Virginia Tech Civic Action Plan 2020

Executive Summary

This plan was developed by Jessica Davis, Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement in VT Engage; two current Campus Vote Project Fellow, Houston Dixon and Jasmine Alvarado; Campus Election Engagement Project Fellows, Addie Parker; and other VT Engage staff members. This action plan was created in order to further institutionalize voter education and engagement and provide a road map to implement democratic engagement events at Virginia Tech.

In the fall of 2018, Virginia Tech's VT Engage office merged with the Leadership Education Collaborative. This merger led to an expansion of the VT Engage's scope to encompass leadership for the public good. Leadership for the Public good aligns with the Virginia Tech motto, "Ut Prosim-That I May Serve" by way of increasing and expanding the curricular and co-curricular democratic engagement work. Virginia Tech has also been a part of the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement through the Institute for Democracy in Higher Education at Tufts University since the inception of the study in 2012. This study has found voter turnout at Virginia Tech consistently under 60%, but a 75-80% registration rate. This has guided VT Engage to develop civic engagement opportunities that focus on voter education and engagement. This action plan will start January, 21, 2020 through May 2021. This action plan will be led by the VT Engage team as well as other organizations who want to be a part of the process.

Key Terms and Acronyms

Because use of definitions can vary across the spectrum, we've included a set of key terms that are used throughout this document and higher education. Many of the terms are taken from the Strengthening American Democracy report through Students Learn, Students Vote.

Civic learning and democratic engagement: is promoting education of students for engaged citizenship through democratic participation in their communities, respect and appreciation of diversity, applied learning, and social responsibility.

Civic engagement: is any act intended to improve or influence a community through deliberation, collaboration, and reciprocal relationships and community-building.

Democratic participation: is civic engagement that involves democratic processes (e.g., when an organization puts a matter to a vote and there is democratic participation).

Political engagement or political participation: is civic engagement that emphasizes governmental institutions and/or power (e.g., voting in local, state, and federal elections).

Voter registration: is the process of successfully completing the application to be able to cast a ballot in an election.

Get out the Vote: are organized efforts to increase voter registration.

Voter education: is the curricular and co-curricular activities offered to students and designed to facilitate civic learning and increase participation in elections.

Voter turnout: Is the act of casting a ballot, in any manner (e.g., early, in person, and absentee).

CVP: Campus Vote Project. national non-partisan, non-profit dedicated to helping students gain access to the ballot and increasing voter turnout. CVP is a project of the Fair Elections Center.

CEEP: Campus Election Engagement Project. is a national nonpartisan project that helps administrators, faculty, staff, and student leaders at America's colleges and universities engage students in federal, state, and local elections.

SLSV: Students Learn, Students Vote. promotes civic learning and engagement on campuses across the country by providing a series of key steps and information on best practices that institutions can use to create a more voter friendly campus.

ACC: Atlantic Coast Conference. Virginia Tech's athletic conference.

SGA: Student Government Association

NCoC: National Conference on Citizenship

Section I: Goals and Strategy
In order to change the institutional culture of Virginia Tech to promote civic learning and democratic engagement, VT Engage has established some preliminary short term and long-term goals. By accomplishing the short-term goals, we will set ourselves up for success of the long-term goals.

Short-Term Goals
- ➔ Develop a structure and curriculum for a HokiesVote Ambassador program. Students participating in this civic leadership program will have the opportunity to become leaders on campus for voter education and engagement. The Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement will serve as the advisor to the group. They will work with the CVP and CEEP fellows to develop this program during the summer of 2020 to launch for the fall semester. This group will be able to utilize the VT Engage office and the student leader office to plan and conduct meetings. Undergraduate and graduate/professional students will be encouraged to participate in the program.
  - ✓ This group of students will implement the VT Engage co-curricular civic learning and democratic engagement. Including;
    - ● Be the street team for voter registration at various events and other tabling opportunities.
    - ● Hosting deliberative dialogues to engage students in issue-based policy discussions.
    - ● Contribute to an online student blog developed from a CEEP fellow semester project.
    - ● Attend state wide Democracy in Action Summit and other professional conferences to expand and grow their knowledge on civic learning and democratic engagement.
      - ○ We will be monitoring the state of various professional conferences as some have/will be moving to online formats and others are being cancelled.
      - ○ We will also need to default to both state and university guidance on travel to ensure the health and safety of our students and other attendees.
  - ✓ They will gain skills in civic digital literacy, deliberative dialogue facilitation, state and federal election laws, inter- and intra- personal communication, and other competencies to be identified by the inaugural student conveners.
- ➔ Voter registration tabling as a part of Week of Welcome events, GobblerFest (student organization fair), National Voter Registration Day, Vote Early Day, the Big Event, Spring Game, and other potential campus events. CVP and CEEP fellows and the Graduate Assistant for Leadership and Civic Engagement will lead the implementation of these events with the HokiesVote Ambassadors. The Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement will help organize and support events as needed. These events will occur throughout the 2020-21 academic year. The audience of this goal includes all Virginia Tech students, staff, and faculty.

