

Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rate Action Plan 2022

Executive Summary

The University of Central Florida is a metropolitan university located in Orlando, Florida. With over 70,000 students, the University of Central Florida is considered one of the largest universities in country and the largest in Florida. Civic learning, political engagement, and voting is a key priority for our university and plan to engage stakeholders across the university to execute our action plan. Student leaders from our Student Government Association and university leadership will partner with members of the community to implement this plan.

Landscape

The University of Central Florida is in Orlando, FL. Founded in 1963 to support the United States Space Program, UCF was deeply rooted in innovation from the beginning. We are one of the largest universities in the country and the largest university in the state of Florida. With over 70,000 students across 238 academic degree programs, UCF is a leading metropolitan research university in Florida. Our most popular majors include psychology, computer science, biology, health sciences, mechanical engineering, and hospitality management. UCF confers over 18,000 degrees each year and roughly 20.6% of our undergraduate students are first generation college students. UCF employs over 12,500 staff and faculty and has an operating budget of 2.1 billion dollars.

Our students are located on a variety of UCF campuses across Central Florida, including the main campus (located in Orlando), College of Medicine (located in Lake Nona Medical City), UCF Downtown (located in the Orlando neighborhood of Parramore), and the Rosen College of Hospitality Management (located in the hospitality corridor in Orlando). Our students represent a wide range of professional interests and goals. Also, 49.1% of our students are minorities and 57% of our first time in college students graduate with no educational debt. When not in the classroom, our students participate in a wide range of activities that keep them engaged in campus life and in the community.

UCF has over 650 registered student organizations and 8 Student Government funded Agencies. Student organizations with both identity/cultural and pre-career missions are among the most popular. Student Government at UCF “represents, advocates for, and services the Student Body.” Our UCF Student Government allocates Activity and Service Fee (ASF) funds to student agencies and ASF funded offices. Student Government is separated into three branches: Judicial, Executive, and Legislative. Our student body President serves on the Board of Trustees for the University and directly advises university leadership on student perspective. Currently, Student

Government has two student positions that directly support voter engagement. The Governmental Affairs Chair in the Senate and the Governmental Affairs Coordinator in the Executive Cabinet collaborate to make sure voting is a priority for our university.

Connection to University Initiatives

QEP

As a part of our Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation process, the University of Central Florida created a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) in 2016. The QEP theme was *What's Next: Integrative Learning for Professional and Civic Preparation*. There were three components of this initiative: intentional learning, high-impact practices, metacognition. The QEP was completed in 2021, but the University is now in the process of implementing the outcomes of this plan. The UCF voting plan will be using this format for implementation.

1. Intentional Learning
 - a. Creating pathways for students, faculty, and staff to set goals and view their voting experiences holistically
2. High-Impact Practices
 - a. Connect both curricular and co-curricular voting learning and practice
3. Metacognition
 - a. Provide opportunities for guided reflections at all stages and in connection with multiple curricular and co-curricular experiences
 - b. Encourage students to make connections between their classroom and beyond-the-classroom experiences

Collective Impact

In 2021, President Alexander Cartwright began the UCF Strategic Plan, titled “A University for the Future.” In the plan, the university details key elements to the future success of UCF while also highlighting how the university can “positively impact lives across our community and world.” The Strategic Plan addresses four primary priorities, including “Student Success” and “Impactful Engagement.” Civic learning and democratic engagement will align with both university priorities. While voting engagement is not service learning by nature, UCF will try to integrate voting practices into some service-learning activities. Also, the plan will include ways to involve faculty and staff in voting engagement.

SDES Strategic Plan 2017-22

The division of Student Success and Wellbeing recently completed their Strategic Plan that spanned from 2017-2022. In this plan, voting directly connected to the Student Success and Wellbeing Priority 5, “Student Advocacy, Equity, and Inclusion” through a variety of metrics. The division is now using the “Wellbeing in SSWD” framework to support student success at the University. The Wellbeing in SDES framework offers five pillars that contribute to student success. Voter engagement efforts fall into the “resilience,” “purpose,” and “engagement” pillars. Purpose is defined as “the process of deriving meaning, direction and fulfillment as an individual.” Voter engagement and education will support students as they reflect on their beliefs and channel them into democratic engagement. Students will show resilience as they “develop and demonstrate skills” that allow them to be active citizens in their communities. Lastly, the engagement pillar allows students to “participate in the learning environment” as they become informed voters. The UCF voting plan will connect to the SSWD Wellness Pillars in the through the following goals:

The division of Student Success and Wellbeing has also released their Strategic Plan 2017-22. This plan works concurrently with the Collective Impact but has specific metrics and strategies for the division. The UCF voting plan will connect to SSWD Priority #5 Student Advocacy, Equity and Inclusion through the metrics:

- c. Increase by 20 percent students’ understanding and knowledge regarding free speech and university free assembly policies.
- d. Increase by 20 percent the number of campus deliberative dialogues and conscious conversations between students, student organizations and other constituents.
- e. Increase by 20 percent the number of students who participate in diverse civic engagement or community service-learning opportunities.

CLDE Emergent Theory of Change

Utilizing the CLDE Emergent Theory of Change, we hope to support democracy and democratic engagement on our campus and in our local community through education, outreach, and building connections on campus.

1. The Vision Question

What are the key features of the thriving democracy we aspire to enact and support through our work?

- Increased voter registration on campus
 - **GOAL:** Achieve 90% voter registration based on 2020 NSLVE data.

- Increased voting rate on campus
 - **GOAL:** Achieve 77% voting rate based on 2020 NSLVE data.
- Increased campus dialogues and conscious conversations
 - **GOAL:** Increase by 20% the number of campus dialogues and conscious conversations between students, student organizations and other constituents.
- Increased civic engagement and civic identity for administrators, faculty, student affairs staff, and students
 - **GOAL:** Increase the general campus climate advocating for contributing to a larger community based on UCF's Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory data (PSRI).

2. The Learning Outcomes Question

What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do people need to help create and contribute to a thriving democracy?

- Voter Registration
 - How to register to vote
 - Using new Florida online voter registration through the Supervisor of Elections office
 - Traditional methods
 - Deadlines for voter registration
- Finding Information on How to Vote
- Making an Informed Decision
 - Where and how to find information about candidates
 - Approaching situations with an open mind
 - How to have a civil dialogue and conscious conversation with others

3. The Pedagogy Question

How can we best foster the acquisition and development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for a thriving democracy?

- Host presentations on voting/civic engagement at existing programs

- Leverage student-leadership through registered student organizations and Student Government to promote peer-to-peer dialogue and education
- Infuse civic engagement/political conversations into classroom assignments
 - Develop a list of courses that already do this
 - Collaborate with the Lou Frey Institute to promote voter education in academic spaces on campus

4. The Strategy Question

How can we build the institutional culture, infrastructure, and relationships needed to support learning that enables a thriving democracy?

- Increase support from administration
 - Dr. Cartwright is in his first year at the University and SDES will have our new Senior Vice President begin in June
- Build connections across campus
 - Continue to collaborate with partners that do CLDE work on campus
 - Build partnerships with the Ginsburg Center for Inclusion and Community Engagement
 - Center for Civil Discourse and Engagement
- Leverage student leadership to positively impact culture around voting and engagement

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

The University of Central Florida has been collecting the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data since 2014. In 2014, our student registration rate for UCF was 77.1%. UCF students have increased their registrations rate over 2018 and 2020, with the most recent rate being 88.7% in 2020. In 2014, our voting rate of registered students was 32.7%. In 2020, that rate increased significantly to 84.1%. The university's overall voting rate for students went from being 25.3% in 2014 to 74.6% in 2020.

UCF also saw an increase in our voting by race/ethnicity categories from 2018 to 2020. Each of the demographic categories (Asian, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, two or more races, and White) all saw significant increases. The

biggest increases came from the White and two (or more) race/ethnicity categories. Our Black students had the highest numbers in 2018 (54%) and saw a 19% increase in 2020. Overall, we want to focus on engaging our Asian student population who currently have the lowest rate in 2020 (56%).

Leadership

In 2022-2023, the University of Central Florida will re-engage a Voter Engagement Leadership Team that will help create campus goals, provide valuable perspectives, and champion democratic engagement for the university. Many of these partners have long-standing collaborations already, but we would like to formalize this group and determine a regular meeting schedule. This group will likely meet at least 1-2 times a semester. Potential partners include:

- Office of Student Involvement Director
- Office of Student Involvement Volunteerism and Community Engagement Assistant Director
- Associate Vice President, Government and Community Relations
- Coordinator, Government and Community Relations
- Program Director, Office of the President
- Governmental Affairs Coordinator, Student Government
- Governmental Affairs Chair, Student Government
- Multicultural Student Center Student Director
- Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life Representative
- Director, Communications
- Ginsburg Center Representative
- Housing and Residence Life Representative
- League of Women Voters Representative
- Faculty and Staff Representative
- Athletics Representative
- Accounting Coordinator, Lou Fry Center
- Connect Campus and/or Downtown Campus Representative

Partners

UCF is American's Partnership University. The institution is very focused on partnering with both internal and external entities to amplify our academic, economic, social, and cultural impact and reputation. The below is a non-exhaustive list of campus and community partners that will both directly implement and indirectly assist this plan.

