

ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE
SUNY Cortland
23 June 2022

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NOTE: As of this draft, some potential Working Group members and other potential participants have not answered invitations, as we are in summer vacation.

I. Executive Summary

1. ***Which individuals developed this Action Plan?*** SUNY Cortland’s Action Plan, called *Cortland Votes*, was drafted by the Institute for Civic Engagement’s (the Institute’s) director and some members of the Cortland Votes Team.
2. ***What is the action plan for and what does it seek to accomplish?*** Cortland Votes provides a “map” for meeting our goal of reaching and maintaining at least 90% voter registration and voter turn-out rates for SUNY Cortland students, beginning with the 2024 General Election. The Plan names our partners, steps, challenges, and resources.
3. ***Where will this action plan be implemented?*** Cortland Votes will be implemented at SUNY Cortland, under the leadership of the Institute, whose director chairs Cortland Votes’ Working Group.
4. ***Why was this action plan developed? How does this plan tie to broader institutional norms/values/strategic plans?*** Cortland Votes was developed to nurture a culture of democratic engagement at SUNY Cortland. One measure of success will be a consistent 90% (minimum) student voter registration and turn-out rates. Cortland Votes also aims, in the long term, to raise rates in the City of Cortland, especially among eligible high school students. Cortland Votes includes
 - a. Voter registration, voter education, and get-out-the-vote activities
 - b. Actions to assess, refine, and report on the projectOur Plan ties into broader institutional considerations in that it aligns with SUNY Cortland’s [mission](#) statement, with elements of the college’s [Strategic Plan](#), and it draws on our strength in applied (experiential) learning, which helps students “internalize” reasons for, and ways of, becoming democratically engaged.
5. ***When does this action plan start and end?*** This plan runs from July 1, 2022, to December 2024, by which time student voter registration and turnout rates should be at least 90%. By that point, we will have revised our plan for the next four years so that we integrate changes in approach, demographics, technology, and the trajectory of local and global events.
6. ***How will this action plan be implemented? Who’s in charge? What unit/office/division will be facilitating the effort?*** Our Cortland Votes Working Group will implement the Plan. It will design, promote, and conduct activities and events that register and educate SUNY Cortland students, and that encourage voter turnout. The Institute’s director is responsible for facilitating this effort.
7. ***What strategies were employed to make sure this plan was equitable and included a diverse audience?*** We are working with our Black Student Union, La Familia Latina, and SUNY Cortland NAACP student clubs, as well as with our Multicultural Life and Diversity Office and with our Antiracism Taskforce’s Educational Programming Subcommittee, which is chaired by our Working Group’s chair.

II. Leadership

1. Who are the working group members and how are they involved? How is the working group ensuring there is diversity within the campus' voting coalition?

- The Institute for Civic Engagement director is Cortland Votes chair. His responsibility is to
 - o Ensure that Working Group members meet their Cortland Votes goals
 - o Provide Working Group members with the resources they need to succeed
- Director, Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office, helps tailor *Challenge* messaging for students from marginalized populations. The director reports to the president.
- Student Affairs –
 - o Campus Activities and Corey Union Office, Director Kevin Pristash is our liaison with the Cortland County Board of Elections and he helps coordinate voter related activities.
 - o Campus Activities and Greek Affairs, Associate Director Sandra Wohlleber recruits support from the college's Greek organizations
- Student groups –
 - 1) Black Student Union, La Familia Latina, and SUNY Cortland NAACP help design and promote *Challenge* messaging for students from marginalized populations
 - 2) Bridge Cortland designs and conducts voter education activities. President: Sarah Burbige
 - 3) NYPIRG conducts voter registration and voter turnout activities
- Faculty and Staff members –
 - 1) Communication and Media Studies: Professor Christopher Ortega advises on *Challenge* messaging
 - 2) English: Dr. Laura Dunbar is piloting voter-related content into a Composition course.
 - 3) Physics: Professor Eric Edlund helps design and conduct voter education activities (as a member of the *Freedom of Speech Team*), and helps faculty incorporate voting-related content into syllabi
 - 4) Recreation/Parks/Leisure Studies: Professor Jason Page will guide development, operation, and reporting of the independent Data Collection and Assessment Team.
 - 5) Secondary Education Social Studies: Professor and Program Coordinator Jared McBrady is helping coordinate the Working Group's efforts with that of the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness
- Community partners
 - 1) Cathy Bischoff, Cortland County Legislator, helps design voter education activities
 - 2) Sheila Cohen, President, League of Women Voters, Cortland, NY, helps with voter registration and voter turnout on- and off-campus

The working group is ensuring diversity in our voting coalition by including representatives of student organizations such as La Familia Latina, and of administrative offices such as M Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office.

a. What academic departments and which faculty within academic affairs are involved?

Please refer to the academic departments noted above.

b. What units within student affairs are involved and which administrators are involved?

Please refer to the student affairs units noted above.

c. Which students and student organizations are involved?

Please refer to the student organizations noted above.

d. **What community &/or national organizations are involved? How do national & local partners support your institution's efforts?**

- Cortland County League of Women Voters conducts voter registration, turnout, and education events, including meetings with elected officials and candidates
- The multi (SUNY) campus *Freedom of Speech Team* organizes monthly events
- A City of Cortland Expanded School District School-Board-member, Donald Chu, is partnering on the New York State and SUNY Cortland Seals of Civic Readiness
- City of Cortland Mayor Scott Steve is partnering on the Seals of Civic Readiness
- Alder person Patricia Lane (LD 4) is partnering on the Seals of Civic Readiness
- Cortland County Legislator Cathy Bischoff helps design voter education activities

2. Leaders

a. **To whom is this person and/or office held accountable, and what is their reporting line?**

The director of the Institute for Civic Engagement is Working Group's chair, he reports to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs.

b. **If student-staff or community partners are involved, how are they compensated for their involvement?** Student-staff and community partners volunteer on the *Challenge*.

