



Democracy Challenge Action Plan 2024

Prepared by the Center for Civic Advancement
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I. Executive Summary

This Action Plan was developed by the Center for Civic Advancement (CCA) on behalf of Tusculum University. In support of Tusculum University's mission of providing an education rich in civic engagement, the CCA provides engagement opportunities for students and the greater university community through civic programming, community partnerships, and service opportunities. This work includes organizing the political engagement and democratic participation efforts, including the organization of the civic holidays, such as Constitution Day, Voter Registration Day, and Voter Education week. The Center also partners with other organizations and groups on campus to further expand civic participation and support democratic education, including Student Affairs and the College of Civic and Liberal Arts (CCLA).

The purpose of this Democracy Challenge Action Plan is to consolidate the efforts across the university surrounding democratic participation and action leading up to and during the 2024 presidential election cycle. We seek to accomplish the following with this action plan:

- increase the number students registered to vote
- increase student participation for civic engagement events
- increase the diversity of organizations and units across campus involved in the implementation of these events
- increase the outreach and engagement between the university and the community in the support of non-partisan civic education

The primary location for the implementation of this action plan will take place on Tusculum University's residential campus in Greeneville, Tennessee. The University's current enrollment is around 1,200 students, including about 250 online graduate and undergraduate students. Most of the events and efforts indicated in this plan will be in-person and on-campus. However, as needed online and/ or hybrid components will be integrated to better accommodate and increase access, potential involvement, and execution. For example, the Democracy Forums, an initiative between CCLA, the Office of the President, and the CCA, will invite local, state, and Congressional candidates for office to answer student questions. If a candidate cannot come to campus, but is still interested in participating, an online forum could be hosted, either as a hybrid or fully-online event. Additionally, during the fall semester for Voter Registration Day and Voter Education Week, the CCA shared sources through their social media platforms on voter registration and supportive information to accommodate those students that might miss the table events on campus. These efforts will continue for the 2024 election cycle.

The mission of Tusculum University is:

Building on a rich Presbyterian heritage and a pioneering spirit, Tusculum University provides an active and experiential education within a caring Christian environment to inspire civic engagement, enrich personal lives, and equip career-ready professionals.

As noted, the CCA directly supports a core component of the University's mission: to inspire civic engagement. But the efforts presented by this Democracy Challenge Action plan and the integration of other units across the university to accomplish these tasks indicates additional support of the University's mission and values. This includes a commitment for an active and experiential education. For example, for the 2023 fall semester, several American Governments classes took part in civic engagement case studies that had students plan and organize two of the national civic holidays: Constitution Day and Voter Education Day. These kinds of real-world case studies demonstrate that a civics education and institutional knowledge about government structures does not nor should not remain in the classroom, but can be integrated to support a healthy civic life and promote participation in democracy. We believe that participating in direct civic action is one way to enrich our personal lives, but it is also our hope that by giving students experience in organizing and planning these kinds of events, these are skills that they can take with them whether that is in their future careers, or as informed citizens. Civic engagement case studies will also be integrated into select class curriculum for the Political Science Program Spring 2024 and Fall 2024.

Additionally, the work presented here corresponds directly to the following components of Tusculum University's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan:

- Integrate civic engagement more fully into the student experience
- Integrate civic engagement more robustly across campus
- Nurture student development of civic engagement – students who care about and have the tools to impact their communities

While this action plan focuses on the short term goals identified above (e.g. increase the number students registered to vote, increase student participation for civic engagement events, etc.), given the value of civic engagement to the University, as seen in both its mission and strategic plan, these objectives are a part of long-term goals set forth by the University to support, encourage, and inspire civic engagement as part of its identity and culture.

This action plan will begin with the 2024 Spring Semester in January and will end December 2024. Opportunities to update or add to this plan will be at the start of each of these semesters, and is dependent on the additional parties' commitment to the designated programming and resources. The implementation of this action plan will be overseen by the Center of Civic

Advancement and its director. The Director will be in charge of following the timeline and details of this plan, and will connect with each of these coalition members identified to ensure that individual and collaborative programming, events, and resources are produced throughout the two semesters this plan will be in action.

