Executive Summary

This plan builds on the broad based collaboration between students, faculty, staff and administrators with a range of local, regional, and national organizations which has, in the past, earned the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) a Voter Friendly Campus designation. Specifically, we are hoping to build on this work to:

- Consolidate, expand, and deepen voter engagement
- Expand our portfolio of civic engagement activities, providing a pathway to increasingly more challenging and complex forms of political action, and
- Strengthen the link between Civic Engagement and and the liberal arts mission of the college, and
- Create pathways to civic and political professions not ordinarily open to first generation students.

We hope to do this in concert with an expanded network of community and national partners, working across what is now a single, integrated college, over the course of the next two years. We plan to accomplish this by leveraging good organizing practice (individual relational meetings, small group meetings for study, training, and reflection, and student engagement in increasingly complex organizing activities.)
Leadership

This new plan represents a shift in the way in which civic engagement is situated organizationally at the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC). In the past, while Civic Engagement was led by a member of our faculty, generally from the Social Sciences, the function as a whole reported to Student Affairs. This reflected our commitment (which remains unchanged) that civic engagement be student driven, but it made it difficult to fully integrate Civic Engagement with the academic aims of the institution and to engage our faculty assets in the work. This year, while retaining close ties with Student Affairs, and in particular with Student Engagement, the function as a whole reports to the Dean of Humanities, Mathematics, and Social Sciences. The idea behind this shift to is leverage civic engagement as an experiential basis for the liberal arts aims of the college, while informing it with the theoretical, historical, and practical tools which the liberal arts provide, with the aim of cultivating free human beings and engaged citizens who can decide for themselves what it means to be human and act effectively on these decisions in the public arena.

Humanities, Mathematics, and Social Sciences
The Community College of Allegheny County recently underwent a reorganization of its Academic Affairs and Student Affairs operations, moving from a campus based to a discipline based structure in Academic Affairs and a functional organization in Student Affairs. The Division of Humanities, Mathematics, and Social Sciences includes all of the disciplines central to the liberal arts core curriculum with the exception of the physical and biological sciences (which are currently located with Allied Health and Nursing). This allows us to lead the liberal arts mission across the college and with it the civic engagement mission which at once supports flows from it..

The Coordinating Dean,
The Dean, Anthony Mansueto, holds a PhD in Religion and Society from the Graduate Theological Union and is the author of nine books and numerous articles engaging fundamental questions in social theory, philosophy, and religion. His career has cross the boundaries between the academy and the public arena and in addition to teaching at colleges and universities around the country and in Mexico he built the sponsoring committee for Dallas Area Interfaith in the late 1980s and early 1990s, organized a broad program of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in response to 9/11 (the only one we are aware of in which Muslims and Native Americans were the principal participants), and has developed a distinctive approach to organizing which focuses on the *lounge duree* brings more than three decades experience linking liberal education and civic engagement at a variety of institutions

Civic Engagement Coordinator
Our current civic engagement coordinator is Professor Jeffrey Langstraat. Professor Langstraat holds a PhD in Sociology from Boston College. His research focuses on social movements and he has presented on organizing at the community college level. He brings to our civic engagement work a focus on broadening our focus beyond voter registration to include grassroots lobbying and other forms of political action.
The Civic Engagement Working Group

The principal role of the Civic Engagement Working Group is to ensure that our civic engagement strategy reflects the contributions and commitments of all the diverse constituencies in the college and to coordinate activities among them and that the institution fully owns the strategy we develop. In general, working groups at the college are composed of people brought forward by various constituencies, including the administration (and its various units), the AFT, student organizations, etc. We expect that the membership will be renewed in this manner as we begin the new election cycle, most likely early in the Autumn 2022. At this point our members have been largely carried over from the last election cycle.

The existing Working Group (See Appendix A) reflects the diversity of the college community fairly well. As we renew the membership we will ensure that this remains the case, co-opting additional members if necessary to ensure such representation. The principal change we plan is a gradual shift from a Working Group composed entirely of administrators, faculty, and staff, to one which is at least moving towards a strong student majority, with the nonstudent membership shifted significantly from student affairs towards the faculty. This will link the group directly with students and people with daily engagement with students, including students not currently involved in formal student activities (though we will, to be sure, keep strong representation from Student Affairs and especially those offices responsible for student activities and organizations).

Creating an effective operational structure and determining its relationship with the Working Group will likely have to await renewal of the group’s membership in the autumn. Strategic and key operational leaders will be represented on the group. Operational leadership of various functions will be entrusted to smaller teams, preferably with both a student and a faculty or staff leader, responsible for voter engagement, public programs, grassroots lobbying, organizing, professional pathways, etc.,

The Working Group will meet monthly to receive reports and provide feedback to the operational leadership.

