



Whatcom Community College 2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: WCC Voter Friendly Campus Coalition

Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Whatcom Community College in Washington for the 2024 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 election.

Overview:

Whatcom Community College (WCC), founded in 1967, is a public associate and applied baccalaureate degree granting institution with an accomplished faculty and staff who serve 7,604 students annually on its beautiful 72-acre campus in Bellingham, Washington. WCC is a destination for cybersecurity, pre-engineering, health care, and business studies. The college offers three Bachelor of Applied Science degrees in Applied Business Management, IT Network-Cybersecurity, and Social Work as well as 34 transfer degrees, 75 certificates, career preparation, online and hybrid courses, and community education classes. WCC is a supportive community, empowering lives through education, preparing students for active citizenship in a global society, and is committed to honoring student investments to ensure all learners have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential and achieve academic success. WCC seeks to cultivate an environment of voter engagement and civil discourse. The College is accredited by The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The Office of Student Life and Development, in coordination with the Associated Students of Whatcom Community College (ASWCC), has taken the initiative to foster this environment through voter education, voter registration and information activities, legislative advocacy, and voter turn-out events. The Voter Friendly Campus coalition has grown since it was initiated by Associated Students of WCC leaders in 2019. This is due to growing representation from various departments, reflecting a greater interest in the coalition across campus. In Washington State all elections are conducted by mail. Washington State has an official voter information portal, VoteWA.gov, which includes functions for registering to vote, pre-registering to vote for 16–17-year-olds, updating voter residential and/or mailing address, downloading a replacement ballot, ballot tracking, and more.

Top three goals for civic engagement for fall of 2024 are:

1. Enhance digital campaigns and online access to information regarding civic engagement and voter education opportunities; by fall quarter 2024, all digital assets will include a link and/or a QR code to votewa.gov.
2. Develop new programming to address harm that may be caused during an election cycle, and help students identify personal incentives to vote and get involved in civic activities.
3. Strengthen Coalition initiatives with new campus stakeholder members of the WCC Voter Friendly Campus Coalition by creating at least one new civic engagement activity with each of the following areas by November 4, 2024: WCC Faculty, Marketing & Communications, and Orca Athletics

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following, campus groups, and organizations:

The 2024 WCC Voter Friendly Campus Coalition is composed of WCC staff, student leaders, and community members:

- Office of Student Life and Development (OSLD)
 - Heidi Farani, Director
 - Kaleb Ode, Associate Director
 - Associated Students of Whatcom Community College Executive Board (ASWCC)
 - Alaina Hirsch, 2023-24 ASWCC President
 - Moises Jacobo, 2024-25 ASWCC President
 - Mariam Mohd, 2023-24 ASWCC Executive Vice President
 - Julianna Serrano, 2024-25 ASWCC Vice President for Civic Engagement
 - Simpson Intercultural Center (IC)
 - Yusuke Okazaki, Associate Director
 - League of Women Voters Bellingham/Whatcom County (LWVBWC)
 - Paula Rotondi, ASWCC Community Partner and LWVBWC Member
 - WCC Faculty*
- Mary Haberman, WCC History Faculty
- WCC Communications & Marketing Department*
 - Marni Saling Mayer, Director for Communications & Marketing
 - Mali Gorovoy, Program Manager for Communications & Marketing
- Orca Athletics*
 - Rob Pedicone, Director for Campus Recreation and Athletics

*new members of WCC Voter Friendly Campus Coalition as of May 2024

Commitment:

Whatcom Community College's Mission Statement addresses a commitment to preparing students for active citizenship in a global society. Each year our commitment to staying designated as a Voter Friendly Campus has helped our campus learn more about civic engagement activities that are already happening in various silos across campus, as well as

sparkling energy and commitment to finding new, better, and more varied ways to incorporate programs, events, and conversations both inside and out. Our most widely visible commitments to nonpartisan democratic engagement occur with a partnership between our campus and the League of Women Voters of Bellingham and Whatcom County. The ASWCC Executive Board partners directly with the LWVBWC by setting up regularly occurring voter registration tables at various locations on campus, and also during several ASWCC hosted events. In addition to these in-person events, several departments on our campus receive voter education materials from the LWVBWC and make those materials available to students in our Learning Commons, our library, and our residence hall.

