



## **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. The College's main campus is located in the Spring Garden section of the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with regional centers in Northeast and West Philadelphia.

Through the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership (the Institute), the College is reapplying to become a Voter Friendly Campus in partnership with The Fair Election Center's Campus Vote Project and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Voter Friendly Campus Designation Program.

The Institute's 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. 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 team members who are responsible for the development of the plan are:

- Michelle Lopez, Director, Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership
- Olivia Edwards, Community Engagement Specialist
- Michael D. Miles, Community Engagement Specialist
- Mr. Marc Meola, Assistant Professor, Information Literacy Librarian
- Abigail Thomas, Democracy Fellow with Campus Vote Project, Student at Community College of Philadelphia

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 presentations, voter registration drives, volunteering and positive peer pressure, we aim to educate students about their democratic rights and civic power. We know that political efficacy will be improved college-wide when students see that voting is an effective strategy when combined with other advocacy efforts to improve large societal issues and most importantly their own living conditions.

The College's action plan will contain information around all current initiatives that helped us to achieve the designation for 2021-22 academic year as well as a strategic plan to improve our Voter Registration, Education and Engagement programming overall. The action plan will take effect again in Fall 2022 and will consistently be evaluated on an as needed basis throughout the year. Democratic engagement will continue to be achieved through ongoing planning and effort.

## 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 Director and Community Engagement Specialists. Through the creation of cross-campus coalition-building, differing areas of the College will implement pieces of the plan and encourage active student participation to facilitate increased democratic engagement among the student body. The coalition includes faculty, administrative staff, and other non-partisan partners within the local community, including local elected officials, all of whom will work together to create a voter-friendly environment on-campus. We also plan to ensure student voices are reflected as we invite them to contribute and evaluate this plan.

The Director for the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership and the Community Engagement Specialists, act as the chairpersons 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 driving force for ensuring the college remains 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 Office of the President, the Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Community Engagement, the Government Relations Officer, the Director of Special Events and Community Relations, the Director of Marketing and representatives from our Office of Student Engagement including the Director of Student Engagement, The Student Government Association, The Center for Male Engagement, The Women's Outreach and Advocacy Center and faculty from the Art, English and Political Science Departments, 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 basis with a cadre of student fellows, a faculty co-advisor and faculty members of varying disciplines to carry out Voter Friendly Campus strategies. This working group is essential to keeping student fellows engaged in our work as they are responsible for on the ground

operations, planning and implementation of democratic engagement that goes into the #CCPVotes program.

The Director of the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership will also manage both local and national partnerships and will act as the student co-advisor along with the Community Engagement Specialist and the #CCPVotes faculty advisor. External partnerships include: Campus Election Engagement Project, the Campus Vote Project, The City Commissioner's Office, Urban League of Philadelphia, Committee of Seventy, SEAMAAC, NextGen America and the Student Public Information Research Group among others.

The strength and effectiveness of our campus plan is greatly impacted by the expertise our coalition members and partners contribute. Through our coalition, we have experts in event planning, project management, government relations, advocacy, strategic planning, research, and more. As our coalition continues to grow, we are also able to extend our reach on campus and increase the diversity of voices impacting our work. The newest internal members to be added to our coalition are the College's Center for Male Engagement and the Women's Outreach and Advocacy Center. Our external partner SEAMAAC represents the Southeast Asian population in the city, which is an important voice that we plan to increasingly include in our efforts. The Urban League of Philadelphia has also been a long-time partner of ours, but most recently have been a strategic partner in our voter engagement efforts. The Urban League collaborates at the national and local levels with community leaders, policymakers, and corporate partners to elevate the standards of living for African Americans and other historically underserved groups. At the beginning of a new academic year, we convene our coalition to discuss our goals for the year and ways for us to continue our partnerships. We also reach out directly to faculty throughout the year, to include them and their students in our work. The College's enrollment management team will be more instrumental in the future as well, as their team works to get voter registration incorporated into the enrollment admissions process.

### III. Commitment

This action plan is continuously being improved and updated because the College is committed to strengthening the lives of Philadelphians, students of Community College of Philadelphia, and their families. It intends to empower marginalized and historically underrepresented populations in Philadelphia to become more active and engaged citizens of their city.

