



Civic Learning & Democratic Engagement Plan

2020



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ALL In Democracy Action Plan was developed by the Vice-President of Academics and Student Services, Jon Mandrell, Director of Research and Planning, Joe Bright, and Student Activities/Cross-Cultural Coordinator, Ana Salgado. The Student Government Association President, Anah Chamberlain, also is vital in coordinating efforts with students. The plan's purpose is to encourage civic engagement at Sauk Valley Community College. This plan includes activities offered during 2019-2020.

I. COMMITMENT

Mission

Sauk Valley Community College is dedicated to teaching and scholarship while engaging the community in lifelong learning, public service, and economic development.

Shared Ethical Values

Sauk Valley Community College respects the worth and dignity of all people; stands for integrity and fairness; and encourages responsibility, accountability, and persistence in a caring, supportive environment.

SVCC encourages civic engagement in a multitude of ways and assists students in their growth through several offerings and opportunities to promote positive change. The College Catalog and Student Handbook include voter registration information to increase the number of voters in our college community. Our president, Dr. David Hellmich, not only teaches leadership courses to students on Fridays, but he also is the chair of the local Sauk Valley Community Leadership Program. Each year, approximately 3-4 employees are a part of this community leadership program, where they sharpen their skills and ultimately bring back to SVCC to work with students. As part of these efforts, faculty, staff, and administration echo the importance of participating in elections by challenging students to speak up and engage not only in elections, but also in conversation with elected officials. Our president and his cabinet write regularly in the newspaper about civic leadership and social responsibility. These topics can and do touch on the very topics of engaging in local leaders and elections. Dr. Hellmich is highly committed to civic engagement and regularly writes articles for the local newspaper on the topic, as well the Vice President of Academics and Student Services, Dr. Jon Mandrell. Most recently, Dr. Mandrell began recruiting students with local community members to serve as election judges in the upcoming election. Our voter registration page has also recently been updated to include our efforts, including our work in the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge.

Most recently, Dr. Hellmich signed the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation, further increasing our visibility and commitment to expanding our efforts at our campus and in the community.

Additionally, the SVCC Board of Trustees has visitors from students often and moves their meetings to allow for large classes to attend, as well. Our student trustee is elected by their peers and has a seat with the Board of Trustees, where they give an update each month and participate in crucial dialogue with other elected trustees.

Board policy also supports the civic engagement of students. Specifically, board policy 601.01, Rights and Responsibilities of Students states:

Sauk Valley Community College is committed to a philosophy that ensures the basic rights of students, such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to assemble, and the right of inquiry. In consideration of these rights, it is implicit that students should also accept those responsibilities that are inherent with attendance at a public community college.

Collectively, across the college, institutional commitment is visible and noted. The college efforts are not only seen and viewed from the senior leadership, but communicated outward in the community. Resources on websites are available and referenced, a new committee is being formed, updates are provided in local communications on campus and off, and then also our Board of Trustees is briefed on our efforts. Our new efforts with the Civic Engagement Committee will enhance all of our efforts as our institution's size allows for a committee to become a core part of its operations and communications.

II. LANDSCAPE

SVCC's National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLV) reports indicate a 37.6% voter rate in 2018 midterm election and 21% in 2014. The voting rate in the 2016 presidential election was 51.6%. The NSLV report will be used to learn student registration and voting rates in order to plan initiatives and programs that increase civic engagement.

Demographically, last year, Sauk Valley Community College had 1878 students enrolled in classes. There are 20 student organizations with around 175 student participants annually. Also, 77 of our students were veterans. 60% of our students are female and 40% are male. 56% of our students are full-time and 44% are part-time. 65% of the students are 24 years of age or younger, while the remaining 35% are above the age of 24. 79% of the students are white, 14% are hispanic/latino, 4% are African American, and 3% are undeclared.

50% of our students are pursuing a transfer degree, while 38% are pursuing a career/technical credential. The remaining 12% are course enrollees. Additionally, the college serves approximately 500 dual credit students each semester.

Civic engagement is embedded throughout our campus not only through our faculty, staff, and administration, but also through the curriculum. Each course requires a student to critically think and to challenge others, but we also have added competencies relating to responsibility and diversity of our communities to our general education philosophy statement, which reads as below and assessed in our learning outcomes:

General Education at Sauk Valley Community College prepares its graduates for the increasing demands of the workplace and the expanding responsibilities of the diverse local and global communities in which they will live and work. Many programs require courses in communications, mathematics, the physical and life sciences, the social and behavioral sciences, the humanities and fine arts, and personal health and development provide students with knowledge, competencies, and habits of mind conducive to living responsible, productive, and joyful lives.

