



Evergreen Valley College

All In Campus Democracy Challenge

2018 Action Plan



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evergreen Valley College (EVC) Service-Learning and Public Service program (SL&PS) prepares students for lifelong civic engagement and social responsibilities in an increasingly complex and diverse global society. Our social justice paradigm asks students to tackle real world problems by serving with local nonprofit organizations in neighboring communities, in order to encourage students to utilize their knowledge and skills to become “part of the solution” for the public good.

In 2016 we joined in the work of the *All In Democracy Challenge* in order to support our mission, and to be part of the larger national democratic movement in higher education. Specifically, we want to change the culture at EVC in order to increase our students’ below average voting rates. EVC’s student voting rate of 36.4% in the 2016 Presidential Election was far below the voting rate for all institutions which was 50.4%. We believe that there is much that we can and must do to change our students’ voting rates. Moreover, we believe that a large part of what prevents our students from voting at a higher rate is not individual apathy, but lack of visible institutional commitment to democratic principles, lack of information and resources about the voting process, residency requirements, deadlines, ballot measures and candidates’ positions.

To this end we are using our 2016 *National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement* (NSLVE) report as a “Call to Action.” Our goal is to increase our students’ voting rates and community participation by providing a variety of educational forums, voter registration drives, activities and Service-Learning and volunteer opportunities outlined in this *All In Campus Democracy Challenge Action Plan*, which will be active from January 1, 2018 through December 1, 2018.

Point of Contact for Designation Process

Marjorie Clark

EVC Service-Learning and Public Service Coordinator

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COALITION

EVC Votes Civic Engagement Team members are responsible for identifying and creating programs and activities to encourage civic awareness, discourse and engagement. Members represent all contingency groups at the college, including faculties, staff and students.

Marjorie Clark, Service-Learning and Public Service Coordinator

Responsibilities: Coordinator of Civic Action Plan, Free Speech Forums, Volunteer and Service-Learning coordination and establish Community Partners

David Hendricks, History Professor and Honors Institute Coordinator

Responsibilities: Coordinator of Constitution Day and Honors Debate

Tiffany O'Brien, Service-Learning and Public Service Program Assistant

Responsibilities: *Get The Vote* Voter Registration Scheduling, EVC Votes Website

Raniyah Johnson, Director of Student Life

Responsibilities: Coordinator of Student Organizations' Contest, *Get the Vote* activities and Watch Parties

Charina Tengson, Associated Student Government Senator

Responsibilities: Coordinator of Student Advocacy, American Association of University Women Liaison

Campus Partners

- AAUW Student Organization
- EVC Associated Student Government (ASG)
- Center for Service-Learning and Public Service
- Honors Institute
- Office of Student Life

Community Partners

- American Association of University Women (AAUW)
- Asian Law Alliance
- *Indivisible San Jose*
- *League of Women's Voters*
- *Rock The Vote*
- Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters
- *SIREN*-Services Immigrant Rights and Education Network

COMMITMENT

Since 1999, EVC has been committed to civic engagement through the work of the SL&PS program. Our work is deeply rooted in EVC's guiding principles of equity, opportunity and social justice, and mission to "empower and prepare students from diverse backgrounds to succeed academically and to be civically responsible global citizens." This commitment is also reflected in one of the three institutional priorities outlined in the college's Strategic Initiatives, *Community Engagement*, which strives to increase visibility, develop strategic partnerships and to build campus community.

Evidence of the college's commitment to civic learning can also be seen in the curriculum. EVC promotes civic engagement by offering Service-Learning opportunities through its General Education course offerings. The college also offers two (2) stand-alone Service-Learning courses: SERV-002 *Service-Learning: Career and Personal Development*, and SERV-001: *Introduction to Service-Learning*, where both courses are based on civic and community principles, and fulfill the district's General Education requirements for the Associates degrees.

LANDSCAPE

Overall EVC's campus climate is diverse and disengaged. The college has several campus programs, departments and student organizations who work independently to offer a modest number of political forums, events and humanitarian drives that fall under the umbrella of civic learning and engagement. For example, our Office of Student Life recently opened a food and clothing pantry to help dress and feed our homeless students, and our *California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs)* Program has for many years partnered with *Second Harvest Food Bank*, in order to distribute food to low-income community members and students. Recently Keith Aytch, our new college President, has publicly committed to address the plight of our homeless students by identifying available resources on campus and in the community. President Aytch has also participated in the distribution of food on campus, and he has made it a point to make personal appearances at many of the political forums, humanitarian drives and events on campus.

In spite of these good intentions and admiral activities, numerous institutional barriers still exist that impedes our progress towards greater student voting rates. The key barriers are 1) a lack of a unified, campus-wide commitment to civic engagement and voter registration, 2) lack of funding for activities and 3) lack of support and funding for SL&PS, the sole program that is responsible for promoting civic engagement on campus. Due to inadequate funding and staffing, the SL&PS program is only open half days, Mondays through Thursday for a total of 16 hours a week.

Additional factors, which may also explain our students' low voting rates, are:

- Commuter campus: Many of our students choose to leave right after classes.
- Large student working population: We have a large student population who work off-campus and are unable to attend campus activities.
- No College Hour: There is no designated time when there are limited classes in session where students, faculty and staff can participate in activities and events.
- Students' low trust in government.
- Large first-generation and immigrant student population with limited knowledge of U.S. political system.
- Lack of published information and resources on voting deadlines, process and candidate forums.
- Silo Mentality: Many programs and individuals working independently on similar projects with little to no communication.
- Lack of incentives for faculties to integrate Service-Learning and civic education into their curriculum.
- Faculties' unwillingness to leave their classrooms and take their classes to campus activities, even if there is a direct relationship between the event and their curriculum.
- Staff not permitted to attend campus-wide events outside of their lunch break.

All of the above mentioned barriers actively contribute to our college culture of low student involvement in campus life, community involvement and civic engagement.

GOALS

EVC's long-term goals increase civic engagement are:

1. Engage the college community in ongoing dialogue about the role of higher education and civic engagement;
2. increase our students' voting rates;
3. provide information and resources to help students and staff make informed political choices;
4. increase the number of General Education courses offering Service-Learning opportunities;
5. expose students and staff to social issues on campus and in local communities that impact their lives.

STRATEGY

Moving forward, our strategy will be to include more students and key stakeholders in our Civic Engagement Team. Furthermore, we plan to recruit more Political Science and Sociology instructors to integrate Service-Learning into their curriculum so that Service-Learning students can assist with voter registration. Additional strategies include:

- Use of campus-wide emails and GRADGURU (a mobile platform that gives community college students deadlines, tips and personal advice) to remind students and staff about deadlines and events
- Constitution Day Observance
- National Register to Vote Day activities
- *Get Out The Vote* (GOTV) activities
- Student Clubs contests and incentives to register students
- *Free Speech/Social Justice Forums*

REPORTING

This *All In Campus Democracy Challenge Action Plan* will be shared with all members of the EVC VOTES Civic Engagement Team. The plan will also be presented to the college President and the College Council, which is a representative *council* of administration, faculty, classified staff and students that advises the college President.

Our NSLVE reports, will be housed on the SL&PS EVC Votes web page.

EVALUATION

The *EVC Votes Civic Engagement Team* will evaluate our 2018 plan and strategies in order to identify the most effective methods of increasing our students' registration and voting rates. The team will review the numbers of:

- Students who participated in the Student Club contest
- Number of participants in the *Free Speech/Social Justice Forums*
- Participants attending *Free Speech/Social Justice Forums*
- Our students' registration rate in the 2018 NSLVE report