In our efforts to communicate our college's commitment to nonpartisan democratic engagement, our Associated Students have publicly posted previous Voter Friendly Campus reports on the student government webpage, and shared the Voter Friendly Campus Designation marketing kit with our Communications and Marketing Department. Additionally, we post regularly on our social media accounts to let campus community members know about civic events and conversations happening on our campus. Recently, we also added a Voter Friendly Campus link on the front of our college webpage that takes campus and community members directly to the VoteWA.gov voter registration and ballot management portal.

We have full support and commitment from our President's Cabinet and WCC College President Kathi Hiyane-Brown is currently reviewing and intends to sign the All In Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

Landscape:

Whatcom Community College is a public community college and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2023. Our institution is designated as the following: Predominantly White Institution, Rural Serving Institution.

In Washington State all elections are conducted by mail. Washington State has an official voter information portal, VoteWA.gov, which includes functions for registering to vote, pre-registering to vote for 16–17-year-olds, updating voter residential and/or mailing address, downloading a replacement ballot, ballot tracking, and more.

In recent years Washington State has enacted legislation to reduce barriers to voting, and to make voting more accessible, and more convenient. Washington has an 18-day voting period and ballots can be mailed in or deposited in a ballot drop box. Washington also permits same day in-person voter registration and voting at county auditors' offices and voting hubs. More recent legislation has provided automatic, opt-out voter registration when applying for a Washington State ID, or Drivers' License. Washington State legislation effective July 15, 2024 facilitates access to the official state voter information portal, VoteWA.gov, by submitting name, DOB, and either Washington State ID or drivers' license number, or the last four digits of SSN. VoteWA.gov contains many functions including: voter registration, pre-registration for 16 and 17-year-olds, update of voter mailing and/or residential address, download of a replacement ballot, ballot tracking and more.

Key dates and deadlines pertaining to Washington's vote-by-mail November 5 General Election include:

October 18 - Start of the 18-day voting period (through Election Day). Ballots are mailed. Ballot drop boxes are opened. During business hours the Whatcom County Auditor's Office provides in-person voter registration services and Accessible Voting Units (AVUs). A person may go in-person to the Whatcom County Auditor's Office between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to register to vote and receive a ballot for the November 5th election.

October 28 - Online and mail registrations must be received 8 days before Election Day. Last day for online and paper voter registration forms to be received and go into effect for the November 5th ballot.

November 5 - Election Day - A person may go in-person to the Whatcom County Auditor's Office between 8:30 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. and register to vote and receive a ballot for the November 5th election. Ballots must be deposited in an official ballot drop box by 8:00 p.m. Ballot drop boxes are closed at 8:00 p.m. Mailed ballots must be postmarked no later than November 5, 2024.

Our campus demographic and voting data: Whatcom Community College has 2,697 students according to the data dashboard on the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges website (source: <https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/research/data-public/enrollment-data-dashboard>, retrieved May 31, 2024).

Presently, Whatcom Community College has not yet authorized the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) and does not have campus voting data from NSLVE to evaluate our efforts or set data-driven goals. We do have Whatcom County voter turnout data for the 2022, 2020, and 2018 General Elections for the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups which are the age groups comprising the majority of WCC's student body.

2022 November General Election: Percentage of Registered Voters in Whatcom County in each age group that turned in their ballot:

<u>ages 18-24</u>	<u>25-34</u>
53.8%	54.4%

2020 November General Election: Percentage of Registered Voters in Whatcom County in each age group that turned in their ballot:

<u>ages 18-24</u>	<u>25-34</u>
81.3%	80.6%

2018 November General Election: Percentage of Registered Voters in Whatcom County in each age group that turned in their ballot:

<u>ages 18-24</u>	<u>25-34</u>
63.6%	63.5%

Goals:

Our institution's nonpartisan democratic engagement goals are:

1. Enhance digital campaigns and online access to information regarding civic engagement and voter education opportunities; by November 4, 2024, all digital assets will include a link and/or a QR code to votewa.gov.
2. Develop new programming to address harm that may be caused during an election cycle, and help students identify personal incentives to vote and get involved in civic activities.
3. Strengthen Coalition initiatives with new campus stakeholder members of the WCC Voter Friendly Campus Coalition by creating at least one new civic engagement activity with each of the following areas by November 4, 2024: WCC Faculty, Marketing & Communications, and Orca Athletics.
4. Have our president/chancellor sign the [ALL IN Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation](#) by September 2024.
4. Authorize NSLVE to receive WCC student voting data in the future. Initial WCC voter turnout goals:
 - WCC student voter registration to match or exceed the 2020 national voter registration rate of 83%
 - WCC student voter turnout to match or exceed the Public AS Institutions 2020 national voter turnout rate of 57%

Strategy:

Whatcom Community College will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

Enhance digital campaigns and online access to information

- Register to Vote link to live on the website by May 2024
- Social Media Campaign for important voting dates: Oct 18, Oct 28, and Nov 5; tag and cross-post on both main WCC social media accounts as well as WCC Office of Student Life and Development accounts
- Add important voting dates (Oct 18, Oct 28, and Nov 5) to official WCC calendar
- Share ballot box location information on FIN slides (digital marketing screens on campus), social media, and web banner during voting time.
- The VFC Coalition will provide digital opportunities to enhance student understanding of how civic engagement and voting connect to and impact their daily lives and future. Slides and links will include information about registering to vote, pre-registering to vote, updating address and other features of Washington State's vote-by-mail system.
- All digital communications will include a link for VoteWA.gov and/or its QR code.

Associated Students of Whatcom Community College Legislative Advocacy:

The Office of Student Life and Development staff assist new student leaders in learning about legislative advocacy through both local and statewide training by the State Board for

Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) Council for Unions and Student Programs (CUSP).

- ASWCC Leaders attend Washington Community and Technical Colleges Student Association (WACTCSA) Spring Voice Academy in April 2024. Students from each college in attendance present the legislative priorities most relevant to the students on their campus. Students learn to caucus around common legislative issues and WACTCSA representatives vote on the 2024-25 WACTCSA legislative agenda that students will present to administrators and legislators during the next academic year.
- ASWCC identifies the ASWCC VP for Civic Engagement as the delegate representative to WACTCSA; new ASWCC VP Civic Engagement term will begin in August of 2024.
- ASWCC student government will attend CUSP legislative trainings and weekly WACTCSA meetings beginning September 4, 2024. Through these meetings, the ASWCC leaders will participate in developing a campus-specific legislative agenda if it differs from the WACTCSA agenda, and will refer to it as they develop their work plan goals for the 2024-25 academic year.
- ASWCC representatives will attend WACTCSA Legislative Advocacy Day at the WA State Capitol in Olympia, WA during the month of January 2025.

Civic Conversations in the Curriculum

- The WCC Voter Friendly Campus Coalition will be polling WCC Faculty at the top of fall quarter to collect information about civic engagement activities and conversations happening in the classroom during the Fall 2024 quarter.
- The Coalition will follow up with an end-of quarter survey to collect information about civic conversations and activities that actually happened in the classrooms and will include this information in the January 2025 Voter Friendly Campus report.
- Voter Friendly Campus Coalition will offer 3-5 minute classroom presentations on voter registration topics to any faculty that would like to participate.

Voter Education

- In September 2024, the Office of Student Life and Development will provide training and development opportunities for ASWCC leadership team to enhance understanding about the importance of civic engagement, help student leaders make connections between civic engagement and social justice initiatives, and introduce student leaders to the 2024 WCC Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan.
- Distribution of voter information pamphlets in multiple locations, including the residence hall, Learning Commons, voter registration tables, and in some classes
- Voting Dates Education: ASWCC Leadership will partner with the League of Women Voters (LWV) to obtain materials regarding elections and to help students identify election dates, including October 18 start of voting, and the Primary Election on November 5, 2024. The team will plan voter registration tables and information posting spaces for ongoing voter education opportunities.
- Voter Registration Education: The ASWCC student government will use ongoing tabling outreach and event programming to share information about ballot access (i.e., when to look for your ballot, how to print ballots online, how to submit ballots, and how to see if your ballot has been counted.)
- The VFC Coalition will provide digital messaging and in-person events highlighting Washington State's and Whatcom County's official voter information resources – primarily the Voter Information Pamphlets which are mailed to every registered voter's household and which also are available online at VoteWA.gov.
- The OSLD, in partnership with the ASWCC Executive Board and the LWVBWC, will host at least one event during National Voter Education Week (October 7-11, 2024).

