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Feather River College

Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rates Among College Students

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I. Executive Summary

This plan was developed by the Liberal Arts and Sciences Division Chair, and full-time faculty member in the political science and sociology programs at Feather River College. This is a general action plan for the 2020-2021 academic year and is based on staffing and budget resources. The goal is to increase voter registration amongst FRC students, and more specifically, increase voter turnout in the November general election. The second goal is to provide voter education programs and increase students' sense of political efficacy. The plan will be implemented on the FRC campus in Quincy, CA. This plan was developed as part of the overall civic engagement efforts of campus. The faculty member and Liberal Arts and Sciences Chair will oversee the implementation of any action items in this plan.

II. Leadership

As stated, there is only one faculty member overseeing civic engagement activities on this small campus. This faculty will integrate some of these activities into courses, such as the introductory U.S. government and other political science courses. Students in these classes will be participants in implementing some of these activities. This instructor will also work closely with the Student Services Programs and outreach, specifically with the plans, programming, and staff working on Guided Pathways implementation, and with the Office of Instruction. Most campus activities involve coordination and support across programs – most of which are one-person (faculty) directed programs.

Because of the size of Quincy and Plumas County, working with the County Clerk and county political parties is easy. The campus also has good working relationships with the County Board of Supervisors. Members of these entities are guest speakers in various classes in an academic year. For example, the local parties supported efforts to bring District 1 congressional candidates to meet with FRC students this past Fall. The campus has historically been a place where candidates prefer to come when visiting Plumas County.

III. Commitment

Civic engagement and responsible citizenship are amongst FRC's college-wide learning outcomes. Civic and community engagement, citizenship, ethical behavior, etc. are all evident in FRCs mission statements, its education plan, and statement of values. FRC faculty and staff are leaders in the community, serving on boards, councils, etc. Faculty also bring speakers to campus and community, and host cultural events. FRC students are also active in the community through volunteer efforts such as working with local elementary schools in everything from teaching kids about horses (Equine Program), rafting and hiking (Outdoor Recreational Leadership), community cleanup projects, etc. Not only are such service learning opportunities part of many FRC programs (including athletics), civic engagement is central to the political science curriculum and program learning outcomes. While there are only one or two political science majors annually, most students will take a political science course during their two years on campus. These courses emphasize the importance of citizen action in a democracy, and students are assessed on their appreciation of this participation. Every spring, FRC students are given a survey and one of the questions is on their growth in civic understanding. Results consistently show that students have learned in this area, and students report their growth in the area of civic engagement.

IV. Landscape

The FRC student demographic is diverse, and it changes every year. This is not unlike most community colleges who see their population turnover frequently, making this unlike four-year institutions where students stay longer and are more involved/present in the campus community. In other words, as soon as we think we have reached civic engagement goals, we get a whole new group of students and need to start again. It's important to note that most FRC students are from out of state or out of the county. Many do not choose to register to vote in Plumas County and choose instead to register in their home state or county. It is not easy to track their voting behavior. Additionally, many students turn 18 during their two years here and become eligible to register to vote. They also become more interested in government and policy as they learn more about the democratic process. According to our NSLVE data, FRC voter turnout rates are in line with that of most other two-year colleges. This is not something we expect to maintain without effort and outreach. These efforts include voter registration events, dissemination of election information, hosting speakers and debates, and hosting events that celebrate U.S. democracy.

In 2016 the political science program received a Civic Impact grant to use for civic engagement activities. This money has been used for voter registration efforts, led by students, and for campus-wide election events. The political science program also coordinates with the student success and equity staff and with the Office of the President, to bring speakers to campus who supplement civic engagement curriculum and efforts. Activities and efforts have been funded

through this grant, including employing students to register voters, signage to encourage voting, food for events, and t-shirts celebrating the vote.

V. Goals

- Increase voter registration among FRC students.
- Increase voter turnout among FRC students.
- Offer voter education events prior to the June primary and November 2020 general election.

These efforts will continue to be about building citizenship skills and confidence in civic engagement among the community college demographic. A latent result of these activities will continue to be enhancing student connections with their community.

Our strategic approach is to coordinate civic engagement activities in collaboration with other activities and events. This will mean working closely with other offices on campus and with groups in the community. We will set up and decorate a voter registration table at events such as the annual cultural fair, student orientation sessions, and offer snacks and perhaps prizes for students who stop by or who answer a survey or trivia quiz. We will do the same during annual Earth week activities and at athletic events. Working closely with the Office of Student Life will also be important for voter education outreach, particularly disseminating candidate and other ballot information. Civic engagement activities are also planned for the new First Year Experience, which will be a multi-faceted program to prepare students for college and professional life.

Voter registration will occur each semester, regardless of budget. For Fall 2020, we will have very visible voter registration opportunities at campus events. The political science students will also host at least one ballot education forum. The campus is working on implementing activities around Guided Pathways also, and these may include opportunities to create activities to get students interested in the social sciences pathways. At these events, we will assist voters with the registration process (online or on paper). To entice interest we will decorate the table, use signage made previously, and have non-partisan activities. We will make a concerted push for registration prior to the registration deadlines, and educate students about the vote by mail process in Plumas County and other California counties. Funds will be used for snacks and for co-sponsoring events that may require rental fees. We will also use the all-student email list and the FRC app to send voter registration links and reminders of registration deadlines. Students really liked the t-shirts we made before, so we will make t-shirts celebrating voting for the November election. Secondary to these efforts will be encouraging students to be involved in student government activities on campus.

VI. Reporting

NSLVE data is sorted by the FRC Institutional Researcher and then the faculty member political science shares this information with the campus. Student activities are reported to the Board of Trustees through the monthly president's report. The local newspaper covers many FRC activities.

Activities and the results of these activities are also reported bi-annually to the civic impact grant sponsor.

VII. Evaluation

The primary tool for evaluation is the NSLVE report. Additionally, efforts will be evaluated in the Political Science Comprehensive Program Review, and in the student learning outcomes annual report. Conversations will occur with various offices and committees about the effectiveness of various events and activities. This will include the student services committee, the Guided Pathways working group, and the diversity committee, among others.