

Voter Friendly Campus - Strengthening American Democracy - Campus Action Plan Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) – Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Ohio



the voting experience

The Voting Experience 2024

*Submitted by Katharine Montgomery, Director, Government Relations, Tri-C
on behalf of Tri-C, the Tri-C Democracy Fellows Core Team, and Cross-Campus Coalition*

Executive Summary

Overview: For many years, Democracy has been alive and well across the campuses of Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) in Cleveland and Northeast Ohio. Ranked as one of the Top Five Community Colleges in America, we serve just over 41,000 traditional and non-traditional students each year. We know that 85% of our students remain to live and work in the region – so it is a basic tenet of the College to help prepare our students to serve as stalwart community stewards of civic engagement. Also, 58% of our students self-identify as first in family to go to college. We've learned they also can be first in family to vote. We seek to serve as the voting coach for all students – and encourage them to share this skill with family and friends once learned. Finally, Tri-C – Ohio's largest and oldest Community College – is a levy-supported institution. We return to the ballot every five years. As an institution that has served over one million of our citizens since opening in 1963, we are most grateful to the citizens of Cuyahoga County for their ongoing support and we strive to earn their votes every day.



*Two Tri-C Democracy Fellows at
The Voting Experience 2023 – over
1,000 peer-to-peer voting
conversations held*

Annual Promote the Vote Campaigns

Ohio conducts Primary and General Elections each year. In every Primary and General election, Tri-C's Government Relations Department runs a college-wide, multi-layered **Promote the Vote** campaign with all students, faculty and staff across four main campuses and at 10 additional college sites.

For Each Election cycle – A cross-campus team of 29 works with Tri-C Government Relations to distribute Voter Registration Forms and Vote-by-Mail requests at 70 high-traffic areas across 14 college sites – including our four main campuses.

- **During the two months leading to a Primary** - *Every Vote Counts* signs are posted at 40 locations. The signs share key Election dates – Voter Registration & Vote-by-Mail deadlines as well as the date/hours of Election Day. We like to make it hard to miss an opportunity to vote!
- **For the two months leading to the General Election** – Six- and 12-foot banners are added to the mix – for a total of 70 locations spotlighting key voting information. There are two banners each for use at 30 sites. The first banner reminds everyone to register. After the registration deadline passes, the second set of banners goes up to remind people to vote.

College-wide efforts are supported by articles in the faculty/staff newsletter and with ads or articles placed in the Student newspaper. Full Social Media campaigns are run across five online platforms. Posts on digital campus screens

supplement this messaging. The Government Relations website is updated for each Election cycle and linked to in communications. Our Student Life Directors have Voter Registration and other forms available year-round.

One-to-one outreach: We send All-Student texts & emails in every cycle. Also, our VP, Government Relations sends All-Employee emails for key voter dates, which helps reinforce our Civic Engagement messaging. Content includes our national hashtag #TriCVotes and website links. In most years, we host a County-wide **Your Vote Counts** youth summit with 250+ high school students. This year – with a stretch goal of 350 students – we’re moving to a larger venue in the City of Cleveland.

The Voting Experience at Tri-C

Our annual voter education event – for students, by students – enters its seventh year in 2024.

Tri-C has built a legacy project called **The Voting Experience**. Think of it as a pop-up shop for learning how to vote, in which we cover the five topics studies show students/new voters would like to learn about most. The in-person pop-up voting event also supports our role as a Voter Friendly Campus and Ask Every Student Codesigner Campus.

Each year, by design, The Voting Experience covers both Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day. It's been designed that way from the start.

- Often these two Civic Holidays are the bookends for our events. In 2024, Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day fall on the same date – Sept. 17th. Therefore, we’ll schedule our eight Voting Experience events – two per campus – in the week prior as well as that week.
- **Starting in 2020** – we added an online video playlist to share these same peer-to-peer messages and also add some fun and new engagement to the mix.

The Voting Experience In-Person - Eight pop-up voting events, held across four campuses, take students through five keys aspects of voting. The Board of Elections joins us to fully recreate the in-person voting experience at each one! In 2023, we held over 1,000 peer-to-peer voting conversations with students at these events – all nonpartisan – a requirement.