3. What are working group members' unique strengths and responsibilities?

- The Working Group's chair –
 - o His expertise is experiential learning – a component of our effort, especially for students.
 - o As chair of the Antiracism Taskforce's Educational Programming Subcommittee, he works with many people and students who can contribute to this work.
 - o He is advisor to BridgeCortland, an SGA club that conducts student-oriented events on student-identified issues. He will provide prompts for club members to reflect on this work.
 - o He is co-chair of the Freedom of Speech Team, which is planning a two-year series of voter education events, especially participatory events such as deliberative dialogues.
 - o He will serve as a poll worker in 2022-2023, so he will be able to build additional working relationships with people involved in our voting process.
- The Director of Corey Union is our liaison with the Cortland County Board of Elections.
- The Director of our Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office
 - o Works with faculty, staff, and students across campus on these issues
 - o Is a member of the Freedom of Speech Team.
- Students in Black Student Union, BridgeCortland, La Familia Latina, NYPIRG, and Cortland NAACP
 - o Represent specific interests
 - o Provide guidance in marketing our message to their peers, including those in underrepresented populations
- Professor Erik Edlund
 - o Helps design/conduct voter activities (he is a member of the Freedom of Speech Team)
 - o Can help promote our work to upper administration (as chair of the Faculty Senate's Educational Policy Committee)
- Professor Christopher Ortega provides expertise in various modes of communication.
- Donald Chu will help connect our efforts with the local public school system, especially through his participation in our New York State Seal of Voter Readiness project.
- Sheila Cohen and other members of the Cortland County League of Women Voters have been long-time partners with SUNY Cortland in voter-related activities on- and off-campus.
- Cathy Bischoff represents the area in which most SUNY Cortland students live while in Cortland, and she takes the initiative in helping students feel connected to the city.

4. **How will people be brought into the coalition who currently are not there? Why have these individuals/groups been identified to join?** We will use our working relationships with people who are currently not a part of the coalition to recruit individuals who have relevant knowledge and/or who are members of relevant organizations.
 - a. **Which groups have traditionally been underrepresented within your mobilization efforts and how does your working group work to strategically involve members of those groups?** Especially in the last year, we partnered with Black Student Union and SUNY Cortland NAACP, and with our Educational Opportunity Program to reach out to students in underrepresented communities.
5. **How is the working group inclusive of different campus and community stakeholders?** We have representation across budget lines, student groups, and community partners.
6. **Does the working group have the support of upper administrators (e.g., president, provost, VPSA) who can help advocate on behalf of the working group?** Our Working Group's efforts are supported by upper administration. President Bitterbaum, for example, signed (in 2020) the *All In President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation*. Our Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Greg Sharer, also supports Cortland Votes.
7. **What other offices on campus need to be involved (e.g., website or portal management, registrar, university relations)?** We need to partner more closely with our Director of Athletics, Director of Recreational Sports, Assistant Director of Web and Digital Marketing, Director of Communications, Associate Director for Institutional Research and Analysis.
8. **How often will the working group meet and communicate? Identify who is responsible for communicating among the group and how the group will meet.** The Working Group's chair is responsible for ensuring that the Group meets once/month. Depending on people's scheduling and on possible COVID restrictions, the Group can meet in the Institute's office or over WebEx.
9. **How are you keeping working group members engaged over time and addressing stakeholder turnover?** We are developing an "ownership" model for our Working Group: People help design details and due-dates for their parts of the project, with the Group's chair offering to help with resources as need be. Student participants are encouraged to consider ways in which their work on the project helps them in career-development (which helps to make their work an applied – s experiential – learning opportunity).

As with our internship projects, we will encourage students to refer to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' [Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce](#). Faculty/staff can refer to their work as part of their service to the institution and to the greater community (part of annual reports and part of requests for advancement).

As much as possible, we will work in pairs so that we have back-up in case someone must leave the Group. At such times, of course, we will recruit a person to rebuild the Group.
10. **If someone in the working group stops showing up and doing the work or needs to step away, what steps will be taken to ensure the efforts continue?** The chair will ask how the Group can help, if this is a temporary situation. If not, the Group will search for a replacement.

III. Commitment

1. How does the institution and its leadership demonstrate commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement? Is there an explicit, visible commitment on the part of the governing board, president/chancellor, and senior leadership?

Senior leadership's commitment is demonstrated in our [mission statement](#): *SUNY Cortland is an academic community dedicated to diverse learning experiences. Students grow as engaged citizens with a strong social conscience fostered by outstanding teaching, scholarship and service.* [Underline added.]

This commitment is reinforced in our [Strategic Priorities](#), which includes our Vision: *Students graduate...to excel as leaders, citizens....* Also, as part of the Transformational Education priority, we commit ourselves to *Transformational Education [that] challenges [students] to be more engaged agents in their lives and their communities.*

Administration encourages faculty to nurture students as citizens by incorporating civic education as one type of evidence that faculty can use in applying for promotion (220.07 [Criteria](#) for The Continuing Appointment and Promotion of Academic Faculty; E. Application of Promotion Criteria – Teaching).

SUNY Cortland's Communications Office promotes and reports on engagement-related, college-sponsored events. These links provide examples:

- <https://www2.cortland.edu/news/detail.dot?id=33d3d15b-7366-4595-9819-cdd9a68d93fe>
- <https://www2.cortland.edu/departments/political-science/news-detail.dot?id=fa094f7b-7ab4-4f7e-81b7-2d471f1cb6b2>
- <https://www2.cortland.edu/news/detail.dot?id=23f63979-4822-4e27-9241-3d5f4741df39>
- <https://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/newsletter>
 - [https://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/Newsletter-files/ICE Newsletter October 2021.pdf](https://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/Newsletter-files/ICE%20Newsletter%20October%202021.pdf)
 - [https://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/Newsletter-files/ICE Newsletter November 2021.pdf](https://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/Newsletter-files/ICE%20Newsletter%20November%202021.pdf)
 - [https://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/Newsletter-files/March 2022 newsletter final.pdf](https://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/Newsletter-files/March%202022%20newsletter%20final.pdf)

The institution's leadership also demonstrates its commitment through continuing support for this kind of work, including its funding of the Institute for Civic Engagement.

The SUNY Cortland website provides [links](#) where students can find online connections to

- Voter registration forms and to absentee ballot forms in English and in Spanish
- Contact information for the Cortland County Board of Elections
- The campus individual who is responsible for voter registration assistance on campus.