- ✓ Expand partnership with Cultural and Community Centers to host at least two events with the Centers to discuss specific election imperatives and barriers for the community.
- → Establish a campus wide coalition of students, staff, and faculty to network with one another to support individual organizational goals. This coalition will also work to establish new partnerships for programs and events. Additional goals and responsibilities of the coalition will be determined by the members of the group. The Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement will convene the coalition. Once the coalition is established they will develop a democratic process to determine co-chairs (a student and faculty/staff member) and the Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement will take on an advisory capacity. This work began during the spring 2020 semester, but was interrupted due to COVID-19. Work will resume again during the second summer session.
- → Network with other campuses and community organizations to broaden support and develop new resources. The Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement will be the campus liaison for each of these partnerships, but the Graduate Assistant for Leadership and Civic Engagement, student fellows and ambassadors, and other VT Engage staff will engage and support this network too.
  - ✓ Complete requirements for the Voter Friendly Campus Plan.
  - ✓ Attend SLSV coalition and the Resources and Support subcommittee monthly meetings.
  - ✓ Attend DemocrACCy working group monthly meetings and participate in subcommittee activities as necessary.
  - ✓ Become a CoDesigner Campus for the Ask Every Student Program and participate in monthly 1:1's and small group meetings.
  - ✓ Attend the various webinars offered through SLSV, NCoC, CVP, ALL IN Democracy Challenge, CEEP, and other organizations as they arise and are pertinent.
- → Develop a marketing and online engagement strategy for VT Engage to establish an online civic presence. VT Engage Communications Manager will work in tandem with the Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement to begin developing the strategy and structures needed to implement the strategy. It will then be the responsibility of the student fellows and ambassadors to create continued content. The Graduate Assistant for Leadership and Civic Engagement will advise the students in this process.
  - ✓ Make the NSLVE report publicly available on our website.
  - ✓ Ensure students have a means of registering to vote (in state and out of state) from the VT Engage website.
  - ✓ Create content and graphics for voting reminders, knowledge nuggets, and other resource information.
  - ✓ Communicate updates and promote events/programs of our partner organizations.
  - ✓ Post a reminder notice on Canvas for students to register to vote and on election day.

Long-Term Goals

➔ Stabilize an institutional culture around civic learning and democratic engagement.
  - ✓ Increase senior leadership commitments to include the entire executive cabinet and the Board of Visitors.
➔ Become a national leader in voter engagement, civic learning, and democratic engagement.
➔ Ensure there is a diverse voice and equitable representation on the campus wide coalition and the HokieVotes Ambassador
➔ Increase Voter Registration and Participation rates.
  - ✓ Registration Rate of 85% for mid-term elections and 90% for Presidential elections.
  - ✓ Participation Rates of 45-50% for mid-term elections and 65% for Presidential elections.
➔ Maintain an educational and reciprocal relationship with the Town of Blacksburg, Montgomery County Board of Elections and other local government organizations.
➔ Develop a working relationship with the Virginia Cooperative Extension to increase civic learning and democratic engagement across the Commonwealth.
➔ Develop a HokiesVote Class curriculum where ambassadors can engage students in voter registration and engagement through a classroom takeover.
  - ✓ The ideal audience would be first year experience courses.
➔ Establish voter registration opportunities through several processes on campus. These potentially include; first year and transfer orientation, parking/bicycle permit pickup, Hokie Passport (student identification card) pickup, move in weekend for on campus students, or course registration.

Managing Goals and Strategy During COVID-19

We recognize the state of our nation has drastically changed since mid-March and has already begun impacting voting for the primary elections. While with many of the goals we will be able to move to an online format we will also need to thoughtfully think through how we can maintain students' commitment and engagement with a potentially online or hybrid format of campus life. The Division of Student Affairs will be convening an online engagement working group that will be chaired by the VT Engage Interim Director. This working group will be sharing how each department in the division is engaging and recruiting students online. In addition to VT specific strategies, the Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement has been attending several webinars and training sessions to learn about promising practices for online democratic engagement amongst other campus and community partners. The marketing and online engagement strategy will need to be flexible and prepared to make changes throughout the semester depending on the changing health and safety recommendations. It is our belief that taking this time to understand and plan for different learning environments both online and in person will only strengthen our commitment to a democratic process that is both equitable and just.

