

Davidson County Community College



Democratic Engagement Action Plan 2020



Prepared by Lynne Watts, Director of Student Life

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Overview of the action plan)

What is this action plan for and what does it seek to accomplish?

This action plan seeks to accomplish a nonpartisan voter engagement initiative to improve civic learning, political engagement and voter participation. This would involve a three prong approach:

- a. Registration (August- September)
- b. Education (October)
- c. Mobilization (November)

We believe that our democracy works best when more citizens show up and participate, which makes election results more representative of society. Put simply, we're all better off when our elections reflect everyone in our community. One of the best ways to do that is to ensure that every eligible American is registered to vote, regardless of party affiliation or other views. Community college students are one of the largest and most diverse group of potential voters, with distinct values and ideas. They have the power to elect the next generation of leaders who care about the things they do, and will fight for their shared vision of the future.

Where will this action plan be implemented? E.g., Situate this work at an institution including the number of campuses and the state the institution is located in.

Davidson County Community College is a medium size public institution in a rural area of Thomasville and a satellite campus in Mocksville, North Carolina. We have an approximate enrollment of 3,627. With regard to age, 54 percent of students are 18-24, and 36 percent are 25-64. White students comprise about 76 percent of the study body, with black students about 14 percent and Hispanic students at 8 percent. Regarding gender, 65 percent of the student body is female; 35 percent male. As noted on our website, "DCCC offers 45 curriculum programs that have evolved to ensure that students enter the workforce with 21st-century knowledge. In addition to a robust transfer program, DCCC has programs in such fields as advanced manufacturing and allied health. DCCC also is one of the few community colleges nationally to have a zoo and aquarium science program. Dental assisting will make its debut next year. Both the Davidson and Davie campuses are home to a successful Early College high school program; DCCC also partners with the Yadkin Valley Career Academy. Student clubs and an athletic program contribute to a vibrant campus life, while a successful international education program gives students the opportunity to both travel abroad and meet international visitors who come to DCCC."

Why was this action plan developed? How does this plan tie to broader institutional norms/values/strategic plans?

This action plan was developed because civic engagement is one of the core elements included in what we think defines a successful student experience. DCCC wants our students to be

informed, educated citizens prepared to participate in the civic life of not only our college community, but the region, state and the world. This plan aims to increase voter engagement and participation on campus and create an informed student body that will continue to be civically engaged far beyond their college years.

This perspective is manifested in the mission of Davidson County Community College which is to provide “innovative and equitable learning experiences to empower individuals, transform lives, and prepare students for enhanced career and educational opportunities within a changing global community.”

When does this action plan start and end? Is this an action plan focused on the short-term and long-term goals? When will it be updated?

Our goal is to move away from focusing only on voter registration to year-round civic engagement so that students become stronger agents of democracy. This action plan will kick off in August 2020, with the pinnacle of work taking place during the election month, but will continue until December 31, 2020 at which time it will be reevaluated and a new timeline established.

How will this action plan be implemented? Who's in charge? What unit/office/division will be facilitating the effort?

The primary responsibility of voter registration and participation falls under the responsibilities of the Office of Student Life within the Student Affairs division. The Office consists of the Director of Student Life, Lead, Student Life & Information Desk Specialist, Student Life Support Specialist, and Student Life Evening/Weekend Specialist. As a medium size community college we don't have a large budget for a Civic Engagement Office devoted solely to civically empowering students. So we plan to leverage the faculty, staff and students who have overlapping interests in this work such as History and Humanities instructors. We would also like to integrate voter education and registration into the first year courses, *Student Success Strategies* and *Success and Study Skills*, so that students are engaged and informed as they enter college.

II. LEADERSHIP (Description of the leadership coalition responsible for improving democratic engagement)

The Office of Student Life will collaborate with student organizations, faculty and staff to create and implement events and activities outlined in this action plan. Here is a list of stakeholders and their connection to the work:

Office of Student Life

Since the mission of Student Life is to holistically engage students and since civic engagement is student engagement, the overlap of these interests fits well within the area. Student Life sees voting as critical to our democracy and educating student voters as essential.