Institutional Commitment

The Community College of Allegheny County is fortunate to have a senior leadership which has made a strong commitment to civic engagement, incorporating a commitment to civic engagement in the formal statements indicated below and backing that commitment with resources by funding a 1/5 time Faculty Civic Engagement Coordinator, dedicating a portion of the time of several administrators to the work, and providing resources to ensure continuity when, as in March 2020, the pandemic required a swift transition of all operations to virtual modalities.

This is reflected in an ongoing and deepening commitment to make civic learning a pervasive part of institutional culture. As our 2020 report put the matter,

Since joining The Democracy Commitment in 2011, the Community College of Allegheny County 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’s, and the world’s most pressing challenges related to enhancing democracy and social justice.

This commitment is reflected in our formal documents, the way in which our curriculum is structured, and in the achievements of past civic engagement efforts.

Documents
We have attached three documents indicating the formal commitment of the college to civic engagement:

- Our “Five Commitments
- Our 2021-2022 Strategic Plan and
- Our January 2021 Democratic Engagement Campus Report

These documents are attached as “additional documents” to the application.

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.

There are, furthermore, discussion underway regarding the possibility of separating out the Culture and Society and Citizenship outcomes, with the aim of give both more challenging and content.

Co-Curriculum
These formal commitments are reflected in the achievements of our previous civic engagement efforts. Here are some highlights:

- In partnership with the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburg, student voter registration drives were conducted on each of the four CCAC campuses as well as the Homewood-Brushton center in spring 2019 and fall 2020.
The civic engagement coordinator in partnership with the CCAC Marketing and IT Departments, and the Boyce Campus librarian developed a “Vote 2020” 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 through the CCAC homepage, the CCAC Blackboard learning platform, and through the CCAC college-wide library system.

Developed by the CCAC librarians, the Election 2020-Vote Lib Guide contained a variety of resources to assist students with voter registration including (but not limited to):

- PA online voter registration
- Votes PA
- “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 Election – 2020 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
- Get involved and work your polling place

Despite the inability to gather in person due to COVID-19, Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows Madysen Kelly and Sabrina Ukasik organized student activities, including a virtual “ask all” event via Zoom, in which students had the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had about the election in a relaxed environment.

PTK co-hosted a virtual program titled “What Happens After You Vote?” on October 30. This was an educational program during which panelists answered specific questions about the Electoral College and the Voting Process. Professor Davis Manel and Rep. Bethany Hallam from the Allegheny County Board of Elections were the panelists, and two students from the political science club and PTK moderated the discussion. The program had 25 Student attendees.

The History Department organized a Social Media Takeover Information was provided by CCAC Student Life & Engagement regarding the election 2020 website, the constitution, the electoral college, constitutions from around the world, and an interactive game called “what founding father are you?”

A virtual panel discussion was scheduled in September 2020 on Voting Rights and Social Justice through Student Protest— from the Civil Rights Era to Black Lives Matter.

Although the debate was canceled, the CCAC Honors Program hosted a Prepresidential Debate/Discussion on October 15 featuring commentary by faculty members from history and political science departments as well as the civic engagement coordinator.
All of these efforts bore real fruit. The Community College of Allegheny County received a Gold Seal from the All In Campus Democracy Challenge for achieving a student voting rate between 40% and 49% in the 2018 midterm elections as against the average for college campuses in Pennsylvania participating in the challenge: 37%.

Challenges

In the short run, the COIVD 19 pandemic represented our greatest challenge during the last election cycle. The campus (in-person) voter registration drives in partnership with the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh that was scheduled for March 2020 was cancelled and our focus shifted to reaching our students through all channels possible including the ccac website, portal, blackboard course sites, and social media. As a result, we were unable to track student registrations as efficiently as we had hoped.

In the long run, however, our greatest challenges are precisely the same factors which make civic engagement so important at a community college. Our students are often first generation and frequently experience first hand the effects of systemic racism, gender oppression, and economic exploitation. Helping them find their voice is a central mission of the college. At the same time, precisely because of these factors our students often have less time to devote to what are often seen as “extra-curricular” activities and bring less social and cultural capital to the table, so that more relationship building and training are necessary in order to facilitate effective political participation.

Finally, the frontal assault on higher education generally and the liberal arts in particular from the Right has put both colleges generally and faculty in particular on the defensive. Our faculty report a long history of pressure not to raise controversial issues with students and our student engagement staff report parents of students out our South Campus objecting to clearly nonpartisan voter registration (i.e. LWV).

