



Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan 2024

October 1, 2024

Executive Summary

San Diego Mesa College is the largest two-year institution in San Diego, enrolling over 30,000 students annually in a variety of degree and certificate programs. Mesa is committed to promoting civic engagement across campus to increase the number of students who register to vote and submit ballots in primary, special, and general elections. To fulfill the requirements set forth by AB 963, Mesa has created its inaugural Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan (CVEAP). As part of this plan, the college has identified two Civic and Voter Empowerment Co- Coordinators, formed a CVEAP Committee comprised of students, staff, faculty, and administrators, and will host a series of voter engagement events in preparation for the general election this November. This plan is implemented through the *Your Voice, Your Vote* student voter engagement campaign, led by Student Affairs with assistance from CVEAP Committee. This report will be submitted to the California Secretary of State's office by October 1, 2024¹.

Leadership

The CVEAP has been developed by the CVEAP Committee, which includes nine members representing Student Affairs, Instruction, and Associated Students. This committee is led by two Civic and Voter Empowerment Co- Coordinators (one faculty and one staff member) and is supported by the Dean of Student Affairs. This committee formed in Spring 2024 and has continued to meet during the summer and fall terms in preparation for the general election.

CVEAP Committee

Austin Barraza, Assistant Professor of Political Science (Co-Coordinator and Lead Author)

Blythe Barton, Associate Professor of Dance

¹ Language found in the executive summary was adapted from the San Diego Miramar College Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan 2022, as well as from resources provided by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge.

Mahro Hashimi, Associated Students Vice President

Wendell Kling, Professor of Art

Victoria Miller, Dean of Student Affairs

Veronica Morales, Student Rights and Responsibilities Project Assistant (Co-Author)

Claudia Perkins, Student Rights and Responsibilities Coordinator (Co-Coordinator)

Anabell Pulido, Events and Operations Project Analyst

Zora Williams, Associated Students President

Commitment

This is the first election cycle in which Mesa has created a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan. However, the college has previously engaged in voter turnout initiatives, most recently through the *Your Voice, Your Vote* campaign led by Student Affairs. In previous election cycles, this included campus events, social media posts, and a dedicated campaign website. For this election cycle, *Your Voice, Your Vote* has expanded to include teaching resources, so that instructors can promote civic and voter engagement in their classrooms. These resources have been supplemented by existing materials provided by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, which Mesa is participating in for the first time this year.

Mesa is well equipped to continue building its voter empowerment efforts. In addition to the CVEAP Committee, the college has several active student organizations that can plug into civic engagement efforts. These include Associated Students, the Law Club, and Phi Theta Kappa. Mesa also benefits from offering 14 courses that have students examine American political institutions. These include not only history and political science courses but also courses in Asian American Studies, Black Studies, and Chicana/o Studies. Each of these disciplines offer courses which fulfill the CSU American History and Institutions (AH&I) graduation requirement.

Table 1: American History and Institutions Courses

Discipline	Number	Name
AAPI	127	Asian Americans and American Ideals, Institutions, and Politics
BLAS	140A	African American History to Reconstruction
BLAS	140B	African American History since Reconstruction to the Present
CHIC	141A	United States History from a Chicano Perspective

CHIC	141B	United States History from a Chicano Perspective
HIST	109	History of the United States I
HIST	110	History of the United States II
HIST	123	United States History/Asian Pacific American Perspective
HIST	141	Women in U.S. History I
HIST	142	Women in U.S. History II
HIST	150	Native Americans in United States History
HIST	151	Native Americans in United States History
POLI	102	Introduction to American Government
POLI	121	American Political Development

Landscape

Mesa has participated in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) since 2014. This provides the college with multiple election cycles to observe trends in voter behavior. As of this report, our data includes the 2022 General Election, as released in the [NSLVE Campus Report](#). Based on our campus voting rate from 2022, Mesa was awarded a Bronze Seal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. This is a recognition of our previous voter empowerment events. However, for the purposes of this Action Plan, it is important to compare our 2022 voting rate with those from 2018 and 2020.

Table 2: San Diego Mesa College Voting Rates, 2018-2022

	2018	2020	2022
Registration Rate ¹	68%	76.8%	68.2%
Voting Rate of Registered Students ²	52.1%	80.1%	39.1%
Overall Voting Rate ³	35.4%	61.5%	26.7%

¹ Registration Rate is the percent of voting-eligible students who registered to vote.
² Voting Rate of Registered Students is the percent of registered students who voted on Election Day.
³ Overall Voting Rate is the percentage of eligible students who voted on Election Day.