The Office of Student Life led several efforts to achieve these objectives, including but not limited to:

- Partnered with *National Voter Registration Day* (NVRD) and have committed to organizing on-campus voter registration drives since 2016
- Partnered with the nonpartisan group *You Can Vote* to sponsor Lunch and Learn workshops to educate students on the latest voting rules and details about navigating NC Voter ID laws.
- NC College Voter Summit attendance since 2016
- Nonprofit Vote member
- Politics and Pizza forums throughout the semester
- Welcome Week voter registration drives
- Fall Fest & Spring Fling Tabling
- Lunch Time voter registration tabling

Future Direction

Future steps that we plan on taking to improve civic learning and voter participation include but not limited to the following:

- Commit to *Ask Every Student*, a non-partisan program that will help DCCC to apply and implement voter registration strategies that reach every student on campus.
- Create a Student Vote Coalition where students are trained to register, educate and help lead voter engagement efforts on campus. We plan to offer these students a small stipend.
- Class raps: A short (10 -15 minute) presentation by members of the Student Vote Coalition given in front of a classroom with express permission from the instructor. They will talk about why voting is important, how it works, and get everyone in the class registered to vote.
- On campus candidate forum, town hall style, with local candidates representing the different parties.
- Rides to the polls during early voting.
- Debate watch parties.

Student Government Association

An important component of Student Government is to promote civic engagement within the student body. Encouraging students to be involved in our democracy is one of the best ways to promote engagement and strengthen the student voice. There are a lot of important issues at stake in the upcoming election that affect college students, including jobs, the economy, health care, and college affordability. Student Government will assist and or sponsor National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) and volunteer in the Student Vote Coalition.

Student Organizations

Many students are involved in student organizations, clubs, and other communities focusing on cultural, academic or religious affiliation. All of these groups are capable of hosting voter information events or promoting registration and other election activities.

Faculty across disciplines. We plan to collaborate with faculty across disciplines, sociology, psychology, American History, and Humanities, just to name a few, to create ways to demonstrate the relevance of their course material to voter and civic engagement.

Community Partners. Organizations including You Can Vote, NC Campus Compact, National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) and Nonprofit Vote have supported our voter registration efforts in the past, through training, supplies and registration assistance.

III. COMMITMENT (Description of institutional commitment to improving democratic engagement).

DCCC celebrates the work of civic learning and democratic engagement through co-curricular programming and activities as well as through integration in certain academic courses. One of the areas we have to work on is interweaving civic engagement into the culture of the institution rather than it just existing in silos.

One step toward this goal is our new partnership and commitment to the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) which will help us to learn about our students' voting habits. Examining the voting rates within different programs of study offers additional areas of improvement in terms of incorporating civic engagement in the classroom. Comparing the voting rates of male and female students, students of different races/ethnicities as well as students of different ages will be very helpful information as we plan future voter and civic engagement efforts.

Since 2005, as part of the college's commitment to civic engagement DCCC has been a member of NC Campus Compact, which helps colleges to facilitate civic and community engagement programs and initiatives. DCCC hosted the Engaged Faculty Institute on campus in 2018, participated in the Pathways to Achieving Civic Engagement (PACE) conference, Community Engagement Administrators Conference, MLK Day of Service, and Collegiate Hunger Challenge.

DCCC host an annual Day of Service in November that creates opportunities for faculty and staff to feel a sense of responsibility for their communities and to be knowledgeable of their communities. Staff and faculty participate in service opportunities in both Davidson and Davie counties at local schools, pantries, Salvation Army, Hospice, and Habit Restore just to name a few.

IV. LANDSCAPE (Analysis of student data, campus climate, and current institutional efforts for improving democratic engagement.)

As demonstrated in this action plan DCCC has infused a commitment to voter engagement primarily through co-curricular programs and activities. We will need to work on integrating this commitment into the institution culture both in class and out of class through a campus wide voter action committee, civic engagement campaign, and perhaps a civic engagement graduation requirement.

The data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and from our new partnership with National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) will give us a better analysis of our campus climate to understand the correlation between student learning and student voting.

Through the Office of Student Life DCCC currently sponsors or participates in several activities and events related to civic learning and democratic engagement. Those activities include, but are not limited to the following:

National Voter Registration Day at DCCC

The National Voter Registration Day at DCCC focuses on ensuring that all eligible students have an opportunity to complete the application to cast a ballot in an election. In 2019 the National Voter Registration Day resulted in 14 new voter registrations on the Davie Campus and 36 new registrations on the Davidson Campus.

