

South Mountain Community College

Voter Friendly Campus Strategic Plan

May 31, 2020

Executive Summary:

This action plan was developed in May 2020 by the Civic Engagement committee to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at South Mountain Community College. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over the next 18 months on and around our campus in Phoenix, Arizona. In order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize South Mountain Community College's commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement and youth participation in elections, key stakeholders within our organization will lead in these efforts.

Leadership:

Key stakeholders will provide leadership and direction in helping us meet our goals. This group is inclusive and diverse in terms of fostering leadership from different parts of the college, representing different perspectives and areas of expertise and is identified below.

Student and Administrative Services Divisions:

- Dr. Osaro Ighodaro, Vice President of Student Development
- Guy Goodman, Dean of Enrollment Services
- Lynnette Amparan, Program Coordinator
- Abigayle Benson, Student Services Analyst Senior.
- Buddy Cheeks, Director Student Life and Leadership
- Vanessa Logan, Program Specialist – Student Life and Leadership
- TBD, Student Government President
- Bruce Battle, PR Marketing Manager
- Kassandra Alvarez Borunda, PR Marketing Analyst
- Todd Eastin, Athletic Director

Learning Division:

- Dr. Clyne Namuo, Vice President of Learning
- Bernice Portervint, Dean of Innovation
- Dr. Cate McNamara, Residential Faculty - Library and Faculty Senate President Elect
- Dr. Jeannette Shaffer, Residential Faculty – Director Center for Teaching & Learning
- Christine Raack, Residential Faculty – English and Honors Program Coordinator
- Azra Mahmood, Residential Faculty – Communication
- Shalmeka Sweet, Residential Faculty – Counseling

These key stakeholders are all members of the college's newly formed Civic Engagement Committee. The establishment of this standing committee reflects the college's increased commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement.

Commitment:

The idea of a college-wide civic engagement committee was vetted through our shared governance process and approved. Despite the formal approval process, the college struggled getting membership and a routine meeting pattern. Throughout the Fall 2019,

we personally invited key stakeholders to discuss the importance of the work, and how we might better integrate better into our organizational identity. Our committee met twice during the Fall term bringing in fresh ideas and new opportunities. During the Spring 2020 semester, most of the founding members were able to meet virtually to brainstorm ideas related to supporting our short and long term goals.

In December 2019, our College President, Dr. Shari Olson signed off on the All-In challenge. Efforts within our college continue to gain momentum in better integrating our organizational commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement.

Our commitment is formalized through our mission, vision, and value statements – see: <https://www.southmountaincc.edu/about/vision-mission-values>

Landscape: (Institutional Data)

South Mountain Community College was recently awarded a ten-year accreditation renewal from the Higher Learning Commission (2020). Demographic data has been gleaned from these reports submitted by our Institutional Effectiveness department. Information related to the college, its profile, programs, etc. can be found at <https://www.southmountaincc.edu/about/accreditation>

Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Facts at a Glance:

Spring 2019 Student Enrollment (Headcount) 3534

Academic Load: 70% Part-time 30% Full-time

Ethnicity:

56% Hispanic
15% Black
15% White
3% American Indian

Gender:

57% Female
40% Male

Average Age: 25

First Generation: 71%

NSLVE Report Information:

According to latest report (2018) our efforts netted favorable results in both voter registration and voter turnout. While we saw vast improvements in our numbers, we still have room to improve and come up to national benchmarks.

- The 2018 voting rate for South Mountain Community College was 34.2%, up 22% from 2014. While this figure represents a vast improvement, South Mountain still lags behind the national benchmark-voting rate for all institutions by 4.9%. We see this as an opportunity for improvement.
- The 2018 voting rate of registered students saw a 29.7% increase over 2014 figures. This increase may represent a holistic improvement by the college to underscore the importance of voting as an act of civic engagement and the importance of being involved within the overall political landscape.
- The voter registration rate saw a 10.7% increase between 2014 and 2018.
- The voting rate increased across all age groups with the 18-21 year old group seeing the highest rate of change.