An important component of this plan is that it strives to include different plans of study and majors. For instance, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Joel Shelton will speak on how to read political polls and the data sets that go into them as part of Voter Education Week in October 2024. This event would not just be open to the university, but the wider community to help promote data literacy and civic knowledge. The overall goal for the identification of these various groups is to ensure that this plan is equitable and includes a diverse audience.

Finally, having the work of non-partisan democratic education and voter registration fall under the CCA is also advantageous for cultivating diversity of involvement on campus. While the Director does teach for the Political Science Program, the Center itself is not housed within a particular college and reports directly to the Provost. There is opportunity for the CCA to be the centralized node for many of the efforts that surround this work for the university. Additionally, the Center also houses the University's chapter of the national Bonner Leader program. Founded by Bertram F. Bonner and his wife Corella Allen Bonner, the Bonner Foundation is a national philanthropic organization based in Princeton, New Jersey. In 1997, the Foundation launched the Bonner Leader Program designed to encourage students to develop lives of service, civic engagement, and social justice. This is a diverse student group within majors and departments throughout the University that are committed to service and civic engagement. In recent years it has been the Bonner Leaders that have primarily planned and organized efforts for the civic holidays, voter education, and voter registration efforts. For example, Estefania Juarez, the 2022-23 Bonner Outreach Chair, led the voting education and registration efforts on campus as her major project with the Center for Civic Advancement. Juarez organized voting registration drives, provided information about the Tennessee Constitutional Amendment changes during voter education week, and organized a community and campus discussion with local Greeneville Alderwoman. For her individual efforts, Juarez was individually recognized by ALL IN Campus Democracy for helping to increase nonpartisan student voter participation, and selected to the 2023 ALL IN Student Voting Honor Roll in April 2023.

While it is our plan to integrate additional students and student groups into this work, the work completed by the Bonners through the CCA has been instrumental in laying the foundation for this work at Tusculum University. That is not to say that the Center does not face challenges. Due to turnover in the positions of director and assistant director, and cuts to the infrastructure of the Center, we face issues when it comes to institutional knowledge, as well as capacity and

resources. Additionally, after Juarez and other key senior Bonner Leaders graduated in May 2023 there does not seem to be as much interest by a student leader or another student group to fill the vacuum that was left. However, despite these challenges, the Center is resolved in its commitment to supporting democratic civic engagement. We hope that as we move forward with the planning and implementation of this action plan, that student interest will be renewed surrounding the 2024 Presidential Cycle. By also strengthening our own efforts as an institution, it will help to mitigate these losses in the future as students graduate and turnover for student leadership inevitably cycles again. We see this upcoming election cycle as an opportunity to build off our recent and efforts and recognitions by ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, including:

1. Most Engaged Campuses for College Student Voting recognition
2. Bronze seal for having a student voting rate between 50 percent and 59 percent in the 2020 elections.
3. 2023-2024 Voter Friendly Campus status

II. Leadership & Strategy

The coalition for this action plan will include the following units and campus groups:

1. Academic Departments and Faculty
 - a. College of Civic & Liberal Arts
 - i. Dean for the College of Civic & Liberal Arts and Associate Professor of English, Wayne Thomas
 - ii. Department of English
 - iii. Department of Social Sciences
 1. Criminal Justice
 - a. Program Coordinator & Associate Professor of Criminal Justice, Mikaela Cooney
 2. Political Science
 - a. Chair of Social Sciences & Professor of Political Science, Troy Goodale
 - b. Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, Shelby Ward
 3. Sociology
 - a. Assistant Professor of Sociology, Aja Matthews
 - b. College of Science, Technology, & Mathematics
 - i. Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Joel Shelton
 - c. OREN 105 The Tusculum Experience - Instructors
2. Administrative Units and Personnel