Leadership succession for Cortland Votes has been identified: Should John Suarez no longer lead this program, Dr. Laura Dunbar (English, Writing Program) will assume leadership.

a. Is the commitment communicated within the institution? To whom, specifically, and how?

The commitment is communicated to potential and current parents/guardians and students, as well as to faculty/staff and the greater Cortland community in a variety of ways:

- SUNY Cortland President, Dr. Erik Bitterbaum, often encourages faculty, staff, and student involvement in democratic engagement as one way of being “stewards of place.” He routinely participates in civic- and voter-education activities, both in-person and virtual, to demonstrate his commitment.
- Our *Challenge* Action Plan and our NSLVE report are posted at the Institute’s [webpage](#).
- Civic engagement is named in our mission statement, and citizenship is listed as a strategic goal.
- Admissions offers civic engagement scholarships to incoming first-year students; our Institutional Planning and Assessment Committee promotes and provides \$10,000 in civic engagement scholarships for current students. Some of those scholarships require students to intern with the Institute.
- We participate in Campus Compact’s *Newman Civic Fellowship* program, which further develops the civic engagement and leadership skills of students who have already demonstrated them. Our Newman Fellows intern with the Institute. Our college president, Dr. Erik Bitterbaum, is a member of the National Campus Compact.
- The college funds the Institute for Civic Engagement.
- The Institute has already scheduled an October 6th *Community Roundtable* presentation to describe our *Challenge* Action Plan and to recruit additional participants.
- The Institute has formed a campus/community team that is exploring the possibility of a SUNY Cortland *Seal of Civic Readiness*, which would be modelled after the [New York State Seal of Civic Readiness](#). At our July 21st meeting, we will discuss a plan through which Secondary Education Social Studies majors would work with high school juniors and seniors, helping high school students earn the NY State Seal.

This would be an applied (experiential) learning project for our future Social Studies teachers – who would, in turn, earn the SUNY Cortland Seal. Importantly, they would have the experiential knowledge and, ideally, the motivation to incorporate this kind of work in their own classes.

We promote voter education events, such as those described below, through campus-wide email, social media announcements, our campus’ CTV system, and in-class announcements.

- 2020 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Debates, with post-debate discussions, October 2020
- Institute-sponsored Town Hall meetings with the candidates for (what was then) the 22nd US Congressional District, October and November 2020
- Two Constitution Day events: A SUNY-wide and remote public deliberation on voting, and a SUNY Cortland panel discussion (remote) entitled, *Should Cortland County Become a Second Amendment Preservation County?* Panelists were a SUNY Cortland Political Science professor and nationally-recognized expert on the Second Amendment, a Cortland County legislator, and two local town supervisors who are Second Amendment proponents, September 2021
- A “Gen[eration]Roundtable” conducted by BridgeCortland with three other [BridgeUSA](#) colleges/ universities across the US in which participants shared ideas regarding the environment, including ideas specific to “the role of the democratic process in climate policy,” October 2021
- *Gun Rights/Gun Regulations*, a student deliberation sponsored by BridgeCortland and BridgeBing[hamton], spring 2022
- A Community Roundtable entitled, *Public Deliberation: Solving Divisive Issues Together*, conducted by an Institute intern and the Institute’s director, spring 2022
- NIFI-based deliberative dialogue, *Election Security and Access*. A Cortland County legislator participated with SUNY Cortland students, faculty, and staff, October 2021

- NIFI-based deliberative dialogue, *The Cost of Health Care*, which included discussion of the proposed *New York Health Act*. Organized by the Institute. Participants included people from the greater Cortland community, including a Cortland County legislator, October 2021
- A NIFI-based deliberative dialogue, *Climate Choices*, conducted by the Institute, November 2021
- Town Hall meeting, *The New York Health Act*, with our NYS Assemblymember, February 2022
- A presentation with Q&A, *Design Ways to Increase BIPOC Students' Voting Rates*, conducted by the president and vice president of our Black Student Union and the Institute's director.
- Screening of *Utica: The Last [immigrant] Refuge* documentary, with discussion with a producer and a documentary participant. Participants included students, faculty, staff, and community partners, April 2022
- A presentation/discussion, *Gun Violence and Male Toxicity*, by an Institute intern who is from an underrepresented community, with active participation by many students, April 2022
- A freedom of speech presentation/discussion, *Your Vote and the First Amendment*, with two First Amendment experts from Syracuse University. Students, faculty, staff, and our president participated, April 2022

In spring 2022, the Institute for Civic Engagement' director recruited members of five departments/offices to form the *Freedom of Speech Team*. The Team designs and conducts voter education events and activities that focus (obviously) on freedom of speech. Our first event, organized by Team member and Director of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office, Lorraine Lopez-Janov, was *Free Speech and Expression on College Campuses: Challenges and Opportunities* in April. This in-person presentation/discussion was conducted by Dr. Cerri Banks (Vice President and Deputy to the Senior Vice President) and Mr. Allen Groves (Senior Vice President and Chief Student Experience Officer), Syracuse University's Student Experience Office. The event was so successful that SUNY Cortland President Erik Bitterbaum, who participated in the event, invited the speakers back to SUNY Cortland.

The Institute's director expanded the Team by recruiting faculty/staff at two other SUNY campuses – Nassau and Plattsburgh. Our new Team has scheduled a virtual, multi-campus *Constitution Day* event entitled, *Your Vote and the First Amendment* for September 20th – *National Voter Registration Day*. The event includes a keynote, a Ted Talk video with student-talk-back, and a deliberative dialogue. We have sent "Save the Date" announcements, encouraging faculty and staff to include this event in their planning. A SUNY Cortland Professional Writing Professor, David Franke, has already done so.

b. Is the commitment communicated outside the institution (i.e., to stakeholders and the general public)? To whom, specifically, and how?

The college's Institute for Civic Engagement shares its civic engagement [Newsletter](#) with community partners, and it invites community partners to participate in many events. Also, each January, the Institute solicits nominations from on- and off-campus for its *Leadership in Civic Engagement* awards, given at our April reception to civically-committed individuals and groups from on- and off-campus.

c. Does the institution's commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement consider diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice tenets?

