

QUEENS UNIVERSITY

of

CHARLOTTE

About Queens University of Charlotte

At Queens, we believe that an education should not just lead to a career, but to an understanding of what it means to be a responsible citizen – in our communities and the world at large. Our motto is “non ministrari sed ministrare”, or “not be served, but to serve.” This motto shapes the Queens’ campus community and positively impacts the work and learning of all of our faculty, staff, and students.

This action plan was created by the Director for the Wells Fargo Center for Community Engagement in coordination with the Student Civic Engagement Fellow. This place seeks to increase overall voter participation, create and support civic engagement efforts through curricular and co-curricular efforts, and increase voter education and connection to the larger Charlotte community. This plan will be implemented over this academic year and national election cycles from August 2020 thru April 2021.

Queens is fortunate to enjoy a broad range of support for civic engagement efforts from senior leadership and the campus at large. We strive to empower members of our community, including students, faculty, staff and alumni, to be authentically engaged citizens on campus, off campus, and throughout the world. We help bridge the academic and civic missions of the university.

The university mission seeks to

- Promote global understanding
- Prepare individuals for purposeful and fulfilling lives
- Encourage ethical living

Our values call for a commitment to:

- Responsible citizenship
- Value a sense of caring and community
- Promote diversity and respect for all people

At the core of our mission, “we value responsibility and service to the society at large, in keeping with our Presbyterian connection and as expressed in our motto, not to be served, but to serve.”

In 2019, Queens collaborated with Wells Fargo and reimagined the relationship between the Queens’ campus community and the greater Charlotte community. The Wells Fargo Center for Community Engagement was created to provide community-based learning and civic engagement efforts. This office works to make an impact on the curriculum through community-based learning and involvement. Civic engagement efforts, voter registration, and voter education are a part of the work this office handles as well.

Also in 2019, Queens University welcomed our new President, Dan Lugo, who has re-committed our campus to the North Carolina Campus Compact University Action Statement. This commitment allows us to continue working towards inclusive campus communities, engaged citizenship, and public service.

As an institution, Queens continues to explore ways in which democratic engagement can be embedded in the culture and practices of the institution. Expanding upon the work of our general education program and our early initiatives to integrate the curriculum and the co-curriculum, we hope to identify ways to encourage more consistent civic engagement initiatives at the programmatic and departmental level.

Landscape

Queens is a participant in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). In 2018, our student voting rate was 38.1%, which was a 15.6% increase from 2014, however was 1% lower than all participating institutions according to Carnegie Classification (39.1%). In comparison from 2014 to 2018, Queens improved their scores on total student recruitment (2014: 2108; 2018: 2512), number of students who registered (2014: 1448; 2018: 1703), voting rate of registered students (2014: 30.6%; 2018: 52.4%), and early voting (2014: 25.5%; 2018: 40.5%). The registration rate percentage decreased from 73.4% to 72.6% from 2014 to 2018. Due to COVID-19, we plan to increase our absentee ballot numbers and early voting numbers for the 2020-2021 academic year.

As is the case with most small private institutions, the greatest barrier to the expansion of civic engagement programming is limited funding. At the moment, our activities are funded from the Wells Fargo Center for Community Engagement, the Office of the Provost, and mini-grants in which we apply for. With the support of these areas of funding, we hope to expand our programmatic offerings, and continue to develop and tap into community partnerships.

Queens is fortunate to be located directly next to our designated polling location, which makes in person voting extremely accessible. That said, in the state of North Carolina, we continue to face efforts restricting voting. This results in misinformation that can negatively affect voter participation. Making accurate information available to students will be one of the priorities throughout the academic year.

Goals

For this academic year, the goals that we hope to accomplish include:

1. Increase voter education efforts to all Queens students, with a specific emphasis on absentee ballot voting and early voting options (due to COVID-19).
2. Employ new voter engagement programmatic efforts that expand beyond in-person efforts to connect with voters remotely. This allows us to have greater effectiveness in case of academic calendar changes and potential remote learning.
3. Increase our total voting rate by 1.9%.
4. Develop stronger community partner connections to promote voter education efforts across campus. (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, City Council Members, Jewish Federation, ect).
5. Expand curricular and co-curricular deliberative and sustained dialogue experiences for our students, both in-person and virtually (in partnership with DICE, Davies Center for Faith and Outreach, and College Democrats, and Young Republicans).

Over the next ten years, Queens would like to

1. Create an environment in which students feel encourage to explore political identity and participation in the political process, regardless of ideology or party orientation.
2. Create an environment in which students consistently engage in public service activities.
3. Develop external opportunities to fund civic engagement activities (outside of mini-grants).

