

**Connecticut College**  
**Holleran Center for Community Action**  
**2020 Campus Election Action Plan**

*“Connecticut College educates students to put the liberal arts into action as citizens in a global society. Connecticut College fosters civic responsibility and enhances academic excellence through a long tradition of community involvement and through courses that provide opportunities for service. The College promotes an understanding of local, regional, national, and international peoples, groups, cultures, and issues, and encourages students to take a life-long interest in them.”*

*- [Connecticut College's Mission & Values](#)*

### **Executive Summary**

Starting in the Spring of 2020, The Holleran Center for Community Action will implement the following Campus Election Action Plan to elevate students' understanding of democracy and civic engagement, specifically related to voting, at Connecticut College. The Holleran Center for Community Action is an interdisciplinary, academic center that is dedicated to cultivating responsible civic engagement and leadership for social justice through engaged scholarship and reciprocal community collaborations. The Holleran Center will work in partnership with academic divisions and departments, our Office of Institutional Research and Planning, the Career Office, the Student Government Association (SGA), CC Democrats, CC Republicans and Conservatives, Women in Politics, Roosevelt Institute, League of Women Voters of Southeastern Connecticut (LWVSECT), and others to ensure that the goals outlined in this action plan are met by the end of 2020. Through continued partnerships with these organizations, Angela Barney, Assistant Director of the Program in Community Action, was able to develop this plan and indicate clear goals for Connecticut College, with the assistance of Kim Sanchez, Associate Director of Engaged Scholarship and Community Learning, Kayla Johnson, '20, Student Government Association Chief of Communications, and Stephanie Martinez, '21, Program in Community Action Scholar.

In collaboration with the Holleran Center staff, the Voter Education and Engagement interns and Holleran Center fellows will plan and execute strategies, activities, and programs that will target different student groups. This team will also work to institutionalize voting within freshman First-Year Experience courses by means of First-Year Seminar modules and a First-Year Seminar so that students are engaged and informed as they enter into their college careers. It's our hope that through these initiatives we can further institutionalize Connecticut College's commitment to nonpartisan civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation.

This plan was informed primarily by the following resources: [Election Imperatives from the Institute for Democracy in Higher Education](#), [The Institute for Democracy & Higher Education's Report: Politics 365: Fostering Campus Climates for Student Political, Learning & Engagement](#), [Strengthening American Democracy from the Students Learn Students Vote \(SLSV\) Coalition](#), [Democracy Works' Votes & Ballots activity](#), and [the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement \(NSLVE\) 2016 and 2018 campus reports for Connecticut College](#).

*\*Note: This is our intended plan as of 5/31/2020, as College, state, and federal guidelines change we will adjust as well.*

## **Leadership**

The Holleran Center is well integrated throughout the campus and provides support to numerous departments for research, community learning, and other initiatives that are consistent with the Center's mission. Angela Barney, Assistant Director of the Program in Community Action in the Holleran Center for Community Action, will manage and coordinate all events, programs, and activities surrounding voter engagement held at Connecticut College. Angela will collaborate with community organizations as well as students, faculty, and staff of Connecticut College to create programming. The Holleran Center will work in partnership with academic divisions and departments, our Office of Institutional Research and Planning, the Career Office, the Student Government Association (SGA), CC Democrats, CC Republicans and Conservatives, Women in Politics, Roosevelt Institute, League of Women Voters of Southeastern Connecticut (LWVSECT), and others. Angela will be assisted by Julia O'Connell, '21 & Jozette Moses, '21, Voter Education and Engagement interns, and Holleran Center Fellows to execute these events, activities, and programs. Other members may be chosen to join the working group based on the commitment to involvement, strategies, and degree of an overall mutually beneficial relationship. The level of involvement and membership responsibility will be decided and agreed upon by Angela Barney and the member. Some members may provide resources and data, while others will develop programming and materials or volunteer at events.

We have also been collaborating with our fellow New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) schools. In October 2019, Angela Barney, Kayla Johnson, and Stephanie Martinez attended the NESCAC Votes summit where we met with eight other NESCACs to build democratic action plans and share strategies for deepening civic learning on campuses. Angela Barney has been asked to serve on the NESCAC Votes core planning team alongside Andrew Lardin, Bowdoin College, Jason Duquette-Hoffman, Middlebury College, & Stephanie King, ALL IN Director of Strategic Initiatives and our athletic conference challenge representative. It is our plan to have a check-in with the NESCAC schools throughout the year to discuss our progress and learn from one another. We have set a NESCAC-wide goal of 64% voter participation in 2020 that we will hold each other accountable for.