Yes, by way of the college's stated commitment to DEI and social justice and its DEI-related offices.

d. Has the institution's senior leadership (e.g., president, provost, chancellor) made an outward commitment to democratic engagement? For instance, signing the All In President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation?

Yes, senior leadership overtly supports our work. President Bitterbaum, for example, signed (in 2020) the *All In President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation*.

2. Is educating for civic learning and democratic engagement a pervasive part of institutional culture? Is it ongoing, consistent, systematic, and sustainable across programs, departments, and the entire institution? How do you know?

We are continuing to make educating for civic learning and democratic engagement a pervasive part of our institutional culture, though we know that we have more work to do. Elements of such a culture appear in certain courses, such as *United States History and Society*, *Political Communication*, *Introduction to American Government and Politics*, *Foundations of Democracy*, *Politics and Multiculturalism*, *Student Government Practicum*, and *Participation in Politics and Government*.

Educating for democratic engagement is evident in co-curricular opportunities, such as SGA and certain SGA clubs, including Young Democrats, the Political Science Association, and the Black Student Union.

Cortland Votes aims to weave nonpartisan civic learning and democratic engagement into a wide range of academic courses and co-curricular activities. For example, we are collaborating with two English Composition faculty members to incorporate exploration of current issues from a voting perspective. One, for instance, will partner with a local not-for-profit, Access to Independence, which helps people with disabilities live independent lives.

3. How is the institution's commitment reflected in existing statements and documents (e.g., mission statement, vision, core values, strategic plan)? Has the institution created and implemented an action plan in previous years?

In addition to the commitment stated in our mission statement and Strategic Plan (as noted in *Leadership* on page 3), the Institute's mission reflects this commitment:

***The Institute for Civic Engagement** is a Division of Academic Affairs resource for faculty, staff, students, and the greater Cortland community as they develop, conduct, and assess mutually-beneficial applied (experiential) learning projects. These learn-by-doing activities help students strengthen their understanding of course content, sharpen career readiness competencies, and develop a disposition of applying their skills to civic decision-making and democratic engagement.*

This is our third action plan.

4. What are the institution's overall civic, democratic, and/or political outcomes? Is there a process in place to ensure that outcomes are measured and met?

Civic outcomes are integrated into our Mission Statement and Strategic Plan. Processes such as our recently-completed 2022 Middle States [Self-Study Report](#) help ensure that we meet those commitments

5. How are educating for civic learning and democratic engagement included in the general education curriculum?

Educating for civic learning and democratic engagement are not explicitly included in the general education curriculum, though certain courses (such as those previously named) do include such lessons in their syllabi. However, democratic engagement is encouraged in at least our teacher education programs, as described in *Guiding questions: Landscape*, below.

6. How are educating for civic learning and democratic engagement included in the co-curriculum?

Certain SGA clubs include civic learning and democratic engagement in their work. Examples include Black Student Union, BridgeCortland, NYPIRG, and SUNY Cortland NAACP.

IV. Landscape

1. Are civic learning and democratic engagement overall campus learning outcomes? If so, what are the learning outcomes and how are they measured?

Civic learning and democratic engagement are posted as goals at the institutional level (as in its mission statement) and at the departmental level, as noted immediately below. However, those goals are not yet phrased nor measured as learning outcomes. Here is a departmental example

SUNY Cortland's second-largest department, [Childhood/Early Childhood Education](#), is the largest comprehensive teacher education program in New York, and the tenth largest education program among public institutions in the United States. Its webpage highlights the importance of democratic engagement in its programs:

Department programs prepare teachers to provide effective child-centered, developmentally-appropriate learning environments and to advocate for children from birth to grade six, in cooperation with families and communities. Our future teachers and caregivers are prepared to transform their profession in response to the needs of children and families in an increasingly diverse and global society.

[Regarding the Department's Core Value of *Policy Formation*], The Department is committed to its role informing and influencing public policy related to children and families and care and educational practice.

[Regarding the Department's Core Value of *Equity and Eco-Justice*], The Department is committed to developing educators who understand and teach to the diverse needs of all children and who promote understanding and respect for difference in all children. The Department is committed to developing educators who teach and advocate for a clean environment and ecologically sustainable life for all people.

In addition, and as noted in the Institute's April/May [newsletter](#), faculty in our Foundations of Social Advocacy and Literacy Departments (all geared toward elementary education), and in our English, Mathematics, and History Secondary Education programs encourage future teachers to become civically- and democratically-engaged professionals.

A Literacy professor tells her students that "being a literacy leader goes beyond teaching kids how to read and write. Being a literacy leader, like being a teacher, is a service profession that works with human lives. As such, being a literacy leader means serving one's community."

Education faculty build on this approach by encouraging students to develop relationships, on behalf of students, with children's families and with school district employees. This work could include contributing to policy decisions at the local school board or at the state or federal levels.

A Secondary Education Mathematics professor (and department chair) structures reflection prompts that ask students to think of themselves not only as teachers of mathematics, but as agents of change.

2. Do you have access to assessment data for your campus? If so, what does assessment data show about the political climate and democratic engagement on campus? How does this data compare to that of peer institutions?

Anecdotal evidence suggests a divisive political climate in the student population, especially regarding social justice concerns, with more vocal students leaning to the "left" of center, and with many not willing to let people with sharply opposing points of view on social issues defend their positions. Complicating this situation are students' sources of news. Many say that – if they pay attention to current events – they get their "news" over social media platforms.

Our NSLVE data reveal that only 59.1% of all eligible SUNY Cortland students voted, vs. 65% of all public masters-awarding institutions in the NSLVE study.

Our 2016, 2018, and 2020 data show a slow rise in voter registration rates of registered students (77, 77, and 85%) and a dramatic rise in voter turnout rates (45, 24, 69). Within those numbers, we find lower voter participation by students from marginalized populations. In 2020, for example, only

- 49% of Black students voted
- 51% of male students voted
- 55% of Hispanic students voted
- 58% of 18- to 21-year-olds voted

3. How are civic learning and democratic engagement present in the curriculum?

- a. In which courses is it taught?
- b. In which courses is it listed as a learning outcome?
- c. Are courses connected to civic learning and democratic engagement available to all students or a particular group of students (e.g., only in-coming first-years, political science majors)?

