



Democratic Engagement Plan

2021 - 2022

Executive Summary

The Democratic Engagement Plan for East Carolina University (ECU) was written and developed by Lauren Howard, Associate Director in Intercultural Affairs and Director of the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement (CLCE) and Alex Dennis, Assistant Director in CLCE. The goals were developed using data from the 2016/2020 and 2014/2018 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) reports and from assessment results from previous democratic and voter engagement programming offered by our center. The goals and implementation strategies were discussed with members of the Democratic Engagement Coalition (see Overview & Leadership section) before being solidified in this plan. The plan was then reviewed by the Director of Intercultural Affairs and the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Involvement & Leadership before being submitted.

This plan will guide the work that will be implemented at ECU by CLCE and other campus departments and units beginning fall 2021. 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 were very intentional with regard to the student demographic groups that we would like to target and for which to create additional programming due to their previous low voter turnout. We hope to accomplish our short- and long-term goals related to these issues, across both East and West campuses. This plan was developed in order 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, in order to assess the current state of our efforts and to modify our goals accordingly.

Overview & Leadership

The primary responsibility of democratic engagement falls under the responsibilities of the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement (CLCE) within Student Involvement and Leadership (SIL) at East Carolina University (ECU). The Associate Director/Director and Assistant Director for CLCE supervise and advise democratic engagement efforts across campus. The Assistant Director supervises two Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF) Vote Everywhere Ambassadors, two Campus Vote Project (CVP) Democracy Fellows, and one Service and Leadership Assistant (SLA) for Citizen U.

Director, Intercultural Affairs (staff)	Dr. Dennis McCunney
Interim Associate Director, CLCE (staff)	Lauren Howard
Assistant Director, CLCE (staff)	Alex Dennis
AGF Vote Everywhere Ambassadors (students)	Amrina Rangar DaNisha Harris
CVP Democracy Fellow (students)	Vacant Position Tete Narh-Mensah

While CLCE is not solely responsible for hosting, promoting or implementing democratic engagement initiatives, this is the only entity on campus where democratic engagement is included within the mission and vision of the center. Other entities on campus working with legislative officials or promoting democratic engagement include Student Affairs, the Political Science Department, and Student Government Association.

Additionally, CLCE established the Democratic Engagement Coalition, building upon the work of the inaugural Voter Engagement Coalition which was organized for the 2016 general election. The purpose of the Democratic Engagement Coalition is to bring together faculty, staff, students and community members who are passionate about democratic and 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 Democratic Engagement Coalition is tasked with developing new partnerships, brainstorming new programming, and covering all aspects of voter and democratic engagement work. The Democratic Engagement Coalition meets 3-4 times per year.

Assistant Director, CLCE	Alex Dennis (Chair)
Associate Professor and Chair, Political Science Department	Dr. Alethia Cook
Assistant Director, Outreach & Relations Office of Undergraduate Admissions	James Rudd
Executive Assistant, Central Reservations Office	Teresa Baro
Interim Assistant Director, Ledonia Wright Cultural Center	Gabriela Lemus
Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs	Dr. Erik Kneubuehl
Deputy Director, Pitt County Board of Elections	Dave Davis

Public Safety Supervisor, ECU Police Department	Stephanie Carnevale
Assistant Director, College of Business Advising Center	Aisha Powell
Director of Local and State Affairs, Student Government Association	Daniel Morgan
AGF Vote Everywhere Ambassadors	Amrina Rangar DaNisha Harris
CVP Democracy Fellow	Vacant Position Tete Narh-Mensah

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.

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 in an increasingly global and culturally diverse world.

The CLCE reports to the Division of Student Affairs at ECU. The Division of Student Affairs provides programs and services that optimize student learning and leadership, builds a safe supportive and welcoming campus community, fosters the emotional growth and personal development of students, and makes a positive contribution to the overall student experience. Directly tied to the strategic plan, by 2022 the Division of Student Affairs plans to fully develop and embed civic learning and democratic engagement on campus through a framework of programming and action that includes understanding of democratic values, capacities to engage diverse perspectives and people, and commitment to collective civic problem solving. Related to this strategic plan objective are the following unit actions:

1. Promote student civic learning and democratic action through focused engagement in 1) intergroup and deliberative dialogue, 2) service-learning, and 3) collective civic problem solving projects.
2. Enhance the Division's influence in the field of student affairs by supporting the development of staff to be leaders in student affairs and their respective functional areas with specific focus on addressing common problems, empowering people to act, strengthen communities, and generate new knowledge.

