

Civic Engagement Action Plan 2024-2025

Fort Lewis College Political Engagement Project

Executive Summary

The Fort Lewis College Political Engagement Project, or FLC PEP, is a group of FLC students, faculty, and staff dedicated to civic engagement, political action, and civil dialogue. We are here to help FLC students and community members stay informed and take action on the issues they care about. Whether that means voting, awareness raising, contacting elected officials, or other forms of advocacy, FLC PEP empowers students and community members to feel that they are prepared, informed, and effectively engaged.

Guiding principles:

- **Engaged:** We help motivate and empower all FLC community members to be meaningfully engaged in decision making on the issues they care about.
- **Informed:** We strive to make political issues more accessible with robust civic education programming in order to help more people effectively participate in our democratic processes.
- **Principled:** We stand up for democratic practices and voting rights for all in our diverse communities.
- **Inclusive:** We invite all community members regardless of identity, creed, or ideology to participate in engaging their political world.
- **Justice:** We work to recognize and address the historical oppression of marginalized peoples and identities within our political community.
- **Non-partisan:** We do not explicitly affiliate with or support political parties, candidates, or specific ballot propositions.

Long-term goals:

- Encourage **engaged citizenship** as an integral part of the **Skyhawk identity**.
- **Create a culture of excitement around civic engagement** at FLC and in the community.
- Institutionalize civic engagement in **both curricular and co-curricular activities** (e.g. annual events/campaigns, outreach in FLC100 (first year launch class), shareable civic engagement Canvas module).
- Create **social capital by connecting** diverse campus and community organizations working on civic, political, economic, and social issues critical to our communities.
- **Raise awareness and create educational resources** to empower our community members to meaningfully participate in their civic worlds.
- **Decrease toxic polarization and support pragmatic problem-solving** with education, outreach, training, and advocacy for civil dialogue across divisions based in identity and ideology.

Short-term goals:

- **70% student turnout and 100% registration in the November 2024 general elections**, which translates to maintaining and slightly improving the [2020 presidential election numbers \(64.4% voting rate, 84% registration rate\)](#) during this general election. This is an ambitious goal given the large increase in youth voting from 2016 to 2020, but we are dedicated to continuously increasing the presence of student voice in our public policy and electoral contests and to reaching every student with our voter resources.
- **Provide resources** for students, staff, and faculty to engage their communities in ways that are most exciting, meaningful, and impactful to them.
- Make progress in **closing engagement opportunity gaps** academic majors and demographic groups based upon NSLVE data from 2016-2020.

Organization:

PEP is a student-led Registered Student Organization (RSO) at Fort Lewis College. PEP officers and members collaboratively establish the organization's civic engagement goals and programming, and then work alongside paid student interns, or "Engagement Specialists," to execute PEP's vision.

Student Leadership:

- Matthew Schaeffer, President and Engagement Specialist
- Wyatt Bair, Vice President and Restore the Balance Intern
- Jade Pruet, Secretary
- Jose Renteria, Treasurer
- Brittany Bitsilly, Immediate Past PEP President and ASFLC President
- Dominick Dampber, Engagement Specialist
- Madison Eckard, League of Women Voters of La Plata County Intern

Paul DeBell serves as faculty advisor to the PEP and supervisor to Student Engagement Specialists. Paul is an Associate Professor of Political Science and Assistant Dean of Impact and Innovation for Arts and Sciences at FLC.

Strategy

Below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months and years.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** in the **short term** (within the next year):

- Reach out to faculty with opportunities for **classroom visits** to talk all things voting and help students register, partnering with New Era Colorado (Aaron Hackett, Western Lead Organizer aaron@neweracolorado.org)
- **2024 Colorado ballot measure explainers.** FLC Engage, Political Analysis Lab, League of Women Voters of La Plata County collaborate to produce **Skyhawk voter education guides** on Colorado's ballot initiatives, and share these resources during a public event, on social media, on our website, and on YouTube.
- Promote **Civic Holidays** on campus with resources from Civic Holidays partners.

- **Community by Conversation** events and resources to support civil, critical dialogue on issues of widespread student and community interest.