Coalition

Queens has a strong commitment to civic engagement that extends through all areas of academia and Student Life. It is very important that we gather a group of faculty, staff, students, and community partners who can bring multiple perspectives to create inclusive and robust civic engagement experience for our students. Those serving as part of the “think tank” to create the best civic opportunities include:

- Dr. Greg Pillar, Assistant Provost, University Programs
- Dr. Aaron Houck, Assistant Professor, Political Science
- Dr. Maggie Commins, Associate Professor, Political Science
- Suzanne Henderson, Professor, Interfaith Studies
- Reverend Joey Haynes, Chaplain & Director, Davies Center for Faith and Outreach
- Darryl White, Sr., Assistant Dean, Diversity, Inclusion, & Community Engagement
- Rick Thames, Knight-Crane Executive in Residence, Visiting Professor in Journalism
- Travis Wright, Assistant Director, Employee Relations
- Maria Flores-Mills, Vice President, Student Engagement, Dean of Students
- Monica Gillette, Assistant Dean, Student Engagement
- Student Civic Engagement Fellow (currently Emily Sears)
- Student President for Queens University Young Republicans
- Student President for Queens University College Democrats
- Community Partner – waiting on confirmation (Charlotte Mecklenburg Library)
- Community Partner #2 – waiting on confirmation

Primary contact person for this coalition and civic engagement plan is:

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Fall 2020 Plan

The following sections will highlight the steps that our campus will take during the 2020-21 school year to achieve the aforementioned goals. While we are looking forward to the coming election and the opportunity it provides to empower young voters, we are also closely monitoring the federal, state, local, and university guidelines pertaining to the coronavirus pandemic. Bearing that in mind, each of the following event and outreach programs has an associated COVID-19 plan that will be implemented should the initial plan need to be modified in order to ensure the safety of all university personnel and

students. Those contingencies will be outlined at the end of each section and we will continue to seek out creative ways to imbue the importance of voting upon our community.

Voter Registration

1. Registering new voters remains a cornerstone of the civic process and college students have a unique opportunity to remain registered in their hometown or switch to their new area of residence. No matter what their decision might be, we are here to ensure that they have multiple opportunities to stay active in the political and social arenas of their chosen district. In order to achieve those goals, we are planning to implement the following measures:
 2. During the fall semester of 2020, the campus will hold a total of four voter registration drives to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to vote in November. The first drive will take place at the annual Clubs and Organizations Fair, which is typically hosted on the residential quad during the first week of school. The following two drives will be facilitated by the College Democrats and Young Republicans. The remaining drive will occur on National Voter Registration Day, September 22nd, and there will be multiple tables around campus for ease of access.
 3. A further measure will include a university-wide registration challenge between all of our student organizations, including Greek Life and athletics teams. The top three groups who manage to register the greatest number of students and are able to turn in the appropriate documentation to confirm the number of registrants, will receive a prize for their efforts. Furthermore, each organization and team will be contacted again to join in the Election Day events outlined later in this report. The winning student organization/athletic team will be rewarded for registering club/group members; not rewarded for individuals who registered. We will follow proper protocol in choosing the winning group to make sure we are in compliance of the rules.
- **COVID-19 Plan:** The drives will be managed by students who will remain six feet apart at the tables. They will each have either a university computer, tablet, or individual paper registration form for students to use. Once each student has filed their information, the volunteer will disinfect the device before calling the next student up to the table. The competition amongst the student organizations and athletic teams will largely remain the same as students will be able to register online and provide digital proof of their efforts.

Voter Education

1. Flyers are one form of effective communication on campus that will be utilized in the fall. These posters will include information on absentee ballot procedures, in-person voting requirements, directions to all of the polling stations in Charlotte for those who may need it, and lists of people and issues that will appear on the ballot in the Queens University of Charlotte district as well as a link so that students can find that information for their hometowns.
2. The Engage Queens Event will focus on bringing local elected officials and candidates to campus to speak with students about the importance of local government and the associated issues that affect our lives every day. We will be partnering with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library to make this event possible.
3. We will also utilize the campus newspaper Q-News to disseminate information regarding the upcoming election in addition to a “fun fact” about voting and the outcome of previous elections. Q-News is the best way to stay up to date on campus life, so we want to maximize our voter education outreach using this platform as much as possible.
4. The Diversity Inclusion and Civic Engagement office on campus will be hosting a Deliberative Dialogue event on the issues surrounding partisanship. This is a vital portion of this university’s commitment to giving each student a safe environment to meet with one another and discuss

our differences. Through these dialogues, the goal is to help students to listen to each other on equitable grounds and have the chance to understand where the other person is coming from in terms of their political beliefs or ideologies.

- COVID-19 Plan: Each of the plans listed above is feasible to move to a digital platform should the need arise. The most difficult one to facilitate will be the Engage Queens Event; however, we are committed to providing students with the opportunity to learn more about local government and the officials who are working in various elected roles. Additionally, we will use our social media platforms to post multiple resources and educational videos about any voting-related topics or questions that students may have.