The mission of the CLCE is to provide opportunities for the campus community to learn, serve and lead with our community as active citizens and advocates for positive social change. Service, leadership and democratic 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 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 actually voted in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections, as well the 2014 and 2018 midterm elections. 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). Race and ethnicity data was not submitted by ECU, therefore our NSLVE report does not include that information.

2016 & 2020 NSLVE Analysis

The 2020 ECU report includes our 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. 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 definitely 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.

2014 & 2018 NSLVE Analysis

ECU’s voting rate increased by 14.8%, from 17.1% in 2014 to 31.9% in 2018. This is 6.6% below the voting rate for all institutions and 5.9% below the voting rate for public research institutions. Our registration rate increased by 14.2%, from 68.6% in 2014 to 82.8% in 2018. The voting rate of registered students increased by 13.5%. This is a good indication that if a student is registered, they will be more likely to vote.

The number of our students who “Voted Not in Person” (includes Early Voting) increased by 19% between the 2014 and 2018 elections. This was the most popular method of voting in 2018, accounting for 55% of total votes. Meanwhile, the percentage of students who “Voted In Person” or on election day declined by 18%.

When accounting for age, our vote totals increased for every age group between 2014 and 2018. Age groups of 25-29 saw the largest increase of 16.2% (22.8% to 39%), followed by 18-21 year olds with a 15.1% increase (7.8% to 22.9%), 22-24 saw an increase of 14.5% (14.2% to 28.7%), 30-39 saw an increase of 14% (38.1% to 52.1%), 40-49 saw an increase of 10.7% (53.6% to 64.3%), and 50+ saw an increase of 7.2% (65% to 72.2%). 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 an increase (16% increase for women; 12.8% for men).

Library Science majors continued to vote at the highest rates (63.5%), followed by Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies (50.4%), Education (41.4%), Foreign Languages, Literatures and Linguistics (41.2%), and Liberal Arts/Sciences and Humanities (39.5%). Parks, Recreation, Leisure and Fitness Studies voted at the lowest rates (18.4%), followed by Law Enforcement, Firefighting and Protective Services (20.7%), Family and Consumer/Human Sciences (25.9%), Physical Sciences (25.3%), and Psychology (25.5%).

Goals

ECU continues to prioritize the work of democratic and voter engagement efforts on campus and has the support of upper 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 recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, continued advocacy for our One Stop Early Voting site on campus, and the current climate of divisiveness and distrust of democratic 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 to lobby for an on-campus one-stop early voting location in the Main Campus Student Center for the 2022 municipal, primary, and midterm elections.
2. Conduct eight voter registration drives per semester, equally distributed across East and West campus.
3. Voter registration education and outreach to off-campus housing developments.
4. Increase awareness and branding of the Pirates Vote initiative on campus.
5. Utilize social media to better share information regarding elections, voting, and DE events/programs.
6. Continue to include voter registration information into PiratePort and as a downloadable Canvas module.
7. Continue to collaborate with the Student Engagement office to offer Pirates Vote programming and registration opportunities through the GOLD Leaders program.
8. Continue to offer Pirates Vote programming to ECU athletes and Club Sports athletes.
9. Continue to collaborate with the First Year Transitions office to offer Pirates Vote presentations and a lesson plan on Voting & Elections.

Short-Term

1. Increase the voting rate from 31.9% to 38% between 2018-2022 for midterm 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. Task the DE Coalition with addressing the Ask Every Student initiative and find a way to institutionalize voter registration on campus.
4. Fully develop a Pirates Vote student coalition.
5. Collaborate with Campus Living to offer voter registration options for on-campus students.
6. Create voter registration kits/displays for student center offices on both East and West campus.

Long-Term

1. Increase the voting rate from 72.6% to 75% between 2020-2024 for general elections.
2. Expand programming for STEM majors, females, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Hispanic students.
3. Engage an average of 15 students per session of Citizen U.
4. Facilitate faculty development workshops (one per semester) and encourage faculty to include civic engagement in their classroom.
5. Lobby for the inclusion of race and ethnicity data to the National Student Clearinghouse so that ECU's NSLVE report reflects these demographics by 2022.

