

Agnes Scott College Civic Engagement Action Plan



Developed May 2020
For the 2020-2021 Academic Year

Executive Summary

This civic engagement action plan was developed by the Civic Scotties Coalition, a cross-discipline group of faculty, staff, students, and community partners dedicated to promoting and advancing the role of civic learning and democratic engagement as part of the work of Agnes Scott College. This plan provides an overview of Agnes Scott College's plan for the 2020-2021 academic year, but provides long term goals stretching as far as 2030.

This plan was developed after numerous students requested that the college, and specifically the Center for Leadership and Service do more to engage students in democracy and civic learning. Through the coalition's brainstorming, it became apparent that while the Center for Leadership and Service was already doing a lot to support students, these efforts were not well known or well advertised. Additionally, these offerings were done in a vacuum with minimal input from students about what they want and need from civic learning and student engagement. This led to the creation of the Civic Scotties Coalition, who in turn, assisted in the creation of this action plan and will be the key partners in its implementation.

Due to the current climate and decisions that must be made regarding the global pandemic, the coalition thought that it was prudent for us to develop a plan that could be implemented regardless of place and space. It is uncertain if Agnes Scott College will resume courses on campus in the fall, and felt that a plan that did not take that into account would not be prudent.

Leadership

At Agnes Scott College, The Gué Pardue Hudson Center for Leadership and Service, and specifically the Director of Community, Civic, and Global Engagement, is responsible for overseeing Agnes Scott College's work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement. Under initial leadership from JLP Prince, Director of Community, Civic, and Global Engagement, a coalition was brought together to address the civic learning and democratic engagement programming on campus. The coalition is co-chaired by JLP Prince and Breanna Madison '21, a current student and Impact Peer Leader for Racial Justice.

The primary role of the coalition is to develop the action plan to be implemented by the Center for Leadership and Service. Additionally, the working group will help promote civic engagement events during the Fall 2020 semester. Beyond the 2020 election, the coalition will serve as an advisory group in helping determine the direction of civic engagement efforts at the college.

Student members of the coalition were selected based on the students who attended the Georgia Student Voting Summit. These students, along with the Director of Community, Civic, and Global Engagement, identified potential faculty, staff, and community stakeholders to serve on the working group. Emails were sent to the potential members inviting them to join. In addition to campus representatives, a representative from Georgia Equality's civic engagement arm was invited to join the coalition. Georgia Equality has been a key partner in previous voter engagement efforts. At this time, the working group member's responsibilities are primarily advisory in nature, with the student members taking on leadership for some of the student events that have been developed as part of the action plan.

Our working group is comprised of the following individuals:

JLP Prince (co-chair), Director of Community Civic, and Global Engagement

Breanna Madison (co-chair), Student, Impact Peer Leader for Racial Justice

Dr. Holloway Sparks, Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science

Shandra Owens, Director of the Resource Center for Science and Math

Shannon Clawson, State Outreach Organizer, Georgia Equality

Olivia Chapman, Student, Rock the Vote Fellow and Fair Fight U representative

Loren Walters, Student, SGA and Ignite Representative

Lila Holland, Student, HerCampus Representative

Lane Miller, Student, Center for Leadership and Service Student Assistant

Our group met bi-weekly during the Spring 2020 semester to coordinate the development of the action plan and will continue to meet monthly in regards to the execution.

Commitment

At this point in time, civic learning and democratic engagement are not explicitly demonstrated by the institution, but is threaded more implicitly through things such as our mission statement (Agnes Scott College educates women to think deeply, live honorably, and engage the intellectual and social challenges of their times), our strategic plan, and our student learning outcomes which are discussed later. In a similar manner, a commitment to civic engagement is a part of campus culture, though with limited formalization outside of the Center for Leadership and Service. While there are faculty and staff members throughout the institution who are personally dedicated to advancing democratic engagement, it is not manifested in campus wide initiatives. The true influence in this culture is our student body. They are passionate about a variety of social issues and are heavily engaged with civic learning, especially as it relates to activism and advocacy work and they are a large driving force behind the work happening in civic learning and democratic engagement.