To distinguish the College's commitment to the work contained in our action plan, College President Generals, is now a signatory of the Presidents' Commitment of the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and has made a pledge to support the institution in making engaging in the democratic process a formative part of the collegiate experience at Community College of Philadelphia. Dr. Donald Generals, President of Community College of Philadelphia, was also recently announced as a recipient of the 2021 Standout College President/Chancellor Award by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge.

The ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge is a national initiative that empowers colleges and universities to achieve excellence in nonpartisan student democratic engagement. He was recognized for his leadership in helping college students improve nonpartisan civic learning, political engagement and voter participation.

*“This award does not only reflect my vision of a more civically engaged campus, but the efforts of the entire college community in doing their part to see that vision become a reality,”* said Dr. Generals.

In the most recent general election years, Dr. Generals implemented strategic plans for Election Day as a day of service for the College to ensure its community was aware of the upcoming elections and were able to participate. The official announcement included school closure and a resource of opportunities dedicated to information about finding polling locations, volunteer opportunities and ballot information.

A commitment to civic engagement is also 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.*

Through the President’s commitment, deans and vice presidents from across the College have a revitalized dedication to improving voting outcomes and democratic engagement for all Community College of Philadelphia students. This is reflected in the College’s strategic plan as well which incorporates external and internal community relations, the student experience, and diversity, equity and inclusion.

The College’s [2017-2025 Strategic Plan](#) External and Internal Community Relations pillar is 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.

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

- Long-standing commitment to quality, access, affordability and upward mobility
- **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.**
- **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.**
- Develop an entrepreneurial approach to partnering with local businesses, organizations, philanthropies, and community groups in ways that help sustain the College.

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

- Critical Thinking Skills—critical thinking allows students to reflect on, reason about, and independently judge ideas and information
- 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.

As an example of how core competencies are reflected, the College 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.

Through co-curricular programming the College, through the Institute for Community Engagement and Civic Leadership beyond their #CCPVotes program, which is the central component of this plan, has expanded civic leadership fellowships where high-achieving students can retain paid experiential opportunities as an incentivization to engage their communities. Additionally, through the College's semester of service program, there is a standardized and methodical approach to the messaging and direction of improving civic learning and democratic engagement on-campus through volunteerism.

The College's commitment to civic engagement and social justice has expanded to include new workshop series entitled, the Civics Beyond the Classroom workshop series, Community Journalism for Civic Power series (administered by the Institute) and the Enough is Enough series (administered out of the President's office) all which are centered around political engagement, societal issues, community-based solutions, advocacy and more! Participants can earn certificates of completion for their engagement in these programs and ultimately are better informed to take action in large societal issues by way of community engagement, voting and ultimately learn how to discern the difference between misinformation, disinformation and factual/historical context that impact our civic rights.

All initiatives concerning civic learning and democratic engagement show up in a variety of ways through championing our efforts via the College's newsletter, social media channels, campus-wide emails, external media outlets and more in which we publicly promote our offerings to the City at large and beyond, creating impact both in and outside of campus.

#### IV. Landscape

Community College of Philadelphia's student voting rates hover at 55.7%. This information is reported by the National Study for Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) 2020 report. The NSLVE Study was the reasoning behind the launch of the #CCPVotes program and has supported the expansion of civic learning throughout the College. Analyzing our NSLVE reports is one of the ways in which we measure our outcomes.

#### ***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 Engagement which includes all student clubs, The Student Government Association, Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society, The College Volunteer Council, The Center for Male Engagement, The Women's Outreach and Advocacy center all incorporate democratic engagement and civic learning as part of their programming and 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 City Commissioner's Office.

### ***Barriers to Success***

While the College's #CCPVotes program seeks to eliminate barriers for civic success, there will always be external problems that can negatively affect our voting and registration rates. Our college is a polling site, however not all students live near our main campus where it is located. Therefore, without consistent election days off or time off to go vote during the day in between classes, we know that students may have trouble getting to their polling location in time. Another barrier is that PA does not institute same day voter registration on election day. Student voter apathy is also an issue that is hard to contend with. When your local environment is overwhelmed with violence, health and safety issues that go beyond the classroom and College walls, it can be difficult to motivate students to go out to vote.

### ***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. Additional resources that support our efforts are our #CCPVotes webpage and the College's President giving all faculty, staff and students the general election day off.

## **V. Goals**

The long-term goal through the #CCPVotes program is to remain 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.

