



# Northern Essex Community College

## All in Democracy Challenge

### *2020 Election Engagement Action Plan*



For more information, contact:

Janel D'Agata-Lynch, Coordinator

Civic Engagement, Service-Learning, and Community Resources Office

[jdagatalynch@necc.mass.edu](mailto:jdagatalynch@necc.mass.edu) or 978-314-3471

### **Executive Summary**

In fall 2019, Northern Essex Community College (NECC) joined the All in Democracy Challenge. As part of this commitment, NECC agreed to create an action plan for upcoming elections. This action plan would address specific election engagement strategies for 2020, expanding on the college's current Civic Action Plan, which was established in 2017.

NECC has a strong commitment to civic engagement and voting. In order to form this action plan, input was solicited campus wide. This plan was created during the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis; and its effect on the college and voting process was considered in its writing. Based on this information, a plan was created with realistic goals and strategies, focusing on voter registration, election education, and voter turnout. With strong voter registration and turnout rates in 2016, NECC strives to maintain these in 2020 with a goal of increasing both by 5% in 2024. In 2021, this plan will be evaluated and updated.

## **Leadership**

Northern Essex Community College (NECC) has an established Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Committee that provides oversight and direction to civic engagement efforts on the campus.

Committee membership is open to any student, faculty and/or staff. This committee consists of over 35 staff and faculty from all college divisions and both campus locations, including the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs and the Vice President of the Lawrence Campus and Community Relations. The Coordinator of Civic Engagement and Service-Learning chairs the committee.

The Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Committee established an elections working group in fall 2019 to plan how NECC would address the upcoming elections. This small, but dedicated group outlined strategies for engaging the campus in the 2020 elections. The Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Coordinator also chairs this group.

The Student Government Association (SGA) is invited to participate in committee meetings. They have contributed to the creation of this plan and received a full copy for review.

The Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Advisory Committee is comprised of community leaders, NECC faculty/staff, as well as a current NECC student and recent alumni. This Committee has had the opportunity to review the plan and offer feedback. They have since endorsed this plan.

This plan was reviewed and approved by the President of NECC, Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, and the Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs.

## **Commitment**

Northern Essex Community College is committed to graduating active, engaged citizens. In 2015, the college hired its first Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Coordinator. The same year, NECC agreed to participate in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) to learn more about NECC students' voting participation. The college has been using the results of this study to inform strategies for student voter engagement since 2015.

In 2016, NECC President Lane Glenn signed the Campus Compact 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Statement of Presidents, reaffirming the college's commitment to civic engagement. As part of this pledge, NECC committed to creating a college civic action plan within the year.

In spring 2017, NECC adopted its first [Civic Action Plan](#). NECC's Civic Action plan embraces the college's vision by preparing our students to be active, informed citizens; by empowering the NECC community to pursue partnerships to benefit local and global communities; and to contribute institutionally to the health and strength of our local communities. This plan has helped NECC live out its mission "to educate and inspire our students to succeed" and "to create vibrant and innovative opportunities that encourage excellence and enhance the cultural and economic life of our region" ([NECC Mission Statement](#)).

The college's current strategic plan includes the goal to "design and deliver an integrated, structured, and inclusive student experience across campuses that maximizes student success." As part of this goal, the college affirms the following: "Ensuring access for students and preparing them to meet their educational goals, enter the world of work, and be informed, active citizens in our global society is paramount" ([Strategic Plan 2020: Integrated Student Experience](#)). As part of this commitment, the

college has increased efforts to create opportunities for students' civic engagement, as well as recognize students' efforts.

In spring 2017, NECC established a Civic Engagement Award for a graduating student who has demonstrated a commitment to civic engagement during their tenure at the college. In 2018, NECC nominated a student to be a Newman Civic Scholar through Campus Compact for the first time.

The college continues to have a strong dedication to civic engagement. In fall 2019, the Civic Scholars Program was established to provide a pathway to civic engagement. The program awards points to students for engagement in a wide variety of co-curricular, community, and curricular offerings focusing on civic participation, service to their communities, and/or social justice. The first two students completed the program in spring 2020.