The Voting Experience Online - We are proud to have won a national SLSV Coalition award for making democracy “fun and celebratory” and we try to add a new element to the online mix each year. **The online playlist – covers the same topics as our pop-up events** – with a twist, as illustrated below.

- **In 2022, we worked with a gospel artist to create a nonpartisan voting anthem – [Rock The Polls](#)** – that was shared across the college, region, and country.
- **In 2023, we started a new soap opera series called *The Votes of Our Lives*** – using tropes to drive home key voting points. [Watch it here](#) - Happy to report it was shared by fellow institutions, educators and elected officials across the city, county, state and nation.
- **In 2024, we’re taking the video series playlist to a film noir place as we go *On the Case for Democracy*.** Target date: Constitution Day & National Voter Registration Day – Sept. 17.

Tri-C is proud to be nationally recognized for its student civic engagement efforts.

- **Ask Every Student (AES) Codesigner Campus** – one of 31 in the country chosen in the Inaugural cohort.
- **AES National Codesigner Cohort 2022** – our Director of Government Relations, who runs the college-wide Promote the Vote effort and guides the Democracy Fellows program, is one of 24 students, faculty and staff members chosen to serve on the cohort in 2022.
- **Voter Friendly Campus** – We were honored to earn the designation the FY19-20, FY21-22, FY23-24 and hope to earn the honor again in this round from CVP and NASPA.
- **Campus Vote Project** – Tri-C is hosting its seventh cohort of Democracy Fellows in 2024 and enjoys a strong working relationship with both the State and National Teams.

Leadership & Commitment

[Tri-C Government Relations & Tri-C Core Democracy Fellows Team](#)

**Katie Montgomery, Director, Government Relations
Summer Paris, Liaison, Tri-C Mandel Scholars Program
Ayodele Onoyungbo, 2023 & 2024 Democracy Fellow
Emmanuel Ahmadu, 2023 & 2024 Democracy Fellow
Sylvia Snow-Rackley, 2023 & 2024 Democracy Fellow
Olu Ogunlade, 2023 & 2024 Democracy Fellow
Allison Price, 2024 Democracy Fellow
Samantha Franco, CVP Liaison to Democracy Fellows, 2023 & 2024**

+

Tri-C Cross-Campus Promote the Vote Coalition 2024

The Tri-C Cross-Campus Promote the Vote Coalition encompasses the work of the Democracy Fellows and a larger college-wide Promote the Vote effort. These efforts are led by Tri-C Government Relations on behalf of the College and the coalition continues to grow in number and collaborations. The Democracy Fellows serve through the office of Government Relations on a Core Team comprised of the students and staff.

We begin our 2024 Coalition efforts with 70+ volunteer members on board. Members include the entire Student Life Team (four campuses) as well as Community Relations Liaisons from all four campus President's Offices, a 29-member Signs & Banners Coalition, and so many more. We have established, and are now working to grow, a Faculty Champions program. We have enlisted the help of our IT & Media Production Teams for student videos.

In 2024, we will once again be extending our outreach to a wide variety of student groups, including the Black American Council, Phi Theta Kappa, The Student Multicultural Club, Reach Scholars, SOGE, Lambda, and Student Government. Our hope is to grow an annual Co-Curricular effort based on The Voting Experience – already in place for the seventh year with our Mandel Humanities Scholars Program – and turn it into a college-wide challenge.

Tri-C has established community partnerships with the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections Community Outreach team. I'm happy to report they provide active support to Tri-C efforts and are already set to volunteer at 2024 events. We've also partnered with the County Executive's Media Team on county-wide voter education initiatives. The Ohio State Secretary of State provides stats and data we use to support our student engagement messaging.

Tri-C is an active participant in Civic Holidays – fully participating in National Voter Education Week and Vote Early Day in addition to NVRD. We've also established amazing partnerships with student voting organizations across the country that truly enrich our work.