- The Intercultural Center (IC) will host a Talks for Change event centered around civic engagement and the importance of voting before November 4, 2024.
- Whatcom Community College will host a speaker from the LWV to share information regarding voter registration and the roles of various legislators and elected officials. There will be a Q&A session for students to ask questions regarding voting and voter registration. This event will take place in October 2024.
- The ASWCC student government will provide learning and discussion opportunities regarding the November 5th specific ballot measures and their potential to impact students' daily lives and future. ASWCC plans include arranging an on-campus forum at which official representatives supporting and opposing each ballot measure discuss and answer questions.
- The ASWCC student government will provide opportunities for students to learn about candidates and their positions on key issues so students can decide who best represents their interests and deserves their vote. ASWCC plans include arranging an on-campus forum for candidates for some offices and will partner with the LWV to co-host one or more candidate forums.
- The VFC Coalition will provide digital and in-person opportunities for students to learn about Washington State's vote-by-mail process including the steps and procedures for obtaining and successfully submitting a ballot.
- The VFC Coalition will provide ongoing, campus-wide digital and in-person messaging to familiarize students with all the functions of Washington State's official voter information portal, VoteWA.gov.
- The VFC Coalition will distribute hard copy voter information materials to multiple locations on campus including the Learning Commons, residence hall, some classrooms, Student Life and Development in Intercultural Services areas, Orca Food Pantry, and at all voter education tabling events held through the November 5th Election.

Voter Registration, Pre-Registration, and Updating Voter Information Activities

- The ASWCC student government will partner with the LWVBWC to host a Voter Registration Table at Orca Day, June 5, 2024.
- The ASWCC student government will partner with the LWVBWC to host a National Voter Registration Day event with members of 5 Orca Athletics teams on September 17, 2024.
- The ASWCC student government will host tabling, occasionally co-hosting with the LWVBWC, at varying campus locations at least once a week from September 24 through November 5, 2024.
- The ASWCC student government will partner with Running Start and reach out to Running Start students via email to invite them to learn about voter pre-registration.

Voter Turn Out

- The ASWCC student government will include information and maps to raise awareness about the location of the campus ballot box, as it is not central to campus and many students may not know we have one.
- 2024 Vote Early Day, October 29, 2024: The ASWCC student government will partner with the LWVBWC and WCC Social Science Faculty to host a "Bring your Ballot to the Pop-up Voting Party". This voter education and voter turnout event will draw attendance with a Pop-up theme and encourage students to bring their ballots with them, learn more about the resources for researching the issues and choices on the ballot, and end with a trip to the ballot box on campus to submit their ballots.

- November 4, 2024, OSLD will host a social media campaign celebrating Election Hero Day, which recognizes the important work and contributions of poll workers, election administrators, and clerks to ensure efficient and secure elections

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

We hope to have fresh NSLVE data to set our baseline for WCC student voter turn out in the 2024 election. In addition to that data, or in the absence of that data, we will rely on similar data collection to evaluate campus civic engagement activities:

- Number of contacts at voter education tables
- Number of people who utilize resources to update their address at voter education and registration tables
- Number of people who register to vote at voter registration tables
- Sign in attendance at civic engagement events
- New this year, we will include attendance data for classes that are civic engagement focused or that host civic engagement activities or discussions in the classroom, as reported by the WCC instructors who teach them

Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/whatcom-community-college/>. It will also be posted on the student government webpage, and presented in the Associated Students Open Public Meetings in Fall of 2024. We will share hard copies of the action plan on bulletin boards around campus.