Section II: Leadership and Partnerships
Administrative Leadership
VT Engage is Virginia Tech's center for service-learning, leadership education, and civic engagement and will serve as an anchor and education hub for civic learning and democratic engagement. VT Engage will develop strategic partnerships for a campus wide coalition with other offices, faculty, and student groups to support and grow current and future civic initiatives. Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement will convene the coalition. At the end of the first year the group will develop a democratic process to elect co-chairs for a term determined by the group. The Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement from then on will remain in an advisory capacity and as the off campus contact for partnership development with various national organizations (e.g., SLSV, CVP, CEEP, ALL IN Democracy Challenge, and DemocrACCy working group).

The role of the coalition is to increase awareness of the democratic work happening on campus and work to build a network of support across the campus to enhance learning and programming. The Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement will work to develop a series of scoping meetings in order to bring different stakeholders to gauge their interests and organization goals. These stakeholders may include both campus partners as well as off campus partnerships. The working list of organizations will ensure a diverse representation of our institution is being brought into the process by capitalizing on the current working relationship with the Office for Diversity and Inclusion which includes the Culture and Community Centers. Additionally, student identity based groups and representatives from the faculty and staff caucuses will be invited to be a part of the initial meetings. While this is only a start to ensuring the coalition has an inclusive and diverse voice, it will be the responsibility of the chair(s) and advisor to ensure the group is equitable, inclusive, and diverse. The scoping meetings will first be a gauge of what organizations, offices, and faculty are doing in order to support democratic engagement and/or voter engagement work. The scoping meeting will also include gathering information on what gaps currently exist on campus. From these meetings a charge document will be developed and sent out to individuals who were included in the scoping meeting along with an invitation to participate in the coalition.

The coalition will convene at least once a month and provide updates on programming and coursework that align with the mission of the group. Depending on the needs of the group they may also develop sub groups to create partnerships for programming or developing resources for student organizations or for faculty to use in classes. Additionally, by inviting both campus and community partners there will be an opportunity to partner with and beyond campus. At the time of this report we had begun these meetings, but were interrupted by COVID-19. These meetings will resume in August once the students return to campus. The current organizations and groups who have been invited to participate include;

Student Engagement and Campus Life
Student Government Association
Graduate Student Assembly
Leadership and Social Change Residential
College

Virginia Extension Office
Political Science Department
School of Public and International Affairs
Communications Department
Agriculture and Life Sciences Department

Office of Government Relations
Provost Office
Office of Diversity and Inclusion
Black Organization Council
Asian American Coalition
College Republicans at Virginia Tech
Give & Take
Greens at Virginia Tech
International Relations Organization at Virginia Tech
National Association of the advancement of Colored People
NextGen
Open Dialogue in Ideas and News at Virginia Tech
Political Science Club
Public Administrators at Virginia Tech
Hokie Pride
Science Policy Education and Advocacy Club
Secular Students at Virginia Tech
Turning Point USA

United Feminist Movement
Young Americans for Freedom at Virginia Tech
Young Democratic Socialists for America
Young Democrats at Virginia Tech
American Indian and Indigenous People's Alliance
Appalachian Caucus
Asian/Asian American Faculty Staff Caucus
Black Faculty and Staff Caucus
Disability Alliance and Caucus
Hispanic & Latinx Faculty and Staff Caucus
International Faculty Staff Caucus
LGBTQ+ Faculty Staff Caucus
Veteran's Caucus
Women's Alliance
Montgomery Board of Elections
Radford Board of Elections
Town of Blacksburg
League of Women Voters
Virginia Organizing

Student Leadership
Students will be an integral part of the planning and implementation process of this civic action plan. In partnership with the Campus Vote Project (CVP) and Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) VT Engage will host two democracy fellows with CVP and two engagement fellows with CEEP. Each of the four students have their own individual projects with their respective organizations. The students will be able to work with one another to support their projects as well as help with engaging student organizations in the coalition.

Students will also work with the Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement (AD) to develop a new student group sponsored through VT Engage. This group will be a cohort of approximately 10-15 Hokies Vote Ambassadors. Students will engage in a yearlong commitment to learn more about voter engagement including education, organizing (in person and digital), volunteering, civic digital literacy, the historical and contemporary context of voting rights in the US, and deliberative dialogue facilitation and reflection. The democracy and engagement fellows will lead the group of voter engagement ambassadors. They will work with the AD to develop curriculum and a meeting structure. The student ambassadors will assist with get out the vote events and other initiatives including but not limited to, National Voter Registration Day, Early Vote Day, debate watch parties, and deliberate dialogues.

