



2022 Strategic Plan for Campus Civic Engagement

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Ryan Flynn, Director
Office of Community-Engaged Learning



**CAMPUS
DEMOCRACY
CHALLENGE**

I. Executive Summary

The Illinois College Affirmation of Community Responsibility represents a guiding ideology for our work around democratic engagement. As this affirmation states, *to ensure that all members of our community live, work, and learn in an environment where they can thrive, we affirm four guiding virtues: commitment, curiosity, clarity, and civility.*

With this affirmation in mind, the Office of Community-Engaged Learning's goal in leading the campus voter and election engagement programming is to instill in students a commitment to democratic principles; the curiosity to pursue quality information; the clarity to find well-researched answers to tough questions; and the overarching principle of approaching with civility those who may hold different political perspectives or ideologies.

Institutional Background

Illinois College is a private liberal arts college in Jacksonville, Illinois, which is located in West Central Illinois approximately thirty minutes from the state capitol of Springfield. It was the second college founded in Illinois, but the first to grant a degree (in 1835). Today, the college holds an enrollment of 1,150 students (2020), with over 80 different programs and majors offered.

Illinois College has a long history of civic engagement. Founded by a band of Yale graduates in 1829, the college took up the cause of abolitionism, with students, faculty, and a small group of local community members participating in the underground railroad. The first and second presidents of Illinois College, Edward Beecher and Julian Sturtevant, were very active in the local abolitionist movement. Edward Beecher is also the brother of the famous Harriet Beecher Stowe, who authored the influential anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852.

Graduates of Illinois College have a long history of public service. One of its first graduates, Richard Yates, would serve in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1851-1855, as Illinois Governor from 1861-1865, and in the U.S. Senate from 1865-1871. Another famous alumni, William Jennings Bryan, also served as a U.S. Congressman, U.S. Secretary of State, and ran on the Democratic Party's presidential ticket in 1896, 1900, and 1908. In total, the college has produced two U.S. senators, 20 U.S. congressmen, and six state governors.

Goals, Duration, and Implementation

This history leads us to our current activities, which are to expand student involvement and leadership in civic engagement activities on campus and in the local community, and to deepen our

understanding of past civic engagement activities. How we will accomplish this and our detailed goals are compiled in section five of this plan.

The college conducts this work through a collaborative team representing stakeholders across campus that have a vested interest in civic engagement work. This collaborative team is led by the Director of Community-Engaged Learning, which serves as the central hub for civic engagement programming at Illinois College. More on this collaborative team can be found in section two.

This plan is meant to guide programming for one academic year, with a follow-up plan developed for each subsequent election year. The plan will be revisited with an internal evaluation being conducted by the Office of Community-Engaged Learning to determine next steps, changes, and future objectives.

II. Leadership

While civic engagement activities are primarily led by the Office of Community-Engaged Learning, this work requires a collaborative effort from many campus departments and individuals. In advance of the 2020 presidential election, the college brought together a committee of campus stakeholders to develop an election response strategy.

The Election Response Team includes:

1. Ryan Flynn, Director, Office of Community-Engaged Learning
2. Director, Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (to be hired soon)
3. Jessica Flynn, Director, Center for Student Involvement
4. Tim McGee, Chaplain
5. Two student representatives
 - a. Newman Civic Fellow
 - b. One representative from Student Senate
6. Two faculty representatives
 - a. One representative from History and Political Science
 - b. One representative to be determined on an rolling basis

Additional offices across campus are consulted throughout the semester when appropriate, either for specific programming, outreach assistance, or other important tasks. These offices may include Athletics, Academic Affairs, Career Readiness and Experiential Learning, the Center for Academic Excellence, Chesley Health and Wellness Center, Faculty Senate, Public Safety, and Residential Life.

III. Commitment

Since joining the All In Campus Democracy Challenge in 2019, the college has steadily ramped up its civic engagement programming to provide year-round engagement through the Office of Community-Engaged Learning.

A cornerstone program includes annual first-year seminar workshop offerings, which alternate between bi-annual voter information sessions during election years and a rotating topic on off-years. The fall 2020 series was focused on information literacy and how it relates to being a civically-engaged citizen. These workshops provide an opportunity to connect with first year students in the classroom and prepare them for each election cycle.

Starting with the 2021-22 academic year, the college will be investing resources into maintaining a Newman Civic Fellow through Campus Compact. The Newman Civic Fellowship recognizes and supports community-committed students who are changemakers and public problem-solvers at Campus Compact member institutions. Through the fellowship, Campus Compact provides students with training and resources that nurture their assets and passions and help them develop strategies for social change. The yearlong program, named for Campus Compact founder Frank Newman, includes virtual learning opportunities and networking as part of a national network of engaged student leaders and an optional in-person convening.

In addition to the fellowship's core components, the college has added additional resources to create a unique experience for each fellow. Each fellow will be funded on a student work position with the Office of Community-Engaged Learning with projects based on each fellow's career aspirations and interests. Our 2021-22 Newman Civic Fellow, D'Ajahnae Croft, is diligently working through a recently donated collection of documents from the local League of Women Voters organization. The organization was active in promoting voting and election engagement in the Jacksonville community for over 100 years, being very active throughout the 20th century. Croft is utilizing the collection to develop lesson plans that our faculty can use to teach on local civic engagement history, a perfect fit for her career aspirations as an education major. During election years, the fall semester's student work project will involve voter engagement efforts and inclusion on the Election Response Team.

The Election Response Team was developed in fall 2020, with a focus on ensuring an engaged but civil election week. This team was brought together largely to ensure there was no repeat of events that occurred after the 2016 election, which featured post-election demonstrations from students on both sides of the political spectrum and a college left reacting without a set plan. The Election

Response Team developed and coordinated election week programming, a communication strategy, and a demonstration response plan.