## **Goals**

In keeping with Connecticut College's mission & values to foster "civic responsibility," Connecticut College has taken the "ALL IN Democracy Challenge" with the intent of increasing student civic engagement through:

- voter registration
- voter education - informed about ballots, candidates, platforms, and issues
- voter participation/turnout

We will also expand our efforts beyond voting to promote greater civic engagement on campus.

We feel this is especially important in order to create an inclusive space on campus for students who may not be able to register to vote.

## **Strategies**

In order to achieve the goals, set forth above, we have created the following strategies:

### **Voter Registration**

- Incorporate voter registration into the process for student government elections
- Work with Residential Life to incorporate voter engagement into at least one residence hall/dorm meeting or event each semester (e.g., Plant House - community engagement dorm)
- Work with IT Service staff to incorporate voter registration into online platforms used frequently on campus (e.g., within campus student portal)
- Have the Student Government Association send out a campus-wide email about the importance of voting including voter registration and education resources
- Incorporate voter registration into unrelated, yet popular social events including athletic events and Fall weekend

### ***Voter Registration at Pre-Orientation and Orientation***

- All new students receive a Voter Registration form in their orientation packet
- Include voting resources and civic engagement opportunities in the New Student Guide: *Over the Hump*
- Have Holleran Center communications & Student Government Association send out a blurb about voting and civic engagement opportunities in an email to incoming first-year and transfer students during the summer
- Have student volunteers attend open Orientation and Pre-Orientation events with Camels Vote t-shirts and tablets. They will conduct informal voter registrations and spread the word to recruit volunteers for Camels Vote's 2020 efforts
- Co-sponsor Orientation activity and hand out Camels Vote give-aways while registering students to vote

### ***National Voter Registration Week***

- Continue expansion of National Voter Registration Day to National Voter Registration Week
- Host registration tables at high traffic locations on campus throughout the week (e.g. library and student center)
- Host Get out the Vote activities in residential halls (e.g. [Storm the Dorm](#))
- Engage in large social media pushes towards registering to vote and plan College and Holleran Center *Instagram* takeovers
- Voter registration forms, absentee ballot applications, and other educational voting materials will be made available through the Holleran Center
- Ask students to pledge to vote and follow up on the pledges

- One pledge card will be created for all students to indicate whether they are registered to vote, politically engaged, asking 3 friends to vote, etc.
- Follow-ups will include election reminders, information on polling locations, and reminders about transportation to the polls

### **Voter Education**

- Co-sponsor State of the Union Address, Debate Watch Parties & Follow-up conversations
  - Coordinate with faculty experts (Prof. MaryAnne Borrelli & Prof. Mara Suttman-Lea) and interested student organizations and clubs
- Bring legislation and campus issues together for educational forums or panels
  - Example: Work with the Pathway in Public Health and Career to invite health policy experts, legislators, public health faculty, and alumni working in the field to discuss the ramifications of local and national changes to health care policies
- More fully exploit the educational potential of co-curricular activities
  - Highlight and promote what students learn by volunteering and through political activity
- Voter Education Materials
  - Work with John Nugent, Director, Institutional Research and Planning to identify the 5 states from which the most students draw from
  - Distribute nonpartisan documents from national and local organizations as well Connecticut College and Connecticut specific-materials
  - Information will include:
    - How to register to vote absentee
    - Where to find polling locations
    - Sample ballots for the 5 states from which the most students draw
    - Information on swing states
    - Education video tutorials (e.g., how to vote-by-mail)
    - How to be civically-engaged at Connecticut College and the local community
  - Educational materials will be made available online through the Holleran Center's voter education webpage & social media channels as well as campus platforms
- Holleran Center Social Media Channels & Webpage
  - Webpage & Holleran Center social media will include access to information and resources related to voter registration, ballot casting, civic engagement, etc.
  - Social media posts will include videos and images encouraging students to register to vote, look up non-partisan information regarding candidate and ballot issues, and promotion of other engagement opportunities
  - Beginning in September and running through to Election Day, the Holleran Center will send out a trivia question on our social media channels including *Facebook* & *Instagram* every few days to make it fun while keeping the students engaged and thinking
- Mock Polling Station on campus