Currently, few if any of our courses teach civic learning and democratic engagement.

4. How are civic learning and democratic engagement present in the co-curriculum?

- a. In which departments is this included?
- b. What incentives, programs, and activities focus on this?
- c. What student groups and clubs are engaged?

Civic learning and democratic engagement are present especially in the Student Government Association. During the 2021-2022 academic year, the most engaged groups were Black Student Union, BridgeCortland, SUNY Cortland NAACP, and Young Democrats. The Institute will again – as it has done twice in the past three years, work to re-start College Republicans.

5. What internal barriers (e.g., limited funding, staff resistance, lack of leadership) prevent the institution from being successful?

The Institute has been working with one employee – its director – for over a year because a part-time employee’s position was dropped when the grant that supported her ended.

As of the fall 2022 semester, though, the Institute for Civic Engagement will have more administrative support from an *Applied Learning Center Council* whose members will include faculty, staff, students, and a community partner. They will help the Institute incorporate civics education into syllabi.

6. What external barriers (e.g., election laws, voter ID laws, lack of proximity to polling location) prevent the institution from being successful?

Beginning with the 2022 Midterm Election, we will no longer have the barrier of polling place location: We will have a polling station on campus, per a New York State mandate.

7. What is the demographic makeup of the institution’s student body? How is this information considered when mapping out civic learning and democratic engagement efforts?

Student Demographics, 2020-2021	%, Students Overall	First-year students (20.1% total pop)
White	76	61.1
Hispanic	12	27.8
Black/African American	05	4.7
Unknown	03	2.1
Two or more races	02	1.7
Asian	01	1.7

This information is useful as we design outreach and activities.

8. What resources are available to help the institution be successful? Specifically, what internal and external factors lead to success (e.g., president’s support, in a fully vote-by-mail state)?

Administration, student groups, and community partners will help us be successful:

- Student Government Association (SGA) and SGA Clubs, with which we have partnered, including
 - Black Student Union
 - BridgeCortland (The Institute’s director is this club’s advisor)
 - La Familia Latina (In the fall, the Institute will again reach out to this club)
 - NYPIRG
 - SUNY Cortland NAACP
 - Young Democrats
- Faculty with relevant expertise, including an expert in Constitutional Law who has twice presented on at our Constitution Day events
- Some faculty and staff members serve as deliberative dialogue moderators
- Brooks Museum, whose director (chair, Sociology Department) is partnering with our Freedom of Speech Team because the Museum’s 2022-2023 Program is entitled “The Culture of Truth.”
- A Freedom of Speech Team’s member organized an April 2022 presentation/discussion by two Syracuse University experts on *Freedom of Speech and Expression on College Campuses: Challenges and Opportunities*. This three-campus team has been planning a two-year-long participatory voter-education program, including a Constitution Day 2024 event that will run on September 20th, *National Voter Registration Day*.
- Our *NYS Seal of Civic Readiness* project includes an applied learning component that will lead to a *SUNY Cortland Seal of Civic Readiness*.
- Cortland County League of Women Voters is a long-term partner in voter registration, education, and turnout.
- City of Cortland Town/Gown Project members include the City of Cortland’s Mayor, Scott Steve; Alderperson Patricia Lane; the Cortland County League of Women Voters president, Sheila Cohen; two Institute for Civic Engagement Action Team interns, Armani Ortiz and Sean Campbell; SUNY Cortland’s associate director of Campus Activities and Greek Life, Sandra Wohlleber, and the Institute for Civic Engagement’s director.
- National Issues Forum Institute provides, of course, a variety of public deliberation resources.
- *CIRCLE* Resources, including the [Growing Voters](#) materials.

9. What additional resources are needed to help the institution be successful? We are watching for funding that could support a paid internship to help coordinate this work. We are aware of Ask Every Student grants.

V. Goals

Short-term goals

1. What outcomes does the institution need to reach during the next three years to stay on track to reach its longer-term vision? How do the goals of the campus voting coalition contribute to the institution’s overall equity and inclusion goals? How do the goals support the institution’s strategic plan?

By three years from now, we need to

- Increase the number of faculty members who incorporate critical thinking about current issues and their importance to voting from the current “unknown” to six
- Secure a Residence Life liaison with whom we can coordinate and promote vote-related activities
- Secure an SGA liaison with whom we can coordinate and promote vote-related activities

- Partner with the City of Cortland Expanded School District and government offices, such as the Mayor’s office and the Cortland County Board of Elections, to develop applied learning projects in which college students and high school students partner on voter-related projects. This is part of NYS and SUNY Cortland *Seals of Civic Readiness* project.

Our goals contribute to the institution’s equity and inclusion goals through our collaborations with staff, students, and community partners (named above) who are dedicated to DEI.

Our goals support the institution’s [strategic plan](#) in that they

- Help nurture students as “engaged citizens”
- Contribute to Institutional Objectives, especially numbers
 - o 4 – “Promote faculty engagement in the life of the college and in their respective disciplines”
 - o 6 – “Expand the impact of applied learning by increasing opportunities and increasing the quality of experiences”
 - o 7 – “Strengthen our community through a focus on inclusion, civility, and accountability”

2. What resources does the institution need to ensure its longer-term vision within reach?

Our Working Group needs to “secure” interdepartmental working relationships – relationships that are based on funded budget lines, the “performance programs” (job descriptions) of which include this work

3. Who does the institution need to involve in order to reach its longer-term vision?

At the college, we need to involve the Provost, our three Deans, and academic department chairs, administrative offices such as Institutional Planning and Assessment Committee, and teacher-education faculty members so that they can incorporate the teaching of voter-related lessons in their teacher education syllabi.

In the greater Cortland community, we need to involve more school board members and K-12 administrators and K-12 teachers.

4. Does your campus voting coalition have the capacity and/or support to achieve this goal?

We have the capacity and support to conduct this year’s program, including outreach for the future.

5. Is the goal SMARTIE (specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, time-bound, inclusive, and equitable)?

