

Voter Friendly Campus Designation Program

Democratic Engagement Action Plan

I. **Executive Summary**

Community College of Philadelphia is an open-admission, associate-degree-granting institution which provides access to higher education for all who may benefit. Its programs of study in the liberal arts and sciences, career technologies, and basic academic skills provide a coherent foundation for college transfer, employment and lifelong learning. Serving more than 685,000 individuals since 1965, the College plays an integral role in the education and advancement of Philadelphia's residents and workforce. With 78 percent of our graduates employed in Philadelphia, and 93 percent working in the Greater Philadelphia region, the College impacts key industries in the city. Our graduates are talented, educated citizens who improve their own lives and strengthen Philadelphia as a whole.

Through the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership (the Institute), our vision is that the College's institutional profile and reputation be elevated to the status of one recognized for excellence, and embraced by the community and beyond for having a positive impact on social issues at local, regional and national levels. To that end, the College aspires to become a Voter Friendly Campus through The Fair Election Center's Campus Vote Project and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Voter Friendly Campus Designation Program.

Throughout this document, information will be provided around all current initiatives to achieve such designation as well as a strategic plan to improve our Voter Registration, Education and Engagement programming at the College. This plan has been composed by the team within the College's Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership (also known as the Institute) and former Campus Vote Project Student Fellow:

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The College intends on continually educating, encouraging, and engaging the student body and wider Philadelphia region with sustained and comprehensive democratic engagement policies and programming to elevate civic education, prioritize voter literacy, and facilitate increased student voting

rates for every election. Through education, we will dispel misinformation and disinformation purveyed through social media as well as news media and political commentators. This will occur through classroom presentations, voter registration drives, volunteering and positive peer pressure. We know that political efficacy will be improved college-wide when students see that protests and voting work in tandem to improve large societal issues and most importantly their own living conditions.

This action plan was developed because the College is committed to improving the lives of Philadelphians, students of the Community College of Philadelphia, and their families. It intends to empower marginalized and historically underrepresented populations in Philadelphia. Student political apathy reflects a failure of our society to engage young people with their democracy. It is a symptom of the lack of educational policies that do not prioritize community engagement and civic leadership in a sustained and consistent manner.

The plan began in earnest during Fall 2018 and will continue **indefinitely**. Democratic engagement will be achieved through ongoing planning and effort.

Through the creation of cross-campus coalition-building, differing areas of the College will implement pieces of the plan through voter registration drives and encourage active student participation to facilitate increased democratic engagement among the student body. This coalition includes faculty, administrative employees and other non-partisan partners within the local community and local elected officials, who will work together to create a voter-friendly environment on-campus.

II. Leadership

The Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership (the Institute) is the primary working group responsible for coordinating and implementing the College's initiatives to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. The Institute team consists of the Executive Director, the Manager and Community Engagement Specialist.

The Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership is the College's home for service learning, volunteerism, community outreach, partnerships and democratic engagement. The mission of the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership is to foster a culture of engagement and collaboration that promotes experiential learning and capitalizes on the strengths of students, faculty, staff and partners to make a positive difference on social justice issues. The Institute is housed in the larger division of Strategic Initiatives within the Division of Access and Community Engagement.

The Manager for the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership acts as the chairperson for both the varying working groups supporting the #CCPVotes program and its larger coalition. The #CCPVotes program that runs out of the Institute, is the College's democratic engagement program and is the primary vehicle for ensuring the college becomes Voter Friendly. The larger coalition supporting the #CCPVotes program is made up of both senior leadership at the College as well as faculty, administrative employees and student groups. Members include the Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff, the College's General Counsel, the Government Relations Officer, The Community Relations Manager, the Director of Marketing and representatives from our Office of Student Engagement including the Director of Student Engagement, Marketing Coordinator and Deans. The Student Government Association, members of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society and volunteers

from the College's Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership are also part of the extended working group team.