Duties of Fellows
Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow
Campus Vote Project is dedicated to helping students gain access to the ballot and increasing youth voter turnout. Fellows are an integral part of carrying out voter engagement and empowerment at institutions of higher education across the country.

As a fellow, students will have the opportunity to work with administrative and faculty partners. They will work with the on-campus team to complete the four planning steps of students learn student vote checklist, created to build power and ensure success. They will be responsible for meeting deadlines and carrying out nonpartisan voter engagement activities on the campus.

Responsibilities and Goals:
- Participate in supporting a voter engagement plan including meeting planning deadlines and being an active spokesperson
- Carry out voter registration and voter education activities on campus. This includes:
  - Informing peers about registration and election deadlines
  - Providing information about issues and candidates on the ballot
  - Engaging students as voters and voter advocates for their peers
- Complete timesheets and check-ins with campus partners and with CVP staff to ensure fellows are on track and getting the support they need to carry out voter engagement efforts
- Complete leadership and voter engagement webinars put on by Campus Vote Project
  - Fellows will also be asked to participate in discussion blocks related to grassroots organizing and voting rights issues.
- Participate in skills-building and historical-context discussion blocks. Write reflections on your work and the program.
- Opportunity to attend a Student Voter Summit in your state to learn new skills, discuss issues, and network with other students and organizations passionate about youth voter engagement

Campus Election Engagement Project Institutional Fellows
CEEP is a national non-partisan project that helps America's colleges and universities get as many of their 20 million students as possible to register, volunteer in campaigns, educate themselves, and turn out at the polls. We teach administrators, faculty, staff, and student leaders to use their institutional resources to engage students.

Position Description:
CEEP fellows will organize various election engagement events on campus, while building leadership skills with other fellows and organizations both at the state and national levels. Through this fellowship students will work to institutionalize voter engagement efforts, leaving a lasting legacy for students to come. Nonpartisan engagement contributes skills that look good on a resume and are applicable to all job fields.

Responsibilities and Goals:
- Participate in biweekly CEEP check-in calls with CEEP State Director or National Fellowship Director to troubleshoot campus plan and provide additional support;
- Collaborate and partner with student organizations, campus administrators, and faculty to organize voter registration, voter education, and voter engagement efforts on your campus;
- Plan and complete at least 4-8 election engagement deliverables documented in the activity tracker;
- Compose and submit an end-of-semester report summarizing activities and accomplishments.

Campus and Community Partners
The work of this action plan takes an entire network of community in order to be successful. This is a current group of partners, but as the work grows so will our partnerships.

Campus Vote Project
Campus Election Engagement Project
Students Learn, Students Vote Coalition
National Conference on Citizenship
ALL IN Democracy Challenge
ACC DemocrACCy Challenge
Ask Every Student Project
DemocracyWorks
VT Libraries
Virginia Tech Division of Student Affairs
Virginia Tech Student Government Association

Section III: Commitment
Currently, civic learning and democratic engagement is not a pervasive part of the Virginia Tech institutional culture. One of the goals of this coalition will be to start this change; with VT Engage serving as an anchor, we will create a consistent, systematic and sustainable culture on the campus for civic learning and democratic engagement. When our Hokies graduate we want to ensure they are ready to be active citizens in their community.

Virginia Tech has committed to the ALL IN Democracy Challenge. Under this commitment we are working to increase student voter participation, awareness of individual civic identity, and build a campus wide coalition. We have also requested for a Presidential commitment from Virginia Tech President, Dr. Timothy Sands. Additional efforts with the ALL IN Democracy challenge include participation in the DemocrACCy challenge. This is a working coalition of our athletic conference, ACC, schools to build a network and resources for these schools. The group is working on establishing our goals, but we have committed to convene every month as a group.

Currently, our Vice President for Student Affairs, Dr. Frank Shushok has given his full support in engaging students in the democratic process through voter engagement. We are hoping that with President Sands and Dr. Shushok's support, other senior leadership will also commit to institutionalizing democratic engagement.

The implementation of the civic learning and democratic engagement initiatives, while not explicitly, directly align with both our institutional and Division of Student Affairs strategic plans and initiatives as well as the Aspirations for Student Learning--a division wide framework for student learning and development. Understanding this alignment strengthens the arguments for an increased commitment from senior leadership.

