UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
Action Plan
December 2019

SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of South Carolina (UofSC) is located in Columbia, S.C., the state's capital. The state legislature is in the university's backyard, just a block away from the center of the main campus. UofSC has seized many of the great opportunities that are afforded with this unique setup, through intentional partnerships and educational initiatives. Despite previous attempts, this has not yielded as high of voter turnout as desired.

The Tufts University National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) campus report reveals information about UofSC's voter engagement that has shaped this action plan. When analyzing the data we received in for our 2014 and 2018 Midterm Election Data we gathered the following:

UofSC has made significant increases in both registration rates and voting rates since 2014. Additionally, UofSC is slightly higher than the national average for registration rates confirming our hypothesis that students showing up to the polls is the primary election engagement issue we face on our campus. Absentee ballots are still the most popular method of voting at UofSC (increased by 6.9%). There are significant increases in voting rates for all class standings, both genders mentioned in the survey, all ethnicities, and all reported fields of study except one (Ethnic, Cultural, Gender and Group Studies). Black students on our campus had the highest voting rate of any race/ethnicity in 2014 and 2018 by at least 15%. Despite this, UofSC is still behind the national institutional average for voting rates in general.

Self-Comparison (2014 vs. 2018)
Increases seen in registration rates (7.5%), voting rates of registered students (19.4%), and overall voting rates (+16.9%)
- Number of students who registered increased by 4,067
- Number of students who voter increased by 5,955

note: total populations at UofSC also increased in four years by 2,651

Institutional Comparison (2018 vs. 2018)
- UofSC rates lower than Public Research Institutions by 6%
- UofSC rates lower than All Institutions by 4.4% (which is a larger gap than the 1.9% lower in 2014)
- UofSC is slightly higher than the national average for registration rates

Additionally, when comparing the 2016 voting data with that of 2012, it is evident that UofSC is making progress in terms of increases among students registered to vote, as well as those actually voting in elections. In the 2016 presidential election, UofSC had a 53.5% voting rate which was 3.1% higher than the national institutional average. Additionally, the voting rate of UofSC students in 2016 was a 7.7% increase from the previous presidential election in 2012.

Overall NSLVE data reveals the distressing reality that the majority of college students nationwide are not exercising their right to vote during presidential elections. Although UofSC is relatively on par with its peer institutions, the university will seize the opportunity to address this national issue through its commitment to civic education.

PURPOSE & MISSION

This action plan is designed to serve as a catalyst for year-round nonpartisan civic and democratic engagement at the University of South Carolina. This action plan aims to:
1) Improve students understanding of civic engagement processes;
2) Enhance student's civic competencies through respectful dialogue and consideration of diverse viewpoints; and
3) Strengthen partnerships between UofSC, partisan and non-partisan community organizations

This action plan will begin January 2020 and continue through the 2020-21 school year, being revised again for Spring 2021. Implementation and revisions will be spearheaded by the Leadership and Service Center in collaboration with campus and community partners.

University of South Carolina's Civic Engagement Action Plan was developed by:
- Carly Zerr, Leadership and Service Center
- Jabari Bodrick, Ph. D., Leadership and Service Center
- Nancy Jones, Civic Leadership, Education and Action Team (CLEAT)
- Emily Ziedman, Civic Leadership, Education and Action Team (CLEAT)
- Jordan Hammond, Civic Leadership, Education, and Action Team (CLEAT)

SECTION II: LEADERSHIP

The Leadership and Service Center (LSC) at University of South Carolina will coordinate and oversee the institution's work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement. The Leadership and Service Center equips students to positively impact their communities through involvement in student organizations, leadership development, service, and civic engagement. The LSC works towards a vision that students will be engaged, lifelong leaders committed to positive change in the world.

Stronger emphasis on civic engagement initiatives will assist the LSC in achieving their mission by guiding students to become responsible and engaged citizens in their local, national and global communities. Students will become more aware of social issues, take diverse perspectives into consideration, and connect their current leadership and service efforts to a deeper meaning.