The Institute team will work on a weekly to biweekly basis with a cadre of student fellows, a faculty co-advisor and faculty members of varying disciplines to carry out Voter Friendly Campus strategies. These working group members are responsible for the on the ground operations, planning and implementation of democratic engagement that goes into the #CCPVotes program. This working group helps to execute the following projects:

- National Voter Registration Day
- Vote Early Day
- Voter Registration Drives
- Voter Registration Trainings
- In Classroom Presentations
- Virtual Presentations
- Social Media promotion
- Debate Watch Parties

The Manager of the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership will also manage both local and national partnerships and is already a part of the Get Out the Vote, Octavius Catto Taskforce, run by the City of Philadelphia Commissioner's office. National partners include, Campus Election Engagement Project, the Andrew Goodman Foundation and the Campus Vote Project, where the manager acts as the student fellows' advisor.

III. Commitment

The Community College of Philadelphia and its leadership is determined to improve civic learning and democratic engagement across the College. With the expansion of Student Fellowship programs by the Andrew Goodman Foundation, the Campus Election Engagement Project, and the Campus Vote Project, high-achieving students can retain paid Fellowships as an incentivization to engage their communities. Additionally, through the creation of a volunteering corps headquartered in the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership, there is a standardized and methodical approach to the messaging and direction of improving civic learning and democratic engagement on-campus. Deans and vice presidents from across the College are dedicated to explicitly improving voting outcomes and democratic engagement for Community College of Philadelphia students.

A commitment to civic engagement is listed clearly on the college's Mission and Goals website, which new students are familiarized with during new student and transfer student orientations. It states the following: *The College serves Philadelphia by preparing students to be informed and concerned citizens, to be active participants in the cultural life of the city, and to be able to meet the changing needs of business, industry and the professions. To help address broad economic, cultural and political concerns in the city and beyond, the College draws together students from a wide range of ages and backgrounds, and seeks to provide the programs and support they need to achieve their goal.*

Additionally, the College's commitment to civic engagement and social justice is continually reiterated during campus events, curricular and co-curricular activities throughout the school year.

The Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership is uniquely positioned within the College to communicate the College's commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement both on and off campus. The Institute works with a number of community partners across Philadelphia through its advisory council to ensure that its programming is engaging and effective. Additionally, both the Marketing and Government Relation offices that work with a broader group of external stakeholders share the College's commitment publicly and with all of our constituents.

Civic learning is ingrained into institutional norms. Vessels of student democratic engagement exist in a normative manner throughout all academic disciplines. Democratic engagement programming is cogent, coherent, and informative. It is a central tenet of the College's strategic mission to craft engaged and informed citizens who enter the workforce and society as more well-rounded individuals capable of self-advocacy for themselves and their communities.

More specifically, in addition to the Institute's co-curricular college-wide events as well as its non-credit Civics Education Course, the College also hosts its Center for Law and Society whose mission is to *provide a supportive intellectual and practical framework for exploring significant societal and law-related issues including citizenship, civics and re-entry. Through service learning and research, the Center engages the College and larger community in its endeavors to: foster a rich learning environment for student achievement; sustain faculty development and enrichment; facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration; be a resource to professionals and other academic institutions; stimulate innovation; and strengthen connections throughout the wider community.*

The College's [2017-2025 Strategic Plan](#) lists External and Internal Community Relations as one of its key initiatives. Below is the strategic plan statement concerning civic engagement and learning through External and Internal Community Relations.

"As the City's college, Community College of Philadelphia will position itself as a vital resource that impacts all of Philadelphia and beyond. The College's inclusive learning community is an important asset where people from all walks of life can grow together and learn from each other. To this end, the wide range of programs, services, departments, faculty, staff and administrators must be seen and aligned as an interconnected and interdependent whole.

In order to reach the College's varied constituencies, communications will be clear, transparent, and sensitive to the diverse landscape of stakeholders. Effective, respectful communications both internally and externally foster pride in the College, clarify priority strategic goals, and develop a collaborative culture among employees.

Increased pride within and around the College is imperative because External and Internal Community Relations determine how the College's work is viewed—by College faculty and staff, the community we serve, and, most importantly, our students. Consequently, in order to fulfill its mission, Community College of Philadelphia must foster a unified identity that clearly and effectively communicates our commitment and dedication to student success – and to Philadelphia, the region and the world.

As the largest public institution of higher learning in Philadelphia and an important asset for moving people out of poverty, Community College of Philadelphia must continue to advocate for support of

education as a public good. The College will maintain and strengthen partnerships with policy makers and other relevant stakeholders. The College's own active and engaged faculty and staff can also play an important role in leveraging the College's human resources and facilities in entrepreneurial ways that provide alternative revenue sources to the College."

