

ALL IN Campus
Democracy
Challenge

TOMPKINS
CORTLAND
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Tompkins Cortland Community College Democratic
Engagement Action Plan:
2024-2025 Academic Year**

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I. Executive Summary

This report contains a summary of Tompkins Cortland Community College's current voter landscape and outlines the goals and strategies the leadership team will take to help increase voter participation among TC3 students.

The following groups will be leading this work at Tompkins Cortland Community College in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and student participation in elections:

- Undergraduate Students
- Faculty
- Student Affairs Staff

Background

Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) has grown from humble roots housed in a former high school located in Groton, New York, to a multi-faceted institution that is an integral part of the Tompkins County and Cortland County communities. Located on a 220-acre picturesque setting in the hills of Dryden, New York, TC3 is one of 30 community colleges in the State University of New York, and offers degrees, certificates, and microcredentials in more than 40 academic programs including nursing, business administration, criminal justice, chemical dependency counseling, new media, sport management, culinary arts, sustainable farming and food systems, and liberal arts programs, including education and general studies. The College has been a leader in educating students for a global society for more than 30 years, with a dedication to international education that has featured partnerships with education institutions in several counties and study abroad opportunities for our students. TC3 is known for its commitment to academic rigor, transferring graduates into top four-year universities, as well as its dedication to providing the focused workforce training business and industry need today. A hallmark of the College is its passionate commitment to providing comprehensive student support services, including a model on-campus food pantry, services for students from a wide array of backgrounds and abilities, and mental health services.

The planned activities outlined in this plan will be carried out over 2024-2025 Academic Year, on and around our campus in Dryden, New York.

President Kremenek has effectively communicated our institutional commitment to the principles of civic education, voter registration, and participation in voting to the campus community. She

addressed a Faculty meeting with this topic, followed by signing the AICDC pledge. President Kremenek also re-joined the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) data collection project of Tufts University, and communicated our commitment to our Board of Trustees, her Executive Council, the College Senate, and to local media outlets.

II. Leadership

President Amy Kremenek is the core leader of the ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE initiative at Tompkins Cortland Community College. Her preference was for the AICDC Committee to report directly to her and report back with a durable action plan to establish a Campus Voting Coalition. She charged Leah Tompkins and David Flaten, Ph.D. to co-chair the committee and to draw in a diverse cohort of members from across the campus, including faculty, staff, and students.

Campus Voting Coalition Co-Chairs David Flaten, Ph.D. and Leah Tompkins will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. They will be supported in this work by our committee:

Natalie Brewster is the Director of Residence Life and comes to TC3 with a background in Student Affairs and Fraternity and Sorority Life, with a commitment to increasing civic engagement for our residential students.

Emma Dennis is a commuter student who serves as the President of student Debate Club, member of the Student Government Association, and Treasurer of the student Sustainability Club. She returned to TC3 after time off to pursue her degree.

David Flaten teaches American History and American National Government, and within each course focuses on changes and challenges to voting and voting rights. In re-writing the SUNY curriculum to highlight civic engagement, he has re-emphasized the historical denial of voting rights, and the long battle to exercise them fought by citizens. He will be one of the authors of the Action Plan and will supply a teaching faculty perspective.

Eric Jenes is a reference and instruction librarian who specializes in working with social science and academic writing courses. A proponent of information literacy education, Eric empowers students to apply critical thinking skills to distinguish between reliable sources and misinformation. As a member of the committee, he will work to make sure students have reliable information and resources to make informed decisions at the polls in November.

Zachery Snyder is TC3's Director of Strategic Marketing and brings extensive background in public awareness, social media, web management, and various methods of outreach communications.

Leah Tompkins serves as the Assistant Director of Student Activities at TC3 and oversees all student Clubs and Organizations, assists in advisement of the Student Government Association, and works to provide co-curricular learning opportunities for all students. She will be co-

authoring parts of the Action Plan to provide perspective from the student organization and activity side of on-campus programming.

James Williamson is the Assistant Director of Athletics at TC3 and coaches the TC3 Men's Baseball Team. James will provide knowledge and insight into the student-athlete perspective and will help the committee in player involvement in on campus voter registration initiatives.