Lunch and Learns

This event highlights some of the major issues that are prevalent locally, nationally, and globally. Some of the proposed topics of discussion include racism and immigration, LGBTQ rights, student loan debt, and gun control. Each Lunch and Learn educates attendees on the importance of becoming politically engaged beyond voting. Student Life provides free pizza and the Lunch and Learns are attended by students, faculty, and staff.

Constitution Day

As part of the Constitution Day celebration, a table is set up outside the Student Center to engage students. In addition to voter registration efforts, this event includes opportunities for students to articulate why voting matters and post their thoughts on social media. Copies of the U.S. Constitution is sometimes distributed, and faculty and staff can participate in activities.

Community College Legislative Day

Student Government members participate in the NC Community College Legislative Day at the Capitol in Raleigh to advocate on behalf of community colleges. It is a great opportunity for students to get involved and make their voices heard. Through participation in Legislative Day, students gain experience in advocacy work.

One of the barriers that prevent the college from reaching as many students as it could is that we are a commuter school as opposed to having dormitories on campus. Students commute to campus from home and are only on campus when they need to be for class. It is difficult to find times that large groups of students are in different areas of the college and to plan events around those times. Another barrier is that the Student Life Office staff is small, so it is difficult to take on large-scale voter engagement projects on top of all of the other programs ran in the office. With that being said, the office has created many connections throughout the college and with outside organizations that help with some of the events planned.

V. Goals (Short-term AND long-term democratic engagement goals).

Short Term Goals

To cultivate students to engage in the 2020 election, we propose these short-term goals:

- **Create a Voter Engagement Advisory Committee** composed of students, faculty, staff and community partners to provide strategic oversight and guidance. Additional partnerships across the institution, such as student organizations and faculty, are critical to this work. This group will meet monthly to share ideas, collaborate on projects and break down student voting barriers.
- **Enhance resources to ensure students make informed decisions on Election Day.** We hope to continue to strengthen our efforts to provide nonpartisan candidate information to students. The lack of information on candidates can be a barrier to turning out to vote.
- **Create an “Election Central” station** at which students can access voting guides, sample ballots, website resources, etc. This will be held the week before the November 2020 election.
- **Put yard signs around campus** reminding students of voter registration drives and deadlines, as well as the date for the upcoming election. They will be up during the fall 2020 voter registration drive, as well as two weeks in advance of the election.
- **Create an “I Vote because...” display** featuring the voices of DCCC students and why they participate in elections. These cards will be exhibited in the Student Center in an effort to give students the opportunity to consider that others their age recognize the importance of participating and maybe they should, too.

- **Hold a Meet the Candidates event** in the fall 2020 semester in advance of the November election. During this event, candidates for local and state races will be invited to campus to talk with students in the style of a Town Hall.
- **2020 Tuesdays.** We will hold voter registration drives every Tuesday in the Brooks Student Center Lobby, enlisting students to appeal to their peers to register and vote.
- **Registration presentation to Athletic Teams.** Student volunteers will visit a practice session of the basketball and volleyball teams to do a 15 minute presentation about the voter registration process and help register or check the registration status of the athletes on each sports team.
- **Digital marketing campaign.** We will have a robust digital campaign, including posting information on social media and at least one campus-wide email blast reminding students to get registered. We will also advertise on digital screens across campus.

Long-Term Goals

- Long-term, it is our goal for students from the Student Vote Coalition to be involved when the college's strategic plan is developed and to weave this work into the institutional priorities of the college identified in that plan.
- Continue to engage students who are less interested in the political process or who face unique barriers to participation.
- Institutionalize voter engagement efforts through ACA classes by providing each class with voter engagement presentations and perhaps incorporating it in the foundation of the course.
- Include information on class syllabi about certain campus resources such as counseling services, Single Stop, and voter registration. Including information about various campus services on syllabi may help to raise awareness of those services.
- A DCCC Voter Engagement landing page on the college website. We would like to have a landing page on the college website with voter registration information, where to vote, how to get an absentee ballot, upcoming events, opportunities to get involved, reminders for students about upcoming dates, candidate information and other Election Day reminders.

VI. Strategies (voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout activities).

Voter Registration

Welcome Back

A table devoted to voter registration will be set up during Welcome Week to conduct voter registrations.