The College is committed to implementing the following goals as a part of the 2017-2025 Strategic Plan:

1. Long-standing commitment to quality, access, affordability and upward mobility
2. Positioning itself as a hub for social and economic innovation through workforce development and civic engagement, increasing its visibility and centrality to the progress of Philadelphia.
3. Improve student success to ensure that the College is able to support the region and to continue to ensure the public good created by the College's education.
4. Develop an entrepreneurial approach to partnering with local businesses, organizations, philanthropies, and community groups in ways that help sustain the College.

Strategic Directions

- Strengthen the relationship between the College and the City's pre-K to 16 communities to improve access to education and completion rates throughout the educational pipeline by creating responsive programs and partnerships.
- Expand partnerships with community organizations integrating the resources of the City into courses and programs that bolster students' abilities to master the College's core competencies."

What are the institution's overall civic, democratic, and/or political learning outcomes?

Campus-wide learning outcomes are reflected in the College's General Education/ Core Competencies. There are two primary outcomes the College expects all students to meet upon graduating:

1. **Critical Thinking Skills**—critical thinking allows students to reflect on, reason about, and independently judge ideas and information
2. **Responsible Citizenship** - students are expected to demonstrate an awareness of the responsibilities of informed citizenship in a diverse and pluralistic society. Students will demonstrate self-management in the requirements that come with one's role as a student in the classroom and at the College; demonstrate integrity in one's role as a student relative to other students, faculty, staff and administrators; and demonstrate effort to understand the perspective of others and to respond with well-founded thoughts.

Additionally, a core competency of Value, Ethics and Diverse Perspectives is soon to be added where students can develop as informed and engaged global citizens through experiential learning and exploration of varied yet connected cultures.

The general education curriculum requires students to be technologically competent, informationally literate, and calls for the enhancement of civic engagement opportunities by faculty to their students. Many of these opportunities require service learning and volunteerism in order to successfully complete general education classes. Students who are technologically competent will be able to easily identify political disinformation on social media – a medium by which 25% of college-aged students receive their news from. Students who are informationally literate will be able to determine the veracity of sourcing provided to them by peers, family, friends and virtual communities.

General Education outcomes are measured by our General Education Committee on an ongoing basis to ensure that the strategic goals are consistently met.

IV. Landscape

Community College of Philadelphia's student voting rates hover at 40.5% consistently, which is above that of junior colleges and 4 year institutions nationally. This information is reported by the National Study for Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE). The NSLVE Study was the reasoning behind the launch of the #CCPVotes program and has supported the expansion of civic learning throughout the College.

Curriculum

Democratic engagement exists across multiple disciplines and fields of study including, Earth Sciences, Psychology, Biology, Health Care Studies, Political Science, Sociology, History, Liberal Arts & Humanities, Gender Studies, Economics, Criminal Justice, Behavioral Health & Human Services, Black Studies, and Anthropology all incorporate democratic engagement and civic learning components into their curriculums.

Democratic Engagement is listed as a learning outcome for Anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, History, Sociology, Liberal Arts & Humanities, Gender Studies, Criminal Justice, Behavioral Health & Human Services, and Black Studies.

Co-curriculum

The Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership and The Office of Student Life which includes all student clubs, Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society, and the Center for Male Engagement all incorporate democratic engagement and civic learning as part of their programming, activities. All students are welcome to participate in volunteering opportunities with each of these initiatives. Additionally, the College has fellowship opportunities from the Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project, and the Andrew Goodman Foundation.

Barriers to Success

We know that due to a number of external factors and most recently the Covid-19 pandemic that Community College of Philadelphia may experience budgetary shortfalls that could impact programming on some level. However, in the past we have seen success with little to no funding needed to execute voter education programming. We also know that some staff, faculty, and administrators may be resistant to change when it affects workload, curriculum and a shift in routine, but we do not expect to experience major barriers because of this. Alternatively, we've seen engaged employee volunteers step up to the plate to help execute voter engagement programs due to their passion for civic engagement.

While sustained economic disenfranchisement continues to be a barrier for many residents in Philadelphia, we hope to empower students while obtaining their education at the College and use the classroom setting as an opportunity to plug in needed learning around navigating the voting process to their benefit and enable them to use their vote as their voice.