In February 2024, President Amy Kremenek, on behalf of the College, joined other institutions of higher learning in advancing non-partisan efforts to educate our communities on civic engagement and voting. President Kremenek charged our committee to create a durable campus action plan for 2024 and beyond. This committee built on earlier ad-hoc efforts at the College and moved Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) towards a durable and repeatable plan. Co-chairs Leah Tompkins and David Flaten, Ph.D. recommenced work on this project in conjunction with campus stakeholders to form a Campus Voting Coalition. The committee, joined by other faculty, staff, and student volunteers, will implement this action plan starting in August 2024. The committee will reconvene in late November 2024 to review effective/ineffective aspects of our plan. We will collectively provide recommendations for future plan iterations.

Meetings commenced in March 2024 to define our task as well as to brainstorm on how our campus could support voter education outreach efforts across our diverse communities. They communicated using face-to-face meetings, Microsoft Teams, email, and texts. The committee will refine the plan over the summer, and will reconvene in August, adding members as appropriate. After the elections in November, the committee will hold a final meeting to review the strengths and weaknesses of our action plan, make alterations, and warehouse the plan.

This coalition is diverse and inclusive of:

- Representation from different parts of campus, including student leadership
- Representation from different perspectives and areas of expertise
- Trusted leaders and organizations who support communities that are historically underrepresented in democracy
- Leaders who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus into our work

In addition to the structure laid down by the president, we as a committee are well aware that we have many institutional allies, who while not currently active in our committee, have volunteered to participate in aspects of our programming this fall. Several faculty and staff could not commit to committee service, but do already have a proven track record of service to our community through voter registration drives, voter education campaigns, the League of Women Voters presentations, and direct outreach to local political leaders. We also have several returning

students from our Student Government Association as well as student club leaders who have expressed interest in participating in activities once we have agreed on days and dates. We believe we have a village of people to call upon for action.

Our ongoing efforts to recruit stakeholders at our College includes outreach to our in-coming student trustee, incoming officers to our Student Government Association, our Athletics teams, Residential Life staff, the College Senate, as well as student club officers. We have commitments from multiple faculty and staff volunteers for tabling and other on-campus efforts.

III. Commitment

Mission, Vision, and Values

TC3 is dedicated to the core ideas of our Mission, Vision and Values statement:

- **Our Mission:** We serve our community by meeting educational needs, creating an environment for student success, and preparing our students and ourselves for citizenship in a global society.
- **Our Vision:** To see strengths and unique potential in every person. To inspire people to make the courageous choice to learn, grow, and serve.
- **Our Values:**
 - **Learning**
 - Learning is the most important outcome of our work. We are all learners and we know that teaching and learning happen both inside and outside the classroom. Each of us is responsible for our own learning and for supporting the learning of others.
 - **Excellence**
 - Exceptional teaching, programs, and services are critical to our success. We believe that excellence must be built on a foundation of integrity, honesty, and academic freedom. We achieve it by focusing on strengths, learning from experiences, and assessing our work.
 - **Opportunity**
 - Education transforms lives. We value access to education as a fundamental right. Our students start here and go anywhere.
 - **Innovation**
 - Change creates vitality. We value active pursuit of thoughtful innovation and continuous improvement. We empower and challenge ourselves to create, innovate, take risks, and nurture an environment of trust.
 - **Relationships**
 - Relationships are the heart of our work. We value a caring, supportive community built on integrity, openness, honesty and respect. Our internal and external relationships are flexible, collaborative, and interdependent.
 - **Diversity**
 - Diversity enriches our learning. We embrace diversity in all of its contexts, including strengths, perspectives, and people. We seek to increase our capacity to understand issues of difference, power, and privilege and to constructively resolve conflict.

TC3 challenges all students to apply themselves, and to transform their communities, and selves. Thoughtful comprehension of the realities of our world demand action to not only become better global citizens, but to also to take responsibility for transforming the world through applied education.

Previous Academic Engagement with Voting and Civic Engagement

Starting in 2022, the SUNY system began to implement a significant commitment to civic engagement and education within the mandated SUNY General Education Program. Specific language was added to our Master Course Syllabus (MCS) governing several introductory survey courses in history and political science. New MCS for our American History sequence (HSTY 201/202) as well as within American National Government political science course (POSC 103) were each crafted to address in a specific manner this initiative. Ultimately within the American HSTY sequence, we created a student learning outcome (SLO) to: “Describe the varying abilities of individuals to participate in civic engagement based on race, gender and economic class.” A very similar SLO was created for our World History sequence (HSTY 116/117) as well.