**The Tri-C Cross-Campus Coalition 2024
is composed of the Tri-C Core Team + the following:**

Metro Campus

Nache Jones, Director, Student Engagement, Metro Campus
Davion Fisher, Student Life Advisor, Metro Campus
Lisanetta McDade, Community Relations Liaison, President's Office, Metro Campus

Westshore Campus

Billy Bernard, Director, Student Engagement, Westshore Campus
Nikki Matala, Community Relations Liaison, President's Office, Westshore Campus

Eastern Campus

James Gardner, Student Life Director, Eastern Campus
Mynetta Brower, Student Life Advisor/Student Government, Eastern Campus
Meagan Gibson, Community Relations Liaison, President's Office, Eastern Campus

Western Campus

Chava Witt, Student Life Director, Western Campus

Stephanie Faciana, Community Relations Liaison, President's Office, Western Campus
Trish Myers-Houlehan, President's Office, **Western Campus**
Promote the Vote Cross-Campus Team
Signage/banners/forms – Includes all of the above +
Hayley Brown, Government Relations & Community Outreach, **District Administration Offices**
Dan Overfield, Assistant Professor, Learning Commons, **Metro Campus**
Lynne Flournoy, Manufacturing and Technology Center, **Metro Campus**
Marcia Leftridge, **Student Engagement**
Margaret Mays, Concierge, **Workforce and Community Economic Development**
Greg Malone, Assoc. Dean, Health Careers Sciences, **Eastern Campus**
Rosemary Rivera, Associate Dean, **Western Campus**
Laronda Adkins, Associate Dean, **Western Campus**
Jean Cornelius, Associate Dean, **Western Campus**
Kristen Tomcho, Admin, ICD, **Western Campus**
Patrick Finneran, Director, Public Safety Training Center, **Western Campus**
Joel Latiolais, Event Services, **Corporate College East**
Jaymu Miller, Concierge, **JSTC Center**
Nancy Farinacci, Conf. Event Planning, **JSTC Center**
Pete Jennings, Library, **Western Campus**
Maureen Leff, Academic Student Services, **Brunswick Center**
Tamika Maxwell, **Transportation Innovation Center**
Ian Wilson, Director, **Transportation Innovation Center**
Rashida Elias, Concierge, **District Administration Offices**
Julieann Chambers, Unit Operations, **Hospitality Management Center**

and

Integrated Communications Team Members – Marketing, Social Media, Media Relations, Web
Lisa Dobransky, Caroline Rado, Dana Leidich, Anthony Moujaes, more!

IT & Media Production Team – Mike Donato and a team of four+

Faculty Champions – Kara DePaul, Christine Wolken, Clare Rahm

Foundation Team Members – Scott Sternecker, Robyn Herr, Becky Krumhansl, Cat Chia

Student Liaisons – All Student Emails / Social Media Outreach – Tisha Hardy, Kris Vild

and

Campus Team Members

Dr. Michael Baston, President
Claire Rosacco, V.P., Government Relations
Community Outreach Team – Sandy-Kish Jordan, Kenneth Hale
Mandel Scholars Humanities Program

and Community Partners

Campus Vote Project

Alexis Crosby, Ohio Coordinator & the National Office staff
Teri Seabrook, Ohio

Voter Friendly Campus

Chuck Black, National Director

Community & Organizational Partners

Mike West & Community Outreach Team – Cuyahoga County Board of Elections

Ask Every Student & Students Learn/Students Vote Coalition

Clarissa Unger, Danny Fersh, Sithara Menon and more!

LANDSCAPE

Tri-C is Ohio's oldest and largest community college and serves a vital role in the economic growth and development of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County by preparing community members to enter and succeed in quality jobs throughout Northeast Ohio. Tri-C welcomes both traditional and non-traditional students. Within our footprint, Tri-C serves a large urban area where educational attainment can be hampered and large numbers of individuals may be

economically disadvantaged. In light of that, Tri-C devotes particular attention to providing assistance for traditionally low-income, underserved population groups. To achieve this goal, Tri-C continually develops and implements programs and strategies to move this population into post-secondary education and to remove impediments to academic success and workforce participation.

Civic engagement and voter education are built into Tri-C's DNA. As a levy-supported institution, we work to earn the community's vote every day.

Each semester Tri-C offers more than 1,000 credit courses in more than 200 career and technical programs and more than 600 non-credit workforce/professional development courses. Tri-C also grants Short-Term Certificates, Certificates of Proficiency and Post-Degree Professional Certificates.

