

FAU Civic Action Plan



FAU
**WEPPNER CENTER FOR LEAD
AND SERVICE-LEARNING**
Division of Student Affairs
Florida Atlantic University

Executive Summary

As Florida Atlantic University embarks on the prestigious Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement, the ultimate goal of this civic engagement plan is to create civically-minded and socially responsible students and alumni by bringing together curricular and co-curricular programs and experiences. The Roadmap to Civic Engagement for Florida Atlantic University incorporates elements of curricular and co-curricular service-learning and civic engagement, as well as resources directed specifically to continuing to build a culture of voter engagement at FAU.

This plan incorporates the definition of civic engagement from the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) as defined in Ehrlich, 2000:

“Civic engagement is working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. In addition, civic engagement encompasses actions wherein individuals participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community.”

To accomplish this, the Civic Action Plan centers around five themes, detailed throughout this plan.

- Community Partnerships
- Voter Engagement and Literacy
- Experiential Programs
- Faculty and Staff Engagement
- Equity and Social Justice

This plan was assembled in alignment with FAU’s *A Strategic Plan for the Race to Excellence 2015-2025* and live out the Mission of the institution, which states:

Florida Atlantic University is a multi-campus public research university that pursues excellence in its missions of research, scholarship, creative activity, teaching, and active engagement with its communities.

Additionally, this plan serves to support the *Pillars* and *Platforms* of the university’s Strategic Plan which strive to “create knowledge that benefit society”.

Institutional Background

Since FAU was founded in 1961, the institution has been committed to community. FAU developed as a “new kind of university”, one that would open the door to higher education more than ever before. The *Race to Excellence* offers a blueprint for where FAU envisions itself as it moves further into the 21st century. One of the core components of the Race to Excellence that this plan seeks to build on is to “achieve the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching’s classification as a community engaged institution by 2020.”

FAU is an institution with a footprint that spans over 100 miles of coastline in southeast Florida, across a 4-county service area with students attending campuses in Dania Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Davie, Jupiter, and Fort Pierce, and the main campus in Boca Raton.

Weppner Center for LEAD and Service-Learning

In November 1995, Dr. Daniel Weppner, an Associate Professor in the Educational Leadership Department, requested support from the University President to establish a place on campus that would motivate students to get involved in volunteer services. In February of 1996, the Campus Volunteer Center (CVC) was opened.

Since 1996, the center has evolved into a place where thousands of students come to get involved in their community. Originally established with just Dr. Weppner at the helm, it expanded its services to include more staff, more community partnerships, additional programming and an interactive website. In the year 2000, Students Advocating Volunteer Involvement, or SAVI, was established by the Student Government Association to serve as a partner in community service programming. In the following years, SAVI and the Volunteer Center services expanded to the Broward and Jupiter Campuses, expanding the FAU community service programs to additional Florida communities and students.

In the Fall of 2006, representatives from the FAU campuses began discussing further opportunities for partnership. Included in these discussions were plans to have university-wide programs like Alternative Spring Break, which first took place in Spring of 2007. Following the Alternative Spring Break trip, the campus representatives for the CVC came together and revisited the policy, procedure and mission of community service programs at FAU. With the support of Dr. Charles Brown, then Vice President for Student Affairs, the center was renamed to the Center for Civic Engagement and Service. During the Summer of 2007, the Center was officially named the Dr. Daniel Weppner Center for Civic Engagement and Service with operating offices on the Broward and Jupiter campuses. In 2014, the name was changed to the Weppner Center for Service-Learning and Civic Responsibility.

In July of 2014, LEAD (Leadership Education and Development) branched out from Student Involvement & Leadership. In July of 2015, after one year of existence as a standalone office, LEAD merged with the Weppner Center for Service-Learning and Civic Responsibility to become the Weppner Center for LEAD & Service Learning. The Center that started as a table in

the Breezeway now offers programs and resources that benefit all of South Florida and ultimately, our world.

Community and Regional Background

As the home of Florida Atlantic University’s Main Campus, the City of Boca Raton with a population of almost 100,000 is part of the larger Miami metropolitan area, with a population of over 6 million people. Greater Miami is the eighth largest metropolitan area in the US. South Florida is known around the world for its diverse cultures, history, and is also known as the “Gateway to the Americas”.

While metropolitan South Florida is known around the world for its beaches and being an economic powerhouse, challenges and disenfranchisement exist across the three-county region. Cost of living remains one of South Florida’s biggest challenges, affecting residents’ ability to access nutritious food, secure safe and affordable housing, as well as access to quality education. Additionally, workforce training and access to affordable health care also remain challenges for many of the residents of Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties.

FAU works with a variety of nonprofit agencies across its service area, as well as other regions in Florida, and around the country. Through a plethora of programs offered through the Weppner Center for LEAD and Service-Learning, students, faculty, and staff engaged with a variety of community partners across a range of social issues including: poverty, disaster relief, environmental awareness, animal health and rights, and much more.