Colleagues in each half of the survey course then are obligated to create some curricula that apply directly to the changing dynamics of elections, parties, voting etc. that have been applied differently over time.

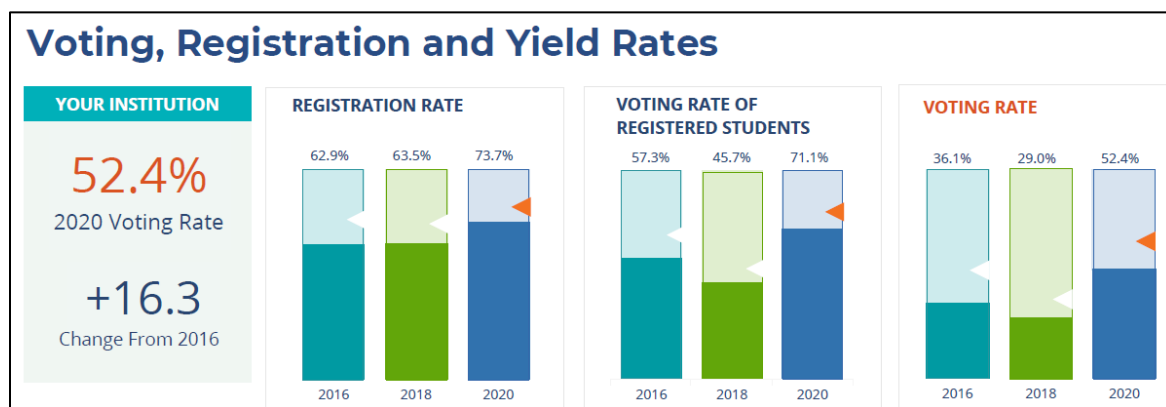
That standard SLO is applied to all core offerings in history, both on campus and with our substantial cohort of CollegeNow high school colleagues. We thus have the SLO imbedded in an essential course, exposing the vast majority of our students, full-time and part-time, to this core element of the SUNY General Education requirement.

Previous Non-Academic Engagement

For many years, TC3 has boasted a robust tabling effort through TC3 Votes to garner greater voter participation. Campus leaders have been supportive of voting, and put development into materials. There have also been specific drives surrounding civic holidays such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day.

IV. Landscape

To collect a snapshot of the participation of TC3 students in recent elections, the College shared the NSLVE data report from 2021 about our campus that covered the 2016, 2018, and 2020 election cycles. The full report has been shared with the committee. As a community college with both resident and commuter populations, we have a constantly changing dynamic, which opens the door to unique campaigns with a new audience every year.



2020 NSLVE Tompkins Cortland Report (a)

The campus registration rates (total percentage of those eligible that actually registered) varied in those three cycles, provided here for each election in order: 62.9%, 63.5%, 73.7%. This indicates that at least a quarter of all eligible voters in any of these cycles did not register, while in some cycles over 34% of our students were unregistered. This indicator provides a clear target, assuming we would strive for 100% registration of all eligible voters. Seeing swings from cycle to cycle indicates an opportunity to realize higher registration percentages through strategic outreach as a first step.

The next data point to focus upon, again for the same three election cycles, are to look at the yield rates. This yield rate is the number of registered voters who actually voted. This measure factors out those eligible who did not register. Looking at this section of data, TC3 had yield rates of 57.3%, 45.7%, and 71.1%. Each of these data points indicates a disconnect. We have students registered who did not vote, at rates that varied from roughly 29% to nearly 55%. This again indicates that registration is not enough to be a predictor of actual voting---and offers another avenue to educate and support the registered voter and get them to vote.

In comparing TC3 voting to other public 2-year institutions on presidential election year cycles (factoring out 2018) TC3 percentages are 36% and 52% while national voting averages were 48% and 56%.

In reviewing the report there is three salient features to provide some clear aspirational goals for our work. First, there is the opportunity to increase student registration rates. Second, there is a clear case to be made for educating and assisting the registered voters to participate in this year's election. Third: statistically TC3 has lower voting rates than comparable schools, running between 4% and 12% below national averages. All of this data assists us by revealing key aspects of the reality of our campus.

