



Civic Engagement Plan

2024 - 2025

Executive Summary

The Civic Engagement Plan for East Carolina University (ECU) was written and developed by Lauren Howard, Associate Director of Student Engagement for the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement (CLCE) and Alex Dennis, Senior Assistant Director of Student Engagement for the CLCE in partnership with the Student Government Association. The goals were developed using data from the 2020 and 2022 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) reports and from assessment results from previous civic and voter engagement programming offered by our center. The goals and implementation strategies were discussed with members of the Civic Engagement Coalition (see Overview & Leadership section) before being solidified in this plan. The plan was then reviewed by the Director of Student Engagement and the Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs for Student Life before being finalized.

This plan will guide the work that will be implemented at ECU by CLCE and other campus departments and units beginning fall 2024. When creating this plan, we wanted to focus on increasing the voting rate of our students by institutionalizing voter registration on campus in a variety of ways. We hope to accomplish our short- and long-term goals, across both East and West campuses. This plan was developed to coordinate our efforts on campus and to ensure that we are using best practices and intentionality regarding our goals and strategies. The strategies outlined below for our short-term goals will be implemented immediately and throughout the next couple of years, while the strategies and initiatives outlined in our long-term goals will drive our work over the next five years. We expect to revisit this plan each summer and/or after receiving new NSLVE reports, to assess the current state of our efforts and to modify our goals accordingly.

Overview & Leadership

The primary responsibility for civic engagement falls under the responsibilities of the CLCE within the Student Life unit at ECU. This civic and voter engagement initiative is known as Pirates Vote. The Associate Director of Student Engagement for the CLCE and Senior Assistant Director of Student Engagement for CLCE supervise and advise civic engagement efforts across campus. These efforts are written into the job description for the Senior Assistant Director, which ensures continuity in the event of CLCE staff changes. All Pirates Vote information and materials are located on a Microsoft Teams account. The Senior Assistant Director supervises two Student Leadership Assistants that serve as our Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF) Vote Everywhere Ambassadors and one Campus Vote Project (CVP) Democracy Fellow.

While CLCE is not solely responsible for hosting, promoting or implementing civic engagement initiatives, this is the only entity on campus where civic engagement is included within the mission

and vision of the center. Other entities on campus working with legislative officials or promoting civic engagement include Student Affairs, the Political Science Department, and Student Government Association.

Additionally, CLCE established the Civic Engagement Coalition, building upon the work of the inaugural Voter Engagement Coalition which was organized for the 2016 general election. The purpose of the Civic Engagement Coalition is to bring together faculty, staff, students and community members who are passionate about civic and non-partisan voter engagement work and to help advise and give direction for the work that needs to be done on our campus and within our community. The Civic Engagement Coalition is tasked with developing new partnerships, brainstorming new programming, and covering all aspects of voter and civic engagement work. The Civic Engagement Coalition meets 1-2 times per year. Members serve two-year terms, that can be renewed once. Coalition members are selected by the Senior Assistant Director for CLCE and the Director of Local & State Affairs for SGA, in consultation with the director of Student Engagement.

Senior Assistant Director of Student Engagement, CLCE	Alex Dennis (Co-Chair)
Associate Professor and Chair, Political Science Department	Dr. Alethia Cook
Executive Assistant, Central Reservations Office	Teresa Baro
Professor, Political Science Department	Dr. Jonathan Morris
Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs	Dr. Erik Kneubuehl
Director of Strategic Initiatives	Karson N. Hallow
Deputy Director, Pitt County Board of Elections	Dave Davis
Assistant Director, College of Business Advising Center	Aisha Powell
Director of Local and State Affairs, Student Government Association	Vacant (Co-chair)
Assistant Director & Advisor, Student Government Association	Aleshia Hunt
AGF Vote Everywhere Ambassadors	Vacant Caramia Landis, Student
CVP Democracy Fellow	Thomas Remington, Student

Commitment

ECU's mission is to be a national model for student success, public service and regional transformation. As demonstrated by our motto, *Servire*, service is at the heart of the university. ECU is committed to inspiring our students to be engaged citizens and be a national model for developing the leadership of faculty, staff, and students through engaged research and service. Chancellor Philip Rogers signed the ALL IN President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation in spring of 2022, showing the institutions commitment to this work. ECU has previously supported a One Stop Early Voting site on campus in the Main Campus Student Center. The Student Government Association at ECU is very committed to this work and assists CLCE with election and voting emails to the entire student body. ECU official social media channels are also utilized to share information related to elections and voting during the One Stop Early voting period each year.