Constitution Day

As part of the Constitution Day celebration, a table will be set up to engage students outside the Student Center. In addition to voter registration efforts, this event will include opportunities for students to articulate why voting matters and post their thoughts on social media. Copies of the U.S. Constitution will be distributed, and faculty and staff can participate in activities.

National Voter Registration Day

The National Voter Registration Day at DCCC focuses on ensuring that all eligible students have an opportunity to complete the application to cast a ballot in an election. We will also be organizing virtual voter registration drives via Zoom so that organizers can answer questions about how to fill out voter registration forms in real-time.

On-Campus Tabling and Outreach

Weekly until the voter registration deadline, we will table in a high-traffic location to register student voters. The table will have registration forms, information on voter registration options, and informational fliers on candidates' stances, upcoming events, important deadlines and a countdown to Election Day.

Student Organization Outreach

Student Life will host a series of training sessions to support student groups in hosting voter registration drives.

Classroom Presentations

In the weeks leading up to the voter registration deadline, Student Life and SGA representatives will engage students through classroom presentations at the request of faculty. During the 15 minute presentations, we will inform students about their rights as voters and help students register to vote. This service will be advertised to all faculty.

Voter Education

Candidate Information

Student Life will integrate information on which races are on the ballot, who is running and the responsibilities of each position into class presentations and handouts.

Texting

We want to use texting as alternative to reach students with important voter, election–related information for students who opted in to receive text messages.

Flyers

We plan to create bulletin boards that have voter registration guides, sample ballots, and issue guides that will be showcased in different offices and student heavy locations around the college.

Candidate Forums

We will invite local candidates from all parties to campus for a town hall discussion of issues with students.

Biscuits and Ballots

We will host a biscuit and ballot breakfast to teach interested students the ins and outs of voting. This includes discussing concerns first time voters may have, informing participants about who's on the ballot, the candidate's issues and will conclude with an open forum for students to get questions answered and discuss their experiences.

Get Out the Vote

Campus-Wide Emails

We will also send an Election Day email to all students reminding them to vote if they have not already done so.

Social Media

Student Life will utilize social media platforms to remind students when and where they can vote and provide information for students on where they can find their local polling location.

Texting

We will text a reminder to students on Election Day to go out and vote.

Election Day Party

The Election Day Party will be held in the Student Center. This event will feature music, a photo booth with props and decorations, and refreshments as well as stickers, buttons, American flags, and red, white and blue necklaces all to celebrate students voting.

Timeline

Fall 2020

August

Aug. 17: Classes begin

Aug. 17-21: Welcome Week Tabling

Begin voter registration activities

September

Class presentations begin

Weekly tabling begins (2020 Tuesdays)

Sep. 17: Constitution Day

Sep. 22: National Voter Registration Day

Sep. 29: First Presidential Debate Viewing Party

Voter registration activities ongoing

October

Final voter registration activities

Begin voter education and get-out-the-vote push

Oct. 9: Voter registration deadline

Oct. 15: Second Presidential Debate Viewing Party

Oct. 22: Final Presidential Debate Viewing Party

Oct. 27: Absentee Request Deadline

Oct. 24-Nov. 1: Early Voting

November

Nov. 2: Deadline to postmark absentee ballot

Nov. 3: Election Day

December

Reporting and assessment

VII. REPORTING

This Action Plan will be shared with all of the stakeholders, identified under the Leadership section as well as upper administration. Additionally, the plan will be shared with the Marketing office with the hope that it would be available on the college's website. It will also be sent to community partners who are coming alongside the college to support civic goals for our students.

VIII. EVALUATION

Evaluation will assist us in knowing if our democratic engagement efforts are effective in increasing student participation in the areas of voter registration, education, and participation. It will also help us to know whether or not we are achieving our short-term and long-term goals. The work described in this plan will be evaluated annually; if the evaluation determines we are falling short of meeting the goals identified, adjustments to strategies will be made. Student Life will lead the evaluation process. We will continue to track attendance at events/programs, assess outcomes using event/program evaluations, and work with NSLVE and to obtain data for comparison to previous years. We will also rely on the NSLVE data in our analysis to understand what groups have low voter turnout and focus our efforts on those groups. We intend to gather information throughout the process, and make adjustments to programming and outreach based on the data.