- a. Office of the President
 - i. President Scott Hummel, PhD
 - b. Office of the Provost
 - i. Provost Tricia Hunsader, PhD
 - ii. Richard A Miller, Associate Vice President for Institutional Research & Effectiveness
 - c. Office of Communication and Marketing
 - i. Jim Wozniak, Director of Communications and Marketing
 - d. Center for Civic Advancement
 - i. Director, Shelby Ward, PhD
 - ii. Assistant Director, Amanda Delbridge
 - e. Office of Student Affairs
 - i. Claire Hensley, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Retention
 - ii. Charles Sutton, Dean of Students
 - f. Thomas J. Garland University Library
 - i. Kathy Hipps, Library Director
 - ii. Lelia Dykes, Assistant Library Director/ Reference & Instruction Librarian
3. Student Organizations and Groups
- a. Black Student Union
 - i. Steve Anderson, Co-Sponsor and Multicultural Retention Specialist
 - b. Bonner Leaders
 - c. Education Club
 - i. Lillian Burchnell, Sponsor and Administrative Assistant
 - d. Pioneer Peers and Orientation Leaders
 - e. Political Science Classes
 - i. POLS 110 American Government
 - ii. POLS 240 Public Policy
 - iii. POLS 315 Congress and Public Policy
 - iv. SVLN 354 Service Learning in East Tennessee
 - f. Service Learning Class
4. Tusculum will be a registered organization with the following non-partisan groups and platforms:
- a. ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
 - b. Ask Every Student
 - c. Campus Vote Project
 - d. Civic Holidays:
 - i. Constitution Day

- ii. National Voter Registration Day
- iii. National Voter Education Week
- iv. Vote Early Day
- e. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement
- f. Students Learn Students Vote
- g. Tennessee Campus Democracy Network

While the primary unit for democratic action work is the Center for Civic Advancement at Tusculum University, in an effort to increase student participation for civic engagement events and increase the diversity of organizations and units across campus involved in the implementation of these events, the CCA has identified units and programs already in place that could easily integrate civic and democratic engagement initiatives into. This is especially important, because while the budgets for the CCA and the university can cover programming supplies, there is not currently additional compensation for students or staff to work on these initiatives.



Therefore, it is imperative that what be asked of these different units and personnel not exceed what they would be already compensated for in their normal work loads. Upper administration will indicate what honorariums are given to any local election office representatives, community members, or public office candidates that may come to campus as part of the Democracy Forums events. The Center will help to develop and plan many of the events for the 2024 democracy challenge, but for some events will work collaboratively with others to develop events or programming, or will track the efforts developed by others. The breakdown of programming by unit is below, as well as their civic engagement identifier, pulled from the “Social Change

Wheel” developed by the Iowa & Minnesota Campus Compact (Figure 1).¹ Additionally, the Center will work to identify other units and groups on campus that are not currently in this list that would be valuable additions, such as the Department of History, Student Support Services, Environmental Science Program.

1. New Student and Orientation Efforts

a. *Actions:*

- i. Provide new students information on registering to vote in Tennessee when they check-in during move-in day, the beginning of Pioneer WOW (Welcome Orientation Week)
- ii. Provide OREN 105 students materials on how to register, whose on the ballot, candidate positions, ballot measures, and the importance of civic engagement and democratic participation. These materials will be developed as part civic engagement case studies in POLS 110 American Government, POLS 240 Public Policy, POLS 315 Congress and Public Policy, SVLN 354 Service Learning in East Tennessee during the Spring 2024 semester, and then can be shared at the start of the Fall 2024 semester.

b. *Notes:*

- i. Student Affairs provided information on how to register to vote in Tennessee during Pioneer WOW checkin in the Fall 2023, and we would like to continue with this moving forward.
- ii. All in-coming Tusculum students are required to take Orientation - OREN 105 The Tusculum Experience, this provides an opportunity to connect with students early that might not have the civic literacy to know how to vote, but also is another chance to introduce students to the culture of civic engagement on campus. Dean for the College of Civic & Liberal Arts, Wayne Thomas is in charge of the OREN 105 curriculum, and will be making changes for the Fall 2024 classes. This is a good time to introduce voting and democratic participation as part of the already established civic engagement unit in the class.
- iii. The focus on new students and orientation is a key initiative of the *Ask Every Student* framework. *Ask Every Student* already provides templates and materials that will be helpful for these initiatives, including the [Virtual Voter Info Walkthrough Template](#), which can be embedded in the class

¹ “Social Change Wheel – Iowa & Minnesota Campus Compact.” Accessed November 7, 2023. <https://iamncampuscompact.org/resources/social-change-wheel/>.