Strategy

Ongoing Goal 1: Continue to lobby for an on-campus one-stop early voting location in the Main Campus Student Center for the 2022 municipal, primary, and midterm elections.

- Continue to attend Pitt County Board of Election (BOE) meetings.
- Coordinate a letter writing campaign in support of the One Stop Early Voting location in the Main Campus Student Center.
- 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.
- Create voter registration tabling kits that include voter technology (laptops & mobile printers) and ensure that team members and volunteers are properly trained regarding NC voter laws and basic customer service skills.
- 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: Voter registration education and outreach to off-campus housing developments.

- Train Pirates Vote team members on voter registration techniques and rules.
- Create and maintain a list of the large apartment complexes in Greenville where most students reside.
- Make contact with office staff at each apartment complex and ask if materials can be dropped off.
- Create voter registration packets with an explanation letter, signs, and voter registration forms for the large apartment complexes to include in new resident packets.

Ongoing Goal 4: 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 5: Utilize social media to better share information regarding elections, voting, and DE 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 6: 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 7: Continue to collaborate with the Student Engagement office to offer Pirates Vote programming and registration opportunities through the GOLD Leaders program.

- Coordinate with Krista Wilhelm to offer Pirates Vote programs as offerings for GOLD Leaders.
- Market large group voter registration opportunities for student organizations through GOLD Leaders.

Ongoing Goal 8: 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 9: 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.*

Short-Term Goal 1: Increase the voting rate from 31.9% to 38% between 2018-2022 for midterm 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: Task the DE 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 DE 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.

Short-Term Goal 4: 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 5: Collaborate with Campus Living to offer voter registration options for on-campus students.

- Meet with Campus Living leadership to try and figure out how Campus Living & Pirates Vote could work together to offer all on campus residents with the opportunity for voter registration.
- Connect with RD's and RA's to offer Pirates Vote programming for hall meetings and other Campus Living programming.

Short-Term Goal 6: Create voter registration kits/displays for student center offices on both East and West campus.

- Create voting materials and packets, modeled after the materials created for off-campus housing, that student center offices could easily display or have in their spaces.
- Recruit and offer training for said offices on NC voter registration policies, etc.
- Create a schedule for the Pirates Vote student team to collect completed forms from participating offices and to refresh materials.

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

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

Long-Term Goal 2: Expand programming for STEM majors, females, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Hispanic students.

- Continue to update existing programs such as the Dinner & Dialogue discussion series and Trending Topics film series to include curriculum and 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 our democratic process.
- Utilize Engage to contact student organizations (from the target populations) and offer to attend their next meeting to share voter registration and democratic engagement information with their members.
- Partner with campus units such as Greek Life and Intercultural Affairs to market and implement new programming.

Long-Term Goal 3: Engage an average of 15 students per session of Citizen U.

- Increase marketing and/or outreach on campus so that the program becomes more visible.
- Expand program to include early college high school cohort.
- Review assessment data and feedback session data in order to update curriculum so that the program stays relevant and interesting.
- Connect with other programs on campus to offer Citizen U session as a menu of offerings for their program.

Long-Term Goal 4: 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 Democratic 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 democratic engagement themes.
- Explore ways to incentivize the inclusion of civic learning and democratic engagement in the classroom, such as mini-grants to faculty from CLCE.

Long-Term Goal 5: Lobby for the inclusion of race and ethnicity data to the National Student Clearinghouse so that ECU's NSLVE report reflects these demographics by 2024.

- Contact universities and colleges that include this data and inquire as to how having this data has impacted their NSLVE reports and democratic engagement plans.
- Develop a rationale for why race and ethnicity should be included in the NSLVE report for ECU and how this information could be utilized to improve our institution's voting rate.
- Meet with Student Affairs administration, Student Affairs Assessment and the Registrar's Office to share our rationale and develop a timeline for the inclusion of race and ethnicity data to the National Clearinghouse and NSLVE reports.

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 Democratic Engagement Coalition, Intercultural Affairs, 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 Democratic Engagement Coalition, CLCE Advancement Council, [posted on the website of the CLCE](#), and incorporated into reports to upper 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 democratic 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 democratic engagement, build stronger coordination for democratic engagement efforts, and to better advocate for institutionalizing democratic engagement work on our 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 Democratic Engagement Coalition, reports to upper administration, and social media and university news outlets as appropriate.

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