

WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2022-2023

*Distributed To:
Campus Vote Project
All In Challenge*

I. Executive Summary

Community Engagement is an essential piece of a Western Technical College education. In 2018, Western Technical College committed to increasing the number of technical diploma and associate degree programs with an embedded community-based learning experience from 48% to 100% by 2025. Currently, we are at 78% and working to embed community-based learning in more programs. There are multiple pathways for community engagement and Western recognizes the role civic engagement, specifically voting, plays in shaping our democracy and developing our students to be engaged members of the workforce. It is also critically important for student success to be achieved for our white students and our students of color and we commit to eliminating any equity gaps that may exist by 2025. Therefore, Western Technical College seeks to increase student voter rates during all upcoming midterm and presidential elections. Julie Christensen, the Community-Based Learning Specialist and Kari Reyburn, the Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement put this action plan together to help guide Western's voter engagement efforts. A college team consisting of employees and students will be organized to bring capacity to the Department of Equity, Inclusion, & Community Engagement who will lead the efforts.

This action plan will be implemented at Western Technical College in La Crosse, WI and online to serve students attending virtually. Outreach will include the five regional locations including Tomah, Mauston, Viroqua, Black River Falls, and Independence.

II. Leadership/Campus Team

1. Kari Reyburn, Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement – Team Lead
2. Julie Christensen, Community-Based Learning Specialist – Team Lead
3. Leah DurninHoover, Student Life Coordinator
4. Eric Jacobson, Public Relations Specialist
5. Ge Vang, Student Government Advisor & AODA Specialist
6. TBD, Democracy Fellow
7. TBD, Democracy Fellow

The Civic Engagement Team consists of key individuals throughout Western who can help fully engage students and build capacity including the Equity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement department, Student Life, Student Government, Resident Life, and Marketing. This team will also utilize the help from the local League of Women Voters and work with Democracy Fellows at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse and Viterbo to share ideas and partner on voter education efforts to maximize resources. We also plan to utilize the strengths of Western Student Government and General Assembly meetings to help build capacity and share information to the greater student population. Ge Vang, Student Government Advisor, will help make these connections and Julie Christensen, Community-Based Learning Specialist, will ensure the Student Government stays connected to the voter efforts. It is anticipated that both of the Democracy Fellows will be attending General Assembly meetings regularly to share information and connect with student clubs/organizations.

III. Commitment

Western Technical College is part of the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, Campus Compact, Campus Vote Project, the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement. Throughout its history, Western Technical College has been committed to connecting the College to the needs of the community. These community partnerships are essential to the Western experience and provides students an opportunity to connect what they are learning in the classroom to the community. Community Engagement and Equity, Inclusion, and Support are both key commitments in Western's Experience 2025 Strategic Plan.

- Infuse community-based learning in 100% of associate degree and technical diploma programs by 2025.
- Eliminate course completion, retention, and graduation achievement gaps between black, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students and white students by 2025.
- Increase enrollment of program-declared students of color from 12.82% in 2018 to 20% in 2025.

The following language is excerpted from the College's Experience 2025 strategic plan.

- **Equity, Inclusion, and Support**

Western is committed to providing students from all backgrounds and academic levels an accessible, inclusive, and equitable learning environment that results in credential attainment. Western and its employees are committed to every student, every day.

- **Fundamental Beliefs**

- Every employee, regardless of position or title is obligated to help create accessible, inclusive, and equitable conditions for student success.
- Teaching should be inclusive of all cultures and backgrounds and appropriate to the needs, abilities, and aspirations of each student.
- Students' self-efficacy is increased by balancing academic rigor with compassionate support, effective teaching methods, and a precise focus on career-relevant topics and skills.
- Academic, social, and emotional assistance should not be stigmatizing. Success achieved with support is still success.

IV. Landscape

- Western's voter rate in the 2018 midterm elections was 43.8% which was up 13.3% from 2014 with an increase in voter engagement across all age ranges. The biggest increase was between 25-29 year-olds.
- Absentee voting increased to 11.3% in 2018 from 6.4% in 2014.
- Community-based learning is currently embedded into 78% of our associate and technical degree programs. Community-based learning encourages students to be more civic minded individuals and actively engage in their community.
- During the 2020 Presidential elections, Western created a Cavaliers Vote webpage on the Western Technical College website with voter education in English and Spanish including videos, guides, and more. This has continued to be updated regularly for students and staff.
- Western's student population is 16% students of color.

V. Goals:

Academic Year 2023

- Increase our student voting rates from 43% in the 2018 Midterm Elections to 46% in the 2022 Midterm Elections.
- Increase our Hispanic and Asian student voting rates from 34% to 69% in the 2022 Midterm Elections.
- Host at least 2 voter education events for Western students prior to the 2022 Midterm Elections.

VI. Strategy:

- Recruit and mobilize student interns
- Recruit and mobilize student volunteers
- Distribute 1,000 Cavaliers Vote flyers
- Update and maintain www.westerntc.edu/Vote landing page
 - i) myvote.gov information
 - ii) How-to videos
 - iii) Candidate education
- Translate printed and online materials to Spanish and Hmong
- Deploy multiple Get Out the Vote communications
 - i) All student email (2)
 - ii) College Social Media postings (5)
 - iii) SPACE (Student Place of Action Culture and Empowerment) Social Media postings/stories (8)
 - iv) Announcement on MyWestern portal
 - v) Social Media story (Instagram takeover)
- Educate students on how to vote at the polls and voter ID requirements
 - i) Social media
 - ii) Student Government/General Assembly
 - iii) Tabling in the Union Market
- Request assistance from key stakeholder groups
 - i) Faculty – request classroom presentations or announcement postings
 - (1) Follow up to those who have a more racially diverse student demographic
 - (2) Follow up communication to key program areas with low voter rates
 - ii) College Advisors & Support Service Areas
 - (1) email signature comment
 - (2) Tips for bringing up the voting conversation
 - iii) Residence Hall
 - (1) Email messages about registering to vote
 - (2) Walk to the polls event
 - iv) Student Government Leaders
 - (1) Discuss voting at Leadership Night
- Post QR code poster on campus in high traffic areas
- Work with the League of Women Voters to register students
- Post countdown in Essential News Employee Newsletter

VII. NSLVE as a Resource for Colleges & Universities

Western participates in NSLVE and receives a report detailing voter engagement of Western students.

VIII. Reporting

This plan will be shared with the campus team internally and any internal or external partners that request it such as the UWL fellows of Viterbo fellows as we plan to partner with them on some events and information sharing.

IX. Evaluation

Information will be collected via the NSLV report to help guide future civic engagement work at Western. Data will also be collected from the Campus Civic Engagement team members on:

- How many students were engaged during different activities?

- How many students attended events, tabling the Union Market, etc.
 - How was social media engagement? Reach?
- How many communications were sent and when?
- Partnerships that were made and how beneficial they were (Women's League of Voters, UWL Fellows, Viterbo, Student Government, etc.)
- What team members felt worked well and what didn't.