Canvas site or just shared by the instructor. But the American Government and Service Learning classes will also develop materials with information specific to state and local elections. Having students take charge of developing these materials further asks them to consider their own civic participation, as well as gain knowledge, authority, and confidence over the process and election information.

- c. *Coalition Members:*
 - i. Pioneer WOW
 - 1. Office of Student Affairs: Claire Hensley, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Retention & Charles Sutton, Dean of Students
 - ii. OREN 105 Curriculum
 - 1. Dean for the College of Civic & Liberal Arts and Associate Professor of English, Wayne Thomas:
 - 2. OREN 105 The Tusculum Experience - Instructors
 - iii. Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, Shelby Ward: instructor for American Government, Public Policy, and Service Learning
 - iv. Pioneer Peers and Orientation Leaders
- d. *Civic Engagement Identifiers:*
 - i. Campus Based Strategies: **Student Involvement and Leadership Development**; **Information, Digital, and Media Literacies**; **Voicing the Public Purposes of Higher Education**; **Engaged Scholarship and Participatory Research**; **Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning**
 - ii. Social Change: **Advocacy and Raising Awareness**; **Community Building**; **Voting and Formal Political Activities**

2. Democracy Forums

- a. Actions: Congressional, state, and local candidates will be invited to campus, either in-person or virtually, as a forum series to introduce themselves and their candidacy, as well as answer student questions. Student questions will be previously submitted and chosen by the forum committee. This will help to ensure a variety of questions are asked from across different majors and student life. We also want the spirit of these forums to be a place of information and learning, and not debate. If possible, the forums would begin in the 2024 Spring Semester and continue in the 2024 Fall Semester.
- b. Notes:
 - i. The forum committee will meet in January 2024 before the start of classes to begin planning. The current memes are listed under Coalition Members, but additional members may be identified, including the Chair of Social

Sciences & Professor of Political Science, Troy Goodale, as well as the recruitment of a student or student representatives.

- ii. East Tennessee is a politically Conservative and Republican area. For example, Greene County, where Tusculum is located voted for then President Trump in the 2020 election close to 80%. All surrounding counties in east Tennessee also voted for the Republican nominee.² In order to foster and support a non-partisan Democracy Forum, the committee may have to be proactive about equal representation in the forum. For example, if Democratic candidates are not interested in joining, the committee could reach out to the Greene County Democratic Party would be interested in joining.
- iii. *Coalition Members:*
 1. President Scott Hummel, PhD
 2. Provost Tricia Hunsader, PhD
 3. Center for Civic Advancement
 - a. Director, Shelby Ward, PhD
 - b. Assistant Director, Amanda Delbridge
 4. Dean for the College of Civic & Liberal Arts and Associate Professor of English, Wayne Thomas
- iv. *Civic Engagement Identifiers:*
 1. Campus Based Strategies: **Community Building and Partnerships**; **Voicing the Public Purposes of Higher Education**; **Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning**
 2. Social Change: **Deliberative and Reflective Dialogue**; **Advocacy and Raising Awareness**; **Community Building**; **Voting and Formal Political Activities**

3. Constitution Day

- a. *Action:* Host a Constitution Day event on September 17, 2024. The event will be developed and organized by POLS 110 American Government Students and / or the Bonner Leader Program. Past events have included tabling a Constitution quiz with prizes, showing *Hamilton* on the quad, and a Constitution and American Government Kahoot with prizes and coffee.
- b. *Notes:*
 - i. In the past the Bonner Leaders have been in charge of the Constitution Day event, in order to diversify the kinds of groups working on

² "Tennessee Presidential Election Results | The Greenville News." Accessed December 12, 2023. <https://www.greenvilleonline.com/elections/results/race/2020-11-03-presidential-TN-0/>.

democratic engagement on campus, it was given as a civic engagement case study as part of one of Dr. Ward's American Government classes. In addition to getting more students involved in civic life, integrating this project as class work provides an opportunity for engaged and experiential learning where students can see real-world results. Students can include this experience on their resumes as Constitution Day Planning Committee Members.