Landscape

It is with these enduring commitments and past successes in mind that we undertake the next steps in our civic engagement work. Before we outline our goals, however, it is worth saying something about both the immediate metropolitan context in which we work and about the situation within the college itself.

Greater Pittsburgh

The Greater Pittsburgh region is in many ways an anomaly among major US metropoles. Specifically, Pittsburgh is much less integrated into the global market than most major US cities. It is classified as Sufficient by the Global and World Cities Research Network, which focuses on the presence of economic integrators such as capital markets and investment banks and major accounting, consulting, advertising and law firms. At the same time, Pittsburgh is recognized as punching above its demographic and global-market-integration weight due to “legacy” universities and cultural institutions which date from its earlier role as a key industrial center. This has not only allowed it to transition from reliance on steel and other metals production to
become an important center for higher education, medicine, finance, telecommunications, robotics, cybersecurity and additive manufacturing, but also to position itself as a secondary strategic research center in areas as diverse as cybersecurity (Software Research Institute), robotics (the National Robotics Engineering Center), energy (the National Energy Research Laboratory) and Bettis Atomic Energy Laboratory. While the city’s resurgence has clearly been driven by federal and largely defense oriented research funding, it has depended on that legacy layer of universities and cultural institutions which are significant employers of those in the fine arts, the humanities, and the social sciences. Film in particular has become important, with Disney and Paramount locating offices here, creating a demand for film production workers.

Only four hours from the National Capitol Region, and with a much lower cost of living, Pittsburgh as strong comparative advantages not only in defense funded technology activities but as a “reachback” center for federal contractors across all disciplines, including the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

Because the region’s population has continued to decline and in particular because the state’s population increased only 2.4% over the past decade, costing the state a seat in the House of Representatives, its political clout will be driven largely by what it can contribute in these strategically important economic sectors, rather than by its electoral significance. Pennsylvania’s status as a swing state politically may get it more attention from politicians than its population would otherwise warrant, it also makes it difficult for it count on the level of public investment necessary for it to position itself as a very high skill/very high technology center.

While Greater Pittsburgh leans Democratic, it does so less than many other major metropolitan areas (47% as against 65% for San Francisco, 56% for New York and Washington, DC). And unlike areas with rapidly growing immigrant populations such as Dallas, support for the Democratic Party has been more or less stagnant over the past decade, albeit with some shifts from election to election (Pew Research Center 2022. Party Affiliation by Metro Area).

Less integration into the global market and lower levels of immigration make the city less diverse than other major metropolitan areas and than the United States as a whole:

- Greater Pittsburgh/Metropolitan Area: 83% European Origin, 14% African American, 3% Asian, 1% Latino
- City: European Origin: 66%, African American: 23%; Latino: 6%, Asian: 3%

Most diversity is within European origin population:

- The five largest European ethnic groups in the city are German (19.7%), Irish (15.8%), Italian (11.8%), Polish (8.4%), and English (4.6%), while
- The metropolitan area is approximately 22% German-American, 15.4% Italian American and 11.6% Irish American.

Allegheny County is notable for being more heavily Catholic and Liberal Protestant and much less Evangelical and unaffiliated other (Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist) than the rest of the
country. This pulls the city towards the center ideologically with a much smaller Christian right but also a much smaller Left.

This configuration of economic, political, and cultural factors is significant for our civic engagement work for a number of reasons. First, it means that our students lack the exposure to globalization and diversity and the experience of labor mobility which is definitive of the most advanced global centers in the US and elsewhere. Many will never have met an immigrant. Most will have grown up here and may not have met anyone from outside the region, much less outside the country. They will thus have had less experience of being challenged ideologically and culturally and be less likely to think in terms of leaving the region to continue their education or to pursue their careers. The number of positions with global strategic leadership significance is limited here, something which tends to discourage “thinking big.”

At the same time, this is far from a being a cultural desert. Our European origin students are more likely to have retained some awareness of their ethnic heritage than students with similar backgrounds in many other parts of the country, and may have strong roots in a congregation which anchors a strong ethnoreligious community. And while Greater Pittsburgh is not home to any of the world’s leading universities, it is home to strong regional (Carlow, Chatham) and national (Washington and Lee, Allegheny) liberal arts colleges and to doctoral and major research universities (Duquesne, the University of Pittsburgh, and Carnegie Mellon) as well as a number of regional comprehensives.