As we consider the above, we need to be mindful of other aspects demonstrated in the NSLVE data, chiefly differences in registration and voting patterns by age and gender. There is some variability, but two clear patterns emerge from the data on TC3. First, following nationwide trends women tend to vote at higher rates than men, and voters over 40 have higher participation than those under 40. A stark contrast emerges when seeing those 21 and under vote at rates under 46% while those over 50 vote at rates closer to 78%.

When we digest some of the data based on the student's program of study, there are some clear trends to denote as well, and these could be useful in targeted outreach to courses.

By Age Group			
	2016	2018	2020
18-21	28%	21%	46%
22-24	31%	32%	50%
25-29	44%	33%	52%
30-39	53%	43%	61%
40-49	59%	42%	64%
50+	64%	47%	78%

2020 NSLVE Tompkins Cortland Report (b)

V. Goals

Before setting our civic learning and democratic engagement goals on campus, we audited challenges facing get out the vote efforts:

- No person whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- No current ways to communicate voting information to our students.
- No sustainable or consistent funding for voting efforts

We also know our campus faces the following challenges externally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- No working relationship with our local election office.
- No working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement.

We know our campus has the following strengths when we approach our voter engagement work:

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan mention civic learning and democratic engagement.
- We have a coalition of people who are positioned to implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have a budding communication plan for voting information for our students.

With this in mind, we have set the three goals that we would like to achieve over the next academic year:

1. Increase voting awareness through student-focused events in heavily trafficked on-campus student areas.
2. Increase voter registration rates through a targeted outreach campaign that heavily engages the Student Government Association and student clubs.
3. Establish a set of accessible voting education resources on the public TC3-facing website and in-person in the Library.

We have also set three goals that we would like to achieve over the next five years:

1. Create a permanent home for voting education at Tompkins Cortland within co-curricular engagement efforts and the academic curriculum.
2. Maintain voting rates consistent with national averages.
3. Set in place plans for events around local and national elections to allow students the opportunity to engage with future elections.

VI. Strategy

Below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months and years.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** in the **short term** (within the next year):

- Tabling at student events, hosting voter registration tables, providing information on how to vote in New York State

These are tactics that we **plan to do** in the **short term**:

- Bring in outside nonprofits and civic groups like the League of Women Voters to host events.
- Table routinely in trafficked student spaces about voter registration.
- Engage the TC3 Debate Club in a mock debate, watch party, or other similar event.

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **short term**:

- Van trips to local historic election sites, bring in Student Government and Student Leaders for events.
- Hire work-study students to help support on-campus programming.
- Busing to poll sites on election day and other key early voting days as relevant.
- Provide contests and opportunities to engage around the topic of voting.
- Develop a public awareness campaign surrounding key voting landmarks for social media, campus signage, and other guerilla tactics.
- Organize “brown bag” lunches amongst TC3 faculty and staff about the role we can take in helping our students vote.
- Offer TC3 up as a debate site for local politicians

These are tactics that we **are already doing** for the **long term** (beyond the next year):

- Voter registration at Get Connected Fair, New Student Orientation Resource Fair, and new student move-in.

These are tactics that we **want to do** in the **long term**:

- Purchase supplies and materials to be housed in Student Activities and reused.
- Build a repository with the TC3 Library for any time student access.

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **long term**:

- Continue committee meetings to further reflect and evaluate progress and evolve.

As we fill in our calendar of events, there are several key dates we have in mind for specific programming:

In the month of August:

Sport team moving in day (mid-August)

New student move in day and Welcome Event (Friday, August 23)

New Student Orientation and Resource Fair (Saturday, August 24 and Sunday August 25)

In the month of September

Get Connected Fair (Wednesday, September 4)

TC3 Celebrates the US Constitution Week (Monday- Friday 9-13, then Monday- Tuesday 16-17)

Van trip to Auburn, NY (Harriet Tubman and William Seward Houses/Museums) 14 September

US Constitution Day September 17

Van trip to Seneca Falls, NY Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 (September 21)

In the month of October

National Voter Education Week (October 7-11)

New York State Voter Registration Application Deadline (October 26)