Specifically, we have several courses that list civic engagement and responsibility. One example is that from our Political Science program, which offers 6 courses that are tied into the general education curricula above. These courses focus on civic engagement and responsibility at the local, state, federal, and international levels. SVCC not only provides a two-year associate degree in Political Science, but also encourages to transfer and seek further education through a bachelor's degree. The program outcomes for these 6 courses and the program are as follows:

Political Science is the study of the theory and practice of government and politics. Students of politics describe and analyze political systems and behavior. Baccalaureate programs offer courses in areas such as public administration, public law, international relations, comparative politics, political behavior, political philosophy, and U.S. government. Community college students interested in pursuing a bachelor's degree in political science are strongly encouraged to complete an Associate in Arts degree prior to transfer.

Going forward, COVID-19 will surely be a barrier as it relates to hosting public events and engaging students in person to educate them on the value of voting and civic responsibility. This allows us to have effective conversations with students in how to get more involved and lead within the campus and community. With the impact of COVID-19, students will not have the opportunity to observe the positive examples set by faculty administration and staff in person. When we are on campus, there is informal and formal interaction, supporting civic engagement.

Additionally, with enrollment down due to the pandemic, we also will be faced with possibly significantly less students, but also limited communications. Research is currently suggesting that many students may take a year off of college due to the pandemic and rethinking their need to attend college if it has to be offered remotely. So, internally we will struggle with less students and being able to traditionally communicate with them. Externally, we will face similar barriers in engaging the communities due to stay-at-home orders. As mentioned, less students coming to college right now will ultimately impact our initiatives to increase numbers.

The college will use its NSLVE data and its demographics to close equity gaps and increase voter turnout. Specifically, our associate degree-seeking students are voting at a nearly 5% higher rate than our certificate-seeking students. This will be added to our short-term goals with the upcoming election upon us. Additionally, we will seek to increase our voter participation among african-american students, which is 13% lesser than that of hispanic/latino students and 17% of white voters.

With mail-in voting now an option, we will be pursuing our visibility efforts to increase student voter registration through this new option. Recently, we just provided students with new registration information online and it was sent to all students. A local community partner also wrote a local newspaper article emphasizing this effort and our college's work.

III. LONG-TERM GOALS:

1. Increase voter participation by 5% by enhancing civic engagement activities for SVCC students.
2. Increase student awareness of early voting, voting by mail, and absentee voting through educational materials and communications.
3. Increase civic engagement honors projects by 5-10% and also have faculty Google Hangout sessions on civic engagement topics with students.

SHORT-TERM GOALS:

1. Provide students with access to information needed to increase civic learning and democratic engagement by providing at least three voter education events/activities.
2. Institutionalize the practice of the president sending a letter to all students every semester about the importance of being civically engaged and participating in elections.
3. A college committee focused on civic engagement will be created to support civic learning and democratic engagement. The college's Diversity and Inclusion Committee will also focus on civic engagement and include its emphasis as part of the committee's charge.
4. Increase voter participation rates among demographic groups, most notably those in the certificate-seeking group that are 5% lesser than that of associate-degree seeking students, as well full-time and part-time student rates that are also 5% lesser.

IV. STRATEGY:

1. The Student Government Association (SGA) and the Informed Student Voter Coalition Club (ISVCC) encourage civic engagement by offering voter information and voter registration activities.

SGA is responsible for representing the student body to the administration, sponsoring campus-wide activities, serving on college-wide committees, recognizing new student organizations, and allocating programming money to student organizations. The purpose of ISVCC is to create bi-partisan student voter awareness, offer opportunities for voter registration on campus, help students understand how the voting process works, and provide educational events/sessions/seminars on the importance of voting, on how political identity is established, and about upcoming elections.

Activities offered by SGA and ISVCC are included in the 2019-2020 Civic Engagement Activities table below. Marketing efforts included: Web ads, marquee, social media, emails and text alert announcements to

all students during key times, posters to advertise events and a web section that includes an online voting registration page and Illinois General Election important dates and deadlines.

In addition, the Association of Latin-American Students (ALAS) mission is to provide a better scholastic, cultural, political and social life for students and to bring more Latino students to SVCC. Members sponsor programs that focus on promoting and understanding diversity. Every year, ALAS members attend the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute's (USHLI) National Hispanic Leadership Conference in Chicago. This leadership conference gives ALAS members the opportunity to meet national policy-makers, university recruiters, and future employers so they can develop and/or strengthen their leadership skills.

To ensure succession and replacement of key members, each year, a Civic Engagement Committee will coordinate succession planning to ensure that students and organizations are included in the annual planning and activities. This will take place through the Civic Engagement Committee, which includes membership from various student organizations, students, faculty, staff, and administration. These individuals will be a part of the committee selection process that takes place each year collegewide by submitting ranking preferences for committee placement. SGA will have the opportunity to place their representatives into membership on the committee.