University Strategic Plan Beyond Boundaries: A 2047 vision
In 2015, Virginia Tech began the process in developing a new strategic plan. Beyond Boundaries: A 2047 vision is the foundation for a vision for Virginia Tech a generation into the future. A vision that reinforces the university's core values and established strengths, while considering two interrelated goals; advancing Virginia Tech as an internationally-recognized, global land-grant and strategically addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the changing landscape of higher education. Civic learning and democratic engagement fall well within several places of this plan.

Most notably under strategic priority 1 advance regional, national, and global; strategic priority 2 elevate the Ut Prosim (That I may serve) difference; and strategic priority 3 be a destination for talent.

Strategic Priority 1: Advance Regional, National, and Global Impact
This priority is intended to *prepare graduates to contribute and lead in a complex world by offering person-centered and purpose-driven student experiences designed to educate the whole person* (Virginia Tech, n.d., p 15) One of the goals of this civic action plan is to increase the awareness of an individual's civic identity and the power they possess to create change in their communities. Through this awareness students will be able to *increase excellence in research, discovery, and creativity* that will complete their holistic education to impact society at every level.

Strategic Priority 2: Elevate the Ut Prosim (That I May Serve) Difference
As a land-grant institution Virginia Tech has a responsibility not only to its students, but also the entire commonwealth. We take this responsibility to the next level through the Ut Prosim (That I May Serve) Difference. *The institutional and individual commitment to Ut Prosim (That I May Serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence, Virginia Tech will build and support communities of discovery where global citizens engage with different ideas, belief, perspectives, experiences, identities, backgrounds, and cultures* (Virginia Tech, n.d., p 17) Civic learning and democratic engagement allow students to understand and challenge social, economic, environmental, and other societal issues impacting humanity. By teaching students' various ways to participate in the democratic process and how to engage in civil discourse, we are developing active citizens who will work to create solutions for the public good.

Strategic Priority 3: Be a Destination for Talent
In Virginia Tech's continued responsibility to meet our land-grant mission, we will also need to *attract bold and dynamic faculty, staff, and students to a diverse and inclusive community to be a force for positive change* (Virginia Tech, n.d., p 19). Sustainable change comes through developing solutions with a diverse group of people coming together to learn and challenge from one another. By hosting spaces for students to engage in deliberative dialogues, students will be able to widen their own perspectives to be a more inclusive environment

Division of Student Affairs Strategic Initiatives
In alignment with the university strategic plan, the Division of Student Affairs also implemented a strategic initiative plan that is guided by the Aspirations for Student Learning (Student Affairs, 2019). *The Aspirations for Student Learning (ASLs) are the learning goals for Student Affairs which are grounded in the theoretical framework of self-authorship. Self-authorship is defined as "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity and social relations." This requires individuals to collect, interpret, analyze, and reflect to form their own perspectives and subsequent interactions and decisions (Kegan (1994) & Baxter Magolda (2001) as cited in* (Student Affairs, 2019, p. 1)*).*

Strategic Initiative: Aspirations for Student Learning
Through the Aspirations students will commit to unwavering CURIOSITY, pursue SELF-UNDERSTANDING and INTEGRITY, practice CIVILITY, prepare for a life of COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP and embrace UT PROSIM (That I May Serve). This civic action plan allows students to explore, practice, and live out these Aspirations through civic learning and democratic engagement.

Strategic Initiative: Leadership and Service
This initiative is designed to actualize students' leadership through service. *All students are potential leaders. Student Affairs strives to create experiences for our students to lead and serve in the spirit of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve) as part of our land-grant mission. Leadership is not merely a title or position. It is a process of growth and development for the purposes of effecting positive change for individuals, communities, and society* (Student Affairs, 2019, p. 3). This civic action plan is only successful with full engagement of students. Through the development of the Hokies Vote Ambassador program and the CVP/CEEP fellows, students will be able to build their knowledge and skills to be leaders in their communities. Furthermore, all students engaging in civic learning and democratic engagement activities will grow their civic identity into a value that prepares them for lifelong voter engagement.

Strategic Initiative: Diversity and Inclusion
While the alignment of this initiative is the same as the Strategic Priority 3 from the Beyond Boundaries vision. It is still important to recognize the alignment with the Division of Student Affairs. *Virginia Tech Student Affairs is committed to diversity, inclusion, and equity as a value over a good. We are committed to creating a community where all students, faculty, and staff are supported in their growth and learning and are prepared to address issues facing our complex global society* (Student Affairs, 2019, p. 6) A commitment to diversity and inclusion at

every level of program development ensures that we are creating equitable and inclusive structures proactively rather than reactively.