Yes, our goals are SMARTIE – We have defined them in challenging but achievable numeric terms. The goals are inclusive and equitable in part because we have defined them with traditionally underrepresented populations in mind, and we are partnering with college offices and student groups (named above) that represent these populations.

6. Does the goal solve an immediate issue student voters face?

Our voter-education related goals begin to address the immediate student-voter issue of a lack of awareness of issues and the related issue of social media-based “news” consumption.

7. Is the goal informed by data and research?

Yes – Our data give us starting points from which to plot our goals.

8. What does your institution need to do to best mobilize voters for the next election (whether local, state, federal primaries or general elections)?

We need to take a centralized “all hands on deck” approach that involves

- College administration, academic and student affairs, other “operating” offices, and student groups
- Community members and groups such as elected officials, not-for-profit organizations, and schools

This centralized approach models a representative democracy in that it incorporates participants’ ideas.

VI. Strategy

Short-term guiding questions

- 1. What is the work? a) What are the planned activities and initiatives related to voter registration, voter education, voter turnout and mobilization, and voter access? b) What would it take to Ask Every Student on campus about participating in our democracy? For resources and tools to do so visit: www.studentvoting.org. c) Where will each activity occur (e.g., in a public campus space, in the classroom, virtually)?**

The work is the mission of public higher education: Educating and motivating students to use their education to participate in civic decision-making and democratic engagement.

- a. Planned activities cover voter registration, voter education, and voter turn-out. Data collection and analysis will be incorporated into these events.

Activity – Data Collection and Assessment Team’s Preparation

- People – Students, faculty, and staff who will form the Data Collection/Analysis Team
- Audience – Participants
- Location – The Institute for Civic Engagement’s office
- When – During the second week of the fall semester. The Institute is meeting with Professor Jason Page on June 29th to begin planning this Team.
- Purpose – Design a plan, expectations, and schedule for this work

Activity – Voter Registration Training

- People – Board of Elections, BridgeCortland, NYPIRG, SUNY Cortland NAACP, League of Women Voters/Cortland County
- Audience – Students, faculty, and staff
- Location – to be determined
- When – September
- Purpose – Ensure nonpartisan work to register students to vote

Activity – Voter Registration (on-campus)

- People – Members of student groups such as BridgeCortland, NYPIRG, and Black Student Union
- Audience – Students
- Location – Classrooms and tabling at high-traffic campus locations
- When – The 2nd & 3rd weeks of fall semester and on September 20 (National Voter Registration Day)
- Purpose – Have every student register to vote; provide students with voting resources

Activity – Voter Education Training: Deliberative dialogue facilitator training

- People – Institute for Civic Engagement
- Audience – Students, faculty, and staff
- Location – to be determined
- When – Once/month, beginning in September, with specific dates to be determined
- Purpose – Train people to serve as deliberative dialogue facilitators

Activity – Voter Education: *The First Amendment and Your Vote*, Constitution Day events

- People – Freedom of Speech Team
- Audience – SUNY students from at least the Team’s campuses
- Location – Zoom
- When – September 20, 2022
- Purposes –
 - In a non-partisan way, educate students, faculty, and staff on specific connections between the First Amendment and voting issues in the November 2022 Election
 - Give students a chance to participate in a deliberative dialogue on the First Amendment
 - Motivate students to register to vote and to vote

Activities – Data Collection: A series of focus groups

- People – Cortland Votes members, including County Legislator Cathy Bischoff
- Audience – SUNY Cortland students (focus group participants)
- Location – on campus, to be determined
- When – monthly, beginning as early as mid-September
- Purpose – to identify SUNY Cortland students’ reasons for not registering to vote (so that we can adapt Cortland Votes to address students’ concerns)

Activities – Voter Education: A monthly series of events that continues to explore relationships between the First Amendment and voting

- People – Freedom of Speech Team
- Audience – SUNY students from at least the Team’s campuses
- Location – Zoom
- When – to be determined
- Purposes – To
 - Educate participants on this topic and to
 - Motivate students to register to vote and to vote

Activity – Voter Education: Activities designed and conducted by student groups

- People – Members of groups such as BridgeCortland and SUNY Cortland NAACP, local elected officials who represent areas where SUNY Cortland students live
- Audience – SUNY Cortland students
- Location – a variety of campus locations
- When – to be determined
- Purposes – To
 - Educate participants on this topic and to
 - Motivate students to register to vote and to vote

Activity – Voter Turnout: A variety of activities

- People – BridgeCortland, NYPIRG, SUNY Cortland NAACP, League of Women Voters/Cortland County
- Audience – Students
- Locations – Tabling, in-classes, social media, email, posters, side-walk chalking, and an outdoor (weather permitting) voter-oriented live concert by local talent.
- When – November 1 through 8, 2022
- Purposes – Get students to vote

- b. To Ask Every Student on campus about participating in our democracy, we would need to work with offices across the campus to register students on specific days

2. Who is responsible for implementing each planned strategy and tactic?

Our Working Group's chair, John Suarez (director, Institute for Civic Engagement)

3. Who is the audience for each strategy and tactic? a) What methods will be used to make strategies and tactics accessible to diverse populations? b) Are you including tactics that focus on reaching all students, especially traditionally under-represented students?

Audiences are primarily SUNY Cortland students.

- a. Methods for accessibility include partnering with offices such as our Disability Resources Office, Educational Opportunity Program, Multicultural Life and Diversity Office, and our Web and Digital Marketing Office.
- b. Our tactics focus on reaching all students, especially those from traditionally underrepresented communities – Students and staff representing those communities are Working Group members

4. Where will each activity occur on and off campus? Locations are noted in the list above.

5. When will the work happen and what preparations are required beforehand to make it happen? Are individuals consistently (i.e., quarterly, semesterly, or yearly) trained to ensure conversations remain nonpartisan, culturally sensitive, accurate, and that the voter registration processes result in zero errors? The bulleted list above answers these questions.

6. Why is each strategy and tactic being implemented and what is the goal for each activity? The bulleted list above answers these questions.

Long-term guiding questions

1. How would you describe a campus committed to educating for civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation? What would it look like and how would you know this commitment existed?

