

Eckerd College is a small private liberal arts school with a student population of around 1,900, located on the beaches of St. Petersburg, FL. The large majority of students are from out of state and come to Eckerd to study marine science and environmental studies. It is listed as a college that changes lives and boasts numerous opportunities to study abroad and get involved in the local community.

The nature of the college poses many challenges. Primarily, many out of state students that are new to the Florida community and aren't as in tune with the politics and issues affecting Floridians and Pinellas county specifically.

Background:

In 2018, students at Eckerd College organized to run the biggest voter registration drive that ever happened on campus. During that drive, students made class announcements, organized tabling events, and ran big events in order to help register over 300 students to vote leading to an increase in voter turnout between 18-24 year olds by 300%+.

Since then, students on campus, involved with Florida PIRG Students and the Eckerd College Organization of Students (ECOS - Student Government) have continued to organize faculty members and student organizations, working to build a diverse and collective effort with a goal of achieving 100% voter turnout.

The main organizations leading these efforts are Florida PIRG Students and the Eckerd College Organization of Students (ECOS). These efforts have led to some big wins ahead of the Fall 2020 Elections:

- An increase in voter turnout by 1,000+ percent in Eckerd's voting precinct in the 2019 fall city council elections
- A grant from Run With It in the spring 2020 to organize get out the vote efforts for the Presidential Primaries

Overall, the long term goal at Eckerd College is to create a true culture of civic engagement on campus which is woven into the fabric of the campus community. In

order to do that, there are series of tactics we've worked to implement:

- Developed a diverse voting coalition that includes organizations like Florida PIRG Students, Eckerd College Organization of Students, Afro-American Society, the Marine Science Club, Eckerd College Queer Student Alliance, and more
- Integrated faculty members into the voter registration process into the curriculum of their classes. From including voting information in their syllabi, to allowing nonpartisan voting announcements in classes, to putting a voter tool link in their email bios, and sending out voting resources to their classes
- Run big events with a variety of organizations, like the Garden Club
- Worked with college administration to coordinate campus wide communication, like getting all campus emails and all campus texts sent out, and facilitate transportation to the campus polling location

- Created a web page dedicated to informing students on civic engagement in their community, embedded into Eckerd's official website
- Reach 1st year students through Autumn Term (extra term that 1st years have before the regular semester) AND getting swipe credit for registering to vote/confirming you're registered

By implementing many of those tactics, we've set short term goals that allow us to continue to develop relationships with faculty, administrators, and student leaders during fall 2020 and test what is effective on campus AND in a virtual setting:

- Register over 200 students to vote
- Make over 1,000 get out the vote contacts

The leadership team:

- Alexandria Gordon - Chapter Chair, Florida PIRG Students
- Nikki Tesar - Campaign Coordinator, Florida PIRG Students
- Christyna Reagan - Get Out The Vote Coordinator, Florida PIRG Students
- Will Shedden - President, Eckerd College Organization of Students. Fellow, Campus Election Engagement Project
- Damian Fernandez - President, Eckerd College
- Anne Wetmore - Associate Vice President & Associate Dean of Students
- James J. Annarelli - Vice President for Student Life & Dean of Students
- Fred Sabota - Associate Vice President for Student Life & Associate Dean of Students
- Lova Patterson - Associate Director of Campus Activities
- Anthony Brunello - Professor of Political Science
- William Felice - Professor of Political Science
- Michel Fougères - Director of Marketing, Communications and Web Services
- Marjorie DeSanfilippo - Associate Dean of Faculty

Fall 2020 update:

- Eckerd College has sent out 2 all campus emails, 3 all campus texts
- We helped register over 200+ students
- Made over 1,000+ get out the vote contacts
- Made over 100 virtual and in-person class announcements

Conclusion:

Overall, we saw these efforts prevail in keeping voting and civic engagement on the mind of every student at Eckerd College. The student leaders listed above became key faces known across campus to be experts in civic engagement, encouraging students to reach out to their peers for valuable voting information. There was not a single surface on campus untouched by civic engagement and opportunities to register to vote, head to the polls, request a mail ballot and more. Throughout the process of this both virtual and in-person effort, we watched an intention to create a culture of civic engagement blossom into something tangible that will only continue to grow.