Section IV: Landscape

Are civic learning and democratic engagement overall campus learning outcomes?

With the 2019-2020 Division of Student Affairs assessment cycle, VT Engage has begun measuring democratic engagement in department level assessment. One of the goals of the office is to enhance student development by fostering community engagement and leadership opportunities that deepen students' understanding of the public good. This year's measures are designed to establish a baseline of events. The measure includes hosting five events for voter engagement & registration and completing the Voter Friendly Campus action plan. We are currently on track to meeting each of the measures.

As an institution Virginia Tech participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). This study conducted by the Institute for Democracy in Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. helps colleges learn about their student's engagement in voter registration and voting rates. We have participated in this study since its inception in 2012.

The data shows that Virginia Tech students have had a high registration rate at 80% or above since the 2016 Presidential election. Table 1 includes the NSLVE data for Virginia Tech's registration rates, voting rate of registered students, overall voting rate, and the rate for all other institutions in the study. Even though the 2016 election was the highest registration rate the voting rate was below 65% for registered voters and at a 55.6% across the entire Virginia Tech student body. While this number is 5% higher than the average voting rate for all institutions, we do not have a consistent rate of participation. In non-Presidential election years there has been a 20-36% difference in participation rates. Similar trends are also represented at a national level with on average a 20% decrease in voting of the eligible voting population. Voting participation trends from 1916-2018 are represented in Table 2.
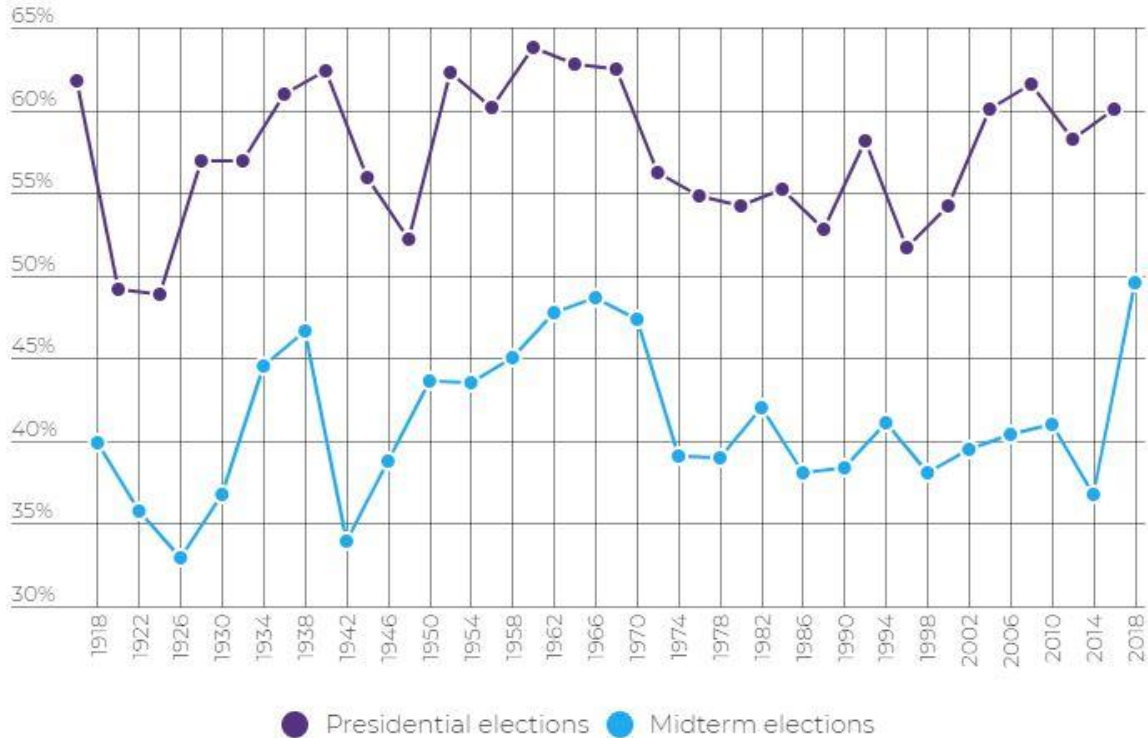
Table 1

Year	Registration Rate	Voting Rate of Registered Students	Voting Rate	Voting Rate for all institutions
2012*	78.5%	86.6%	48.2%	48.2%
2014	71.6%	16.7%	12.0%	12%
2016*	86.6%	64.2%	55.6%	50.4%
2018	81.5%	43.6%	35.5%	39.1%

*Indicates a Presidential Election Year. *(Institute for Democracy in Higher Education, 2014; 2018)*

Table 2- Voter Turnout Rates, 1916-2018

Voter Turnout Rates, 1916 - 2018

(FairVote, n.d.)