To ensure that our efforts are visible and widely communicated, both internally and externally, we will be working more with the media, including our student newspaper, the Skyhawk View. We will not only provide more visible reminders of our efforts, but also students' views and opinions to inspire civic engagement and voter participation. Furthermore, to ensure that our commitment is woven into the culture, our college has adapted the activities below as part of our event planning and marketing, as well as into our operational planning.

2019-2020 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE	LOCATION	DATE	PURPOSE OF ACTIVITY
Invite voter registrars to do voter registration at Fall SaukFest (welcome to the semester event)	Student Activities & SGA	SVCC West Mall	Sept. 4, 2019	Register to vote drive and SGA photo booth with voting signs.
Constitution day	Student Activities & SGA	Email and Cafeteria	Sept. 17, 2019	Encourage students to develop habits of citizenship. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email sent to all students with voting information links encouraging them to take part in the democratic process. ● Informational table with non-partisan online resources available for students to check their knowledge, take the citizenship test, play educational games, and explore the constitution. Students received a free folding constitution.
The Informed Student Voter	Club Advisors	SVCC	Nov. 1, 2019	The purpose of this organization is to create bi-

Coalition Club was formally established.				partisan student voter awareness.
Online voter registration email sent to each enrolled student.	Student Activities Coordinator	Email	Nov. 11, 2019	Promote voter registration.
Voter registration at Spring SaukFest (welcome to the semester event)	Student Activities & SGA	SVCC West Mall	Jan. 22, 2020	Register to vote drive.
“Polly Itical” voter awareness skit.	Informed Student Voter Coalition Club		Feb. 2020	Mini info sessions to increase student awareness on issues and stances so they may be informed voters. Voter registration available.
Census Information shared in the Student Activities Facebook Page	Student Activities	Facebook page	March & April 2020	Remind students about the importance of the 2020 Census.
Faculty Presentations	VP of Academics and Student Services	Zoom or Google Hangout	November 2020	Present presentations to students to promote civic engagement and social responsibility.
Honors Projects	Faculty and VP of Academics and Student Services		Fall and Spring 2020	As part of classes, emphasize honors projects for honors credit that promote civic engagement.
“SVCC Votes” logo	Student Activities & Marketing	SVCC	August 2020	SVCC logo created to promote important election dates on the college’s web page, social media, and emails to students.
Push voter information on important dates.	Student Activities, Marketing & Informed Student Voter Coalition Club	Email, text messages, marquees, social media posts.	Sept. 22, 2020 National Voter Registration Day Sat. Oct. 24, 2020 Vote Early Day Tue. Nov. 3, 2020 Election Day	Push voter registration and participation. Include official state voter information as well as https://allintovote.org/ .

V. REPORTING

The college’s action plan along with the NLSVE report will be made available to the public through the SVCC website and the ALL In Campus Democracy Challenge website. Administration and students will also collaborate on a presentation to the Board of Trustees to discuss their progress and new directions as part of continuous improvement on these efforts.

As the year progresses, Dr. Mandrell, the college’s VP of Academics and Student Services will provide updates the college in collegewide meetings, in President’s Cabinet meetings, and also on social media. There are also plans to partner with Sauk Valley Media to write guest column articles to increase our visibility of the efforts and engage the community. Within these communications, the website and its resources will continue to be shared.

We also plan to share this with dual credit students and faculty. While some of them may only be 17 years of age, it is critical that they are involved now to engage their participation next year and beyond. As part of marketing efforts in September, the roadway digital sign entering the campus has been dedicated to the college's efforts to boost voter participation. Additionally, Dr. Mandrell authored an article in the local newspapers about the college's ALL-IN efforts and how we are using the NSLVE data to create new initiatives and boost voter turnout.

VI. EVALUATION

Event attendance and NSLVE data will be utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts. The college will also work with students on developing surveys and other evaluations to gather data on how we can better serve and create initiatives that best serve students. The NSLVE data and a voter registration page emphasizing ALL IN has been created and can be found at <https://www.svcc.edu/students/student-government/voter-registration.html>

This page will be utilized for resources and data to assist students and the community to promote civic engagement. Additionally, it will provide a platform to become informed on elections and make a positive impact and contribution to the community at the local, state, and federal levels. Presentations by faculty and also projects by students could also be posted here to further engage and educate students.

To continue our evaluation efforts, we will also work with local election officials to determine how we can work even closer together to close gaps and increase participation. If allowable under COVID-19 precautions, the college would seek to host reflection meetings on voter participation and continuous improvement efforts. This data could also be added into the college's operational plans, which are the goals of the college by department and across the college.

Ultimately, the college seeks to gain not only pre-election data, but also reflection of its post-election data. This would be both quantitatively and qualitatively. Breaking down numbers will be key, but also talking through them will be vital to enhancing our efforts.