A significant part of our challenge is to help students recognize what their home communities have bequeathed to them, situate it in a much broader civilizational context, and make decisions regarding what they want to do with their lives in relationship to that broader context. For most—even students with a real calling for ideological and political leadership—this will likely mean positioning themselves as local leaders, but we do need to open up pathways for students whose interests and abilities point them towards the national or global arena.

Community College of Allegheny County
CCAC is, in many ways, a fairly typical community college, sharing the same priorities as similar institutions at this time: a focus on increased success, retention, and completion, a significant retrenchment from the liberal arts transfer mission in favor of an ever narrower focus on career and technical training, and a growing emphasis on—or at least lip service to—“diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

The college is mid-sized for an urban/metropolitan community college, with roughly 12,000 students. The college faces declining enrollments which reach back before the pandemic (47% since a peak in 2010). CARES Act funding has softened the financial blow from this loss in enrollment, though as that funding dries up serious financial difficulties are possible. The college has seen a significant expansion of non-academic administrative functions in response to growing federal mandates which have led to a structural marginalization of the college’s academic mission.

The college is less diverse than most urban community colleges, partly because of the less diverse character of the metropolitan area and partly because the college serves both the city and
most of the suburbs. The board is appointed by the County Executive rather than being elected, which shelters the college to some degree from political extremism. It seems to be composed mostly of mainstream Democrats with second or third tier electoral experience going back to the Clinton and Obama eras. There are a few academic administrators, but no one with roots in the liberal arts.

*Many faculty in the liberal arts and especially in the social sciences feel marginalized and excluded from the work of the college.*

The faculty at CCAC shows significant diversity in age and generation, with many faculty quite old (80 or possibly older) and having delayed retirement. While nearly a third have terminal degrees (PhD or MFA), not including a few EdDs, and while many without doctorates are also intellectually engaged in their disciplines, there are also many whose profile is more like that of a high school teacher than of a university professor. There is strong trade union/work to rule culture and strong resistance to or burnout with seeing the academy as a calling. This culture is reinforced by the college’s compensation structure which pairs low base salaries with very liberal policies with respect to overloads and a system of stipends for essentially all meaningful service activities. Many faculty teach seven or eight classes, leaving little or no time for scholarship or community engagement. Many faculty do significant service to the college and many do almost nothing.

The governance structure coupled with the way in which the Collective Bargaining Agreement has evolved has the effect of giving the faculty a *de facto* veto over proposals bearing on *how* the college tries to meet its goals, but very little role in shaping those goals themselves.

**What We Hope To Accomplish**

Within this context we bring four principal goals. We hope to:

- Consolidate, expand, and deepen voter engagement
- Expand our portfolio of civic engagement activities, providing a pathway to increasingly more challenging and complex forms of political action, and
- Strengthen the link between Civic Engagement and and the liberal arts mission of the college, and
- Create pathways to civic and political professions not ordinarily open to first generation students.

*Consolidating, expanding, and deepening voter engagement*

Specifically, we want to begin a systematic effort to increase voter registration and turnout so that they ultimately approach 100%, excluding only those with a consolidated objection to civic participation on which they have been challenged and given an opportunity to reflect. Given a baseline of what we believe to be voter participation between 40-49% in the last election cycle, we want to expand registration to 60% and voter turnout to 55% for the November 2022 election and 80% and 75% respectively for the 2024 election.
Furthermore, we want to have students take an increasingly active role in organizing and executing voter engagement activities themselves, including voter registration, canvassing, and turnout.

**Expanding our Civic Engagement Portfolio**

Beyond this, we want to engage students in forms of civic engagement which go beyond voter engagement. One key form of transition is *deep canvassing* which has been pioneered by *Changing the Conversation*. Rather than merely contacting voters, sharing information, collecting information regarding the way they intend to cast their ballots, and then turning out voters committed to your candidate, *deep canvassing* engages voters around their fundamental values and situates their political positions in this context, creating leverage to get them to rethink their positions.

We also hope to engage students in grassroots lobbying, a key priority of our current Civic Engagement Coordinator, helping them analyze problems, frame issues, develop policy proposals, and the shepherd those proposals through the legislative process.

Finally, we hope to engage students in long term institutional and other organizing efforts which build a permanent base for social transformation and which cultivate emerging leaders from historically excluded communities.

**Strengthening the Connection between Liberal Arts and Civic Engagement**

The relationship between liberal education and civic engagement is profound, but not always embraced or leveraged effectively. Specific, students often have difficulty understanding the importance of the liberal arts core curriculum and many faculty lack the level of civic engagement themselves to help students understand the complexity of the skills required for engaged citizenship, nor do they know how to leverage civic engagement in order to create context and interest for their courses. With this in mind we hope to encourage faculty to integrate civic engagement assignments into their courses and then build on the experiences in order to help students understand how the questions addressed by the course arise, as well as civic engagement assignments which encourage students to apply and/or test the theory they learn in class.