The decrease of the voter turnout from voter registration is consistent with youth voting rates at a national level. In their book, *Making Young Voters* (2020)*,* Holbein and Hillygus report that voters across all age groups have a higher intention to vote than actual voting rate. This can be anywhere between 20-35%. The largest gap however is young voters, 18-29 year olds. This group of individuals typically face unique life circumstances that potentially increase lower voter participation. This group is more likely to be location transient as they establish themselves in the workforce. College voters in particular face a decision of voting either in their home community or college community. Not only is that decision itself difficult to make, but it may also present issues with requiring to show ID in person to register as a first time voter, requesting absentee ballots, or distance can prohibit in person voting if they are registered at their home address. Holbein and Hillygus (2020) suggest that the gap between voter registration and turnout for young voters can also be affected by the development of non-cognitive skills. This includes self-regulation to follow through with voting, effortlessness of voting, and interpersonal interactions.

The goals of this civic action plan work to address these barriers from several different angles. Get out the vote (GOTV) events allow students to ask questions about the process of voter

registration and turning out to vote. After the registration deadline these events will turn to help students create a vote plan. Vote plans increase the likelihood for individuals to go out and vote on election day. The deliberative dialogue and debate watch parties allow students to have a platform to discuss policy issues and candidates amongst their peers. Through the Hokies Vote ambassadors program students are developing skills to facilitate driving the GOTV and deliberative dialogue events. As students take on more leadership to implement these events they will be in a position to hold their peers accountable on election day.

Curricular Programs
Virginia Tech has committed to increasing holistic student learning through experiential learning. In order to actualize this as a part of the Beyond Boundaries strategic plan there are a host of offices across the university convening to nurture and develop these learning experiences. The partnerships include Career and Professional Development, ExperienceVT, the Global Education office, Living-Learning Programs, Office of Undergraduate Research, and VT Engage. The work of this partnership is to prepare graduates for a purpose-driven career and life by extending students' traditional classroom learning to tackle authentic problems and work in context. This can be done in a variety of ways including, undergraduate research, internships, study abroad, and service-learning.

Virginia Tech offers a Community Systems and Engagement Pathways Minor. This minor prepares students to address persistent community issues through active citizenship and systems thinking competency. By combining community engagement, service learning, and applied problem solving, the minor creates substantial opportunities for experiential learning. Students are able to craft their minor with a combination of the following courses

SOC 2034 Diversity and Community Engagement
SPIA 1024 Community Service Learning
SPIA 2024 Community Systems Thinking
HD 3024 Community Analytics
SPIA 4784 Community Systems Capstone
FREC 2554 Leadership for Global Sustainability
SPIA 4964 Field Work/Practicum
TA 2404 Introduction to Applied Collaborative Techniques
UAP 4954 Study Abroad
UAP/PSCI 4624/4644 Washington Semester

Co-Curricular Programming
For the 2019 National Voter Registration Day, our CVP fellows co-hosted a Black Liberation Talk on the Black Vote with the Black Cultural Center. This event had about twenty-five students present to learn from a political science professor and current graduate student running for Congress on the unique historical and contemporary barriers black voters face. We are hopeful to continue this partnership and expand to other cultural centers in order to address barriers to the unique communities and at various intersections of identities.

The Student Government Association (SGA) previously hosted the CVP fellowship. Due to staff and student turnover the partnership between the two organizations dissolved. A year after this dissolvement, is when VT Engage adopted the partnership with CVP. VT Engage Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement and the SGA Advisor decided that this partnership would be better situated within VT Engage, because the intentions of SGA are set by their particular student leadership for the year. SGA does have a position on their executive branch, the Director of Governmental Affairs, who coordinates efforts to represent student opinion and interests to federal, state and local governments. This includes, but is not limited to, voter registration, Hokie Day, Virginia21, and civic engagement. This position has struggled to be filled and is currently vacant. We hope that the work of the coalition brings various stakeholders across campus together to increase the probability of filling the position.