- ii. Because Voter Registration Day and Constitution Day are on the same day in 2024 these events could be combined. This event should be well advertised throughout the University.

c. *Coalition Members:*

- i. Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies - Political Science Program, Shelby Ward, PhD
- ii. POLS 110 American Government students OR Bonner Leader Program

d. *Civic Engagement Identifiers:*

- i. Campus Based Strategies: **Student Involvement and Leadership Development**; **Information, Digital, and Media Literacies**; **Cultivating Lifelong Learners and Global Citizens**; **Voicing the Public Purposes of Higher Education**; **Engaged Scholarship and Participatory Research**; **Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning**; **Civic-Minded Career Readiness**
- ii. Social Change: **Advocacy and Raising Awareness**; **Community Building**; **Volunteering and Direct Service**

4. **Voter Registration Day**

- a. *Action:* Host a voter registration drive for Voter Registration Day, September 17, 2024. The event will be developed and organized by POLS 110 American Government Students and / or the Bonner Leader Program to get students registered to vote or provide information about how to register to vote.

b. *Notes:*

- i. In the past the Bonner Leaders have been in charge of Voter Registration Day, in order to diversify the kinds of groups working on democratic engagement on campus, it was given as a civic engagement case study as part of one of Dr. Ward's American Government classes. In addition to getting more students involved in civic life, integrating this project as class work provides an opportunity for engaged and experiential learning where students can see real-world results. Students can include this experience on their resumes as Voter Registration Day Volunteers.

- ii. One key drawback to *only* having Voter Registration Day run by the class, is that we were restrained to the time of the class itself, and only able to have about a two-hour event. If we can recruit additional students and student groups to participate in the event we could extend the event time. Ideally for the 2024 election cycle we would like to have enough students interested to go from 9am-5pm.
- iii. Additionally, because of similar limitations we were only able to get students registered online for the state of Tennessee at the 2023 Voter Registration Day. Although each student with their laptop also had links available to help check voter registration status and to help find the registration link for other states, as well. For the 2024 election cycle, we would like to extend our capacity to offer paper registration. This would require additional training leading up to the event.
- iv. For the 2023 event we had a sign-in sheet to try and capture how many students stopped by the event (a total of 24 students signed in), but we did not capture the number of students that were successfully registered to vote at the event itself. We need to ensure that this number is counted for the next event.
- v. Because Voter Registration Day and Constitution Day are on the same day in 2024 these events could be combined. This event should be well advertised throughout the University.
- c. *Coalition Members:*
 - i. Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies - Political Science Program, Shelby Ward, PhD
 - ii. POLS 110 American Government students AND / OR Bonner Leader Program
 - iii. Additional student groups to be identified
- d. *Civic Engagement Identifiers:*
 - i. Campus Based Strategies: **Student Involvement and Leadership Development**; **Information, Digital, and Media Literacies**; **Cultivating Lifelong Learners and Global Citizens**; **Voicing the Public Purposes of Higher Education**; **Engaged Scholarship and Participatory Research**; **Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning**; **Civic-Minded Career Readiness**
 - ii. Social Change: **Advocacy and Raising Awareness**; **Community Building**; **Voting and Formal Political Activities**; **Volunteering and Direct Service**;

5. Voter Education Week

- a. *Actions:*

- i. Have table events during Voter Education Week, the first week of October, to provide information about the history of voting rights, materials on how to register, information about who's on the ballot, candidate positions, ballot measures, and the importance of civic engagement and democratic participation. The goal is to have a different student group at a table each day of Voter Education Week
- ii. Host a lecture / speaking event for voter education. For the Fall 2024 Voter Education Week event, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Joel Shelton will speak on how to read political polls. Title TBD.