The fundamental purpose served in requiring students to take general education courses at ECU is to have students develop an understanding of aspects of the human condition that are not the primary focus of their major field of study. General education exposes students to the broad range of human knowledge, while enabling them to acquire key skills and to gain critical competencies that prepare them to understand societal problems and seek solutions. On that foundation, students then build expertise in one or more academic areas, developing the capacities to establish themselves in the work world and to contribute to society as engaged and well-informed citizens. This foundation and its integration with specialized learning in the students' majors enable them to live broadly informed, responsible, and meaningful lives; at the same time, this preparation is essential to good citizenship.

The CLCE reports to the Division of Student Affairs at ECU. Directly tied to the 2023-2028 strategic plan, the Division of Student Affairs plans to:

1. M1.2 SA Unit Strategy: "Enhance student engagement in high impact/experiential, transformative learning and development experiences in support of student success." We would like to include these strategies from the strategic plan so that it connects our work to the broader plans of the division and the university but we are open to other suggestions.
2. M2.1 SA Unit Strategy: "Expand opportunities for students to explore their roles as citizens through democracy renewal and deliberative dialogue activities."

The mission of the CLCE is to provide opportunities for the campus community to learn, serve and lead with our community as active citizens. Service, leadership and civic engagement commitments range from one-time events to weekly, semester-long opportunities, to intensive immersion experiences. All opportunities are designed with an educational focus to support students as they learn about themselves and their community, take action through leadership and civic engagement, and advocate for lasting positive social change.

Landscape

ECU is a four year, public university in NC and is a member of the UNC system. ECU has a total enrollment of 26,369 students as of fall 2024. 35% of the student body is made up of

underrepresented race and ethnic groups, 63% of the student body is female, and 30% is out of state students.

ECU participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). NSLVE began in 2013 and now provides federal voting rates for more than 1,000 colleges and universities and over 9 million students. NSLVE is a signature initiative for the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. The mission of IDHE is to shift college and university priorities and culture to advance political learning, agency and equity.

The voter registration and voting rates in our report reflect the percentage of our students who were eligible to vote and who voted in the 2020 presidential election, as well the 2022 midterm election. These results are based on enrollment records ECU submitted to the National Student Clearinghouse and publicly available voting files collected by Catalist. Institutional voting rates are also adjusted based on data submitted to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

2020 NSLVE Analysis

The 2020 ECU report includes our voting numbers from the 2020 election, which provides us with a basis of comparison with our last NSLVE report from the general election in 2016. According to the report, we saw big increases in nearly all metrics. The voting rate of registered students increased by 15.6 percentage points (64.1% in 2016 compared to 79.7% in 2020). We also saw a big jump in our registration rate from 81.3% in 2016 compared to 91.1% in 2020. The voting rate also increased from 52.1% in 2016 to 72.6% in 2020.

One-stop voting (commonly known as "early voting") allows any registered voter to cast an absentee ballot in person on select days prior to Election Day and has been an important initiative in North Carolina for several years. The Main Campus Student Center has served as a One-Stop early voting site for the last three elections including local, midterm, and general elections. The number of our students who voted "early" (One-Stop & absentee) increased by 14 percentage points between the 2016 and 2020 election. Early voting and absentee voting (not-in-person) was the most popular method of voting for our students, accounting for 83% of total votes. This increase is also a good indicator that our initiative to encourage students to vote early is in fact working and our One-Stop early voting location in the student center is a big win and success for Pirates Vote.

When accounting for age, our vote totals increased for every age group in 2020; 18-21 year old student voting rate increased 25 percentage points compared to the 2016 election. Age groups of 22-24 saw an increase of 20 percentage points, 25-29 saw an increase of 14 percentage points, 30-39 saw an increase of 10 percentage points, 40-49 saw an increase of 6 percentage points, and 50+ saw an increase of 3 percentage points. Overall, young adults between the ages of 22 and 29 have the lowest voter turnout of any other age group.

When accounting for sex, our vote totals increased for males and females. The voting rate for females increased by 19 percentage points and for males it increased by 22 percentage points, with females voting at a higher rate (75% of females vs. 68% of males). More work needs to be done to help close this gap.

