

# 2020 Civic Engagement Action Plan

Fort Lewis College

## Guiding principles:

- **Engaged:** We want to help empower all FLC community members to be engaged agents of change for the issues they care about.
- **Non-partisan:** We do not take sides in partisan battles or advocate for specific political parties, candidates, or proposals.
- **Inclusive:** We invite all community members regardless of identity, creed, or ideology to participate in engaging their political world.
- **Principled:** We stand up for democratic practices and voting rights for all citizens in our diverse communities.

## Goals:

### Short-term (Fall 2020):

- **55% turnout and 85% registration in the November 2020 general elections**, up from 34.2% turnout and 72.4% registration in the 2018 midterm elections. We will measure our progress towards / away from this goal by comparing [NSLVE data](#) on FLC registration and turnout from previous elections to our 2020 rates.
- **Provide resources** for students, staff, and faculty to engage their communities
- Canvas resources, discussion prompts, and lesson plans for instructors to easily import into their courses to facilitate course- and discipline-specific conversations regarding civic engagement.
- Make progress in **closing engagement opportunity gaps** across demographic groups (e.g. youngest students, students of color, students from lower socioeconomic statuses) and academic departments (e.g. low-turnout majors such as in health and adventure ed.)

### Long-term:

- Encourage **engaged citizenship** as an integral part of the **Skyhawk identity**.
- **Create 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 (the first year launch class), Canvas module for instructors).

**FLC Landscape:** *Analysis of strengths and growth areas so we can best adapt our strategy for the contexts of FLC and our diverse communities.*

Fort Lewis College has one of the lowest voter-turnout rates in Colorado [according to our NSLVE data](#), with a turnout of 34.2% of students in the 2018 midterm elections (compared to a rate of 39.1% for all institutions) and of 41.4% in the presidential elections of 2016 (compared to 50.4% for all institutions). Moreover, we know there are engagement opportunity and equity gaps between students of color and others in turnout rates. These challenges motivate our work, and we have already had some successes. We have secured a small grant to encourage

civic engagement from the Coutts and Clark Western Foundation and had a successful launch of our initiatives at the “Fall in Love with Voting Fair” on February 14, 2020. Unfortunately, the situation with the novel coronavirus escalated quickly after that event necessitating the cancellation of our plans for the rest of Spring 2020. In the Fall, we will work to establish a strong virtual presence to engage students safely and effectively. Doing so will require a dramatic increase in our digital presence, building off of the establishment of our [Instagram \(@FLCengage\)](#) and [Facebook \(@FLCvotes\)](#) presences as well as increasing the resource infrastructure on our recently-launched [FLC engagement website at fortlewis.edu/vote](https://fortlewis.edu/vote).

**Core Organizing Team:** The FLC Engagement Collaborative is a partnership of ASFLC Legislative Affairs and the Political Science Club and Department:

- Political Science Department
  - Ruth Alminas, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Political Science Club Advisor
  - Paul DeBell, Assistant Professor of Political Science, FLC Engage Collaborative Convener and sender of emails
  - Thora Giallouri, Assistant Professor of Political Science
  - Kathryn Gray, Adjunct Professor of Political Science Admission Communication Specialist
- Political Science Club
  - Jackson Berridge, President
  - Dawson Gipp, Vice President
  - Benjamin Brewer, Secretary
  - Elly Harder, Treasurer
- Associated Students of Fort Lewis College
  - Sophie Schwartz, ASLFC Vice-President
  - Morgan Rutkowski, Legislative Affairs Committee
  - Robert Dennet, Parliamentarian
- Fort Lewis Staff
  - Yuriko Miller, Study abroad coordinator and FLC Engage staff coordinator
  - Mark Mastalski, ASFLC Advisor and Director of the Leadership Center
  - Tessa Creatini, Assessment Coordinator
- League of Women Voters of La Plata County
  - Jean Aaro, President
  - Karen McManus, events organizing
  - Jan and Greg Philips, League members and marketing specialists

**Working teams:**

- **Event / campaign planning teams:**
  - **FLC Discussion Series planning team (“Let’s Talk About It!”):** Political Science Club and Ruth Alminas as advisor
  - **Election events team** to plan debate watch parties and other forums. Members: Political Science Department and Club
  - **Ballot initiative event team** ([2018 version here](#)): League of Women Voters, Paul DeBell w/ PS101 students, Thora Giallouri w/ PS110 students
    - LWV Ballot Measure Liaisons: Trish Pegram; Jill Patton, Syl Allred, Diane Goodchild
  - **Curricular outreach team** to reach out to classes and help design a Canvas module with resources and optional engagement lesson plans and discussions. Members: Paul DeBell (content creator), Michelle Bonanno (reviewer), Jen Rider (reviewer), Kathryn Gray
    - Canvas module launched 9/16/2020

- **Election day voting rights panel:** PS Club with Ruth Alminas, Kathryn Gray
- **Post-election discussion:** Tarecka Payne (Leadership Center), Ruth Alminas, Paul DeBell
- **Promotion:**
  - **FLC Engage social media team** to coordinate with all other teams on engagement materials and implement social media strategy for @FLCEngage Instagram and @FLCVotes Facebook. Members: Sophie Schwartz, Paul DeBell, Ashley Muckway (FLC Social Media Coordinator), Morgan Rutkowski, Louie Holland
- **Voter registration and GOTV team** to focus on registration and get out the vote. Members: Allie Wolfe (convener - FLC Student and New Era voter registration specialist), Tessa Creatini, Sara and Andy Newman

**Curricular strategies for engagement outreach:** Bringing civic engagement into the learning experience to make the 2020 election a lesson rather than an unwelcomed class guest.

