

Campus Election Action Plan - DRAFT
Holleran Center for Community Action
Connecticut College
December 2019

“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](#)

Goals

In keeping with our 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 political 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.

Executive Summary

This action plan was developed in Fall 2019 by the Holleran Center for Community Action (Angela Barney, Assistant Director of Program in Community Action (PICA), Kayla Johnson, '20, Student Government Association Chief of Communications & PICA Scholar, & Stephanie Martinez, '21, PICA Scholar) to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at Connecticut College. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over the next year on and around our campus in New London, Connecticut. This plan will be implemented by students, staff, faculty from across disciplines, and partners including the Student Government Association (SGA), CC Democrats, CC Republicans and Conservatives, Women in Politics, Roosevelt Institute, Residential Education Fellow (REF) Program and League of Women Voters of Southeastern Connecticut (LWVSECT), who were recruited by the Holleran Center in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize Connecticut College’s commitment to nonpartisan civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation in elections.

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 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 institutional's student portal)
- Have the Student Government Association send out a campus-wide email about the importance of voting including voter registration and education resources
- Align voter registration efforts with the 2020 Constitution Day event by hosting voter registration tables throughout the duration of the event
- Incorporate voter registration into unrelated, yet popular events on campus 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
- A voter registration link will be added on the orientation checklist for incoming February admits and we hope to do the same for the September admits in fall 2020
- Have Holleran Center communications & Student Government Association send out blurb about Camels Vote in 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 at 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, political 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
- Partner with REF professors and students to co-sponsor and advertise political or civic engagement activities or events on campus
- Voter Education Materials
 - Distribute nonpartisan brochures and half-page documents on 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, how to be civically-engaged at Connecticut College and our local community
- Holleran Center Social Media & Webpage
 - List relevant resources on Holleran Center's *Facebook* and Webpage for students interested in becoming politically engaged and registering to vote
 - Beginning in September and running through to Election Day, the Holleran Center will send out a trivia question on our social media accounts every few days to make it fun while keeping the students engaged and thinking
- Posters/Flyers
 - Hang posters and flyers around campus encouraging students to register to vote, look up non-partisan information regarding candidate and ballot issues, and promotions for other engagement opportunities
- 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 at high traffic locations on campus, including the library, campus coffee shops and the student center, to assist students with any and all questions relating to voting
 - Volunteers are trained by the League of Women Voters (LWVSECT) & Holleran Center

Voter Participation/Get Out the Vote

- Week before Election Day:
 - Work with local election clerk to recruit students to be poll workers on Election Day
 - Post poll information on available platforms throughout college
 - Send an email detailing the ways in which students can receive rides to the polls to vote
 - Create, print, post flyers promoting upcoming election
 - 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 social media accounts 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
 - Encourage "Take a Date to the Polls" and "Real Camels Don't Let Camels Vote Alone" messages to foster support within peer groups (e.g., publicize with posters and *Facebook* and *Instagram* posts)
 - Do a student takeover of campus social media accounts on Election Day
 - Offer stickers for students who submit 'voting selfies' at mail room (absentee) or polling place
 - Host a watch party to reveal the election results on campus with campaign representatives and/or faculty experts (Prof. MaryAnne Borrelli & Prof. Mara Suttman-Lea)

Institutionalization

- 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 through FYS Modules
- 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
- 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.)
- Partner with TurboVote to remove technical barriers to registering
 - Explore paying for TurboVote to create an interface to facilitate students registering to vote electronically
- Continue to participate in 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
- Host a Tisch's College Institute for Democracy and Higher Education workshop on campus
- Create new campus partners
 - Reach out to groups on campus to spread awareness about voting and encourage students to register and vote
 - Create relationships with other student organizations on campus, such as athletics, clubs, and other student-led projects
 - Continue to build upon and strengthen existing partnerships

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 & Student Tour at the Connecticut State Capitol. 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 has made the census one of their top priorities for 2020 and is encouraging participation in the census in all of the 18 towns they cover. Connecticut College student volunteers may serve as representatives on the Complete Count Census Committee.

Tour at the Connecticut State Capitol with the League of Women Voters

We plan to partner with a community learning course in the Spring to offer an opportunity for the students to take a tour at the Connecticut State Capitol with the LWVSECT. During this tour, students will have the opportunity to learn the history of the Capitol, learn about the legislative process while viewing the House and Senate chambers, and possibly meet with New London, CT Representatives and other officials such as the Secretary of State.

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 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 metal status in the All In Campus Democracy Challenge, we also see the opportunity for improvement and seek to receive the silver metal 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 verses 43.7% men) and in 2016 (59.0% women verses 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 like the Men of Color Alliance to host voter registration drives amongst their members.

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 to have them encourage their students to register and vote.

In terms of voting methods, 27.9% 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 with TurboVote. TurboVote will allow 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 Student Government Association 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.

Follow Up & Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on readily available NSVLE data from previous election cycles. Additionally, the team will meet one to two times after election day 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 days of tabling
- # of students, staff, and faculty registered to vote
- # of events
- # of people at events
- # of volunteers
- # of partners throughout the university
- # of students who used 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 through a survey administered on 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 accounts. Results will be shared with the voting coalition and used to help inform future efforts and iterations of our ALL IN plan.