The NSLVE report breaks down student voting data by student's field of study, which showed that overall the voting rate of various fields of study has leveled out over the 2016 NSLVE numbers. The social sciences, education, and English majors voted at higher rates (upper 70's) vs STEM majors voting at lower rates (upper 60's). While we have begun to close the gap on this, there is still more work to be done.

2022 NSLVE Analysis

ECU's voting rate decreased by 3%, from 30.6% in 2018 to 27.6% in 2022. This is 3% below the voting rate for all institutions in 2022. The voting rate for all institutions fell from 39.1% in 2018 to 30.6% in 2022. This stat makes our 3% drop less than the national average for all institutions. Our registration rate increased by 5.8%, from 82.6% in 2018 to 88.4% in 2022. The voting rate of registered students decreased by 5.9%.

The number of our students who "Voted Not in Person" (includes Early Voting) increased by 5% between the 2018 and 2022 elections. This was the most popular method of voting in 2022, accounting for 59% of total votes. Meanwhile, the percentage of students who "Voted In Person" or on election day declined by 3%. The increase for Early Voting can be attributed to the One Stop Early Voting site in the Main Campus Student Center that the Pirates Vote team helped secure back in 2019.

When accounting for age, our vote totals decreased for every age group between 2018 and 2022, except for students in the 50+ category, which saw an increase of 1%. Overall, young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 have the lowest voter turnout of any other age group, which will continue to be a target group for our work moving forward.

The voting rate for women and men both saw a decrease (3% decrease for women; 1% decrease for men).

Library Science majors continued to vote at the highest rates (56%), followed by History (48%), English Languages and Literature (43%), and Education (36%). Parks, Recreation, Leisure and Fitness Studies voted at the lowest rates (15%), followed by Biological and Biomedical Sciences (19%).

Goals

ECU continues to prioritize the work of civic and voter engagement efforts on campus and has the support of senior administration and national partners such as the Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF), the Campus Vote Project (CVP) and the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition (SLSV). Internal challenges for student voting include barriers to institutionalizing voter registration and

general outreach and awareness on campus of the Pirates Vote initiative. External barriers for student voting include apathy, the continued advocacy for our One Stop Early Voting site on campus, and the current climate of divisiveness and distrust of our institutions. Internal and external barriers, along with the data gleaned from our NSLVE reports, helped shape our goals and strategies outlined below.

Continued/Ongoing

1. Continue support for an on-campus one-stop early voting location in the Main Campus Student Center for all future elections.
2. Conduct eight voter registration drives per semester, equally distributed across East and West campus.
3. Increase awareness and branding of the Pirates Vote initiative on campus.
4. Utilize social media to better share information regarding elections, voting, and civic events/programs.
5. Continue to include voter registration information into PiratePort and as a downloadable Canvas module.
6. Continue to offer Pirates Vote programming to ECU athletes and Club Sports athletes.
7. Continue to collaborate with the First Year Transitions office to offer Pirates Vote presentations and a lesson plan on Voting & Elections for our first year seminar course.
8. Continue to offer the Citizen U: Active Citizen workshop series during each fall semester.

Short-Term

1. Increase the voting rate from 72.6% to 75% between 2020-2024 for general elections.
2. Collaborate with Student Engagement to facilitate conversations around voter engagement (at least one voter engagement workshop per year) for Fraternity and Sorority Life leaders.
3. Fully develop a Pirates Vote student coalition.
4. Collaborate with Campus Living and/or ECU Dining to offer voter registration options for on-campus students during move-in.
5. Facilitate faculty development workshops (one per semester) and encourage faculty to include civic engagement in their classroom.

Long-Term

1. Increase the voting rate from 30.6% to 35% between 2022 and 2026 for midterm elections.
2. Expand programming for STEM majors and other groups with low voter turnout on campus.
3. Increase the numbers of students attending civic engagement programming offered by CLCE.
4. Task the Civic Engagement Coalition with addressing the Ask Every Student initiative and find a way to institutionalize voter registration on campus.
5. Explore other methods of funding and new partnerships for civic engagement programming.

Strategy

Ongoing Goal 1: Continue to support an on-campus one-stop early voting location in the Main Campus Student Center for all future elections.

- Continue to attend Pitt County Board of Election (BOE) meetings.