Our short-term goals also remain the same for the #CCPVotes Program and Voter Friendly Campus designation:

- Improve the consistency of voter registration communications to the College Community by ensuring communications go out multiple times throughout each semester including a link to voter registration as a focal point during registration seasons
- Implement the voter registration process with the Enrollment team
- Host engaging panel discussion events with city commissioners and local officials
- Demonstrate the act of voting by exposing the college community to voting machines
- Inform the College community about 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
- Increase student participation and consistency in voter education events by creating a new voter education workshop series and enhancing event registration process
- Continue to improve upon 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, Black and Hispanic populations
  - fields of study including, Computer Information Science fields, Construction, Education, Health, Legal Professions and Studies, Mechanic and Repair Technologies and Technician
  - Strategies will include targeted outreach to the fields of study we're looking to improve voting rates for and ensuring the #CCPVotes working team is including student clubs made up of the demographic populations we are looking to build better relationship in our programming for effective implementation of our campus action plan

## 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 a mix of in-person and virtual events. We have included both our in-person and virtual activities in the list below.

- Ongoing College Presentations for faculty, staff, administration and students
- Voter Registration Tabling throughout the Academic year on the main campus and regional centers
- Events and communications on National Voter Registration Day and Vote Early Day
- Last Day to Register Communication and Tabling Activity
- Weekly Campus Fellows Meetings and Communications (Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project, etc.)
- Hosting Debate Watch Parties

- #CCPVotes Voter Education Workshop Series including information on how to vote, who's on the ballot, how to become politically engaged and more!

### ***The Working Group***

Those doing this work will be a combination of Institute team members, our student fellows, our #CCPVotes Faculty Co-Advisor, student and faculty 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. Additionally, our Government Relations Office, Marketing team and Community Relations Director will be integral in seeing our plan through.

### ***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.

### ***Activities***

#### **Voter education series for faculty, staff, administration and students:**

These presentations on the College's 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 including the Northeast Regional Center and West Regional Center.

#### **Voter Education Toolkit**

We are working on developing a toolkit for students and faculty, which will provide a wide range of voting resources all in one place. Information that will be included is not limited to how to register to vote, checking your registration status, what one needs to bring with them to vote, how to research the candidates on the ballot, etc.

#### **Voter Education Workshop Series**

Over the past couple of years, #CCPVotes has hosted a variety of virtual voter education sessions to educate students and staff on topics like, how to get involved in politics, how to become an election worker, and more. New this year, #CCPVotes will be officially turning this into a certificate program/workshop series that students will be required to register for in advance.

### **Service Learning**



The Institute plans to work with faculty across different disciplines in areas where voting rates are to be improved, to promote service learning through internships, volunteering and advocacy work. As an example, in our Art 150 Computer Graphics class, students made #CCPVotes posters as part of their culminating projects to help the College Get Out the Vote on Election Day.

### **Promote Civic Holidays**

The Institute and #CCPVotes team plan to promote civic holidays happening throughout the year as a means of getting in front of students to encourage voter registration and engagement. Civic holidays include National Voter Registration Day, Vote Early Day, General Election etc.

### **#CCPVotes Email and Online Campaign**

The Institute will work closely with the College's Marketing and Communications team to consistently develop email and social media content that furthers the voter engagement goals on campus and drives students to register to vote and find needed resources on our webpage and new libguides site.

### **General Election Day – College Closed**

The College's President encourages the entire College community to exercise their civic duty to vote by closing the College each year for the General Election and serve as a volunteer at their polls, drive someone to the polls or help someone make an informed decision.

### **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 needed.

## **Timeline for the 2022 – 2023 Academic Year**

### **September 2022 – May 2023**

- National Voter Registration Day Event
- Vote Early Day Activity
- #CCPVotes Voter Education Workshop Series
- 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)
- Get Out the Vote Swag Bag Distribution Distribute 300 bags of needed information, promotional materials as an incentive to register to vote and vote.

All activities will serve the purpose of increasing voter registration and voting rates through the #CCPVotes program. They are meant to encourage voter registration, education and engagement through the election cycles and beyond.

## **VII. Reporting**

The plan will be communicated college-wide to all students, faculty, staff and administrators through a variety of channels. The plan will continue to be shared with stakeholders such as the Board of Directors, internal and external partners 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 internal and external partners, our working team and coalition members to determine how the College can improve and better tailor specialized outreach to enhance higher levels of student democratic engagement within our college community.

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