- Borrow or purchase voting machines from Registrars of Voters and create sample ballot to set up opportunities for our students to learn and become comfortable with the voting process
- Voter Registration Office Hours
  - Host registration office hours to assist students with any and all questions relating to voting
  - Volunteers are trained by Holleran Center & League of Women Voters

### **Voter Participation/Get Out the Vote**

- The week before Election Day:
  - Work with local election clerks to recruit students to be poll workers on Election Day
  - Post upcoming election and poll information on available platforms throughout the college and on social media
  - Send an email detailing the ways in which students can receive rides to the polls to vote
  - Organize a campus-wide pledge to vote campaign
  - Visit with or email faculty about encouraging students to vote after each of their classes the week leading up to Election Day
  - Do a student takeover of campus *Instagram* account with voting content
- Election Day:
  - Host registration and Get Out the Vote tables at high traffic locations on campus (e.g. library and student center) to encourage voting participation
  - The Holleran Center will offer a shuttle bus system to the local polling location for students who are registered to vote in Connecticut
  - Send email and post to the Holleran Center's *Instagram* on election day encouraging students to vote and detailing the ways in which they can receive rides to the polls to vote
  - Do a student takeover of campus *Instagram* account on Election Day
  - Offer "I Voted" stickers for students who submit 'voting selfies' at mailroom (absentee) or polling place
    - Virtual "I Vote" stickers will be made available for students to post on their own social media accounts
  - Host a watch party to reveal the election results with campaign representatives and/or faculty experts (Prof. MaryAnne Borrelli & Prof. Mara Suttman-Lea)

### **Institutionalization**

- Continue to promote and integrate education for civic engagement across the curriculum
  - Involve all disciplines, not only the social sciences—in order to reach more students and also engage the insights and models of more fields of study
  - Offer an example syllabus statement for faculty members and share civic engagement opportunities and project examples

- Brainstorm funding sources for ideas not already built into campus budgets
- Continue to participate in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) to learn more about our student registration and voting rates
- Incorporate civic learning and engagement activities into First-Year Experience courses:
  - First-Year Seminar Modules
  - A First-Year Seminar offered by the Holleran Center - Beyond the Ballot: Applied Civic & Political Engagement
- Partner with the Walter Commons and Toor Cummings Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts (CISLA) to promote and host a discussion where international students to share their political experiences from their own countries with peers
  - Coordinate with Walter Commons to host a session of the *International News Hour* on electoral processes and political engagement in other nations
- Partner with the Walter Commons and CISLA to promote and host an info session for students who are not eligible to vote to get politically involved (e.g. joining a club, going to an event, volunteering, community organizing, etc.)
- Explore online voter engagement tools such as TurboVotes to create an interface to facilitate students registering to vote electronically
- Continue to participate in the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) Votes initiative
  - Share and learn about best practices used by peer institutions similar to Connecticut College through participation in conference calls, webinars, and attendance at the NESCAC Votes Summit
  - Participate in friendly competition with fellow NESCAC schools to see who can register the most students and create a broader New England small college community
    - Increase the voter turnout rate by at least 11 percentage points across the 11 NESCAC campuses in the 2020 general election, from an average of 53% to 64%
- Continue to participate in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
- Explore the possibility of applying to become a Voter Friendly Campus
- Harness the capacity of our campus partners & develop new partnerships:
  - Encourage leaders of various departments, clubs, teams, and affinity groups to personally urge their members to register and vote.
  - Create relationships with other faculty, staff, and student organizations on campus, such as athletics, clubs, and other student-led projects

### **Tentative Calendar of Events**

- Jan. 1, 2020 and Feb. 29, 2020 - State of the Union Address
- February 1, 2020 - Email about Voter Registration, Events, and Resources
- April 23, 2020 – Last day to register to Vote for Presidential Primary Election
  - \*Can register to vote in-person on election day in CT
- May through August – New Student Orientation Voter Registration
- September 9, 2020 – Email about Voter Registration, Events, and Resources

- September 16, 2020 – Constitution Day Event
- September 21 - 25, 2020 – National Voter Registration Week
  - September 22, 2020 - National Voter Registration Day
- September 29, 2020 - Presidential Debate
- October 7, 2020 - Vice Presidential Debate
- October 15, 2020 - Presidential Debate
- October 22, 2020 - Presidential Debate
- October 21, 2020 - [Official Mass Email] Early Voting and Election Day Voting
- October 27, 2020 – Last day to register to vote for Presidential Election
  - \*Can register to vote in-person on election day in CT
- November 3, 2020 – Election Day
- November 3, 2020 – Election Day Results Watch Party

\*Events yet to be scheduled: Additional Voter Registration Events. Additionally, we anticipate that there will be some changes and updates of events throughout the election cycle which will be added.

