

# **Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rates Among Santa Fe College Students**

## **Executive Summary**

Santa Fe College's SF Votes Coalition will provide the SF community with resources and education to ensure that the college turns out a robust and informed electorate for the 2022 mid-term election. The Coalition will use positive and inclusive messaging to champion voter participation and civic responsibility.

The SF Votes Coalition is comprised of representatives from the following programs and organizations at Santa Fe College (SF): Civic Engagement and Service, Student Life, Student Government, Student Development and Leadership, Social and Behavioral Sciences, public speaking faculty, L.W. Tyree Library and Learning Commons, SF's Chapter of Association of Florida Colleges, Alachua County Supervisor of Elections, League of Women Voters of Alachua County, and Campus Vote Project.

SF currently enrolls 13,640 students. Many students are still attending classes remotely, and SF also offers courses at six educational centers across Alachua and Bradford Counties. 53.8 percent of SF students are from Alachua County. 78 percent of SF students are under 25 years old. Most of SF's student voters cast their ballots on election day, while a smaller number voted early, closely followed by vote-by-mail.

The SF Vote Coalition's goals are to promote student participation in the 2022 midterm election by providing the SF community with resources and education, renewing the college's participation in the National Survey of Learning Voting and Engagement (NSLVE), and cultivating a campus culture of civic engagement and democratic participation.

The SF Vote Coalition will engage the entire SF campus by reaching out to every student-based program and organization, academic program, and SF campus. In-person and virtual outreach events will promote a culture of engaged student voters. Through proactive outreach, the Coalition will reach every segment of the student population to connect with potential voters.

The SF Vote Coalition will meet bi-weekly during the fall 2022 semester to report on action planning progress and share the results of implementing the action plan. The plan and subsequent updates will also be shared publicly via Civic Engagement and Service's weekly email updates.

SF's participation in future NSLVE surveys will enable the Coalition to evaluate the progress of outreach efforts. The Coalition will also track engagements with SF students and collect contact information to follow up as the election approaches. This data will be evaluated by the Coalition throughout the election season and beyond to support continual improvement in outreach strategies and outcomes.

## **Leadership**

The SF Votes Coalition was established in 2020 to provide voter outreach and engagement to the SF community leading up to the 2020 election. At that time, the Coalition's outreach work was entirely virtual. The Coalition will continue to provide outreach for the 2022 election and beyond. With opportunities to carry out voter engagement both online and in-person, the Coalition hopes to reach even more potential voters at SF in the coming year. The Coalition is comprised of the following stakeholders:

### **Civic Engagement and Service**

The SF Votes Coalition is chaired by Sarah Blanc, Civic Engagement and Service Specialist in Student Life. Civic Engagement and Service is a Student Life program that provides SF students with community involvement opportunities and civic education.

### **Student Life**

Associate Director of Student Life Dr. Doug Bagby advises Student Government and oversees SF's student organizations. Student organizations – both political and non-political- are key to ensuring a student-led voter outreach effort. Student organizations will be encouraged to participate in voter outreach efforts through Student Senate and recruitment events.

### **Student Government**

SF's Student Government is run by eight elected student officers, numerous appointed positions, and a Student Senate. SF Student Government has a history of supporting civic engagement and non-partisan voter outreach. Student Government will be instrumental in communicating about voter outreach to the entire student body.

### **Student Development and Leadership**

Student Development and Leadership (SDL) is a student-centered academic department with courses dedicated to students' personal growth, decision making, awareness of the world, enlightened life and career choices, the development of leadership skills, and greater self-understanding. SDL faculty have integrated community involvement and civic engagement into their curriculums, which provides space to encourage students to vote.

### **Social and Behavioral Sciences**

Social and Behavioral Sciences is an academic department with courses in Anthropology, Geography, History, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. Faculty in this department facilitate campus programs related to voter education, electoral politics, and current events discussions. They also include voter education resources in their course curriculums.

### **Public Speaking Faculty**

SF's Public Speaking faculty are housed within the department of Humanities and Foreign Languages. Public Speaking faculty engage their students in upcoming elections through debates, critiques, and current events discussions. These faculty also encourage their students to attend campus activities related to voter engagement.

### **L.W. Tyree Library and Learning Commons**

SF's L.W. Tyree Library and Learning Commons provides an important space for voter engagement on-campus. The Library provides space in their lobby to offer voter registration info. The library also hosts current event discussions and panels in their lobby, or nearby at the outdoor amphitheater. The library has become a focal point for civic engagement on campus.

### **Association of Florida Colleges**

The Santa Fe College Chapter of Association of Florida Colleges (AFC) is a state-wide advocacy organization committed to providing educational service and legislative opportunities to all employees of Santa Fe College. AFC's members champion non-partisan voter engagement by encouraging SF students and employees to make sure they are registered and make a plan to vote.

### **Alachua County Supervisor of Elections**

Alachua County Supervisor of Elections Kim Barton and Director of Communications and Outreach Aaron Klein provide voter registration, election related events, and important updates. Alachua County Supervisor of Elections staff and volunteer work closely with the SF Vote Coalition to ensure that the college has the necessary resources to provide effective voter outreach.

### **League of Women Voters of Alachua County**

The League of Women Voters of Alachua County is a non-partisan voter outreach organization that supports the SF Vote Coalition with voter guides, outreach events, candidate forums, and voter registration. The League's Voter Outreach Chair Courtney Pyche leads volunteers in carrying out this work.