b. Notes:

- i. Student groups that have participated in past Voter Education Week table events, or have expressed interest in doing so, include: Bonner Leaders, Political Science majors, Education Club, Black Student Union. Additional student groups that might be interested include the History Club, the Debate Club, Conservation Core, or other majors such as Mathematics and Economics (connected to the speaker event).
- ii. Past speaker events surrounding Voter Education Week have extended the invitation to the community, ideally the speaker event of 2024 would also invite and engage community members, as well as Tusculum faculty, students, and staff.

c. Coalition Members:

- i. Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies - Political Science Program & Director of the Center for Civic Advancement, Shelby Ward, PhD
- ii. Student Groups
- iii. Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Joel Shelton

d. Civic Engagement Identifiers:

- i. Campus Based Strategies: **Community Building and Partnerships**; **Student Involvement and Leadership Development**; **Information, Digital, and Media Literacies**; **Voicing the Public Purposes of Higher Education**; **Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning**;
- ii. Social Change: **Advocacy and Raising Awareness**; **Community Building**; **Voting and Formal Political Activities**; **Volunteering and Direct Service**;

6. Vote Early Day

- a. *Action:* Hold a virtual event for Vote Early Day with reminders and resources leading up to the date
- b. *Notes:* In 2023 information and reminders for Vote Early Day were only shared through the Bonner Leaders and the Center for Civic Advancement, this year we

would like to extend these efforts to additional platforms at the University to reach more students, including reminders in the Pioneer Press (a weekly university newsletter) and Student Affairs.

- c. *Coalition Members:*
 - i. Center for Civic Advancement
 - ii. Bonner Leader Program
 - iii. Student Affairs
 - d. *Civic Engagement Identifiers:*
 - i. *Campus Based Strategies:* Student Involvement and Leadership Development; Information, Digital, and Media Literacies; Voicing the Public Purposes of Higher Education;
 - ii. Social Change: Advocacy and Raising Awareness; Voting and Formal Political Activities;
- 7. Heritage Recognition Months**
- a. *Action:* Provide voting information and registration materials at the Heritage Month events held in the Spring and Fall semesters of 2024. Events that have previously been held or discussed for future options include:
 - i. February 2024: Black History Month
 - 1. African American Read-In
 - ii. October 2024: Hispanic Heritage Month
 - iii. November 2024: Native American Heritage Month
 - b. *Notes:*
 - i. By providing information on voting or opportunities for student engagement during these events (i.e. voter registration and voter education work, or student leadership opportunities) for the upcoming election cycle can help connect theory to practice. These events also provide opportunities to connect and learn about the history of voting rights and citizenship for many marginalized groups in the United States.
 - ii. Partnering with those that organize these events, also provides greater diversity of the groups involved in the democratic engagement of this action plan.
 - c. *Coalition Members:*
 - i. Center for Civic Advancement
 - ii. Department of English
 - iii. Department of Social Sciences
 - iv. Thomas J. Garland University Library
 - d. *Civic Engagement Identifiers:*

- i. Campus Based Strategies: **Community Building and Partnerships**; **Voicing the Public Purposes of Higher Education**; **Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning**;
 - ii. Social Change: **Advocacy and Raising Awareness**; **Community Building**; **Voting and Formal Political Activities**;
8. Additional Components:
- a. Marketing and Communication - Jim Wozniak, Director of Communications and Marketing
 - i. *Responsibilities*: To help advertise and promote the different events identified by this action plan
 - b. Richard A Miller, MPP Associate Vice President for Institutional Research & Effectiveness
 - i. *Responsibilities*: Receives and reviews NSLVE data, along with the Director for the CCA.

III. Commitment

As noted in the Executive Summary, Tusculum University’s mission underscores our commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but who are also actively engaged citizens. Our educational philosophy is rooted in fostering a community that values civic responsibility and democratic participation. As we continue and look to expand our efforts to increase student voter engagement, the coalition members, including senior leadership, recognize the intrinsic connection between our institutional goals and the imperative to cultivate a culture of civic engagement for our students. In addition to making an outward commitment to democratic engagement by signing the ALL IN Presidents’ Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation, the President has also initiative plans for holding the political forums on campus to help foster democratic engagement.