Campus

Alumni Engagement and Annual Giving
Career Services
Center for Civil Discourse and Engagement
Center for Distributed Learning
College Democrats
College Republicans
Experiential Learning
Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning
Faculty Member Public Affairs
First Year Experience
Florida Consortium of Metropolitan Research Universities
Florida Joint Center for Citizenship
The Ginsburg Center for Inclusion and Community Engagement
Housing and Residents Life
Human Resources
LEAD Scholars Academy
LGBTQ+ Services
Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government
Multicultural Academic and Support Services
Multicultural Student Center
Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Office of Emergency Management
Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life
Office of Student Involvement
Office of the President
Recreations and Wellness Center
SGA Legislative Affairs Coordinator
Social Justice and Advocacy
Student Accessibility Services
Student Athletics
Student Government
Student Union
Transfer and Transition Services
UCF Black Faculty and Staff Association
Wellness and Health Promotions

Community

- ALL IN Challenge
- American Democracy Project
- Association of American Colleges & Universities
- Bethune-Cookman University
- Bob Graham Center for Public Service at University Florida
- Campus Compact- Florida
- Campus Vote Project
- Daytona State
- Eastern Florida State College
- League of Women Voters Orange County
- NASPA- CLDE
- Rollins College
- Seminole County Supervisor of Elections
- Seminole State
- Stetson University
- Students Learn Students Vote
- Supervisor of Elections Orange County, Florida
- The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)
- Valencia College

Checklist/Action Plan

1. Voter Registration:

a. Focus on new voter registration

- Send out a campus wide-email through Office of the President with information on voter registration and upcoming elections:
 - Online voter registration
 - Paper registration form
- Provide staffers/volunteers to distribute and collect voter registration forms during orientation, welcome week, move-in and similar programs
 - Collaborate with Student Government and Housing and Residence Life team
- Coordinate with existing voter registration efforts through Student Accessibility Services
- Collaborate with the Transfer Services Center to begin voter engagement training with their Academic Advisors
- Partner with Housing and Residence Life to utilize Resident Assistants to encourage students living on campus to register to vote
- Partner with Fraternity & Sorority Life to register affiliated students in on-campus fraternity and sorority housing
- Host a campus-wide event around programs such as National Voter Registration Day or Constitution Day
- Social media voting campaigns
 - Videos with Knightro, student leaders, and administrators answering questions about voting and registration
- Designate individuals on campus as “experts” on voting who will serve as a resource for students, employees, and community members
- Create an optional syllabus clause for faculty regarding civic engagement and upcoming elections and voting deadlines through the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning

b. Focus on existing voters who are new to Orlando

- Send out an email to out of state students with information on how to update voter registration using their local or campus address
- Partner with Transfer and Transition Services to reach transfer student population

- Partner with Transfer Services to share information about voting during Transfer Week in the Fall Semester
- Partner with Transfer Services to explore how voter information can be shared at Transfer orientations

c. Focus on underrepresented racial minority voters

In the 2020 general election, data from the NSLV report indicated that UCF increased the number of eligible voters who voted (74.6%). We also saw significant increases in voting rates throughout racial/ethnic demographics. The biggest increases in voting rates were our Asian students (17% increase), closely followed by our American Indian/Alaskan Native categories (16% increase). Overall, we want to continue to focus efforts on engaging with all students to ensure voting is a priority on our campus.