Miami



Fort Lauderdale



West Palm Beach

Community Partnerships

The largest amount of engagement with community partners takes place in the areas around FAU’s campuses. Additionally, programs such as Owl Breaks connect with community partners regionally and across the country. The first step in understanding the work of the community partners was getting a baseline of who our partners were and what their needs were and how to align the programs that the university offers in an effort to meet the needs of the community.

Beginning in the 2017-2018 academic year, community partners had the ability to request opportunities to be posted on the Lead and Serve website, as well as have an interactive listing of community partners separated by social issue and geographic region to better serve students across FAU’s broad service area. Beginning with the 2018-2019 academic year, in accordance with the university’s desire to attain the Carnegie Classification of Community Engagement, a community partner survey is being developed to gauge the efficacy and impact of the current programs and services provided to community partners. The data garnered from the community partner survey will also be used to develop intentional ways to integrate the student experience



Community Partnerships: Seek out new community partnerships and further strengthen existing partnerships between the university and the community.		
Goal	Method	Measure of Success
Increase the presence and engagement of community partners in programming.	Encourage community partner participation in programmatic efforts as well as in active conversation.	Evaluate the level of engagement of community partners representing a cross-section of social issues.

Create opportunities for community partners to give feedback on programs and services being offered.	Development of assessment instrument(s) to gauge community partner feedback.	Community partner voices are heard consistently in programmatic development.
Increase access to departmental and university resources for community partners.	Identify resources currently available and what resources could be made available.	Evaluation of resources and gauge whether resources meet the current/expected need.

Voter Engagement and Literacy

Students come to FAU from across the state of Florida, and around the country. As of the 2016-2017 Board of Governors IPEDS report for Fall enrollment, 88% of students were classified as a Florida resident, with 12% classified as non-Florida resident. Additionally, at the end of 2016, FAU gained the designation as a “Voter-Friendly Campus” which “was developed to coordinate administrators, faculty, and student organizations in civic and electoral engagement. This program was developed in partnership between the Campus Vote Project and NASPA, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. In order to increase the amount of resources available to students throughout the school year, the Weppner Center for LEAD and Service-Learning also created a new website to highlight the Voter Friendly Campus designation as well as offer localized links to the Florida Department of State website and County Boards of Elections: <http://www.fau.edu/leadandserve/programs/voterresources.php>.

In an effort to facilitate institutional growth in the areas of democratic and civic engagement, the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University in Boston, MA facilitates the NSLVE (National Study of Learning and Voter Engagement) report that is offered to institutions to get a closer look at their student voting habits to better encourage students to vote either locally at their collegiate location or at home. Most recently FAU was provided data for the 2012 and 2016 election cycles.

For the 2016 election cycle, FAU reported a 59.9% voting rate (which is an increase of 3%). Additionally, FAU students vote at a higher rate than the all institutional average for 2016 (59.9% compared to 50.4%). More comprehensive data from the NSLVE report is attached as Appendix A.

Beginning in October 2017, the State of Florida began online voter registration with www.registertovoteflorida.gov. This portal, offered through the Florida Department of State and the Florida Division of Elections allows residents to register for the first time or update their registration to encourage more to take part in the democratic process.

Voter Engagement and Literacy		
Goal	Method	Measure of Success

Increase ratio of student registration to voting	Development of programs that translate voter registration to voter turnout.	Increase in in-person election day turn-out (turnout dropped from 2012-2016) for election day, but increased in absentee and early voting.
Increase outreach to multi/interdisciplinary faculty and students.	Begin connection with faculty that are teaching courses that are designated as academic service-learning.	Increase voter turn-out for students enrolled as Multi-Interdisciplinary by 10%.
Build connection with Education, English Languages/Literature, and History to capitalize on significant increases in voter turnout rates.	Development of a focus group to learn if/how faculty are integrating civic/voter engagement into their curriculum.	Ability to translate successes from these departments to help students/faculty that have seen decreases in voter engagement.

Civic/Community Engagement Centered Experiential Programs

The Weppner Center for LEAD and Service-Learning offers a variety of experiential programs centered around community engagement and becoming more aware of the various social issues affecting South Florida communities:

Academic Service-Learning designated courses

As a component part of the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement, FAU set a goal to get to approximately 200 designated courses. Academic Service-Learning, is defined as “the integration of community service with instruction and reflection. It is designed to enrich the learning experience through hands-on activity and to teach civic responsibility”. For the 2017-2018 academic year, there were 192 courses in total that are designated, with 93 taught during the course of the academic year.

Additionally, there was a substantial increase in courses that reported AS-L involvement, netting a 156% increase in overall hours reported for the 2017-2018 academic year. As reported in the NSLVE report, we aspire to leverage the faculty in the academic disciplines that have higher rates of voter and overall civic engagement to engage the faculty in disciplines that have lower rates of voter and overall civic engagement to see an across the board increase for all academic programs.