Vote Early Day (October 29)

In the month of November

Election Hero Day (Monday 4)

Election Day (Tuesday 5)

Campus Watch Party (Tuesday 5)

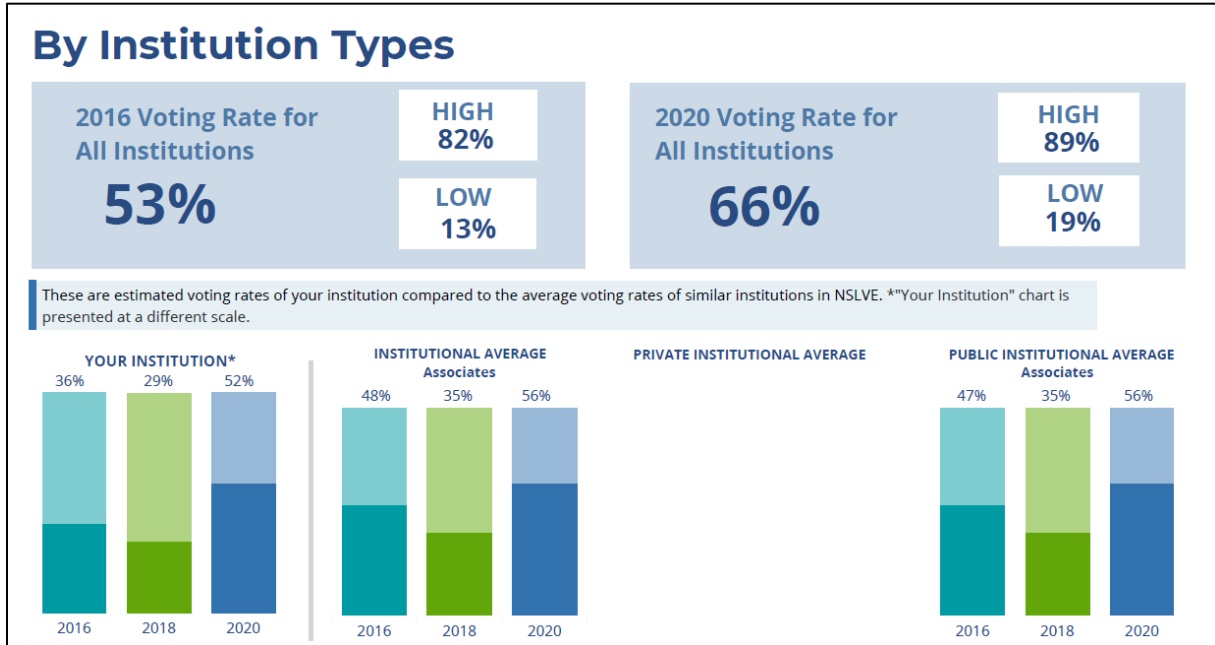
Week of November 19 Action Plan Committee Meeting to create report.

Tompkins Cortland's Student Government Association and student clubs and organizations will participate in campus tabling opportunities and awareness events throughout the Fall 2024 semester.

VII. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

Our campus has access to our National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data for 2020. In 2020 our registration rate was 74. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased.

In 2020, our voting rate was 52 and our voting rate among registered students was 71. During this year, our voting rate was lower than the national average.



2020 NSLVE Tompkins Cortland Report (c)

VIII. Reporting & Evaluation

We plan to share this Action Plan internally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Email to members of our campus coalition
- Email to the President

We plan to share this Action Plan externally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Post on the campus website

We will collect feedback on this plan by:

- Sending a post-election survey to students

We plan to evaluate our success by:

- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year
- Seeking out feedback throughout the action planning process from people outside of our action planning team.

In Fall 2024, our goal is to expand the Campus Voting Coalition and enact the strategies previously listed to increase voter registration and rates. Once we have completed these strategies, the committee will reconvene to generate a report and evaluate the success rate of our actions. This report will be shared with President Amy Kremenek and campus stakeholders in the Campus Voting Coalition. The committee has received a one-time Presidential Initiative Grant to assist in implementing the AICDC Action Plan. Co-Chair Leah Tompkins is responsible for submitting a comprehensive evaluation and report to the Tompkins Cortland Community College Foundation upon completion of the efforts.