- Use NSLVE data and other means of assessment to provide a clear rationale for why it is important to have a polling location on the main campus.
- Coordinate with campus partners regarding logistics.

Ongoing Goal 2: Conduct eight voter registration drives per semester, equally distributed across East and West Campus.

- Continue to work with the Central Reservations Office and the Pirates Vote Team to brainstorm best locations and times with high student traffic.
- Utilize GivePulse, a service management system, to recruit voter registration volunteers.
- Partner with campus departments and student organizations to incorporate voter registration at various campus events.

Ongoing Goal 3: Increase awareness and branding of the Pirates Vote initiative on campus.

- Utilize Pirates Vote promotional items at all Pirates Vote events and tabling opportunities.
- Reach out to organizations like the ECU Honors College and others, to inquire about sharing information about the Pirates Vote initiative.
- Include Pirates Vote identifier on all marketing and social media posts.

Ongoing Goal 4: Utilize social media to better share information regarding elections, voting, and civic events/programs.

- Continue to update/create the Pirates Vote video series that covers topics related to voting and elections.
- Work with the ECU Social Media staff to coordinate official Pirates Vote take-overs of the ECU social media channels during early voting and leading up to election day.
- Work with the CLCE social media contact to ensure Pirates Vote information is being shared regularly on the CLCE social media channels.

Ongoing Goal 5: Continue to include voter registration information into PiratePort and as a downloadable Canvas module.

- Ensure that Andrew Goodman Foundation Voter Portal is up to date and that all links are correct on Pirates Port and on the CLCE website.
- Update the Pirates Vote Canvas module for each election, posting on the Student Affairs, and promoting to faculty/staff via email.

Ongoing Goal 6: Continue to offer Pirates Vote programming to ECU athletes and Club Sports athletes.

- Reach out to ECU Athletics and CRW Club Sports each year, leading up to an election, to provide in-person tabling opportunities and a voting presentation that can also be recorded and shared.
- Offer Pirates Vote voter registration tabling at some major sporting events.

Ongoing Goal 7: Continue to collaborate with the First Year Transitions office to offer Pirates Vote presentations and a lesson plan on Voting & Elections.

- Ensure involvement with large group COAD presentations and attend COAD training each summer to offer in class presentations on voting & elections.
- Update the lesson plan on Voting & Elections used by COAD instructors.

Ongoing Goal 8: Continue to offer the Citizen U: Active Citizen workshop series during each fall semester.

- Schedule three workshops each semester around topics related to voting, being civically engaged, local government with a visit from the mayor of Greenville, and other civic engagement topics.
- Reach out to faculty on campus to help promote the series and offer extra credit to encourage students to attend.

Short-Term Goal 1: Increase the voting rate from 72.6% to 75% between 2020-2024 for general elections.

- Coordinate with campus partners to institutionalize voter registration.
- Hold a minimum of eight voter registration drives per semester.
- Educate students on issues related to voting via workshops and presentations.
- Continue to lobby the Pitt County Board of Elections to ensure a One Stop Early voting location in the main campus student center.

Short-Term Goal 2: Collaborate with Student Engagement to facilitate conversations around voter engagement (at least one voter engagement workshop per year) for Fraternity and Sorority Life leaders.

- Develop the workshop materials and presentation.
- Coordinate with Student Engagement to plan logistics and implementation.
- Present to leadership of recognized student organizations, fraternities, and sororities about voter engagement, encouraging them to schedule a presentation for their entire organization.

Short-Term Goal 3: Fully develop a Pirates Vote student coalition.

- Task one member of the Pirates Vote student team with taking the lead on growing the PV student coalition by holding interest meetings and communicating regularly with members via email and social media.
- Intentionally request meetings with the political student organizations (College Democrats, College Republicans, Turning Point USA, and Young Democratic Socialists) in an effort to better involve and include them in our work with Pirates Vote.

Short-Term Goal 4: Collaborate with Campus Living and/or ECU Dining to offer voter registration options for on-campus students during move-on.

- Include Pirates to the Polls marketing for all RA's in bulletin board packets prepared by CLCE.
- Schedule tabling in the dining halls and the main campus student center to offer voter registration to students during move-in and during the first few weeks of the semester.

Short-Term Goal 5: Facilitate faculty development workshops (one per semester) and encourage faculty to include civic engagement in their classroom.