In addition to this we hope to undertake a broader campaign within the college and the communities it serves to promote the college’s liberal arts and civic engagement mission, positioning the college as a leading institution in public deliberation around what it means to be human and on the nature of our lives together, as well as for cultivating free human beings and engaged citizens.

Of critical importance in this regard will be a series of public programs in which local, national, and international leaders address both broad questions of meaning and value and focused questions of public policy and follow up deliberation within classes and community discussion groups regarding the issues they raise.
**Promote civic engagement professional pathways in the public area**

Finally, we want to open up opportunities for students to explore, prepare for, and enter professions related to public service of which they may not even be aware or which present very high barriers to entry. For many this may mean working as organizers or with local nonprofits focused on social justice questions or preparing for law school and what has become the standard route to public office. We want to make sure students know how these pathways work and where they will and will not take them. But we also want to make accessible to our students fields like diplomacy and intelligence which have tended to be the preserve of cultural status elites, in part because they hiring processes select for those with very high levels of social and cultural capital. We want to make full use of programs available from federal agencies, such as the State Department’s Diplomat in Residence Program, while developing our own mechanisms for helping students navigate what is likely to be foreign and even hostile cultural territory.

**How We Hope to Accomplish This**

Strategy is the art of identifying, organizing, cultivating, and deploying the resources necessary to carry out the mission of an institution. The goals identified above represent a clear statement regarding what we see as the key strategic assets we need to cultivate and the ways in which hope to deploy them. In this section we will focus on how we plan to go about doing this.

First, in accord with sound organizing practice, our principal approach in moving all initiatives forward will center on individual relational meetings with faculty, staff, and students interested in some aspect of civic engagement. This will allow us to assess what type and level of engagement makes sense, so that we can direct the individuals involved towards activities that make sense for them. In most cases this will involve some combination of basic training (e.g. on how to register voters, canvass, do turn-out) etc. and assignment to entry level activities. Leaders will follow-up on those who actually engage, arranging further individual or small group meetings to help them reflect on and learn from their work and agitate for higher levels of engagement.

Second, those with significant leadership potential will be directed towards higher level training and towards working groups planning and executing various aspects of the plan outlined above:

- Deep canvassing
- Grassroots lobbying
- Institutional Organizing

While it is our intention that much of the theory informing the work will come from the humanities and social science courses in which students are already enrolled, we will probably schedule some workshops linking this theory to practice and encourage faculty to make explicit links to civic engagement in their syllabi.
Over the course of the entire process, there will be public events such as candidate fora, programs addressing public policy issues, etc., which will both catalyze broader student interest and contribute to the growth of those involved in the process.

Finally, a selection of public events and workshops will be focused on helping students learn more about and plan for professional pathways in fields like organizing, diplomacy, etc.

**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 in civic engagement activities
- Evaluations from selected civic engagement activities
- Voter registration and voting data from the NSLVE
- Academic performance and assessment data from selected humanities and social sciences courses
- Individual meetings and in-depth interviews with key participants in the process

We will carry out a simple statistical analysis looking for relationships between various data points, and then look at the results of individual meetings and in-depth interviews to identify causal relationships.
Appendix A

Civic Engagement Working Group
2020-2022

Dr. Quintin Bullock, College President
Dr. Stuart Blacklaw, Provost & Executive Vice President
Dr. Mary Lou Kennedy, Associate Vp For Enrollment Management
Dr. Vladimir St. Surin, Dean Of Students
Millie Rodriguez, Dean Of Virtual Campus
Dr. Jacqueline Cavalier, Professor Of History & Civic Engagement Coordinator
Dr. Ebony English, Endowed Professor For Teaching & Learning
Dr. Julia Fennell, Professor Of English & Honors Program Coordinator
Dr. Laurie Sprinkle, Professor Of History
David Manel, Professor Of Political Science
Elora Cunningham, Librarian
James R. McMahon, Ccac Educational Foundation Executive Director
Gaina Miklusko, Student Engagement Specialist & Ptk Advisor
Dean Jolin, Executive Director Of Workforce And Job Readiness
Kate Farmer, Student Development Specialist
Donald Breitbarth, Full Time Academic Advisor & Ptk Advisor
Elizabeth Johnston, Public Relations & Marketing Executive Director
Kevin Smay, Associate Vice President Of Strategic Planning