The college has a centralized assessment and evaluation process that is overseen by the President's Office and the Office of Institutional Research. Offices have the freedom to choose what they assess each year, but they are required to complete assessment. The Center for Leadership and Service will choose to focus on civic learning and democratic engagement as part of our assessment efforts for the 2020-2021 academic year. Currently, there is not an expansive awareness of the dispersal of civic learning and democratic engagement in the general education curriculum, but the Civic Scotties Coalition is planning to use this year to develop a stronger awareness of what is currently happening so that we can better implement

in the coming years. Additionally, beyond the work of the Center for Leadership and Service, mapping needs to be completed for the integration of civic engagement throughout the co-curriculum.

Landscape

Currently, civic learning and democratic engagement are only limitedly represented in our campus student learning outcomes, but the skills necessary are represented very heavily. These outcomes are tied to the Summit initiative, which prepares students to be leaders in a global society. These outcomes include:

1. Identify, explain, and analyze global themes, processes and systems
2. Demonstrate knowledge and skills essential for global engagement
3. Critically examine the relationship between dominant and marginalized cultures, subcultures or group
4. Communicate effectively through writing and speaking, especially across cultural or linguistic differences
5. Recognize, analyze and evaluate arguments
6. Articulate and appraise problems and solutions from multiple perspectives, critically considering diverse sources of information
7. Recognize, analyze, and employ effective teamwork
8. Identify and assess one's values, interests and abilities
9. Practice or interpret creative expression or probe fundamental questions of value and meaning
10. Interpret quantitative information or demonstrate the methods of inquiry appropriate for investigating the natural world
11. Analyze human behavior or social relations

12. Cultivate and maintain interpersonal relationships and networks
13. Demonstrate confidence and motivation to effect change
14. Practice continual improvement of one's whole person and seek and utilize feedback
15. Identify, evaluate and strategically utilize campus and community resources
16. Demonstrate honorable and ethical behavior and civic engagement

In terms of assessment data, the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement provide the most complete picture of our campus' democratic engagement. In the 2018 midterm election we saw over 80% of our students registered to vote and almost 54% of all students voting. We are well above national averages, but know that we can still improve these numbers with a more coordinated cross-campus answer.

One of the most interesting dynamics demonstrated on campus is seen in our student organizations - while we do not have student organizations for political parties (such as College Democrats or College Republicans), we do have a large number of groups for advancing specific political issues such as reproductive rights, environmental justice, immigration, voting access, and empowering women to run for office. These group's efforts manifest in various ways including educational and social events, but also activism, protests, and advocacy work with elected officials. Additionally, the Student Government Association is attempting to change the college's academic calendar so that there are no classes on major election days.

We, as an institution, are currently unsure of how civic learning and democratic engagement manifests itself within the curriculum. There historically has not been any attempt to track or champion this cause. Because of this, we are including research into the implementation of civic learning and democratic engagement in the classroom as part of our

short-term goals. We have anecdotal evidence that some faculty are including it, including the faculty representation on this coalition, but no quantifiable data.

Civic learning and democratic engagement at Agnes Scott College is centered in the co-curriculum and is coordinated by the Center for Leadership and Service, and specifically the director of community, civic, and global engagement. This directly manifests in the office's Scotties Vote initiative which has historically included voter registration drives, coordinating rides to polling locations, and paying for absentee ballot postage, among other things. While other departments develop skills that are essential to being an engaged citizen, that is secondary to the context of the programs.

In the age of COVID-19, internal barriers have increased since the coalition has formed. College funding for community, civic, and global engagement is proposed to be reduced by over 50% in light of predicted enrollment declines due to the pandemic. Additionally, because the college has been primarily focused on leadership and global learning over the past few years, as well as professional success more recently, it is hard to have a voice at the table to have campus partners reframe their work in terms of civic learning and democratic engagement. Additionally, there is only one staff member at the college who has civic engagement as part of their job responsibilities, and those responsibilities exist alongside other responsibilities such as community engagement/service and co-curricular global learning.

Being positioned in Georgia, Agnes Scott College faces unique challenges when getting our students to the polls to vote. Due to the exact match policies with voter registration to state records, along with stringent ID requirements, it is difficult for students, especially those from out of state to vote at their campus address. Anecdotal conversations have shown

that some students have had to vote via a provisional ballot because their Driver's License was from another state. Additionally, despite having a polling location less than a quarter of a mile from campus (Renfroe Middle School), students who register to vote on campus are assigned to a polling place approximately a mile away from campus (Holy Trinity Parish Episcopal Church).

In an attempt to overcome these external barriers, we are doing education work with students about the voter ID requirements. Because of Agnes Scott College's Summit program, each student participates in a global study tour during the spring semester of their first year. This has led to the implementation of passport programs on campus where students can apply, take passport photos, and receive financial assistance to obtain a passport. We are educating students and reminding them that this passport is also a valid form of identification for elections that they already have, regardless of their home state. Additionally, with the situation involving polling place distance, the institution has started providing shuttle service to the polling place on election day and hopes to expand to include our early voting site on the Saturdays leading up to the election.

Overall, the resources Agnes Scott College needs in order to successfully achieve the civic learning and democratic engagement goals outlined in this action plan are ones that we already have. While additional fiscal assistance would be wonderful, what is truly needed is an increase in human resources. Additional staffing would be appreciated, but what would be most beneficial is an overall increase in campus buy-in to civic learning and democratic engagement as something that is everyone's responsibility, not just those within the Center for Leadership and Service and the Political Science and History departments.

Goals

Long-Term Goals

- Increase voting rate to 75% of eligible students by 2030.
- Increase registration rate to 95% of eligible students by 2030
- Create a culture where skills such as deliberative dialogue, information literacy, and community service are seen as key elements of civic learning and demographic engagement by 2030.
- Add civic learning and democratic engagement as a learning outcome for the First Year Seminar courses by 2030.

Short-Term Goals

- Add civic engagement resource page to the Agnes Scott College Website before the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester
- Create a Canvas course to support the dissemination of civic engagement resources to students before the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester
- Increase voter registration rates of STEM students to similar levels as other disciplines by the 2022 midterm elections
- Draw connections between Summit Student Learning Outcomes and Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement to better infuse them into training for faculty, staff and students during the summer of 2020.
- Gather syllabi to better understand which faculty are including civic learning and democratic engagement as part of their learning outcomes by May 2021

Strategy

Civic Scotties Website

A web page will be created on the college's website that will be a comprehensive resource to voter and civic engagement efforts. It will include links to the college's TurboVote site, the Georgia My Voter Page, a "find my representative" section, and tips for contacting elected officials. This information will be compiled and designed by the Center for Leadership and Service and will be launched by August 1st, 2020. This site aims to create a one-stop shop for students to provide resources surrounding Civic Engagement in its various forms.

Civic Scotties Canvas Course

Agnes Scott College uses Canvas as our Learning Management Service. The coalition will create a Civic Learning course that all students will be automatically enrolled in and will appear on their dashboard. The Canvas course will include modules around topics such as voter registration, voter turnout, writing to representatives, deliberative dialogues, and other forms of civic engagement.

Social Media Campaign

The students on the coalition will develop and schedule the implementation of a social media campaign to raise awareness around voting and civic engagement. This will include the utilization of instagram, facebook, and others as well as leveraging relationships with popular social media pages for our campus.

Messaging from the President(s)

The coalition will craft messaging to be distributed by the President of the college emphasizing the importance of civic engagement and its importance to the mission of Agnes Scott College. Additionally, the coalition will reach out to the SGA President to send a message to students at a different time closer to the election.

Reporting

This action plan, its results, as well as our National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement reports will be made available on both the website and Canvas site mentioned above. It's placement on the public website, along with the internal Canvas site, will ensure that it is available to multiple audiences.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a core component of the civic engagement action plan process. This will allow Agnes Scott College to understand our progress towards the goal outlined in this plan. Evaluative data will be gathered from sources such as the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, as well as data collected from TurboVote, attendance at civic learning events, and the canvas course. NSLVE will provide information regarding students who are registered to vote and actually voted providing demographic breakdowns based on information such as racial identity, gender, and major discipline. Additionally, with the TurboVote referral link process, we are able to create specific urls for different locations (such as social media, website, canvas, campus newsletter, etc) to see which of our campaigns are most effective at getting students registered to vote.

The director for community, civic, and global engagement will be primarily responsible for the evaluative efforts with assistance from the coalition members. For data gathered that we have baseline information, we will compare results for previous years to determine success. For the other data points being collected, we hope to establish baseline data that can be used to determine future success. Evaluation results will be shared in a summative format via the aforementioned website as well as the canvas page.