Jabari Bodrick, Associate Director of Service-Learning and Community Engagement, and Carly Zerr, Leadership Coach, will primarily be responsible for implementation of this plan with the Civic Leadership Education Action Team. Additionally, collaboration with campus and community partners will occur. As of now, Student Government Representatives, Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, a group of local politicians, and Political Science Department have been identified as ongoing partners for the working group. The role of the working group is to provide feedback on the mission and programs outlined in the action plan, as well as support programming as it arises. The working group is comprised of students, staff, faculty, and community partners who have previously expressed support of mission and programming.

Civic Leadership Education and Action Team

Students are crucial to developing and strengthening a culture around civic education and participation at UofSC and in Columbia. The Civic Leadership Education and Action Team (CLEAT) established a group of committed students to assist in implementation of this action plan. CLEAT is currently composed of nine student leaders who envision and implement year-round, nonpartisan civic engagement programming. CLEAT's student leadership recruits and manages student participants to assist with the organization's mission. This organization cultivates collaboration with the above mentioned groups. CLEAT meets weekly to revisit the goals addressed in this action plan, and coordinate corresponding programming.

Additional Partners

On-campus partners:
- Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support
- Department of Student Life
- Student Government (Legislative Action Network, Congressional Advisory Board)
- Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity
- Political Science Department
- Off-Campus Living and Neighborhood Relations
- Voter Registration Coalition (currently composed of students representing 15 different student organizations)
- College Democrats, College Republicans, College Libertarians, Young Democratic Socialists, etc.

Off-Campus partners:
- Richland County Elections Commissions
- Civic Nation
- #VoteTogether
- National Voter Registration Day
- TurboVote
- Campus Labs
- Local politicians including; Mayor Benjamin, Mayor Partin, Bakari Sellers, Micah Caskey, Senator Hutto, Representative Norrell, Tameika Isaac Devine, among others

Our internal partners predominantly serve as partners in programming and resource cultivation. Student voice has, and will continue, to help determine and implement initiatives, as well as serve as voter advocates. The off-campus partners have agreed to offer their support to the university's civic engagement initiative through helping with voter registration drives, helping students obtain free voter identification cards, and/or educating students about policy issues. Our external partners also provide a variety of helpful resources to assist in planning and cultivation of best practices.

SECTION III: COMMITMENT

The University of South Carolina values diversity and inclusion of all identities and thoughts. The university's Carolinian Creed states "I will discourage bigotry, while striving to learn from different people, ideas, and opinions". UofSC has a rich history of helping students develop their multicultural competencies through a variety of programs, both curricular and co-curricular. This civic action plan is an attempt to both continue and further such tradition. In recent political events, the nation has witnessed Americans becoming increasingly less civil toward one another as they discuss their political views. UofSC believes that civility and education about voter engagement and political issues can happen simultaneously. Because of UofSC's proximity to the state capitol, the university is fortunate enough to have access to many campus and community partners with a vested interest in civic engagement which helps aids the mission

outlined in this action plan.

The institution demonstrates commitment to improving civic learning in a myriad of ways. From a staff development perspective, the Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support have provided multiple professional development opportunities focusing on this topic, including a division meeting centered on Viewpoint Diversity, a Student Life Lunch & Learn centered on Free Speech on Campus, as well as informal discussion with the Vice President of Student Affairs around civic and democratic engagement at his roundtable discussions.

Additionally, University of South Carolina has contributed monetary support in this area as well. First and foremost, we have signed multi-year contracts with organizations such as TurboVote, and Campus Labs that are primary drivers in our voter registration efforts. The Leadership and Service Center, supported by the Department of Student Life, has also added civic engagement programming as a primary job function to an employee's job description, as well as added a specific budget line for civic engagement programming.

The support in our guiding documents, financial resources, and staff development, set our institution up for success when attempting to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.

The civic learning outcomes that have been outlined are the following:
- o Students will understand the voting process and the resources available to them
- o Students will gain a better understanding of political processes
- o Students will engage in meaningful dialogue to cultivate civil deliberation and increase issue-based knowledge
- o Students will understand what it means to be an active citizen in their community

These four learning outcomes align with our four goals for programming outlined in Section V of this document.