The College serves more than 41,000 credit and non-credit students annually and offers day, evening and weekend classes; classes via television, the Internet, and independent learning. More than half of our students – 58% – self-identify as first in family college students. Tri-C students come from more than 30 countries, 40% are from minority groups, 62% are female, and the average student age is 26.2.

Eighty-five percent of Tri-C grads stay to live/work in the region.

NSLVE

Tri-C regularly measures and monitors all analytics related to its Promote the Vote outreach. We review our NSLVE reports for guidance on student engagement and overall College performance – always with the goals of growing reach, student engagement, and campus and community partnerships.

Our institutional policy currently keeps our NSLVE results for internal use only. However, we can share some trend lines from the last NSLVE report, as also shared in our last VFC Report:

- **While we always have room to grow, we have made tremendous strides since 2014**, achieving three- and four-fold increases in voting in the first three age ranges measured (18-29-year-olds) as well as nearly tripling the overall voting rate in these age groups since 2014.
- **Voting by Age Group also increased by double-digits in every age group from 2018 to 2020:**
 - 18-21 – up 25 percentage points since 2018
 - 22-24 – up 23 percentage points since 2018
 - 25-29 – up 22 percentage points since 2018
 - 30-39 – up 21 percentage points since r 2018
 - 40-49 – up 18 percentage points since 2018
 - 50+ – up 13 percentage points since 2018

Goals & Strategy

Short-Term Goals – 2024

The Voting Experience – In person and Online – After being fully virtual 2020-2022, we brought back in-person events in 2023, but also kept the Online Playlist as another means of civic engagement and voter education. A full video series will once again be created by the Democracy Fellows.

- Each year, we invite the County Board of Elections to join us in putting on the eight in-person pop-up voting events. They already are scheduled for 2024. By adding the experience of what it's like to check in at the polls, vote on an actual ballot, and receive the coveted 😊 I Voted sticker – the BOE helps us hit all the right notes. In addition, Campus Vote Project staff often volunteer.

In-Person & Virtual Topics: The five core voter education components covered in each version of The Voting Experience are:

1. **How to Register to Vote** - includes how to check if you're registered
2. **How to Vote-by-Mail** - includes **Vote Early Day** - a national movement to get this process done at least 10 days before the Election & **How to Track Your Ballot**
3. **How to Research Your Ballot from Home** - includes how to look up your ballot and research at nonpartisan sites - [VoteSmart.org](https://www.vote-smart.org) and [Judge4yourself.com](https://www.judge4yourself.com)
4. **How to Make a Voting Plan** – The three ways to vote: Early, By Mail, or on Election Day
5. **How to Vote** - Literally, how you find your poll, check in at the polls, and vote in a booth; can include the Do's and Don'ts of Voting - or the latter can be a stand-alone.

Accessibility – We host videos on Tri-C's YouTube channel - for students and community members to access, as needed. YouTube provides a baseline of more equitable access for students not currently on Social Media.

The Voting Experience - Online

Key Strategy – We continue to strive to make democracy celebratory and fun with our Core Team.