These are tactics that we **plan to do** in the **next year**:

- **Ask Every Student** about their voter registration and plan to vote using the AES toolkit and partnerships with New Era CO, the League of Women Voters, and Restore the Balance.
 - PEP Engagement Specialists collaborate with New Era for expanded class visits and tabling in high-traffic areas of campus.
 - Develop a team that can use our new email address (engage@fortlewis.edu) and regular office hours / tabling to answer any student registration, voting, and engagement questions in real time.
- **Outreach earlier.** Include opportunities to register in **orientation** materials and events, and provide office hours during orientation and the first week of class for voter services and to meet with FLC Engage students.
 - Collaborating with Animas High School student Madalynn Tharp on her senior action research project to think about optimal way to welcome first-time students with civic engagement opportunities and information.
- **Increasing engagement across the curriculum** and target low-turnout majors according to our NSLVE data.
 - [Science and Civic Engagement](#) resources from All-In
 - [Your Major on the Ballot](#) resource
- Develop robust **resources** for civic engagement and civic learning as well as a **calendar of events** on our website, www.flcengage.org.
 - Include resources for voting in tribal elections in Indigenous communities for as many Nations as possible.
 - Increasing our resources and outreach for the many students who vote absentee from around the country.*
- More robust outreach, including regular collaborations with:
 - KDUR's Off the Rim show with Sarah Flower (Tuesdays 9-9:30). We have an open invitation for us to come talk about issues and events as they arise.
 - The [FLC Independent](#) student newspaper
- Hold expanded **in-person programming** for civic holidays, engagement events, etc. in addition to online outreach to create a more concrete sense of excitement and celebration around engagement and voting.
- **Building a faculty engagement champion program** by which faculty are incentivized and empowered to integrate civic engagement into their classrooms. See [Guide to building a faculty champion program](#) and [template](#) by Ask Every Student.*
 - Collaborating with Animas High School students and faculty on a faculty champion program there as well.

Co-Curricular engagement event timeline:

Fall 2024:

([2024 Colorado Election Calendar](#))

August 2X? FLC New Student Orientation: Work with orientation team to include civic engagement and voting resources to all new Skyhawks.

August 2X? Student services fair: Tabling, welcoming, and registering new Skyhawk voters.

August 26 FLC classes begin

- Campuswide email providing nonpartisan voter registration resources for all (mandated by state law to go out at start of fall semester).
- Begin classroom voter registration and [voter plan](#) information outreach alongside New Era CO.

Early September student-led **Rock the Vote** event with music, games, prizes, and lots of information and resources to get registered to vote.

September 4 Ballot Initiatives declared sufficient or insufficient by Colorado Secretary of State and we should have a final list of initiatives for our student ballot measure explainer project.

Tuesday, September 17 is [Constitution Day](#) and [National voter registration day](#). These civic holidays falling on the same day is new...

- Campus communication and programming to critically dialogue on Constitutional issues in partnership with [CU Boulder Law School Constitution Day Project](#)
- Email, social media, and in-person (SU tabling and “Pie the PEP”) communications about voting rights and how to make sure you’re registered for the November elections.

Late September / Early October Event co-hosted w/ LPC LWV: Media literacy in an age of information, misinformation, and disinformation

- Reworking February panel of the same title for a student crowd with more focus on social media.
- Michele Malach and Justin McBryer have agreed to take part in another event, and we’ll recruit others including students and community members.

October 1-3 AHS Osprey Block on Triple Threat on Environmentalism - host symposium to foster student action.

October 7-11 is the week of both [National Voter Education Week](#) and [Rediscovering Common Ground](#) events at CMC with Richard Haas.

- **SkyWords-PEP Collaboration on common reading and events**
- **FLC watch party of Haas event at CMC** pair with reading / panel discussion that is more tailored to FLC mission (e.g. rights-obligations idea rooted in 4Rs)
- CMC “[common reader books on Libby](#)” page
- National Voter Education Week day-themed communications using their [partner resources](#).

October 16, Ballots mailed in Colorado

Mid October: Securing the election event with County Clerk Tiffany Lee

- Student idea to hold an event that walks people through all of the things they do to secure the vote here, ideally gamified.

October 2X, Ballot initiative explainer videos by political science students (PS101 and PS396) for FLC students and the community alongside nonpartisan researchers with the LPC LWV.

- [2022 videos](#), [2023 videos](#)

Vote Early Day, Friday 10/29: Social media outreach using their partner toolkit

- GOTV tabling and “Pie the PEP”

Election Hero Day, Monday 11/4 and Election Day, Tues. Tuesday 11/5 Social media outreach with information, tabling at student union reminding students of voter services center on campus. Tabling at the student union to GOTV and chalk arrows from student union to voter services at the Community Concert Hall.

Tuesday 11/5 Election night watch party

Week of 11/11 Election post-mortem discussion

Spring 2025

Community by Conversation FLC reconciliation events in accordance with FLC Diversity Collaborative.

Lobbying during legislative session partnerships?

- PEAK Week in Denver usually around Valentine’s Day
- Friends Network DC Lobbying around Spring Break

State of the Union watch party with bingo and prizes

Early April Durango City Council Elections

Three seats will be up and we will work on our student city council voting guide ([2021 example](#)) and social media campaign ([2021](#)).

Mid April Associated Students of FLC Elections

New goal this year to partner with the student government to increase engagement in their election process.