In fall 2019, Northern Essex Community College joined the *All in Democracy Challenge*, committing to create an action plan specific to election engagement. NECC was also recognized with a Silver Seal for Voter Excellence for the college's 2018 voting rates by this organization.

**Goals**

The overarching goal for NECC is to increase voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout among its students.

Northern Essex Community College has voter registration and turnout data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement. NECC, like other colleges, saw an increase in registration and voting rates between the 2014 and 2018 elections, as well as the 2012 and 2016 elections.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Registration Rate</b>	<b>Voting Rate of Registered Voters</b>	<b>Overall Voting Rate of Student Body</b>
2018	66.8%	47.5%	31.8%
2016	69.4%	74.9%	51.9%
2014	59.00%	34.8%	20.6%
2012	64.9%	73.1%	47.5%

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic poses obstacles to both registration and voting for NECC students. Currently, in Massachusetts, voting can be done in-person (early or on Election Day) or by absentee ballot. Voter registration is currently accessible online, by mail, or in person. In New Hampshire (where around 16% of our students reside), voter registration is only conducted in person at the town hall or at a polling site. Voting is only available in person or by absentee ballot (if a person meets the criteria) at this time.

The current debates about approving mail-in voting will be monitored. If mail-in voting is approved and/or if changes occur in NH to allow for remote voter registration, NECC will alter its strategy to help educate the campus community on these new developments.

In light of these challenges, NECC strives to maintain similar voting registration and voting rates as the 2016 elections for 2020. By 2024, NECC strives to increase their voting registration rate by 5% and the overall voting rate of the student body by 5%.

**2020 Strategy**

**Goal: NECC students register to vote.**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<p>In-person and/or online voter registration: Potential activities/weblink locations include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tabling on both campuses</li> <li>• NECC events</li> <li>• Classrooms</li> <li>• Orientation</li> <li>• Navigate</li> <li>• Blackboard</li> <li>• Campus-wide Email</li> <li>• Link on main student facing NECC website pages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Engagement Office/Civic Scholars</li> <li>• Community organizations</li> <li>• Faculty</li> <li>• Coordinator of Orientation and Student Transitions</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> <li>• Assistant Director of Student Success Management Systems</li> </ul>	<p>Summer and Fall 2020 Constitution Day: 9/17/2020</p>
<p>Voter Registration forms are available on campus, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NECC Library</li> <li>• Academic Centers</li> <li>• Student gathering locations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NECC Library</li> <li>• Academic Centers</li> <li>• Civic Engagement Offices</li> <li>• Lawrence Community Relations</li> </ul>	<p>Summer and Fall 2020</p>
<p>National Voter Registration Day Challenge Activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of Civic Engagement</li> </ul>	<p>9/22/20</p>