- Develop the workshop curriculum (outcomes/objectives) in consultation with the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition (SLSV), NC Campus Compact, Department of Political Science, Office for Faculty Excellence and the Civic Engagement Coalition.
- Utilize the major specific handouts created by the Pirates Vote team
- Enlist the support and assistance of the university curriculum committee and the Office of Faculty Excellence to create a comprehensive list of courses that include civic engagement themes.
- Explore ways to incentivize the inclusion of civic learning and engagement in the classroom, such as mini-grants to faculty from CLCE.

Long-Term Goal 1: Increase the voting rate from 30.6% to 35% between 2022 and 2026 for midterm elections.

- See strategies for Short-Term Goal 1 (above)

Long-Term Goal 2: Expand programming and outreach for STEM majors and other groups with low voter turnout on campus.

- Continue to update existing programs such as the Dinner & Discourse series to include issues that are important to these groups of students.
- Create an outreach presentation that can be used to educate faculty about the importance of including civic education in their class curriculum.
- Organize focus groups comprised of students from these target populations to develop new strategies for encouraging their peers to become engaged in civics and voting.
- Utilize The Pirate Experience to contact student organizations and offer to attend their next meeting to share voter registration and resources with their members.

Long-Term Goal 3: Increase the numbers of students attending civic engagement programming offered by CLCE.

- Increase marketing and/or outreach on campus so that the programs become more visible.
- Review assessment data and feedback session data in order to update curriculum so that the programs stay relevant and interesting.
- Connect with other programs on campus to offer civic engagement programs as a menu of offerings for their program.

Long-Term Goal 4: Task the Civic Engagement Coalition with addressing the Ask Every Student initiative and find a way to institutionalize voter registration on campus.

- Meet with the Ask Every Student coach that is assigned to our campus to begin to discuss the obstacle of institutionalizing voter registration on our campus.
- Have an ideation session with the coalition to help solve and address this issue.
- Brainstorm list of existing systemic processes that occur on campus that could be an entry point for voter registration.

Long-Term Goal 5: Explore other methods of funding and new partnerships for civic engagement programming.

- Explore grants to help cover the cost of civic engagement programming.
- Attend conferences and workshops related to civic engagement topics so that new partnerships can be built and existing partnerships expanded.

These efforts will require collaboration with the following campus departments and units: Office of Student Transitions, the Division of Student Affairs, CLCE Pirates Vote Team and the Civic Engagement Coalition, Student Engagement, Information Technology & Computer Services (ITCS), the Registrar's Office, Campus Living and Dining, and the Department of Political Science. In addition, we will need to continue to work closely with the Pitt County Board of Elections and our national partners, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, Campus Vote Project, Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, and Campus Compact.

Reporting

This plan will be shared with the CLCE staff, members of the Civic Engagement Coalition, posted on the CLCE website, and incorporated into reports to senior administration, including the Student Affairs Leadership Team and Student Affairs Executive Council. Additionally, we intend to share highlights from this plan with key stakeholders through presentations. We will also make the NSLVE report available on the CLCE website. Where applicable, we will share updates and information through social media channels and official university news outlets.

This plan will be shared as needed with external organizations such as the ALL IN Challenge, Voter Friendly Campus, Campus Vote Project, Andrew Goodman Foundation, Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, and Campus Compact.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be critical in knowing if our civic engagement efforts are effective in increasing student participation in the areas of voter registration, education, and participation. It will also aid us in knowing whether or not we are achieving our short-term and long-term goals. Additionally, we would like the evaluation to give us information that will help us continue to improve student civic engagement on campus.

The CLCE will lead the evaluation process, building on the foundation that has already been set. We will continue to track attendance at events/programs, assess outcomes using event/program evaluations, and work with NSLVE and our local board of elections to obtain data for comparison to previous years. We intend to gather information throughout the process, and make adjustments to programming and outreach based on the data. We will also do an overall evaluation with all data once we receive updated NSLVE reports to assess our success in meeting the goals we have set out in this plan. We will share the information gathered through key stakeholders, members of the Civic Engagement Coalition, reports to upper administration, and social media and university news outlets as appropriate.

Questions about this plan should be addressed to:

Alex Dennis

Senior Assistant Director of Student Engagement for the CLCE
dennisa15@ecu.edu | 252-737-4988

Lauren Howard

Associate Director of Student Engagement for the CLCE,
Howardl16@ecu.edu | 252-737-1669