Ballot Access

1. This is the perfect opportunity to use social media platforms to distribute vital details about how students can use absentee ballots or display the people and issues that will be present in November. Additionally, we will utilize the common televisions in the library, posters around campus, and Q-News as other outlets of effective communication. We will also highlight reputable organizations, such as Ballotpedia and VOTE411.org, so that students can visit their website to gain even more information about ballots.
 2. During our registration drives, students will have the option to quickly set up an account with Turbo Vote to get reminders about the upcoming election as well as sources they can use to answer any questions they may have about the voting process. Furthermore, if students are ready to send in their absentee ballots, we will hold other tabling events where they can come and receive postage on behalf of the Center for Community Engagement. This will also allow us to track how many students send in absentee ballots throughout the voting period.
- COVID-19 Plan: While the social media and newspaper information is easily transferable under difficult circumstances, the tabling events will obviously have to be modified in the event of stringent gathering measures or further health-related interruptions to our semester. As previously mentioned, the drives will be facilitated through connections with student organization presidents and the university newspaper, so we can include the information from measure number two through those outlets.

Get out the Vote

1. Students will organize debate watch parties to increase awareness about the current issues that are affecting our nation. The goal is to facilitate informed dialogue between our community members.
 2. On election day, the civic engagement groups on campus will host the Stroll to the Polls event. The main event will be held in the courtyard outside of the cafeteria which is a heavily trafficked area of campus. The polling location for our university is within walking distance, so students will be encouraged to bring their friends and celebrate their right to vote. Student volunteers will be there to walk with voters to the polling site and to motivate others who would not otherwise go and vote.
 3. Similar to the debates, we will host an election night watch party in a communal area for any interested students.
 4. In addition to the ballot poster campaign, there will be a similar campaign that urges students and faculty to vote. As with everything in this outline, these campaigns will be nonpartisan and will focus on increasing civic engagement activities.
- COVID-19 Plan: The first, third, and last activities will be transferred to an online or modified platform to ensure the safety and health of our campus. The Stroll to the Polls event will still take place with enhanced precautions, including socially distanced groups of no more than four

students and dispersed teams of student volunteers in the courtyard. Additionally, we will not serve food and drinks as we have in previous years. Furthermore, we will post guides around the courtyard and other places around campus that will have safety guidelines for those who plan to vote in-person. If the debates or election night watch parties are unable to take place, we will use Instagram and other social media platforms to have a live discussion with students and alumni about the events as they unfold. After the events have concluded, we will ask student leaders or interested members to send in 30-second to 1-minute videos about their assessment of the debates or election results. We believe this will encourage equitable and respectful conversations about policies of national and local importance. Finally, we plan to partner with our campus library to host a book club, whether it is virtual or in-person, about our 2020 Common Read which pertains to pertinent issues of leadership in difficult times.

Timeline

Phase 1: June-August 2020

- Our goals for this period are mainly about generating awareness as it pertains to the upcoming election and the ongoing Census process. This will be achieved through social media campaigns which will include videos from students and professors that explain why they vote and why they believe it is important.

Phase 2: Late-August to October

- Host debate watch parties to encourage students to become more aware of the most prominent public and foreign policy issues.
- Post informational flyers around campus and submit voting segments to the university newspaper.
- Conduct a university-wide voter registration challenge.
- Hold four voter registrations, ranging from the first week of school until October 9th, which is the last day to register in North Carolina.
- Have a Constitution Day event and partner with our on-campus library to help raise awareness about the value of knowing our constitutional rights.
- Host the Engage Queens event on campus.
- Facilitate Deliberative Dialogue with Diversity Inclusion and Community Engagement leaders, Young Republicans, and College Democrats, and other students to work through issues of partisanship.
- Why Vote? Campaign: small cards with the question WHY DO YOU VOTE? will be given to students at registration tables to fill out.

Phase 3: The week before elections & Election Day

- Display the WHY VOTE? answers across the campus to encourage people to vote.
- Ask professors to speak with students about the importance of voting and provide them with resources we have compiled that will be able to answer any questions that students may have about the election.
- Host Stroll to the Polls and the Election Night Watch Party on November 8th.

Phase 4: Post-election through December

- Host another Deliberative Dialogue to continue the necessary conversations surrounding politics and the impacts that elected officials have on the future of our communities.

Phase 5: Looking at the new year

- Appoint new Civic Engagement Fellow and begin discussions about areas of growth for the upcoming year.

Measures of Success

1. Facilitate growth in the number of students who are registering to vote and those who send it absentee ballots or vote at the polls.
2. Creating more opportunities for intentional conversations in the classroom and on campus about the importance of civic engagement and the impact that voting has on our communities.
3. Continue to become more inventive with voter engagement practices, especially in light of the recent challenges that COVID-19 has presented.