## **Broad Campus & Community Participation**

### ***Help Parents Vote Initiative***

With support from the Holleran Center's Student Community Engagement Grant and the League of Women Voters of Southeastern Connecticut, the student-led club Women in Politics will offer free onsite childcare at each of the three polling places in New London, CT and educate children on how democracy works, how we vote, and why it matters with the use of age-appropriate mock ballots and books.

### ***New London's Complete Count Census Committee with League of Women Voters and Mayor Passero of New London, CT***

The LWVSECT made the census one of their top priorities for 2020 and encouraged participation in the census in all of the 18 towns they cover. In support of this priority and our ongoing partnership with LWVSECT and the greater New London community, the Holleran Center will lead an online initiative using our social media channels to promote students' participation in the 2020 Census and encouraged students to serve on New London's Complete Count Census Committee or on their own City's Census Committees.

## **National Research & Landscape**

Connecticut College participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) and continues to use the research to measure the effectiveness of our work on campus and to motivate us to increase student participation in the voting process.

For the purposes of this action plan, we have made the decision to reference the 2016 presidential election as opposed to the 2018 midterm election, as it is most comparable to the upcoming race(s). In 2017, Connecticut College was part of the All IN Campus Challenge and received the Bronze Seal for our voter engagement rate – 56.4% based on the 2016 NSLVE

report. While Connecticut College is proud of its bronze medal status in the All In Campus Democracy Challenge, we also see the opportunity for improvement and seek to receive the silver medal status (60-69% voter participation) in the 2020 election.

The NSLVE report shows student voting performance in presidential elections in comparison to all higher education institutions evaluated, improved 11.1% from 45.3% in 2012 to 56.4% in 2016. More female students voted in the 2012 (52.7% women versus 43.7% men) and in 2016 (59.0% women versus 42.3% men) in presidential elections. The Holleran Center will work to address this disparity through targeted programming, which may include partnerships with athletic teams and student clubs/organizations including Men of Color Alliance to personally urge their members to register and vote.

The report also assesses student voter participation by field of study. At Connecticut College, psychology majors were responsible for the highest level of voter participation in 2016 at 64.4%. History majors were the second-highest student voters at 61% and Computer and Information Sciences had the lowest voter turnout at 41.5%. To address the lower voting rates amongst certain fields of study, the Holleran Center will work to contact faculty members across various disciplines to have them encourage their students to register and vote.

In terms of voting methods, 27.9% of students cast absentee ballots, 26% of students vote in person on Election day, and 7.9% of students vote by mail. The Holleran Center will work to inform students that they have the right to vote using their university address if they so choose to. If students prefer to vote via absentee ballot, we will facilitate this process by signing those students up through online voter engagement tools like TurboVote. TurboVote allows students to request a state-specific absentee ballot.

## **Reporting**

This plan will be shared with all members of the voting coalition and incorporated into reports to upper administration. We will also share the NSLVE data/report on the Holleran Center website and the Student Government Association's social media channels and emails. We will also share updates and information through Holleran Center and SGA social media channels and official College news outlets as appropriate. The website is visible to the general public so our local community can also have access to this information.

## **Follow Up & Evaluation**

The evaluation will be based on readily available NSVLE data from previous election cycles. Additionally, the team will meet throughout the year to review turnout numbers and assess the success of individual events and overall efforts.

Some of our assessment measures will include the following:

- # of students eligible to vote
- # of students registered to vote



- # of students pledged to vote
- # of hours of tabling (remote through virtual office hours & in person)
- # of students, staff, and faculty registered to vote
- # of events/programs
- # of people at events
- # of volunteers
- # of partners throughout the college & local community
- # of students who used the transportation system to the polls

We hope to gain some information about outcomes related to our goals (e.g., did they register, did they vote in CT and why, etc.) and overall impression of our efforts (e.g., what events did students find successful, what and how information reached them, etc.) through a survey administered the day after election day. This survey will be completely voluntary and anonymous. The link to the survey will be shared on the Holleran Center's social media channels. Results will be shared with the voting coalition and used to help inform future efforts and iterations of our ALL IN plan.