SECTION IV: LANDSCAPE

Student Engagement Overview
NSLVE data suggests that University of South Carolina students were slightly more engaged in registration and voter turnout than other 4 year public institutions and the national average in the 2016 election. Despite this success, UofSC lagged behind their peers for registration and voter turnout for the previous midterm election.

Table 1. UofSC Student Voter Registration and Turnout Rates, 2012-2018

	Student Voter Registration Rates		Student Voter Turnout Rates		
	UofSC	National	UofSC	4yr Public	National
2012	75.6%	69.0%	45.7%	46.8%	46.9%
2014	67.1%	68.0%	17.8%	18.5%	18.5%
2016	83.5%	70.6%	53.5%	49.8%	50.4%
2018	76.5%	73.3%	34.7%	40.8%	39.1%

Source: National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement, 2014 and 2016 reports
Source: National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement, 2012 and 2018 reports

ASSESSMENT OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMING

In the Leadership and Service Center blueprint (strategic planning document) the following is listed out:

Goal Statement: Students that participate in LSC events will become committed to enhancing their civic competencies and their understanding of civic engagement processes.

Linkage to University Goal: Building Inclusive and Inspiring Communities.

Achievements:

CLEAT
Civic engagement efforts planned through Civic Leadership Education Action Team (CLEAT) primarily focused on voter engagement programming, education surrounding the midterm elections, Congress to Campus, and Deliberative Dialogues. CLEAT programming brought together a variety of constituent groups including 3 academic departments, 17 student organizations, and 3 student affairs partnerships.

- 100% of those who completed the civic engagement speaker survey agreed or strongly agreed a civility series event was a quality program in generating conversations for a better world

Deliberative Dialogues
A Deliberative Dialogue pilot was started during the spring semester. We intentionally facilitated to a select few groups to test out our program and have students gain first-hand facilitation experience. Additional student leaders were selected in the fall to increase our reach across campus and therefore increase participant attendance.

- 63 students participated in Deliberative Dialogues during the spring 2019 semester.

Voter Registration
All the structured voter registration efforts took place during the fall 2018 semester. CLEAT and student organizations used TurboVote to register students. We received the Voter Friend Campus designation and renewed our National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) participation.

- 1303 people registered to vote this academic year.

ANALYSIS OF BARRIERS

Internal Barriers
Balancing new programming: CLEAT is a relatively new student group being advised by the Leadership and Service Center at UofSC. Balancing new organization culture, as well as new programming in conjunction with prior prioritized projects could come with challenges.

Maintaining Nonpartisan programming during an election year: With South Carolina in the forefront of people's minds with the upcoming primary election, the majority of Presidential Candidates have reached out about hosting an event on campus. Determining the best group on campus to host such events to maintain nonpartisan mission can be challenging when trying to fully capitalize on programming that could benefit the student body.

Student confusion/procrastination: While electronic voter registration is allowed in the State of South Carolina, absentee ballots require students to mail in forms. Some counties allow electronic commissions to be emailed or faxed, but not all have this option. Due to confusion and/or procrastination on behalf of students, absentee ballots may not be turned in by the deadline of 7pm on Election Day.

General student apathy: Student priorities are pulled in multiple directions, especially UofSC being an SEC football centered institution. Students do not always care to know what is going on

politically despite being offered programming to increase their awareness.

External Barriers
Election laws: Registration deadlines, ID Requirements, Early Voting Restrictions

- Early voter registration deadline is 30 days prior to the election which means heavy efforts on the front-end of the cycle.

- Voter ID requirements enforce students to present a government-issued photo ID when voting. A student ID is often not an accepted form of ID.

- Despite absentee voting allowed prior to Election Day in some South Carolina counties, South Carolina as a whole does not allow early voting. To take advantage of absentee voting, voters must report to the election office in the county in which they are registered, providing a further barrier.