Resources

The College draws support from a wide swathe of community partners, dedicated students, staff, faculty, administrators, residents, informed leaders in the community, religious and spiritual leaders that are added resources behind the primary working groups effort in expanding the #CCPVotes democratic engagement program.

V. Goals

The long term goal through the #CCPVotes program is to become designated as a Voter Friendly Campus where 100% of students obtain the resources they need to vote, those who are eligible can get registered to vote and vote on election day with a great understanding of the importance of their voice, issues they are supporting and knowledge of candidates that are running for office. Ultimately, we intend to graduate civically informed and democratically active students with the knowledge, skills, and values to solve the country's most pressing problems. We want our students to feel empowered to make the changes needed in the society they live in and understand that in order to have a strong and truly representative democracy, they need to participate.

Shorter term goals for the #CCPVotes Program and Voter Friendly Campus designation are to:

- Better inform the College Community on the vote by mail process
- Implement the voter registration process with the class registration process and new student orientation
- Host engaging panel discussion events with city commissioners and local officials
- Demonstrate the act of voting by exposing the college community to voting machines
- Teach the differences in party ideologies, primary and general elections, and other related details
- Educate students on how to properly research candidates and social justice issues
- Bring awareness events to campus that directly correlate to issues being experienced among the student body and how voting impacts such issues
- Determine strategies to increase voting rates among the following groups that were underrepresented in the NSLVE report:
 - the 40 and under student population
 - students who identify as men
 - diverse minority groups such as Asian and Hispanic populations
 - fields of study including: Computer Information Science fields, Physical Sciences and Mechanic and Repair Technologies and Technician

VI. Strategy

Our strategies align to our overall goals to increase voter education, voter registration, and voter turnout primarily among students but also include faculty, staff, and administration from our campus. Our planned activities are predominantly in person events. However, the pandemic has caused us to pivot and develop virtual events in an effort to engage our campus and continue this work, despite not being physically on campus. With this said, we have included both our in-person and virtual activities in the list below.

- Ongoing Virtual College Presentations for faculty, staff, administration and students
- Ongoing Classroom presentations
- Voter Registration Tabling and One on One Sessions
- National Voter Registration Day and Vote Early Events
- Last Day to Register Communication and Activity
- Campus Fellows Meetings and Communications (Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project)
- Hosting Debate Watch Parties (Campus and/or Virtual Couch Parties)

The Working Group

Those doing this work will be a combination of Institute staff, our student fellows, our #CCPVotes Faculty Co-Advisor, and student volunteers who have a desire to be civically engaged. All of these “categories” of people power can and will be utilized for any given event.

Audience

Because our goal is to engage everyone on our campus, regardless of their role, almost all of our efforts are towards everyone who is part of our campus community, namely students, but also faculty, staff, and administrative personnel in addition to the larger Philadelphia community. The classroom presentations, on the other hand, are specifically for students. These are an effort, primarily led by our Democracy Fellows, to engage students directly through positive peer pressure. They present them with information on the importance of voting, the steps on how to register, finding their polling place, choosing a political party, presenting them with resources, and directing them on how to stay connected to the Institute’s office for more support. The National Voter Registration Event, Vote Early and Last Day to Register activities though mainly for our campus, is open to the general public.

Activities

Virtual presentations for faculty, staff, administration and students:

These presentations will take place on an online video, voice, content sharing, and chat platform. The College currently uses the Zoom platform.

Classroom presentations:

We have built a rapport with professors who teach a variety of subjects such as First Year Experience (FYE), Environmental Conservation, Political Science, English Courses and more! Presentations will take place in all classes in which faculty members approve and have the capacity to allow us in.

Voter Registration Drive Tabling on campus:

Our tabling outreaches primarily take place in high traffic areas of our main campus. The two locations we use most frequently are the lobby of the Bonnell Building and the entrance to the Pavilion Building (which is where our school’s cafeteria is located). However, we will look to expand efforts on all of the College campuses.

Our National Voter Registration Day and Vote Early Events:

These events take place on the first floor lobby of our Bonnell Building, “the largest and most diverse academic building” on our main campus. If we are not on campus at this time we will explore virtual options.