Short-Terms Goals:

1. **Increase student voter registration and voter turnout.**

Without really knowing the true impact of Covid-19 on our Fall term enrollment numbers, we are refraining from a specific percentage benchmark, but we want to continue to see an increase in both voter registration and voter turnout.

Support and assessment: Continuation of voter registration and Census education tables at our Learning Resource Center outside patio area throughout the Fall term. Buddy Cheeks, Director of Student Life and Leadership and his team lead these efforts.

Opportunities for faculty to have our outside partners come into classrooms and register students may be provided given Covid-19 guidelines for the college. The library will continue to have paper voter registration forms available to South Mountain students and community members. Covid-19 has opened up new opportunities for us to make changes within our standard practices. As such, we are examining ways in which we integrate information on voter registration into our online student advising appointments. We will rely on the NSLVE data reports to determine and assess improvements in these areas.

2. **See increases in student engagement for the Fall 2020 events we have planned around the 2020 election.**

At this time, our college is still diligently working on a plan to reopen the college – Summer 2020 classes are online and presently our college is still closed. We have scheduled events for Constitution week for an in-person event. These events may need to be altered to stay in line with CDC guidelines; so planning is underway to reshape how these events may take place in an alternative learning environment.

Support and assessment: The College will continue to provide venues that allow for open discussion on topics important to students, discussion over Presidential debates and state and local ballot propositions. The Democracy Wall project will continue to gather responses related to current events. Assessment measures will include attendance counts and participant responses. Dr. Cate McNamara will lead these efforts and continue to work with the civic engagement committee and marketing.

3. Increase faculty support and participation in supporting civic learning and democratic engagement with our students.

We are encouraged by increased faculty support in our efforts with civic engagement, but know that the more faculty support we have, the more students we can reach. Our goal is to get faculty and staff involved in a visual social media campaign demonstrating the importance of voter registration and voting.

Support and assessment: Dr. Jeannette Shaffer, Director of our Center for Teaching and Learning will provide leadership in this area. We anticipate reaching out to faculty and creating several short videos with social media #hashtags that promote voter registration, voting, Census participation, and other acts of civic engagement.

Long Term Goals:

1. Create an on-going social media presence and campaign to continually support civic learning and democratic engagement with our students. Sharing pictures and videos on social media with consistent #hashtags to demonstrate student volunteerism, support of community issues, and student leadership is critical. Success in this area will require committed efforts with our marketing department, leadership from the civic engagement committee and from student life and leadership.

2. Establishing partnerships with community stakeholders that foster additional support for students. As our demographic data reveals, our students are from under-represented communities who have outside barriers to their academic success. Finding partners to support students with mentor opportunities and internships balance out foundational support for student development.

3. Integrate a better understanding of diversity and tolerance with respect to national and global events within our learning environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled many inequities with our global and local communities. Unprecedented unemployment rates, discrepancies in access and level of medical care, impact on housing and basic human needs, immigrant status revealing who is and is not included within the social safety net – all of these cracks reveal a system that is not sustainable for all groups. In turn, tolerance erodes and anger builds over systemic disparities. Racial injustice continues to take place, as evidenced by the very recent riots affiliated with the death of George Floyd (May 25, 2020) and the response by political leaders remains lackluster at best. We recognize the totality of national events and the impact this has within our local

communities. We seek to gain a long-term strategy to better prepare our students in the wake of this landscape. No doubt, this takes a village to address and we know that our Counseling faculty will provide leadership in moving this forward.

We submit our strategic plan with the acknowledgement that specific activities with definitive outcomes may not be present. Our college remains closed for the summer session and while we work towards initializing its re-opening, we want to remain flexible in how we host events that support our short and long term goals that we have identified. Nevertheless, our commitment is resolute.

