagement project's work.

# CCAC Civic Engagement

Civic Engagement at CCAC is divided into the following areas:

- Promoting intentional service activities for students, faculty, staff, and community members
- Bringing awareness of the issues associated with social justice and their impact on democracy
- Helping students develop civic literacy as well as self-awareness as global citizens
- Providing students with the necessary resources and civic education for them to better understand their roles as citizens, both in the voting booth and in larger society

While voting is central, Civic Engagement extends beyond the vote. CCAC's Civic Engagement Program is keeping its emphasis on voting, but expands it to a broader ideal of citizenship.

# CCAC Civic Engagement Commitment

The College maintains a commitment to the community and social engagement. One of our strategic goals explicitly incorporates the values of civic engagement:

- Expand opportunities for students and members of the community to engage in civic, equity, and other matters integral to the interests of the wider community.

We actively seek to engage our students with the issues that shape the world around them, both through our curriculum and extra-curricular programming activities. Additionally, we seek to provide them with the skills to address those issues.

This is included in our curriculum, particularly the Citizenship, Culture and Society standards for General Education.

# CCAC's Landscape

CCAC is a multi-campus/center community college. There are four primary campuses and an additional four learning centers. We serve a wide range of students. There are two primary ways to think of our student body. First, there are those that might be considered “traditional students,” those who are pursuing credits for transfer to baccalaureate institutions. On the other side we have, “career” pathways based less on traditional liberal arts models and more on skills development for employment. Both are significant parts of the College.

Within these two student populations, CCAC serves a higher percentage of underrepresented people than live within the county. We serve a higher proportion of lower-income folks, immigrants, and people of color than live in the county. We also serve a significant number of first generation college students. This fits well within our mission. This also means, however, that the student body we serve also tends to mirror underrepresented groups within American society along a variety of measures (especially race and class). These factors also have a tendency to impact participation in the democratic system.

# CCAC's Civic Engagement Team

We are undergoing a period of transition. There has been a significant re-organization at the College over the past year. This includes both the Civic Engagement Coordinator, and our Democracy Ambassadors. Additionally, the College has seen significant transitions in personnel, and Covid has affected operations.

The Civic Engagement Team is being re-constructed and re-consolidated given these changing conditions.

In the past, this team has been built from a range of administrators, faculty, and students. It is being reconstructed under the guidance of Dr. Jeffrey Langstraat, Professor of Sociology and Civic Education Coordinator, and Dr. Mary Lou Kennedy, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management. Past members have included President Quintin Bullock, DDS, and Provost Stuart Blacklaw, PhD, along with other members of the faculty and our student Democracy Fellows.

# Internal Organizational Partners

In the past, and looking forward, the Civic Education Program at CCAC has collaborated with the following internal organizational partners:

- Campus Student Engagement Offices
- Campus Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittees, and the College's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- The College's Center for Teaching and Learning
- The College's Education Training Advisory Board (linked externally to Allegheny County Human Services)
- The College's Honors Program
- Student Government at each campus
- Phi Theta Kappa (student honor society)

# External Partners

In the past, and looking forward, the Civic Education Program at CCAC has collaborated with the following external organizational partners:

- The League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh
- Allegheny County Elections Division
- Campus Vote Project
- All-In Democracy Challenge
- Americorps/Vista
- Boy Scouts of America/Scouting for Food
- Campus Compact
- Education and Training Advisory Board (Allegheny County Department of Human Services)
- Goodwill of SW Pennsylvania
- Pittsburgh Community Services, Inc.
- Turbovote
- Pittsburgh Area Urban League

# Goals

Here are the goals, what the program intends to accomplish, for the period covering this proposal:

- Increase voter registration among CCAC students
- Increase voter turnout among CCAC students
- Develop robust voter education programming around registration and mobilization
- Increase programming and education about constitutional voting rights and democracy
- Increase programming and education about the issues facing students at CCAC and how they can address those issues via democratic processes (incorporated within other goals)
- Increase the connections between CCAC and the officials elected to represent the communities in which we live, learn, and work

In the slides below, some of these will be dealt with explicitly, some will be incorporated into those more explicit slides. Specific programmatic actions will be listed for each.

# Goal: Increase voter registration among students (and the rest of the College)

According to the most recent All-In Report on voter participation, CCAC has seen a significant increase over the past several years in both voter registration and mobilization. It is, of course, our goal to improve on this trend. To that end:

- We are recruiting new Democracy Fellows, whose primary responsibility will be voter registration.
- We will hold a series of voter registration events, prior to both primary and general elections, to engage students at each of our campus and learning center locations.
- We will make voter registration information easily available to students (as well as faculty and staff), through the campus Civic Education website/blog and regular email blasts.
- Coordinate with local partners on voter registration drives.