- Involve Office of Diversity and Inclusion Assistant Director of Hispanic Initiatives in voter registration and engagement efforts for Puerto Rican individuals who have relocated to Orlando and UCF
- Establish partnerships with Multicultural Academic and Support Services office and Multicultural Student Center to engage multicultural and first-generation students in conversations and events on voter registration and civic engagement
- Host events highlighting the importance of voting in civil rights/suffrage movements:
 - Asian History Month
 - Black History Month
 - Hispanic Heritage Month
 - LGBTQ+ History Month
 - Month of the Woman
- Include voter registration opportunities/discussions in existing office programs
- Present at multicultural student organization meetings and events to inform students on how to register
- Build partnerships and collaboration with the new Ginsburg Center for Inclusion and Community Engagement
 - Connect with the new Center for Civil Discourse and Dialogue to figure out how voter engagement can be infused into programs

2. Voter Engagement:

a. Organizing Events

- Host a local candidate forum or issue forum on campus
 - Orange County mayoral candidates (2022)
 - County Commissioner candidates (2022)
 - Local/state ballot measures (2022)
 - Congress to Campus events
- Partner with local Supervisor of Elections offices to host outreach events open to students and community members
- Partner with UCF faculty to host discussions and seminars on voting, voting rights, and political engagement
- Partner with UCF Alumni Engagement and Annual Giving to contact any potential alumni who held or have run for political office
- Partner with LEAD Scholars Academy to host voter engagement or civic engagement event during Leadership Week

b. Marketing Efforts

- Highlight the “Engaged Citizen Podcast” from Lou Frey Institute to engage students in conversations on civic engagement topics
- Create and maintain a voter education website with comprehensive information for students
- Use the civic@ucf.edu email address as a primary hub for voting related questions on campus.
- Develop campaign about vote-by-mail or absentee voting options for students
- Distribute nonpartisan ballot guides or sample ballots
- Hang up posters, flyers, or utilize other types of campus media to inform students what candidates and issues are on the ballot in upcoming elections
- Distribute a message to Faculty about voting (including student vote guide)

c. Student Organizations and Groups

- Continue to grow connections with politically affiliated RSOs (over 100 on campus)

- Student Government will host a voter engagement fair that features students from these organizations
- Partner with Volunteer UCF Civic Engagement Director to create events that connect UCF students with the Orlando community
 - Including a QR code that can be used at the end of every VUCF event that will direct students to voter engagement information
 - Educational events focused on voting history, local ballot issues, and opportunities to meet candidates
- Involve Student Government Association and SGA Agencies in voter engagement efforts
 - Student Government will speak at campus orientation sessions to discuss the importance of voting and how to register
 - Student Government will be present during campus move in to support students with voter registration
 - Student Government will create a “IgKnight Your Vote” video to promote voting and bi-partisanship on social media. The video will feature student leaders from across campus speaking about the importance of voting
 - Student Government will collaborate with the Orange County Supervisor of Elections for the “Knugget and Nuggets” event where students will register to vote, receive chicken nuggets, and meet school mascot Knugget the mini-horse
- Work with voter engagement representative from President’s Student Advisory Council team (this team consists of
 - Have regular meetings with PSAC representative about how to best engage campus leaders from RSOs
 - Present to PSAC group about voter engagement plan, key dates, and strategize to mobilize their teams to vote

3. Voter Mobilization:

a. Orlando Community Voter Engagement

- Build connections with local Supervisor of Elections offices
- Develop community connections with local neighborhoods through voter registration drives and neighborhood canvassing efforts utilizing UCF student volunteers

- Partner with local colleges and universities on voter engagement efforts and events

b. Access to Polling Places

- Continue to partner with the Orange County Supervisor of Elections office to support an Early Voting location at UCF Live Oak Event space.

4. Development of Campus Civic Ethos (Long Term)

- Increased support from administrators and UCF departments
 - Explore new opportunities for civic engagement and voting with President's Office and new Senior Vice President for Student Success (beginning in summer 2022)
 - Explore opportunities for civic engagement through new UCF Downtown campus and future partnerships
 - Identify voter registration and voter engagement as high priorities for institution
- Infuse civic engagement across campus (curricular and co-curricular)
 - Increased courses including or focusing on civic engagement topics
 - Increased service-learning opportunities focused on civic engagement topics
 - Increased presence of civic engagement and voting in strategic planning efforts
- Increase opportunities for employees to participate in at least one civic engagement or community service experience annually
- Embed voter registration information in the school's homepage, course management systems, and other heavily trafficked online portals/sites operated by the school
- Create voter registration campaign for employees and community members
- Create a Civic Engagement designation (courses/minor/diploma)
- Coordinate with academic advisors to have conversations during advising appointments to answer questions about voter registration
- Coordinate with academic affairs to have faculty or a student representative to present on voter registration or distribute forms at the beginning or end of class