Transportation to Polls: Being able to provide enough reliable transportation for students to actually make it to the polls is a challenge. Furthermore, efficient advertisement of such transportation is critical.

Available Resources

The Leadership and Service Center has identified the following resources to further our action plan despite the previously listed barriers:

- Staff member focused on Civic Engagement Initiatives in the LSC: after shifting job responsibilities among Leadership Coaches in the office, a leadership coach will be dedicating significant time to implementing this action plan in conjunction with an Associate Director in the center. This Leadership Coach will work with the members of CLEAT to help develop programming from both educational and action perspectives to create a year-long civic engagement culture on UofSC's campus.

- Group of engaged students and traditional programing: The Leadership and Service Center is a premier space at UofSC that is located in the hub of campus. The variety of programming that stems from the center provides an effective outlet to implement civic engagement into. The students who are involved in programming from the Leadership and Service Center are often very engaged in campus with a great deal of social capital. Utilizing these students as advocates and sources of feedback will help cultivate the culture we are seeking to promote.

- Higher-level administrative support: The LSC falls within the Department of Student Life, which is in the Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support at UofSC. The work of our center, specifically civic engagement practices, has significant support from higher level administration that simplifies conversations of resources and credibility.

Additional Resources Needed

- Relationships with external partners: The LSC is in year two of focusing on civic engagement programming and is slowly working on creating and enhancing relationships with external partners such as Richland County Elections Commission. Due to a lot of turnover in that office, further developing this relationship with their newer staff members is an additional resource needed.

SECTION V: GOALS

The long-term goal of this action plan is to create a culture of civic engagement on campus, and to create and implement sustainable programming that is year-round, nonpartisan, and student-led. A ten year goal would be to increase student voting rates by 10 percentage points from 2016 to 2024.

As mentioned above, the civic learning outcomes that have been outlined are the following:
- Students will understand the voting process and the resources available to them
- Students will gain a better understanding of political processes
- Students will engage in meaningful dialogue to cultivate civil deliberation and increase issue-based knowledge
- Students will understand what it means to be an active citizen in their community

This action plan seeks to increase student engagement in civic efforts through the following:

Area One: Voting
- Increase number of students registered to vote
  - Assist students in understanding their options and what voting method is right based on their situation
  - Assist students in verifying they are registered to vote and that their information is correct
  - Disseminate absentee ballot voting information
- Provide education on voting logistics
  - Such logistics might include concerns such as: where students can cast their ballot or transportation to help them reach the polls

Area Two: Civic Literacy Education
- Provide programming focused on helping students understand the political process including positions involved in elections, general purpose of midterm elections, and a deeper understanding of the effects the results could have for both the short and long term political climate

Area Three: Dialogue & Deliberation
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in meaningful dialogue to cultivate civil deliberation and increase issue-based knowledge. Effective deliberation can help students gain development in civic literacy, active listening, humility, non-dualistic thinking, Grit, among a variety of others. Additionally, this type of dialogue can increase student's understanding of local and national social/political issues.

Area Four: Civic Action
- Assist students in turning ideas into action and increase students' capacity and commitment to participate constructively with others and to work collectively to address common problems

The before-mentioned goals and initiatives will occur in the 2020-21 school year and will be implemented by the Leadership and Service Center and CLEAT students in conjunction with support from campus and community partners. The primary audience for said programming is University of South Carolina undergraduate and graduate students living both on and off-campus.

SECTION VI: STRATEGY

Area One: Voting

Strategy: Continue utilizing TurboVote to track voter registration

- Helps students register to vote either online or by paper
- Helps students vote by sending election reminders via text or email to stay in touch with local elections
- Helps students vote by mail via absentee ballot request forms

Strategy: Streamline voter information
- Comprehensive and coherent information to help students register correctly and stay informed

Initiatives:

- Establish a user-friendly website page that houses voting information and logistics, as well as advertising voter registration events
- Host voter registration drives such as National Voter Registration Day, Constitution Day as well as other general tabling events in the hub of campus
- Create a Social Media Campaign to remind students of voter deadlines
- Partner with Richland County Elections Commission for voter registration volunteer training and for Voter ID photo capabilities in real time
- Continue Voter Registration Coalition efforts; a group of students representing multiple student organizations who collaborate to host voter registration drives

Area Two: Civic Literacy Education

Strategy: Streamline civic literacy information
- Comprehensive and coherent information to help students better understand the political process

Initiatives:
- Speaker Series Events: Civic Engagement centered keynote and subsequent events to further dialogue
- User-friendly website page with links to civic literacy information and advertisement of related events
- Provide information during tabling events and voter registration drives

Area Three: Dialogue & Deliberation

Strategy: Continue to use National Issues Forum model for deliberation programs

Strategy: Cultivate partnerships across campus to increase involvement and visibility
- Potential partners include: Office of Multicultural Affairs, Off-campus Living and Neighborhood Relations, Greek Life, and Student Government

Initiatives:
- Increase student participation in CLEAT and develop stronger organizational structure
- Continue to host dialogues and deliberation events to help students hone deliberation skills and gain a better understanding of local and national issues
- Host an open forum deliberation in Spring 2020

Area Four: Civic Action

Strategy: Incorporate civic action into existing Leadership and Service Center programs to create more cohesive understanding of how leadership, service, and civic engagement work together

Initiatives:
- Incorporate brainstorming/reflection of civic action concepts in Alternative Break Curriculum
- Incorporate conversations of civic action into Leadership classes and programing
- Incorporate conversations of civic action into Service Saturday Site Leader training

Fall 2019 Events:
- Richland County Elections Voter Registration Training for Voter Registration Coalition
- National Voter Registration Day
- Civic Engagement Fair
- Family Weekend Voter Registration Drive
- Constitution Day Brunch; Conversation Café
  - The event included remarks from community partners, and facilitated small group dialogues that navigated a range of topics that may be controversial, polarizing, or garner differing opinions. The topics discussed included Limits of the First Amendment, Abortion, Immigration, Gun Control, Mental Health, Voting Rights and the Opioid Crisis. One student and one faculty or community member facilitated each table.
- Diversity in Politics Series
  - Night One: Rebecca Thompson from Reflective Democracy Campaign discussed White Male Electability Advantage and its impact on politics
  - Night Two: Local Politicians (Representative Mandy Powers Norrell, Mayor Elise Partin, and Tameika Isaac Devine) discussed their experiences and strategies on getting involved with politics and running effective campaigns as females and minorities.
- Food Insecurity Deliberation
- Gun Control Deliberation

Spring 2020 Events:
- MLK Voter Registration Drive
- Non-Partisan Political Film Festival
  - Partnering with Washington Political Film Foundation to host
  - Two movies will be shown- The first movie will center on the theme of Campaigns & Elections (due to it being right before the primary) and we will show the movie Ides of March. The second movie will center on the theme of Injustice, Freedom, and Civil Rights (for Black History Month) and we will show the movie Loving. Both movies will be followed up by panelists.
- 4 Deliberations – Topics TBD
- Holding first open forum deliberation on campus

Other programming to be determined by CLEAT during planning meeting in January

All programming is held on campus and open to all students, staff, faculty and sometimes community members.

SECTION VII: REPORTING

This action plan will predominantly be used as an internal document that can be shared with Leadership and Service Center staff and Department of Student Life at University of South

Carolina. As of now, University of South Carolina's NSLVE data is kept predominantly internal as well but available to partners upon request.

SECTION VIII: EVALUATION

Quantitative Measures:
- TurboVote and NSLVE data
- Number of and attendance at election-related events in 2020-2021
- Number of and attendance at dialogue and discourse events in 2020-2021

Qualitative Measures:
- Feedback from staff and students working on civic engagement initiatives
- Feedback from other stakeholders on campus
- Surveys collected from dialogue and discourse events
- Surveys collected from Civility Series

Evaluation will be carried out by Leadership and Service Center staff during the assessment cycle of the university. The results will be shared to the department in the blueprint.