Days of Service/SAVI Partnership Programs

The Student Government program, SAVI (Students Advocating Volunteer Involvement) is also advised by the Weppner Center for LEAD and Service-Learning. SAVI hosts and sponsors three days of service throughout the year, centered around a variety of social issues. The academic year begins with the WOW (Weeks of Welcome) Day of Service, followed by the FAU Day of Service during Homecoming accompanied by ExtravaCANza, a program designed to seek out canned food donations where students are then able to build a sculpture out of the cans, and then

finally the cans are then donated to both the Beyond Food program (located on-campus) and Boca Helping Hands.

Owl Breaks

The Owl Breaks program is an immersive experience that take place during university breaks and offers students the chance to “dive deeper” into a social justice issue around the state of Florida, and regionally. Past social issues that Owl Break trips centered around included: disaster relief, children’s health awareness, food insecurity, and much more. The Owl Breaks program also serves as a catalyst for students to become more civically aware, and also inspiring students to take action. For example, as a result of attending one of the Owl Breaks trips during the 2017-2018 academic year, a student became inspired to become more environmentally minded and wanted to work toward more action around environmental issues.

Civic/Community Engagement Centered Experiential Programs		
Goal	Method	Measure of Success
<u>AS-L Courses</u> : Increased outreach to faculty to center on social issue engagement with projects. Additionally, engagement with faculty from fields that have had lower rates of voter turnout as evidenced in latest NSLVE report.	Beginning with focus group of faculty, learning about how social issues/community partners are selected and gauging how students are reflecting on “what’s next” after they’ve completed their projects.	Evaluation of faculty/student rosters each semester to gauge community partnerships, and collective social impact of all students participating.
<u>Days of Service/SAVI</u> : Intentional aligning of “what’s next” after completing a day of service, and how students can use their “vote as their voice” particularly after the WOW Day of Service as it is before Election Day.	Engaging SAVI director in conversations on how we can have conversations with students on being an active citizen after completing a day of service.	Students will begin to develop action steps as a part of their post-service day experience to include registering to vote (if not already).
<u>Owl Breaks</u> : Similar to the Days of Service, utilizing the Site Leaders to also encourage students to think about “what’s next” and how to do they create action as a result of their experience.	Retooling Site Leader training to have increased focus on social issue, and beginning the trip experience with how will they carry this experience forward once we come back?	Students will begin to develop action steps as a part of their post-service day experience to include encouragement to register to vote (if not already).

Faculty and Staff Engagement

As evidenced in our latest NSLVE report (2016), FAU has seen an increase in our voting rate (57% in 2012, to 59.9% in 2016). Additionally, FAU ranked higher than the institutional voting average (59.9% for FAU compared to 50.4% for the institutional average. Additionally, FAU has had a registration rate above 75% (80.0% in 2012, and 80.6% in 2018).

Faculty and staff play a critical role in increasing student voter registration and turnout rates, FAU saw increases in several STEM fields, including: Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Computer and Information Sciences, Engineering and Engineering Technologies, Mathematics and Statistics, and Physical Sciences.

As FAU prepares for submission of the Community Engagement classification application, there is a question on the application that specifically asks: “Does the institution encourage and measure student voter registration and voting”? There is also a sub-question that asks, “describe the methods for encouraging and measuring student voter registration and voting”. FAU does encourage and measure student voter registration and voting, through the Weppner Center for LEAD and Service-Learning, with the official measurement tool being the nationally recognized NSLVE report. In terms of promotion, this takes the form of encouragement of students to vote by staff; however, there is also an opportunity for faculty to continue promoting in their classes, as evidenced by the disciplines that have increased rates of student voter registration and turnout and an opportunity for more promotion/resource sharing for disciplines that have seen lower rates or overall decreases.

Faculty and Staff Engagement		
Goal	Method	Measure of Success
Gain an understanding of the decreases in voter	Review of courses that are housed in these disciplines	The measure of success will come from the 2018 and 2020

engagement in: Architecture, Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies, Natural Resources and Conservation, Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies, Philosophy and Religious Studies, and Public Administration.	that are designated as Academic Service-Learning to gauge how civic engagement is infused into the curriculum to then look for future opportunities to increase these rates going into the 2018 and 2020 election cycles.	NSLVE reports, and any associated increases with the aforementioned disciplines.
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Basis in Social Justice

The main focus of this civic engagement plan is to inspire students to become change agents through active participation in the democratic process. Through utilization of the data provided by the NSLVE report, we are able to further define connections between programs that are already being offered and inspiring students to take action and become active citizens.

As evidenced in the *Race to Excellence*, FAU is committed to being an integrated partner in the communities it serves to reach toward a common goal of improving the lives of those around us. As an institution of higher education, FAU strives to educate students to develop critical thinking skills to make better sense of the social issues around us and how they can become agents of positive change.

This civic engagement plan exists to bring together a variety of programs and services that are offered in an effort to engage the students, faculty/staff, and community in bringing about higher levels of democratic engagement and improving the lives of those around us.