- **In 2022, we worked with a gospel artist to create a nonpartisan voting anthem – Rock The Polls – <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLC6M42XSuyczLhDFrYdE5vr13fcL0nJ90>** – We're happy to report it was shared across the college, region, and country and continues as a backing soundtrack to subsequent year videos. With 49K views and counting, thank you to all who joined our national dance challenge! 😊
- **In 2023, we started a new soap opera series called *The Votes of Our Lives* – <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLC6M42XSuyczTOOd8KqhJlP4XMiQIV>** – Three soap operas – using tropes to drive home key points – were created by our Democracy Fellows Core Team, with amazing support from our Media team. *Code Red, White and Blue* was a particular favorite and will be the basis for 2024 video efforts.
 - **We're still hearing from folks about these** – most gratifying. We can report that in addition to multiple shares across campus meetings and in classrooms, they also were shared by fellow institutions, Cleveland Metropolitan School District, other local high schools, and by educators, voting partners, and elected officials across the city, county, state and nation.
- **The Tremmy Awards – Year Two**
 - Our students were quite proud of our video efforts in 2023 and kept joking about getting Emmys. We decided to turn that into reality and held the first TREMMY Awards (Tri-C + EMMY).
 - It was a huge hit and we plan to repeat it in 2024. (For fun – photo at the end.)
- **In 2024, we have another big reach – but we're hoping to make it happen.** 😊
 - **The Voting Experience Online – We're building on last year's efforts and taking our video soap opera series in a film noir direction as we go *On the Case for Democracy*.** The video will pick up *four years later* – with detectives called in to solve the case of the missing votes. FYI – This planning is underway and may evolve over the summer. The Soap Operas will be accompanied by student videos sharing key voting info in a conversational manner. The Virtual Voting Experience brings a popular student voter registration event fully online. Target date: Constitution Day & National Voter Registration Day – Sept. 17.
 - **New – Democracy Fellows hosting a 'train the trainer' session** on voter registration with student government and other club leaders to boost voter registration at all events.
 - **New – we're exploring live Instagram Chats with students leading discussions on common mistakes made in Voter Registration, Absentee Ballot Requests, and Vote-by-Mail.** The County Board of Elections is a partner here and they will be accessible by community members too.

New – Community College Concert Competition!

- Tri-C is looking forward to throwing its hat in the ring for the CC Concert Competition. Our students, faculty and staff are quite taken with this opportunity. 😊
- We're most grateful for this thoughtful outreach and support to CCs in America!

- We will be trying a few things for the first time as a part of this effort, including:
 - **Signing up for Campus Takeover**
 - **Participating in the All In Campus Democracy Challenge**

Plus-Ones – Ongoing – Optional Additions to Each Year’s Events

Each year we invite the Fellows to add their own contribution to The Voting Experience mix. Often, this is where new, creative ideas come into play. It is not mandatory, but it can be quite fun, meaningful and/or powerful. Options created to date include – but are not limited to – the following list. *Note – some may evolve as the year progresses:*

1. **When A Few Votes Made a Difference – This is an ongoing video series designed to reinforce the fact that Every Vote Counts** – Government Relations sets up one-to-one recorded student interviews with Elected Officials who have won an election by less than 10 votes. *Caveat - the official may not be currently campaigning for office and the conversation is nonpartisan.*
2. **Social Media Posts** - These can be small intro clips to the longer videos - funny, serious or simple invites to vote or visit The Voting Experience. Under development.
3. **Started in 2023 – Student Voices of the World** – Tri-C welcomes students from 30+ countries. One of our longstanding goals – hosting a voting conversation between international students and citizen students. This was realized in 2023. Our international students have powerful stories to share of seeing Democracy being compromised in their home countries as well as their belief that the U.S. is a beacon for Democracy in the world. Thus, their question to Americans is “why don’t you vote?” is most poignant. Plus, their sincere desire to see Americans vote – even though they themselves can’t – is to keep the hope of Democracy alive for all. Our international Democracy Fellows hosted this inaugural event in 2023 – also attended by our Metro Campus president – with students from at least six countries in attendance. The conversation was deep and powerful. We will explore this again as an activity in 2024.

Continuing Goals

- **Growing Our Faculty Champion Program**
 - **We encourage Faculty to provide time on NVRD to vote in class or attend The Voting Experience**, and in the past few years have put this and other suggestions into a one-pager we share with all faculty.
 - **We encourage college-wide attendance at The Voting Experience** and share info on Tri-C's role nationally in student Civic Engagement in All-Employee and All-Student emails and All-Student texts.
- **We’ll run Social Media Campaigns for The Voting Experience and Civic Holidays** as well as highlight them on our website. All Videos are hosted on the College YouTube channel as a playlist – as this platform provides the greatest accessibility in an area where up to 60% of residents may not have reliable internet connectivity.