# Goal: Increasing Voter Turnout Among CCAC Students (and the rest of the College)

Again, according to All-In data, CCAC students voted in numbers higher than the national average for community colleges. We, of course, want to continue this. To that end:

- CCAC was home to several mail-in/absentee ballot drop-off locations during the 2020 election. (Each campus was a different weekend). The College may consider similar activities in the future.
- Get-out-the-vote efforts will be organized for both primary and general elections.
- Educational events will be scheduled to engage students before elections with the issues that they are concerned with. We are planning student and candidate forums.
- Social media and email blasts are central to ongoing mobilization in these areas.

# Goal: Increase programming and education about constitutional voting rights and democracy

We aim to increase awareness, and hopefully action, around these issues:

- Provide programming on the right to vote and the procedures involved in exercising that right.
- Provide programming on proposed changes to voting regulations and how they will impact citizens' abilities to cast ballots.
- Work with community partners to provide information to the College community on challenges to the ability to participate in the democratic system.

# Goal: Increase programming and education about the issues facing students at CCAC and how they can address those issues via democratic processes

Students, particularly those at community colleges, have particular concerns that are not always addressed. We want students to bring these issues to the fore, and learn how to have an impact on political systems. To those ends, we will

- Provide programming on how to interact with elected officials in order to get issues addressed.
- Provide forums for students to develop a series of issues of importance to them.
- Develop connections between elected officials and CCAC students via programming efforts that will highlight the issues community college students face (we are significantly under represented in elected bodies)

Goal	Actions	Short-Term Outcome	Long-Term Outcome
Increase voter registration	Voter Registration activities. Including: Social media, events on campuses/centers, email blasts	Increase in number of registered voters (NSVE)	Increase in number of registered voters (NSVE)
Increased voter participation	Voting drives; Use of campuses as voting locations; social media; events on campuses/centers	Increased number of voters (NSVE)	Increase in number of voters (NSVE)
Increase programming re: constitutional voting rights and democracy	Present events with local partners regarding voting rights (How to exercise) and challenges to them	Increased number of programs and participants	
Increase programming re: student participation	Present events with elected officials and local partners on working with elected officials	Increased number of programs and participants.	

# NSLVE Data: Results and goals

According to NSLVE Data, CCAC has seen a consistent rise in voter engagement:  
From 2016-2020, CCAC saw an increase in:

- Voter registration from 73% of eligible voters to 77%.
- Voter participation from 58% of eligible voters to 63%

Per the above discussion our \*goal\* is to increase voter participation. We have listed three mechanisms for doing so:

- Voter registration campaigns
- Voter education drives
- Voter mobilization activities

# Strategy: Voter Engagement

Strategy is the large-scale approach toward achieving a goal (increased democratic participation). Tactics are the specific steps used to implement that strategy. These are the strategies through which we will implement the goals outlined above.

Goal	Strategy	Tactics
Increase voter registration	Use voter registration campaigns	Specific campus events; Social media; email blasts.
Increase voter participation	Voter mobilization campaigns; voter access campaigns	Campus events; Social media; email blasts; using campuses and centers as voting locations
Increase education regarding constitutional voting rights and democracy.	Programming.	Specific programs (with partners) about voting rights and challenges to them. Social media campaigns
Address issues facing community college students	Programming and lobbying	Program events and work with shareholders to identify student concerns. Identify mechanisms to bring these concerns to elected officials. Programming for students on how to work with elected officials.

# Reporting

Data from the above listed projects will be collected by the offices/departments responsible for administering those programs/projects. Results will be accumulated by both the Office of Institutional Research and the Civic Engagement program.

The Civic Engagement program already has a dedicated web page to promote information on the College's website. We are in the process of creating a blog to publicize civic engagement issues, particularly those around voting. Information about and from these events will be publicized on our blog (along with many of the events themselves if they are remote and live-streamed).

Appropriate data will be submitted to NSLVE and other partner organizations.

# Evaluation

The primary consideration for this project is voter engagement. So, our primary measures of evaluating success are simply an increase in both the numbers of students who are registered to vote and who vote. As part of the NSLVE project, we have data collection techniques in place to measure this.

The other primary issue involved here is programmatic efficacy. First, do we get people to programs; and, second, do the programs have any effect? We are looking at a number of programmatic efforts regarding engagement with the issues our students believe are important. We will be creating assessment tools to look at both how many people attended these events and what information they took away. In addition, we will be organizing events to get students engaged in the process. The evaluation of these events will involve measures of how many students were involved, and what levels of involvement they had.