### **Campus Vote Project**

Campus Vote Project (CVP) is a national organization that works with universities, community colleges, faculty, students, and election officials to reduce barriers to student voting. Campus Vote Project sponsors the Voter Friendly Campus program, and SF was awarded a Voter Friendly Campus designation by participating in CVP's Voter Friendly Campus program that year. CVP currently hosts one CVP Democracy Fellow, Gabby Griffis, who is responsible for providing voter education and outreach to the SF student body.

## **Commitment**

Santa Fe College's mission is to add value to the lives of students and enrich the community through excellence in teaching and learning, innovative educational programs and student services, and community leadership and service. The college is committed to preparing active and responsible contributors to local and global society.

The college community works collectively to fulfill this commitment. There are programs that demonstrate an explicit, visible commitment to civic engagement and democratic participation such as Civic Engagement and Service in Student Life. Student Life works to achieve several student development learning outcomes pertaining to social responsibility, active citizenship, and leadership:

- Staff will develop programs, activities, and events that connect students to each other and the SF community.
- Staff will organize programs, activities, and events to generate a variety of learning opportunities for students to enhance their awareness and commitment towards active citizenship and social responsibility.
- Staff will develop processes, learning activities, and a support structure that facilitates students' knowledge of their leadership style, personal identity, and the concept of leadership as a process that one engages in to affect positive change for the better of others, community, and society.

The State of Florida's civic literacy requirement that passed in 2021 states that students entering a Florida College System institution or state university must demonstrate competency in civic literacy. Civic literacy competencies and outcomes include:

- An understanding of the basic principles of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government.
- An understanding of the United States Constitution.
- Knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-governance.
- An understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases and their impact on law and society.

Students demonstrate achievement of these competencies by completing a course or an assessment. The updated civics literacy legislation also requires that students in all sections of AMH2020 and POS2041 (including online) have the opportunity to engage in synchronous discussions. The SF Votes Coalition will carry out events and activities that will provide opportunities to fulfill this requirement.

## **Landscape**

SF currently enrolls 13,640 students. Of that number, 5,543 are full-time and 8,097 are part-time. Many students are still attending classes remotely, and SF also offers six educational centers across Alachua and Bradford Counties. 53.8 percent of SF students are from Alachua County. 45 percent of SF students are 18-20 years old, and 78% are under 25 years old. SF's student population is 53.2 percent white, 22.4 percent Latinx, 12.6 percent Black, 4.3 percent Asian, 4.1 percent multi-racial, and .3 percent Native American. According to SF's most recent NSLVE report, in the 2012 election 78.2 percent of students were registered to vote, and 53 percent voter. In the 2014 election,

72.6 percent of students were registered to vote, and 25 percent of students voted. Most of SF's student voters cast their ballots on election day, while a smaller number voted early, closely followed by vote-by-mail.

## **Goals**

The SF Vote Coalition's goals are to promote student participation in the 2022 midterm election by providing the SF community with resources and education and using positive and inclusive messaging to celebrate voter participation and civic responsibility.

One immediate goal is to renew SF's participation in the NSLVE Survey. SF has not participated in NSLVE since the inaugural year, as the college's authorization expired and was not renewed. The authorization form is currently in review for approval by the Registrar and Institutional Research. This will enable the SF Vote Coalition to make more informed plans for future voter outreach.

The SF Vote Coalition will work to turn out even more SF voters by reaching students where they are, whether that is on the main campus, educational centers, or online. The Coalition will leave no rock unturned when sharing voter engagement resources. The Coalition's long-term goal is to sustain a culture of civic engagement and democratic participation through creative and dynamic outreach strategies targeting student voters.

## **Strategy**

Student voter outreach is most impactful when the work is led by students. The SF Vote Coalition will engage the entire SF campus by casting a wide net and requesting to connect with every student-based program and organization. This includes Student Government, student organizations, Student Ambassadors, academic teams, Adult Education, apprenticeship programs, Athletics, student caregivers, College Achievement Program, Community Education, Continuing Education, Disabilities Resource Center, Displaced Homemakers Program, High School Dual Enrollment, East Gainesville Instruction, Educational Talent Search, Honors Program, Leadership Programs, My Brother's Keeper, TRIO Programs, Upward Bound, and Veterans and Military Success Services.

The Coalition will present a succinct and informative overview of voter resources and encourage students to get engaged in voter outreach. The Coalition will also reach out to faculty to offer classroom presentations and resources. Presentations will be available on every SF campus and online. In-person and virtual outreach events during the fall 2022 semester will promote a culture of engaged student voters. The Coalition will also take advantage of SF's integrated news platform and social media to provide regular announcements about upcoming election deadlines. Through proactive outreach, positive messaging, and unexpected messengers, the Coalition will reach every segment of the student population to connect with potential voters.

## **Reporting**

The SF Vote Coalition will meet bi-weekly during the fall 2022 semester to report on action planning progress and share the results of implementing the action plan. The plan and subsequent updates will also be shared publicly via the Civic Engagement and Service weekly email update.

### **Evaluation**

One of the SF Vote Coalition's short-term goals is to renew the college's authorization to participate in the NSLVE Survey. This will enable the Coalition to evaluate the progress of outreach efforts. The Coalition will also track engagements with SF students and collect contact information to follow up as the election approaches. This data will be evaluated by the Coalition throughout the election season and beyond to support continual improvement in outreach strategies and outcomes.