Such a campus would have a culture of civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation. Events and activities would spring from “grass-roots” actions by students, faculty, and staff, with resources – including funding – promoted and provided by administration. Offices including Admissions, the Registrar, and Alumni Engagement would participate.

Civic decision-making and democratic engagement would be part of the fabric of the campus' society, whether in Residence Life or in institutional policy-making.

An intentional focus on, and use of, critical thinking would permeate activities in Student Life and in course-work. Many classes would be designed to be flexible in that instructors could incorporate consideration of one or two current events into a semester's course work. Learning communities could be designed around a current issue.

Applied learning strategies (central to much of the Institute's work) would be central to many of the courses, depending on the capacity of the neighboring community to accommodate applied learning and depending on the creativity of all involved to create and conduct applied learning projects that build the capacity of the community to accommodate this approach to democratic engagement.

Co-curricular activities would, like applied learning academic courses, be intentional learning activities because they would involve reflection that helps participants explore, for example, systemic causes of certain kinds of social injustice and steps and resources to address them.

Our Teacher Education programs would include applied learning projects in which future teachers design and implement civic education lessons.

This work and successes would be celebrated at our annual Leadership in Civic Engagement Awards reception.

2. How might your institution depend on capacity and competence related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in tandem with civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation?

We are already working together to promote these considerations.

3. What will it take to build toward this vision of sustained commitment beyond a single election cycle (e.g., resources, curricular offerings, staffing)?

At the college, we need to involve the President and his Cabinet, the Provost, Institutional Planning and Assessment Committee, our three Deans, academic department chairs, and teacher-education faculty so that they can incorporate the teaching of voter-related lessons in their teacher education syllabi.

In the greater Cortland community, we need to involve more school board members, principals, and K-12 teachers.

4. Where does work need to happen in order to institutionalize this vision (e.g., faculty senate, student government, division of student affairs)? a) Who is responsible within your working group for catalyzing or leading each effort? One step further, how would you know that this commitment has been institutionalized? b) Does your coalition have a succession plan that continually involves and builds up new students leaders, as well as provides for staffing transitions?

The work needs to happen across campus, working with the President's Cabinet, the faculty senate, individual faculty members, and Student Affairs offices such as Residence Life. The Institute's director, John Suarez, is responsible for this work. We will know when this work is institutionalized when

- The yearly steps are incorporated into each office's regular planning
- Virtually every office has one person whose performance program (job description) includes this work
- Our numbers (such as voter registration and turnout rates) are at least 90% for three voting cycles

5. On what timeline will efforts to enact this vision occur? (Think in terms of years; e.g., in year one your institution will accomplish what? In year two your institution will accomplish what? And so on...)

- Year One –
 - o The yearly steps are incorporated into upper management's planning
 - o Major offices have one person whose performance program includes this work
 - o Our voter registration and turnout rates approach 90%
- Year Two –
 - o The yearly steps are incorporated into upper management's (including Deans') planning
 - o Staff and faculty representing key departments and offices participate in Cortland Votes
 - o Our voter registration and turnout rates are at least 90%
- Year Three
 - o The yearly steps are incorporated across upper management's planning
 - o Staff and faculty representing key departments and offices participate in Cortland Votes
 - o Our voter registration and turnout rates remain at 90%, minimum
- Year Four repeats Year Three

6. How are you ensuring that your short-term tactics are embedded into the campus culture and can outlast the individuals leading that effort (accounting for the turnover)?

We will work to embed Cortland Votes into people's performance programs.

VII. NSLVE as a Resource for Colleges & Universities

VIII. Reporting

1. How will the plan be shared, internally and externally? Please state where the plan will be shared, Keeping in mind to share the report with multiple stakeholders. This could take place by sharing during departmental meetings, student organization gatherings, and with community partners.

The Institute will share its plan through a variety of media, including two kinds of events that are hosted by the President's office and are open to the public. Faculty, staff, students, and community partners describe their work and can recruit people to join them in that work. At a Wednesday *Sandwich Seminar* in September, and at a Thursday morning *Community Roundtable* on October 6th, the Institute's director and, ideally, one or two Cortland Votes members will describe our Cortland Votes' purpose, process, and goals.

The Institute will also use the internet to promote Cortland Votes, posting it at its webpage and providing access to its documents through its social media accounts and monthly newsletter. Announcements regarding events will be sent via the college's closed-circuit television system, email, and social media to people on- and off-campus.

For on-campus announcements, we will also use low-tech approaches such as tabling, SGA meetings, campus newspaper and newsletter articles, and paper posters. The paper medium will also have QR codes as a way of giving people additional information.

2. Will the plan be made public? If so, how? This could take place by posting the report on your institution's website, social media, etc.

Yes, the plan will be made public in the ways described above, as well as through meetings of organizations such as the Cortland County League of Women Voters

3. Will the data, such as your institution's NSLVE report, be used to inform the plan be made public? If so, how? This could take place by posting the report on your institution's website, social media, with stakeholders, etc. Yes, as described above.

4. How will this plan be used to execute student voting coalition work on campuses? This will ensure that all campus organizations and groups have access to data and reporting to be able to plan and strategize programming.

Challenge-related planning will be incorporated into key offices, which are represented in Cortland Votes. Regularly-scheduled meetings (two/semester) provide participants with

- The opportunity to share challenges and successes (in addition, of course, to those raised to the Institute's director between meetings).

- Data that they can
 - o Use to refine and implement their work
 - o Include in performance reviews, annual reports, reports to external agencies such as Middle States and Carnegie

Our yearly data will be posted at the Institute’s webpage

IX. Evaluation

1. What is the purpose of the evaluation?

Evaluation will help us refine our methodology so that it stays effective, especially as each year incoming students represent a “moving target” regarding knowledge, interest, motivation, and communication channels. Also, vote-related laws and regulations can change, so we need to ensure that we comply and adapt to stay effective. Our measures of success are –

- The number of students, faculty, and staff at each voter education event. More specifically,
 - o Events with a room capacity of 25 to 30 people should be filled, mostly with students
 - o Activities such as deliberative dialogues should have at least 40 student participants and 8 to 10 small-group moderators
- Students’ reasons for participating in those events should be self-motivated, not “my professor told me to come.” Examples of self-motivation could include
 - o I want to be involved with projects that address this problem
 - o The topic relates to my major (or career)
 - o I want to learn other points of view on this topic
- Students’ opinions of, and lessons from, those events
 - o My opinion has changed on this topic
 - o I didn’t realize how important this issue is
 - o I didn’t realize that I could vote in a local election to help address this problem
 - o I’m happy that registering to vote – and that voting – is easier than I thought
 - o I am looking forward to attending other events like this one
- The extent to which students are connecting current issues with their college learning experiences
 - o I have a better understanding of how to use information from my major in addressing this issue
 - o I am going to change my major (or minor or concentration) so that I can work on this issue
- Intent to become democratically engaged (in projects outside of voting)
 - o This activity’s information taught me that I can help make change in ways in addition to voting
 - o I will use the contact information from this activity to join a group that is addressing this issue.