SGA still holds a strong commitment to coordinate Hokie Day and participate as a Virginia21 campus. Hokie Day is an advocacy even where students get to lobby on issues important to Virginia Tech and higher education in Virginia. This opportunity allows students to meet with their local delegates and senators to tell their individual story. Students can network with other politicians, administrators, and VT alumni during the event. Virginia21 empowers college students and young Virginians to be engaged citizens and advocates for issues important to them and Virginia's future. Each summer Virginia21 hosts a leadership institute where students engage in programming featuring elected officials, business leaders, citizen advocates, as well as access to one of Virginia's largest nonpartisan political networks. Virginia21 Action is a 501(c)4 affiliate of Virginia21 that advocates on behalf of young people around the state to lawmakers in Richmond. Virginia21 Action has a strong schedule of advocacy topics including accessible and equitable higher education--that which leads to a good job, economic prosperity, and a full life in the Commonwealth--and policies that increase civic engagement and participation, as well as good governance.

Potential Challenges
Programming and event planning always present their own unique challenges. In order to successfully pull off this action plan, we will need to be ready for seen and unforeseen challenges as they arise.
- **Potential Challenge #1**. Student Recruitment will always present as a challenge the HokiesVote Ambassador program, because students have several different competing interests. Virginia Tech has over 800 student organizations; students may also have part-time jobs or family obligations taking up their time. Not to mention their classroom obligations as students. Students will need to weigh the costs and benefits for their participation.
  - **Potential Solution.** In order to combat this challenge, we will need to make sure there is a unified message and we highlight the benefits of their participation in the program. The HokiesVote Ambassador program will need to market the unique leadership and professional development opportunities for students.
- **Potential Challenge #2.** The effects of COVID-19 will last well past the time that the pandemic persists. At the time of this report, senior leadership has not decided about whether or not classes will resume in person for the fall semester.

1. This uncertainty makes it difficult to prepare for students' return to campus. If students do not come back to campus, engaging them via online platforms could be difficult. Every student has a unique home situation and may be taking care of loved ones, facing financial and mental health hardships, or even access to high speed internet. The pandemic exacerbates these barriers for students. Even if students are able to come back to campus in the fall social distancing and group gathering regulations may still be in place.

2. The university is also preparing for a loss of revenue forcing offices across campus to reduce their budgets. VT Engage is currently bracing for a potential 5-10% permanent reduction in funding.

3. Another unknown brought on by COVID-19 are potential changes to election policies and procedures. The primary elections have seen an increase in absentee voting, if stay at home orders persist in November election boards will need to be ready for this change. Voters will also have to ensure they are requesting these ballots and turning them in in accordance with the state regulations. Mail-in ballots may take more time due to the mailing distance for out of state students. Additionally, with their current budget, the US postal service may run out of operational money by September and thereby greatly disrupting the process.

- **Potential Solutions.** Through the network of voter engagement organizations (ALL IN democracy challenge, SLSV, CEEP, CVP, NCoC, Andrew Goodman Foundation, and other organizations) there have been several workshops and meetings to discuss digital organizing strategies. We will need to develop a media strategy and plan ahead for online engagement. While the depth of impact for every university is different, campuses within the network are discovering promising practices and support for one another. We will need to rely more on applying for grants to fund the program and events on campus.

Section V: Evaluation

Evaluation is an important component to ensure we are on track to meeting the short- and long-term goals stated above. Furthermore, by being able to demonstrate student participation and learning we will be able to increase institutional support and broaden the depth of the programs. Events and programs where VT Engage is the primary host will be included in the department's assessment and evaluation process. Measures will be developed to support VT Engage departmental goals including;

Goal 1: Enhance student development by fostering community engagement and leadership opportunities that deepen students' understanding of the public good.
Goal 2: Develop effective mechanisms to support community engagement at Virginia Tech
Goal 3: Develop partnerships that promote sustainable community development
Goal 4: Develop effective mechanisms to ensure equitable access to all VT Engage programs.

Individual program and event learning outcomes will be developed over the summer 2020 term by the Assistant Director for Leadership and Civic Engagement. Each of the individual outcomes

not only map back to VT Engage learning goals, but also to the Aspirations for Student Learning and divisional strategic initiatives. They will work with the Interim Director of VT Engage to develop the mechanisms for measurement that will likely include, survey distribution, interviews, focus groups, or registration information. The Division of Student Affairs assessment cycle will run from July 2020-June 2021. Student fellows and the Graduate Assistant for Leadership and Civic Engagement will assist in supporting the implementation of the assessments and evaluations.

The results of the assessment and evaluations will be shared with divisional and university senior leadership. The Interim Director for VT Engage may also use the results to communicate the work of VT Engage to current and potential donors with support of Student Affairs Advancement. The results will also be included in the end of year report for the Voter Friendly Campus designation. We will also use these results to inform programmatic and event changes. VT Engage staff and students will also have the opportunity to develop conference proposals for professional development at various civic and higher education conferences.

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