IV. Landscape

Building on the successful progress made on campus voter engagement in 2020, Illinois College is committing further time and resources to continue that progression towards the 2022 midterms. The college affirms its commitment to increasing its student populations’ civic awareness and voting rates.

Data from National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

Illinois College has been participating in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement since 2012, which is coordinated by the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University. The data has been useful for establishing a baseline to assess year-over-year progress on voter engagement efforts at the college. Below is Illinois College specific data from NSLVE reports from 2012 to 2020.

NSLVE Data - Presidential Elections			
Year	Registration Rate	Voting Rate of Registered Students	Voting Rate of All Students
2012	70.6%	54.5%	38.5%
2016	76.6%	59.0%	45.2%
2020	81.2%	72.1%	58.5%

NSLVE Data - Midterm Elections			
Year	Registration Rate	Voting Rate of Registered Students	Voting Rate of All Students
2014	58.9%	24.0%	14.1%
2018	66.5%	39.6%	26.3%

V. Objectives

Revisiting Our 2020 Objectives

- Objective #1: Increase student voting rates over 2016 voting rates (45.2%) to achieve at least a 50% student voting rate.
 - **Goal Achieved.** Illinois College students achieved a 58.5% voting rate for the 2020 presidential election.
- Objective #2: Increase student voter registration rates over 2018 registration rates (66.5%) to achieve a 75% registration rate.
 - **Goal Achieved.** Illinois College voter registration rate grew to 81% in advance of the 2020 presidential election, with a 72% voting rate among registered students.
- Objective #3: Increase student awareness on the importance of voting, the impact of their votes, and improving student knowledge of 2020 candidates on their ballots.
 - **Goal Achieved.** During the Fall 2020 semester, the Office of Community-Engaged Learning hosted more than a dozen workshops in first-year seminar courses, discussing the importance of voting, registering students to vote, and walking students through an activity focused on voter suppression.

2022 Objectives

- Objective #1: Increase student voting rates over 2018 voting rate (26.3%) to achieve at least a 35% student voting rate.
- Objective #2: Maintain at least an 80% student voter registration rate, in line with what we achieved in 2020.
- Objective #3: Integrate a voter registration event into the first-year student Welcome Week experience.

With such a strong, collaborative team, we are confident we can reach these objectives - or even surpass them. In the 2018 midterm the average voting rate for all institutions studied by the NSLVE was 39.1%. While we would still be under that total if that holds true for the 2022 midterm, a 9% jump feels attainable based on our current level of involvement. We also feel confident in maintaining our 80% student voter registration rate or even increasing it with the help of objective #3, which is to integrate a voter registration event into Welcome Week. This event paired with our first-year seminar workshop series will provide at least two opportunities to connect directly with first-year students early in the semester.

VI. Strategy

We will meet our objectives by enacting the 2020 Campus Civic Engagement Plan and its intended activities over the course of the 2022 calendar year.

Activity	Offices / Individuals Involved	Location	Dates	Purpose
Nomination of 2022-23 Newman Civic Fellow	Newman Civic Fellow Nominating Committee & Office of Community - Engaged Learning	Campus	January 15 (nominations due to committee); February 1 (nominations due to Campus Compact)	The 2022-23 fellow will help coordinate voter engagement activities during the fall 2022 semester.
First-Year Student Voter Registration Event(s) during 2022 Welcome Week	Office of Community - Engaged Learning / Center for Student Involvement	Campus	Welcome Week, late August 2022	Register first-year students as they arrive on campus
First-Year Seminar Workshop Series	Office of Community - Engaged Learning / First-Year Seminar Faculty	First-Year Seminars	Aug - Nov 2022 (pre-election)	Provide context and information on voting and elections
Constitution Day Campus Event	Khalaf Al Habtoor Archives / Office of Community - Engaged Learning	Campus	September 2022 (event date TBD)	Inform students about local civic engagement history and improve knowledge of constitution
National Voter	Office of	Illinois College	September 27,	Register students

Registration Day Event	Community - Engaged Learning	Seal or Kirby Rotunda (if raining)	2022	to vote, help students check and/or change their registration
Ride to the Polls	Center for Student Involvement / Leadership Program	Pick up on campus; driven to nearest polling station	Election Day; November 2022	Provide IC transportation for students needing to vote
Election Week Student Supportive Activities	Election Response Committee	Campus	Election Week, November 2022	Provide whatever support is needed by students in case of another contentious election (in the past, this has included reminders for counseling services, stress relief grab-and-go bags, etc.)
Post-Election Response Plan	Election Response Committee	Campus	Election Week, November 2022	Ensure civil dialogue and a safe environment for all; in 2020, this included a logistics plan in case of demonstrations

VII. Reporting

This action plan will be shared with the leadership team detailed earlier, as well as Cabinet, Board of Trustees, and any other faculty/staff by request. In addition, the college also makes our NSLVE data available upon request and the Office of Community-Engaged Learning sends out highlights to all faculty and staff when the report is released.

VIII. Evaluation

Illinois College uses the NSLVE report to provide us with quality data on voting measurements among the student body. Additionally, we also evaluate each piece of programming we do, with some events being a simple count of who attended and some requiring a follow-up qualitative reflection. This provides us with a good snapshot of progress from event-to-event and year-to-year. Post-election, the Election Response Team also meets to discuss any changes we would make for the following election cycle, whether that is offering new programming, cutting programming, or changing our institutional strategy.

All evaluation records are kept by either the Office of Community-Engaged Learning or the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment.

IX. Conclusion

Building on the successful progress made on campus voter engagement in 2020, Illinois College is committing further time and resources to continue that progression towards the 2022 midterms. The college affirms its commitment to increasing its student populations' civic awareness and voting rates.