Given the differences in voter turnout between presidential and midterm elections, it's most appropriate to compare the 2022 General Election with the 2018 General Election. While the registration rate largely remained constant, there was an approximately 12% decrease in the voting rate of registered students and an approximately 8% decrease in the overall voting rate. In addition, the college voted at a slightly lower rate (26.7%) compared to the other two-year institutions (29%) and all institutions (30.6%), which includes both two and four-year schools.

Much of the decline between the 2018 and 2022 voting rates is likely due to the decrease in enthusiasm of voters during the 2022 midterm elections. Compared to the record turnout for the midterm elections in 2018, when many citizens voted to express their disappointment with the incumbent, the 2022 elections saw mixed reaction to the current administration, with many voters choosing not to participate. However, these results suggest there is work to do to ensure that there are not similar declines between the 2020 and 2024 presidential elections.

Unfortunately, disaggregation by student characteristics such as race/ethnicity and gender are not available. It is important to note that Mesa is in the process of reauthorizing its participation in the NSLVE in order to track and analyze voting patterns from the 2024 General Election.

Goals

Short-Term Goals

Goal 1: Maintain 2020 Voting Rates for the 2024 General Election

As seen in Table 2, 76.8% of voting-eligible students at Mesa were registered to vote in 2020, and 80.1% of those students voted in the general election. The overall voting rate that year was 61.5%. Given the high turnout in 2020, maintaining these rates may prove challenging, but still is a worthy goal to meet. Recent events in the presidential election (the withdrawal of President Biden from the race, the emergence of Vice President Harris at the top of the ticket, and the assassination attempt on former President Trump) all point to renewed enthusiasm by voters, which did not exist at the beginning of the year.

Goal 2: Restore Voter Engagement Events to Pre-Pandemic Levels

As the college continues to increase in-person enrollment, it is important to offer face-to-face voter engagement events at levels seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. As seen in Table 2, the decline in voting rates between the 2018 and 2022 midterm elections may be a result of limited in-person voter engagement events held in 2022, given the active pandemic at the time.

Long-Term Goals

Goal 3: Institutionalize the CVEAP Committee

Currently, the CVEAP Committee is not a formal governance committee at the college. All members serve on the committee in addition to their normally appointed committee work. This makes it difficult to ask members to commit additional time to civic engagement efforts, despite the compelling need. By incorporating this committee into the college's formal governance,

members will be able to dedicate more time to campus civic engagement efforts. Similarly, providing reassigned time to the Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator will allow for the CVEAP Committee to further integrate civic engagement lessons across the curriculum.

Goal 4: Expand Professional Learning for Faculty

To build on the success of *Your Voice, Your Vote*, voter engagement efforts should also extend into the classroom. However, this will require classroom faculty to learn how to embed civic engagement into their existing curriculum. By partnering with the LOFT (the college’s professional learning hub), the CVEAP Committee can offer training for classroom faculty who wish to integrate activities and assignments intended to boost civic engagement.

Strategy

To meet the goals listed above, Mesa intends to host the initiatives and events listed in Table 3. These represent a combination of campus, classroom, and online programs led by Student Affairs, Instruction, and other college or district offices.

Table 3: San Diego Mesa College Voter Engagement Initiatives and Events

Student Affairs	Instruction	Other
9/5: <i>Your Voice, Your Vote</i> Webpage Re-launch	9/17: Constitution Day & National Voter Registration Day	Existing: District voter empowerment webpage
9/5: <i>Your Voice, Your Vote</i> T-Shirt Distribution	10/8: <i>Your Voice, Your Vote</i> Canvas module launch	9/9-10/17: Voter registration announcement via Canvas
9/5-9/27: <i>Your Voice, Your Vote</i> Art Competition	TBD: Micro-lesson on civic engagement for FLEX	
9/16: Reflect, Restore, Unite Week		
9/9-10/17: Voter Registration Tabling		

Reporting

This Action Plan will be submitted to the California Secretary of State’s office by October 1, 2024. It will also be posted to the [Your Voice, Your Vote](#) webpage on the Mesa website, as well as on the [campus page](#) for Mesa on the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge website.

Once the 2024 NSLVE report is made available, we will analyze our voting rates as part of the college’s evaluation of its voter empowerment efforts. This includes determining how well Mesa did in meeting the metrics listed in Goal 1. This data will inform our planning decisions for the 2026 CVEAP, as we work towards increasing the number of students who take part in local, state, and federal elections while building a civically engaged campus culture.