- New student outreach during orientation and in the first year launch.
  - PS club
- Facilitating political discussions in the classroom:
  - PS Club to publish newsletter with student take on a hot-button topics, and instructors will have access to a Canvas module with lesson plans for each discussion.
  - Ongoing social media campaign and Canvas class lesson on discussing what is on the line when it comes to class- and discipline-specific issues, with particular emphasis upon the lowest turnout majors (e.g. discussion of public lands for adventure ed majors; discussion of pandemic response with public health and biology).

#### **Ongoing Co-Curricular campaigns:**

1. **PS Club newsletter / digital discussion forum** to facilitate genuine, civil conversations on timely debates:
  - Partners?
    - Campus RSO's like Philosophy Club, ED, NAC, Centro, BSU, etc.?
    - Work with campus / local media organizations to create and/or disseminate? The Indie, KDUR, Herald, Durango TV?
    - National organizations with resources: Common Cause, Living Room Conversations, Better Angles, [National Issues Forum](#)
  - Format?
    - Have discussions within your network and share out somehow?
    - Instagram? FLC App?
    - In connection with political conversations and "why being engaged is important to me" in classes across different departments
    - Get professors engaged too, sharing what motivates them to use their voice or what difference they want to make. Professors sharing first can create a space for students to also share

- Provide conversation tips as a resource or maybe even share out #TalkingTips that worked during the conversation?

**Co-Curricular engagement event timeline:**

2. **Faculty retreat:** 8/17 9AM-1PM: Engage Collaborative has 10-15 minutes to present during full faculty meeting (outdoors). Goals: introduce Canvas module with resources and lesson plans to hook into the Political Science Club's campus civic conversation series.
3. **New Student Orientation:** 1-2 PM, 8/20-8/22: FLC Engage "pass through" experience in the Vallecito Room. One student orientation leader will be there to welcome students, so Engage Collaborative likely only needs 1 or 2 people there each day to help with:
  - Voter registration – Allie can hook us up with resources here
  - Show sample ballots so people know what they'll look like and what to do
  - Looping video on the big screen with greetings from local officials (County Clerk)
  - List to join PS club, LWV, and other campus community organizations
  - Disseminate information about Engagement events and activities coming up
  - Distribute first issue of Political Science Club newsletter via QR code to PAL website
4. **19th Amendment Women's Suffrage Rally** in Durango the morning of Saturday 8/22 in Buckley Park. This is organized by the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment Committee AAUW and the LWV. Now truncated due to COVID but still featuring speakers such as Tiffany Parker and our own Kate Smith.
5. **PS Club "Let's talk about it" discussion of "the Cheif" controversy with President Stritikus 9/10/20**
  - [Constitution Day](#) 9/17/20 - PS Club "Let's talk about it" digital newsletter on "Constitution vs. Corona" with consultation from Dr. Thora Giallouri launched. Conversations in PS classes and on the FLC app.
6. **National voter registration day campus takeover 9/22**
  - Instagram "ask us anything" campaign about voting/registration questions.
  - LWV and Poli Sci students / faculty to answer questions as they come in
  - Stories to be saved as a series on Instagram for future reference
  - Team: Ashley M., Sophie, Paul
7. **Debate watch parties** run by the Political Science Club. Big screen in the Miller Quad
  - Dates (all 7-8:30PM MST):
    - Tuesday, 9/29 - First presidential debate (Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland OH) successful viewing party with over 100 students!
    - ~~Thursday, 10/15 - Second Presidential Debate Miami FL~~
    - Thursday, 10/22 - Third presidential debate (Belmont University, Nashville TN)
8. **Ballots mailed in La Plata county!** 10/9/2020
9. **Ballot initiative event** with analysis by FLC students co-hosted w/ LWV mid-October
  - Students in Paul DeBell's Introduction to Political Science course (PS101 – 2 sections) and Thora Giallouri's Introduction to US Government course (PS110 –

1 section) will present short (3-5 minute), carefully-researched, nonpartisan videos for each issue on the ballot.

- La Plata LWV going to work with other League chapters on this event and will have liaisons to work with students in constructing

10. Vote Early Week 10/23-10/30 (Vote Early Day 10/24): #votingselfie to enter into a drawing for an iPad. President Stritkus, cycling team, and other prominent community members show off their selfie of dropping their ballots in the FLC ballot dropbox. FLC Engage takeover of FLC social media.

- Point people: Paul DeBell, Ashley Muckway, Morgan Rutkowski

11. **Political Analysis Lab Student Engagement Survey** – political science research methods students ask FLC students to take survey on being politically engaged (or not)

- Launch 10/27 open through 11/3
- Point person: Paul DeBell

12. **Election Day 11/3/2020** - Voting rights panel

13. **What's next? Post election debrief and discussion** Tuesday virtual forum to debrief and discuss soon after the election