Hosting Debate Watch Parties (Virtually or on Campus):

These will take place on the college’s main campus in our most student friendly classrooms such as the Pavilion Klein Cube or Classroom S2-3 within our Student Life Building. However, we are ready to explore virtual options if we are not able to do this due to the pandemic.

Timeline for the 2020-2021 Academic Year

September 2020 - December 2020:

- National Voter Registration Day Event
- Vote Early Day
- Virtual Presentations for faculty, staff, administration and students
- Classroom presentations
- Voter Registration tabling on campus
- Campus Fellows Meetings and Communications (Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project)
- Hosting Debate Watch Parties (Virtually or on Campus)

January 2021 – May 2021

- Virtual Presentations for faculty, staff, administration and students
- Classroom presentations (with materials for students)
- Voter Registration tabling on campus or Virtual Voter Registration Sessions
- Campus Fellows Meetings and Communications (Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project)

Purpose of Activities

Virtual Presentations for faculty, staff, administration and students: This activity is taking place in an effort to continue the work of voter engagement and education on our campus as a whole, in spite of the pandemic. Our goal for this activity, broadly stated, is to increase turnout for the event as well as voter turnout on election day!

Classroom presentations (with materials for students): This activity is being implemented in an effort to focus on student voter engagement and registration and to include and expand curricular opportunities within the classroom setting.

Voter Registration tabling on campus: This activity occurs throughout the academic year to raise awareness about the importance of getting registered to vote, to provide our campus community with the opportunity to do so, and to provide them with the most accurate information regarding dates to register, election days and candidate information.

Our National Voter Registration Day, Vote Early and Last Day to Register Events: These events take place in an effort to join in with organizations all over the country to dedicate a day to focusing on voter registration, education and engagement.

Campus Fellows Communications and Meetings (Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project):

We will be utilizing our campus fellows to conduct classroom presentations, a peer-to-peer strategy, in an effort to use student voice to influence other students to become more civically involved. Additionally, we meet and communicate frequently with fellows to be involved in all activities throughout the academic year.

Hosting Debate Watch Parties (Virtually or on Campus): Debate watch parties have provided opportunity for students and staff alike to hear the plans of the nominees, together, and to discuss the key issues of the election.

VII. Reporting

The plan will be communicated college-wide to all students, faculty, staff and administrators via the College's e-newsletter entitled *Community Starts Here*. The plan will be housed in an easily accessible location on the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership's webpage. The college will reach out to local media, city offices, community organizations and local schools to describe the drive to increase student voting rates, civic leadership, and democratic engagement. The plan will be shared with stakeholders such as the Board of Directors, students, employees, and other interested parties.

Reporting from the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) voting rates are shared publicly and will be attached as a supporting document to our Voter Friendly Campus Plan as our goals strategically align with the reporting captured through NSLVE.

VIII. Evaluation

Evaluation of our Voter Engagement Program, #CCPVotes, and all of the strategies laid out within the Voter Friendly Campus plan is crucial to meeting our goals. We want to know that our voter engagement strategies are working and are effective. We want evidence that students are registering to vote and voting on election day and ultimately graduating as better informed and engaged citizens.

Currently our NSLVE report is examined by the Institute's Advisory Council to determine how the College can improve and better tailor specialized outreach to enhance higher levels of student democratic engagement within our college community. Our larger coalition will also review all plans and evaluations for strategic planning purposes. We will continue to have our partners evaluate our reporting and our planning efforts and will utilize the Voter Friendly Campus plan during our next meetings as a point for discussion, review and evaluation and ongoing meetings thereafter.

Additionally, we will continue to assess our work through the Campus Election Engagement Project's (CEEP) annual assessment survey to determine how engaged we are as a campus. This plan will directly tie into our CEEP annual plan. We currently are considered a campus with medium engagement and will look to improve and expect to improve our engagement score as "high" after achieving goals set forth in our Voter Friendly Campus plan.

Student evaluation questions will also be added to our annual student survey conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and as a follow up survey from the Institute electronically for all voter education, registration and voter turnout events and activities held to continuously improve our Voter Friendly Campus implementation strategies. Questions will comprise of whether or not students were introduced to the resources that the College has made available to campus to ensure an understanding of the voting process and include questions around voter turnout.

We plan to conduct electronic evaluations annually and we will share responses electronically with stakeholders that make up our College community and keep the public informed of this very important and impactful work.