This plan is committed to efforts in diversity, inclusion, and equity, and therefore the Center for Civic Advancement has identified established groups and programming on campus that already support diverse, inclusive, and equitable initiatives and can be used in collaborative efforts for civic engagement, civic learning, and democratic participation, such as the Heritage Months events. For example, the goal of the national African American Read-In is to lift up Black excellence in literature, and to highlight the contributions of Black culture within our historical and contemporary societies. Tusculum’s own chapter event is hosted annually by the College of Civic & Liberal Arts. Last year, for the first time, the CCA also partnered with the CCLA on the event, and doing so again in 2024 provides further opportunity to foster democratic participation. Many of the writers highlighted at this event were and are engaged in direct civic action, by providing information on voting or opportunities for student engagement (i.e. voter registration

and voter education work, or student leadership opportunities) for the upcoming election cycle can help connect theory to practice.

Educating for civic engagement is also a part of the General Education Program requirements of the university. Students can choose classes like American Government or Citizenship: Theories and Practices to count under the Civic Studies category, and which category facilitate understanding of civic life and communities and inspire civic engagement. Student Learning Outcomes for these classes test students on Civic Identity and Commitment: Intercultural Knowledge Skills. (Empathy) and Civic Contexts/Structures: Attitudes. (Openness) (see Table 1). There are also Service Learning classes at different colleges of the University (e.g. College of Business and College of Civic & Liberal Arts), which has students engage in a variety of service activities with governmental or not-for-profit organizations within the Greeneville/Greene County or Tri-Cities area (and alternatively, the Tusculum community or your home community). These activities involve issues of social justice, economic opportunity, environmental protection or restoration, education or health and wellness. They may use community-based research techniques to identify community needs and help accomplish community goals.

In addition to opportunities for service and civic engagement as a part of the general education curriculum and co-curricular opportunities, there are also university-wide events and opportunities for students to get engaged on campus, including:

- A. Nettie Day: Every fall, Tusculum University staff, faculty, students, and the wider community commits time and energy to improving our local community in honor of philanthropist, Nettie Fowler McCormick. Nettie Day is one of the few opportunities where the entire campus is encouraged to engage together towards the goal of civic engagement. Nettie Day usually includes around 300-400 volunteers helping between 20-35 community partners and non-profits.
- B. Freshmen Day of Service: Like Nettie Day, Freshmen Day of Service (FDS) is a large service day at Tusculum. However, the participants of this service day are our incoming Freshmen, as part of their Welcome Week activities, and required through their Freshmen Orientation class. FDS is organized by the CCA. The goal of FDS is to introduce incoming freshmen to community and service, as part of the mission of the university. For the 2023 FDS, the CCA partnered with the Tennessee Valley Coalition for the Homeless, and made 500 hygiene / supply bags, including items like shampoo, body wash, hand warmers, sunscreen, chapstick, handwritten notes by the students, along with many other items. These bags for the homeless that can be distributed throughout the several counties that TVCH services.

While our mission emphasizes the development of civic-engaged citizen, coupled with the integration of civic engagement as part of the general education requirements and co-curricular classes, and university events like Nettie Day, there is still more that could be done to further for increasing our capacity for civic learning and democratic engagement, especially when it comes to student interest, involvement, and leadership for voter registration and education. For example, more might be done to encourage political literacy and democratic engagement into relevant courses across disciplines. This is what we have started doing in some of the political science classes, as identified above, but this work should not be confined to specific departments but permeate across departments and majors.

