

Lycoming College Civic and Democratic Engagement Action Plan, 2023-2024¹

I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by Caroline Payne, Director, Office of Community Based Learning & Associate Professor of Political Science, to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at Lycoming College.² The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 Academic Years on and around our campus in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

The following groups will be leading this work at Lycoming College in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections:

- The Office of Community Based Learning
- The Office of Community Service
- Undergraduate Students

II. Leadership

Dr. Caroline L. Payne, Director, Office of Community Based Learning will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. She will be supported in this work by:

- Sophia Stabley, Director of Community Service and Involvement
- Dr. Angela Kurtz, Visiting Professor, Civic Engagement course
- Tabitha Giacalone, Director of Fraternity & Sorority Life and Involvement
- Dr. Kortet Mensah, Chief Diversity Officer & Special Assistant to the President
- 2 Representatives from Student Senate (Appointments pending)

This coalition includes representatives from different parts of campus, including, but not limited to, student leadership, representation from different perspectives and areas of expertise, trusted leaders and organizations who support communities that are historically underrepresented in democracy, and leaders who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus into our work.

¹ The original 2022-2024 plan was created using the Votes & Ballots Action Planning Form. Modifications were made for the 2023-2024 Action Plan.

² This is a non-partisan democratic engagement effort.

Our group plans to meet once per quarter beginning in November of 2023. In the event that the initiative point-person, Dr. Caroline L. Payne, leaves campus or is no longer involved in this work, we have a succession plan in place. Sophia Stabley, Director of Community Service and Involvement, will be promoted to lead coordinator.

III. Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrate commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values. From our mission statement: "Lycoming College promotes individual growth and community development through a combination of academic and co-curricular programs in a supportive residential environment that seeks to foster self-awareness, model social responsibility and provide opportunities to develop leadership skills." Further, "Through a holistic approach, Lycoming College encourages students to become ethical, informed and engaged individuals."

In addition, our campus has included civic learning and democratic engagement in our most recent (2021) strategic plan. As found in Student Life Strategy 1.11, Lycoming College will "Develop an office of community service within Student Life and provide more options for volunteer activity with an emphasis on engaging the diversity of the regional community... we will both establish an office of community service within Student Life and provide the CEAE with the administrative capacity to support curricular based options." Additionally, in Enrollment Strategy 3.1.1. of the 2021 Strategic Plan, Lycoming College plans on, "Building on the success of the Wertz and Knights Skeath programs, consider developing additional merit scholarships, including in the areas of leadership and civic engagement."

We have already taken significant action on the aforementioned priorities as outlined in our 2021 Strategic Plan by creating the Office of Community Based Learning— housed within the Center for Enhanced Academic Experiences— and Office of Community Service. Clearly, this points to the fact that we have senior leaders who are committed to civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.

Though Lycoming College only joined the All in Voter Challenge for Democracy and NSLVE in later summer, 2022, on campus, we have already seen:

- Campus leaders promoting voting
- Voter education resources being distributed
- Multiple voter registration tables and events each semester
- Signage promoting Election Day
- Social media campaigns on official College accounts promoting voter registration, absentee ballot requests, and election day turnout
- At least one course per semester reviewing and engaging our ALL IN Action Plan.

In addition, we hope to increase voter turnout by promoting the fact that all students can vote at our on-campus polling place

Relatedly, on campus, we also regularly experience:

- Voting in student body elections
- Political speakers
- Civic Holiday events (such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day)
- Collaboration with local elected officials (especially the Mayor of Williamsport) on events to inspire and mobilize students to get involved at the local level.

Though we have room to increase our emphasis on civic learning and democratic engagement, we have seen impressive levels of mobilization around these issues since the beginning of the Fall, 2022 semester. Much of that mobilization has taken place by putting voter registration, education, and turnout in the hands of student groups in three community-based learning courses. With the institutionalization of civic learning and democratic engagement in one curricular (the Office of Community Based Learning) and one co-curricular (the Office of Community Service) office, and the creation of an All IN Advisory Board, we are hopeful to reliably build on this work through the November, 2024 election.

IV. Landscape

The following tables provide a brief overview of the landscape of our campus. This information is based on data collected from Fall 2022 when our total student enrollment was 1067.