Long-Term Goals

- **The First Year Experience (FYE) at Tri-C** – FYE is a multi-layered course that helps new students start their Tri-C career on the right path. We would like to see The Voting Experience and Voter Registration added as a standard segment for this program, negotiating the inclusion of election engagement materials in the class syllabi as a standard learning objective for the course.
 - **Three years ago, we identified this as a 2024 goal** – Update – with the support of one of our Deans, we’re scheduling conversations with FYE leaders to see what we might accomplish this year.
- **Faculty Convocation** – Our goal is to continue making Faculty more aware of our activities, with the hopes of a presentation at Fall Convocation this year or next.
- **Overarching College Goal** – As noted earlier, a consistent College goal is to continue providing our students, staff and faculty with opportunities for year-round engagement in the electoral process – empowering all for lifelong, active civic engagement.

Reporting & Evaluation – How We’ll Measure Impacts and Success

Each year, we track events, evaluate participation and student adoption of events, and use that to inform our actions from year-to-year. For example, we’ve learned that our night students have no interest in stopping for The Voting

Experience. Plus, as I think we all know – students always are attracted by food at events. But even more importantly, students are attracted by learning their vote can make a difference. Helping students reach that awareness is the truest measure of our success.

- **Engagement & Numbers**

- **The Voting Experience - In-Person Voter Registration:** In the past, we typically set goals for the number of Student Voter Registrations we hope to achieve and counted paper forms to track that number. However, with an online option now available in Ohio, we're more focused on getting students registered vs. keeping paper forms as the only tracking option.

- **Starting Goals: 100 Registrations (paper forms); 500 Student Conversations**

- **Online Engagement:** For this category, our metrics will involve measuring the reach of videos, emails, texts, and tracking Social Media engagement analytics. We'll also add in any in-person engagements.

- **Communications Campaigns for each Primary and General include:** All-Student texts as well as All-Student and All-Employee emails prior to each Registration Deadline and Election Day. We celebrate the majority of the Civic Holidays – including National Voter Education Week and Vote Early Day, in addition to those already highlighted.

- Our Social Media Election Awareness campaigns span five Social Media platforms – Twitter, Fb, Insta, LinkedIn, and YouTube. We invite community partners, elected officials, county and high school partners to share our online playlist freely.
 - We add national hashtags to our posts to show partnership and camaraderie.

- **Starting Goal: Reach of 125,000.**

- **Student Engagement** - We work with a number of student groups on campus - including the Mandel Scholars Program, Student Government, Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society, and more. There are typically a number of ways for students to participate. On the idea planning list this year:

- **Co-Curriculars** - The Mandel Scholars Program identifies high-impact civic engagement projects that students can participate in, which also allows them to meet program requirements/earn credits. We have their commitment to make The Voting Experience a Co-Curricular for the seventh year in a row.

- **2024 Co-Curricular Challenge** – We're continuing the annual Co-Curricular effort based on The Voting Experience – already in place for the seventh year with our Mandel Scholars Program. Other clubs/orgs are welcome to join the challenge as well.

- **Expanded Student Engagement** – We will be extending invitations to participate in The Voting Experience and the Co-Curricular Challenge to a wide variety of student groups, including the Black American Council, Phi Theta Kappa, Hispanic Council. SOGE, Lambda, The Student Multicultural Club (students from 30+ Countries who have a passionate enthusiasm for supporting Democracy), Reach Scholars, and our Student Governments – college-wide and at each campus.

- **Faculty Outreach** - Each year on National Voter Registration Day, we invite Faculty members to share The Voting Experience with students - either allowing students five minutes to check on voter registration during class, and/or possibly offering extra credit for attending The Voting Experience. These measures will be in place as well.

- **NVRD Celebration Flyer** - For the seventh year, we'll have an NVRD Flyer created specifically to give faculty NVRD lesson ideas/activity tips. It's shared with faculty groups and gets great use. **We typically track download numbers to track and evaluate this objective.**

- We tie the content in the NVRD flyer to specific teaching goals – with the help of faculty volunteers – so everyone wins in this effort.

- **Cuyahoga County & Tri-C - Your Voice Counts Youth Summit** – This long-standing annual day of civic engagement is held for high school students from across the county.

- Our Democracy Fellows present at the Summit and share The Voting Experience playlist. Last year – there was raucous applause from 300+.
 - This year, the goal has been raised to 350 students.

- It will be held on Sept. 14 – to help tee up NVRD and Constitution Day.
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The first annual TREMMY Awards - 2023!!