Student Learning Outcomes: Connection	Ratings			
Civic Identity and Commitment. Intercultural Knowledge Skills. (Empathy)	4 pts Provides evidence of experience in civic-engagement activities and describes what she/he has learned about her or himself as it relates to a reinforced and clarified sense of civic identity and continued commitment to public action; demonstrates ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.	3 pts Provides evidence of experience in civic-engagement activities and describes what she/he has learned about her or himself as it relates to a growing sense of civic identity and commitment; recognizes more than one worldview and sometimes uses more than one cultural worldview in interactions.	2 pts Evidence suggests involvement in civic-engagement activities is generated from expectations or course requirements rather than from a sense of civic identity; responds in all situations with own cultural worldview.	1 pts Provides little evidence of her/his experience in civic-engagement activities and does not connect experiences to civic identity; views the experience of others through own cultural worldview.
Civic Contexts/	4 pts	3 pts	2 pts	1 pts

<p>Structures. Attitudes. (Openness)</p>	<p>Demonstrates ability and commitment to collaboratively work across and within community contexts, cultures, and structures to achieve a civic aim; suspends judgment in valuing her/his interactions with culturally different others.</p>	<p>Demonstrates ability and commitment to work actively within community contexts, cultures, and structures to achieve a civic aim. Begins to suspend judgment in valuing her/his interactions with culturally different others.</p>	<p>Demonstrates experience identifying intentional ways to participate in civic contexts, cultures, and structures; has difficulty suspending any judgment in her/his interactions with culturally different others but is aware of own judgment and expresses a willingness to change.</p>	<p>Experiments with civic contexts, cultures, and structures, tries out a few to see what fits; has difficulty suspending any judgment in her/his interactions with culturally different others and is unaware of own judgment.</p>
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IV. Landscape & Goals

The polarized landscape of American politics, including politics in Tennessee may be a part of the reason that many students are not as interested in getting involved in the work of voter education and registration. As noted above, there is currently a vacuum for student leadership when it comes to nonpartisan voting efforts on campus, and we hope to find students who want to get involved in this kind of work. Tusculum also serves a regional student body in the middle-Appalachian region, many of whom are first-generation college students. Gaps in political education at the secondary school level may leave students entering university with varying levels of knowledge about the democratic process. For example, while planning for the 2023 Voter Registration Day Event, several students noted that they were not aware that you had to register to vote. Bridging these gaps becomes imperative for effective engagement.

Additionally, the Tennessee legislature may appear hostile to faculty who might teach on the history and importance of political engagement and voting. For example, the Tennessee Higher Education Freedom of Expression and Transparency Act, passed by both the state House and Senate, allows students to report professors that teach “divisive concepts,” specifically noting that:

Positively or negatively incentivizing, informally pressuring, indoctrinating, or otherwise compelling students or employees of a public institution of higher education to embrace divisive concepts is contrary to the mutual respect and collegial processes essential to the free exchange of ideas.³

While Tusculum University is a private university, faculty still might feel hesitant to engage or teach issues of political history or engagement under these circumstances. In addition to funding and resources, these are all barriers that we face as a university.

Despite these challenges, we seek to accomplish the following for the Spring and Fall semester of 2024:

- increase the number students registered to vote
 - *Goal:* register 50 new students
 - *Notes:*
 - At the 2023 Voter Registration Event we had 24 students sign-in at the event, we estimate about 10 students registered to vote that day. With a longer event, better advertisement, and the fact that this is a presidential election, we believe we can reach this number.
 - To measure these goals: NSLVE data and Improve records management during event
- increase student participation for civic engagement events
 - *Goal:* between all of the events listed in the action plan we would like to see 200 students involved in total.
 - *Notes:* To measure this sign-in sheets will be included at each event.
- increase the diversity of organizations and units across campus involved in the implementation of these events
 - *Goal:* In addition to the units listed under Leadership & Strategy, identify at least three more groups that can be apart of the events, or will develop their own programming.
- increase the outreach and engagement between the university and the community in the support of non-paristian civic education
 - *Goal:* Invite and advertise the events, such as Voter Registration Day and the faculty lecture to the community.

³ Hensley, Bowling, and Rose Briggs. Tennessee Higher Education Freedom of Expression and Transparency Act, Pub. L. No. Senate Bill NO. 817, Public Chapter NO. 268 (n.d.). <https://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/113/Bill/SB0817.pdf>.