We can include spaces for people to add individual details.

2. What does the institution want to know and be able to do with the information gathered?

We want to measure the effectiveness of promotional efforts so that we can continually improve them.

3. Who is the audience for the evaluation? Our audience is our Working Group, the Institute, and SUNY Cortland administration.

4. Who will carry out the evaluation? Is there an Institutional Research office representative involved? Faculty who are already studying related research questions? Student Affairs educators carrying out programmatic and long-term learning assessments? We are recruiting support from our Institutional Research and Assessment Office, plus Professor Jason Page (Recreation/Parks/Leisure Studies) and his students for an independent Data Collection and

Assessment Team to evaluate our work. This step can be a valuable applied (experiential) learning opportunity for students in courses that teach assessment as they learn about voting initiatives.

5. When will the evaluation be carried out and completed? Data collection will be conducted after each Cortland Votes event. Ideally, event participants will be able to electronically submit their responses to post-event surveys, facilitating responses and helping to ensure accurate record-keeping. The Data Collection and Assessment Team send a report to the Working Group in time for the Group's monthly meetings.

6. What impact is already being measured for other related initiatives, like the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement?

We are just beginning to assemble our Carnegie team. We don't know of other related initiatives being measured.

7. What information (data, evidence) must be collected and how will it be collected? What are the performance measures and indicators of success?

Data that we need to collect include

- The number of participants at events and activities
- The number and titles of participating administrators, staff, and faculty members
- The number and titles of participating student clubs and groups
- The number, titles, and course-numbers of courses whose syllabi include voter education – especially those courses using applied learning strategies
- Participants' reactions, as listed in #1, above

8. How will information (data, evidence) be analyzed? a) How will the results of the evaluation be shared? b) How will the success of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within the plan be evaluated, beyond NSLVE race/ethnicity breakdown information?

Information will be matched against our goals.

- a) Information will be shared in Cortland Votes reports, departments' reports, and at the Institute's website
- b) DEI-related information will be evaluated in collaboration with our Multicultural Life and Diversity Office, with our Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, and with student leaders from relevant groups and clubs. We will match, for example, BIPOC students' participation in Cortland Votes events with the total number of BIPOC students at SUNY Cortland. (We realize that collecting such information involves a number of challenges.)

9. Will efforts to evaluate be limited to one person/one area of your campus or be part of a larger campus effort?

Evaluation will be part of a larger campus effort because

- This is central to our mission
- Doing so helps people feel ownership of the effort.

10. What are your institution's metrics for success? Share what worked, what didn't, why, and how things will be altered for future action plans.

Our metrics for success include

- The number of participants at events
- The range of participants' backgrounds, including representation from traditionally underrepresented communities
- Event participants' survey responses
- NSLVE data

11. What progress has been made toward each short- and long-term goal?

- Our voter registration and turnout rates have improved, but we realize that challenges remain
- We have established relationships with administrative offices, student groups and clubs, and organizations in the greater Cortland community.

12. Were efforts utilized to advance or implement the Ask Every Student framework? a) Integrating voter registration or GOTV (mail-in ballots, early voting, voter ID asks) into existing processes b) Executing individualized voter registration and democratic engagement tactics c) Institutionalizing tactics to be a sustainable part of campus culture?

Incoming first-year students are given voter registration forms as part of their initial packets. COVID restrictions interrupted our voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.

13. Were efforts advanced regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice priorities on campus?

Yes – We have been working with DEI-related groups of students and faculty/staff, such as Black Student Union president and vice-president (with whom we conducted a Black History Month presentation/discussion exploring ways of increasing the voter registration rates of BIPOC students) and the college's Antiracism Taskforce's Educational Programming Subcommittee, of which the Institute's director is chair.

14. Which efforts were most successful to contributing to shifts in NSLVE and other data? a) What could be done to improve upon data metrics? For instance, if there was a big voter registration push, but voter registration data in NSLVE didn't change much, how can we improve on that?

Our NYPIRG Project Coordinator was especially effective in organizing voter-registration events that included class visits and tabling. In addition, one of the Institute's interns (who was the previous Black Student Union president) also tabled to register students to vote. a) One way in which we can increase the effectiveness of this work is to coordinate with faculty shortly after the end of the spring semester so that faculty set aside time for voter registration during the first week or two of their classes.

15. What are your key performance indicators, and did you satisfy expectations?

Two of our key performance indicators were the voter registration and voter turnout rates, both of which improved, though they are lower than our goals – especially turnout.

16. Was campus administration supportive of civic learning and democratic engagement efforts? What can be done to get university officials to sign the ALL IN President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation?

Administration is supportive, though the Working Group can request additional support

17. How can students research projects support evaluation measures?

One way is for a class that is studying research methods to participate in the Data Collection and Assessment Team. We will meet with the course's professor, Jason Page, on June 29.

18. What resources do you need next year to advance civic engagement and reach long-term goals?

We need initiative from upper administration in the form of messaging and encouragement for directors and chairs to coordinate efforts with the Working Group. Academic department chairs, for example, could encourage faculty members to incorporate vote-related information and skills into syllabi. Upper administration could provide funding necessary for people to research, and conduct workshops, on ways of doing so. In the current economic situation, we will need to be creative in this step.

19. What are next steps for how evaluation information will be shared?

We need to meet with Professor Page to outline our data collection and assessment plan.