**Goal: NECC students are educated on the election issues and candidates.**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<p>Academic election assignment- Request faculty to bring the election into the classroom in the form of an assignment.</p> <p>Provide support (remote and/or in-person) for this through lunch and learns; Blackboard Elections Community site; and one-on-one consultation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty</li> <li>• Civic Engagement Office</li> <li>• Professional Development</li> </ul>	<p>Summer and Fall 2020</p>
<p>Campus election educational events (remote and/or in-person): Potential events include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mock debate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Engagement Office</li> </ul>	<p>Summer, Fall, and January 2020</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic trivia</li> <li>• Ballot questions forum</li> <li>• Election debrief</li> <li>• Inauguration watch party</li> <li>• Guest speakers</li> <li>• Major specific events</li> <li>• Workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Committee</li> <li>• Student clubs</li> <li>• Student Government Association</li> <li>• Faculty</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• PACE</li> </ul>	
<p>Promotion of public election events: Potential events include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National and local debates</li> <li>• Local and national forums/debates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Engagement Office</li> </ul>	Summer and Fall 2020
<p>Create and/or share online resources available for students and/ faculty about the election:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Engagement social media pages</li> <li>• NECC Library Election Lib Guide</li> <li>• Election Teach-In Blackboard Community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NECC Library</li> <li>• Civic Engagement Office</li> </ul>	Summer and Fall 2020
<p>Community College Advocacy Day – MA Statehouse</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Engagement Office</li> <li>• Student Life Office</li> </ul>	Fall 2020
<p>Election educational articles appear in the Observer (the student newspaper).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NECC Observer staff</li> <li>• NECC faculty, staff, students</li> <li>• NECC Civic Engagement Office</li> </ul>	Fall 2020
<p>100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment Potential ideas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speakers</li> <li>• Social media campaign</li> <li>• “What does the right to vote means to me?” video</li> <li>• Constitution Day event</li> <li>• NECC poster contest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of Veteran’s Affairs</li> <li>• Student Life</li> <li>• Office of Civic Engagement</li> <li>• Faculty and staff</li> <li>• Students</li> </ul>	Fall 2020 Constitution Day: 9/17/2020
<p>Connect NECC students to paid and unpaid opportunities working at election polls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Services</li> </ul>	Fall 2020
<p>#NECCVotes webpage will be created to educate the campus on this plan and voting initiatives on campus.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Engagement Office</li> <li>• NECC Marketing</li> </ul>	Summer 2020

**Goal: NECC students vote!**

Activities	Responsible	Timeframe
Promote <b>#NECCVotes</b> Campaign Potential ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute buttons</li> <li>• Create and hang posters with past voting statistics</li> <li>• Create a video from campus community about why they vote.</li> <li>• Yard signs around campus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Engagement Office</li> <li>• NECC Marketing</li> <li>• NECC President and Administration</li> <li>• Campus Community</li> <li>• NECC Observer</li> </ul>	Spring – Fall 2020
Educate on how to vote (early, absentee, and in-person): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly emails</li> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• Blackboard and Navigate messaging</li> <li>• Tabling on Election Day</li> <li>• Classroom announcements/presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Engagement Office</li> <li>• Assistant Director of Student Success Management Systems</li> <li>• Faculty</li> <li>• NECC Observer</li> <li>• Lawrence Community Relations</li> </ul>	Fall 2020
Election Day Reminders: Send election day reminders to students. Potential methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus wide email</li> <li>• Campus wide text</li> <li>• Faculty email to their students</li> <li>• Yard signs around campus</li> <li>• “Chalk” your vote activity</li> <li>• Social media campaign</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic Engagement Office</li> <li>• Faculty</li> <li>• Student Life</li> <li>• NECC Observer</li> </ul>	Fall 2020  Election Days: September 1, 2020 November 3, 2020

**Accessibility**

As part of this plan, the college commits to creating all possible election oriented materials with accessibility and universal design principles in mind. The college’s Center for Instructional Technology, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Learning Accommodations Center, and Marketing and Communications have all committed to assist in this process.

In addition, the college will strive to have as many printed materials as possible printed in English and Spanish.

**Reporting**

This action plan will be available to all members of the Civic Engagement and Service-Learning Committee, college administration, and all offices directly named in the strategy section of the plan. The plan will also be available by request. The Executive Summary will be included on the new

#NECCVotes webpage, as well as a link to the full plan on the *All in Democracy Challenge* website. Updates to the plan and its progress will be shared on this webpage also.

### **Evaluation**

Assessment will happen annually in the late spring.

First, NECC will evaluate if the activities identified occurred within the timeframe and collect outputs for these activities. These will provide the basis for updating the plan for the future, including target outputs.

Second, students will be offered a voluntary survey to fill out after election events to assess learning. These results will be shared with the presenter of the event and compiled into a database for all election events. The results of these evaluations will be utilized to increase the learning effectiveness of events in the future.

Third, utilizing the NSLVE data we will determine if the goals were achieved for voter registration and turnout. This data will help inform the strategy for the subsequent year.

This assessment will inform the creation of the strategy for the following year.