Enrollment Data:

Undergraduate	Graduate	Full Time	Part Time
100.00%	0.00%	99.00%	1.00%

In-State	Out-of-State	International Students	On-Campus Residents	Commuter

Gender:

Men	Women	Non-Binary	Transgender
47.4%	52.6%		

Age:

18-21	22-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50+

Race:

Asian	American Indian / Alaska Native	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	2 or More Races
1.3%	0.00%	12.4%	14.1%	0.00%	60.9%	3.3%

Our institution has also utilized the following data-gathering tools:

- National Survey of Student Engagement

They help to inform our institution's civic learning and democratic engagement efforts by helping us better identify groups traditionally underrepresented in election turnout and other civic activities. This is a critical first step to identifying relevant goals to not only increase democratic engagement for all students but with special attention paid to these historically underrepresented groups.

V. Goals

Before setting our civic learning and democratic engagement goals on campus, we took the following information into consideration.

We know our campus faces the following challenges internally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters. These include:

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan do not directly mention civic learning and democratic engagement.
- We don't have processes in place for registering *large* percentages of our students.
- We don't use the resources readily available to develop and implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We don't have sustainable or consistent funding.

We also know our campus faces the following challenges externally when it comes to get-out-the-vote efforts and registering voters:

- A political climate that places institutions of higher education at the center of culture wars and, as a result, often questions the legitimacy of college voter registration and turnout efforts

With that said, we know our campus has the following strengths when we approach our voter engagement work:

- We have a coalition of people who are positioned to implement and encourage civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have methods in place to communicate voting information to our students.
- The voter engagement work on our campus is distributed throughout many offices and areas of expertise.
- We are able to engage student leaders for the leadership of our initiative.
- We have a working relationship with our local election office.
- We have working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement.

With this in mind, we have set three goals that we would like to achieve over the *next academic year*:

- Register 70% of our student body to vote by October 21, 2024 (the anticipated voter registration deadline for Pennsylvania).
- Achieve voter registration parity across racial and ethnic groups by the end of the 2023-2024 academic year.
- Get commitments from 60% of students involved in all on-campus voter turnout initiatives to future work in future democratic engagement efforts.

We have also set three goals that we would like to achieve over the next *five years*:

- Register 80% of our student body to vote by September 15, 2028.
- Surpass the national college-age turnout average in the November 2024 elections.
- Incorporate voter registration in 80% of first-year student seminars by fall semester, 2024.

VI. 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):

- Regularly scheduled voter registration tables with additional assistance for requesting absentee ballots.
- Multiple coordinated, on-campus voter education programs and campaigns that are created and executed by students enrolled in community-based learning courses.

- Utilization of official Lycoming College social media accounts and website to promote voter education projects and distribute student-designed educational materials.
- Add more co-curricular programs such as voter registration drives, debate watch parties, and election day celebrations for those who voted.

These are tactics that we **plan to do** in the **short term**:

- Add more community-based learning courses from a variety of disciplines to contribute to the Challenge.
- Incorporate the Challenge into responsibilities for the proposed Service Scholars program (tentative launch date: Summer 2024).

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **short term**:

- Sustain the conversation on voter turnout, civic engagement and education more broadly throughout the academic year, not simply during the peak of election cycles.
- Host additional elected representatives to speak with students who are orchestrating these projects.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** for the **long term** (beyond the next year):

- Continue offering CEAE 220 (Civic Engagement) each fall semester. Students in these courses will be responsible for curricular programming to continue our civic engagement and democratic participation conversations and efforts.
- Hold voter registration and absentee ballot request tables each fall semester.

These are tactics that we **want to do** in the **long term**:

- Regularly host elected officials for conversations around civic engagement and democratic participation each semester.
- Include voter registration in new students' first weekend and large campus-wide events

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **long term**:

- Partner with the local election office for *regular* sponsored on-campus programming.
- Add a co-curricular civil discourse program to promote healthy engagement on political issues in a time of extreme national polarization.

VII. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

We are recently enrolled in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) and look forward to receiving our first post-election data. We will use this data to formulate data-driven strategies and tactics to improve civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus in the coming years.

VIII. Reporting & Evaluation

We plan to continue sharing our annual Action Plan internally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Email to members of our campus coalition
- Email to campus administration
- Email to the President

We plan to share this Action Plan externally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Post on the campus website

We will collect feedback on this plan by:

- Regrouping with our campus coalition (namely the ALL IN Advisory Board and key administrators) to debrief and reflect
- Integrating feedback collection into individual campus efforts
- Incorporating an assignment for review of this plan into CEAE 220 (Civic Engagement) each spring semester.

We plan to evaluate our success by:

- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year
- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly