



**All In Challenge  
Civic Engagement Action Plan-2020  
1900 Pico Blvd.  
Santa Monica, Ca. 90405**

## **I. Executive Summary**

A team of faculty, staff, and student leaders came together to develop the Santa Monica College Civic Engagement Action Plan, recognizing a critical need for civic education and involvement among college students to address our most pressing and often intractable local, state, and national concerns. Our goal is simple—to develop a comprehensive program of activities and resources that make “civic engagement” relevant to students while providing opportunities to take meaningful civic actions. The plan builds upon the work already being accomplished by a variety of departments, programs, and constituencies across both our main campus as well as our satellite campuses. Our goal is to implement our new and improved plan Fall 2020 and to institutionalize much of the activities and events as part of the College’s overall commitment to develop students “to contribute to the local and global community as they develop an understanding of their relationship to diverse social, cultural, political, economic, technological, and natural environments” (SMC Mission).

## **II. Leadership**

SMC’s civic engagement effort is a collaborative cross-campus effort to increase civic learning and democratic engagement led by the Office of Student Life and Chaired by the Associate Dean of Student Life, Dr. Isaac A. Rodriguez Lupercio. The Civic Engagement team is composed of students, staff, and faculty, including the following members:

- **Executive Leadership:** Vice President of Student Affairs
- **The Associated Student Government:** President, Vice President, Director of Publicity, Director of Activities, Director of Instructional Support, Director of Student Advocacy
- **SMC Marketing:** Manager
- **Journalism and Media Studies Programs:** Faculty
- **The Public Policy Institute:** Co-Director and Faculty
- **Student Life:** Counselor and Associate Dean

The Civic Engagement Committee has been meeting since January 2020 to plan the work that has been occurring across campus and to brainstorm innovative ways to further engage and inspire students into civic action.

Members of the group help with the “heavy lifting,” such as, plan and supervise events, gather and



coordinate volunteers, develop promotional materials, make classroom visits, speak on panels, and more.

We have worked to develop a robust and comprehensive website for the college:  
[smc.edu/civicingement](http://smc.edu/civicingagement)

### **III. Commitment**

Santa Monica College has long been known for its commitment to civic involvement. As a close partner to the City of Santa Monica, the College participates in multiple projects, programs, and events with the City and its leaders. This commitment to civic engagement at all levels of citizenry is also evidenced in the SMC vision and mission statements (bold added for emphasis):

#### **Vision**

Santa Monica College will be a leader and innovator in learning and achievement. As a community committed to open dialog and the free exchange of ideas, Santa Monica College will foster its core values: knowledge, intellectual inquiry, research-based planning and evaluation, academic integrity, ethical behavior, **democratic processes**, communication and collegiality, **global awareness**, and sustainability.

#### **Mission**

Santa Monica College provides a safe, inclusive, and dynamic learning environment that encourages personal and intellectual exploration – one that challenges and supports students in achieving their educational goals. **Students learn to contribute to the local and global community as they develop an understanding of their relationship to diverse social, cultural, political, economic, technological, and natural environments.** The College recognizes that each individual makes a critical contribution to the achievement of this mission.

Santa Monica College's academic programs and support services are intended to serve diverse individuals from local, national, and global communities who are seeking high-quality, affordable undergraduate education. The College offers certificates, Associate degrees, a baccalaureate



degree, and streamlined pathways for transfer to university and for career training. The College promotes a **commitment to lifelong learning among students and the communities it serves.**

Additionally, in 2016, the President/Superintendent of Santa Monica College, Dr. Kathryn Jeffery, signed an MOU with the Secretary of State of California, Alex Padilla, committing to “expanding access and opportunity for democratic engagement to youth attending institutions of higher education.” This commitment specified the College’s commitment to institutionalize voter engagement through outreach, technology, policies and procedures, and campus resources.

Our Public Policy Institute is one of our most visible commitments to civic engagement. Started in 2010, The Institute “empowers a diverse student body with the academic grounding and hands-on experience they need to become agents of change – whether they choose a career in public policy or simply want to improve their community and the world we share” (Public Policy Institute webpage, Santa Monica College). The Institute provides both degree and certificate programs as well as offers many events and forums for the larger campus and City communities, such as an annual symposium, public forums with civic leaders, lectures, and civic engagement activities.

Additionally, Santa Monica College has been diligently complying with California State Mandate AB 963, The Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act. The act requires all Community Colleges, CSU’s and by, opt-in, UC colleges in California to help inform and mobilize student voters and teach foundational civic engagement and education this semester.

Civic learning and democratic engagement are reflected in either the curriculum or co-curriculum in several ways. Departments and programs such as History, Political Science, and the heretofore mentioned, Public Policy Institute offer obvious examples of curricular efforts to educate and engage civic action among students. Similarly, our Social Science programs, such as Psychology, Sociology, Women Studies and Philosophy also have strong political overtones. A few specific courses that engage political and civic action, global citizenship, and voter engagement include:

- Anthro 14: Sex, Gender and Culture
- Biol 9: Environmental Biology
- Com St 37: Intercultural Communication
- ECE 11: Child, Family and Community
- Econ 5/Global Studies 5: International Political Economy: Introduction to Global Studies
- Envrn 7: Introduction to Environmental Studies
- Envrn 20: Environmental Ethics



- Envrn 22: Environmental Politics and Policies
- GS 10: Global Issues
- Journ 2: Intermediate Newswriting and Reporting
- Media 10: Media, Gender, and Race
- Philos 20: Environmental Ethics
- Pol Sc 3: Introduction to Politics: Justice, Power and Agency
- Pol Sc 21: Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Difference
- Pol Sc 23: Sex, Gender, and Power
- Pol Sc 24: Introduction to Law
- Pol Sc 95: Public Policy Experiential Learning
- Pol Sc 930: Preparation for Citizenship

Also important to note, in order to obtain an Associate's Degree, students must take a Global Citizenship course of which there are many.

As noted earlier in this report, Civic Engagement is manifest in the co-curriculum at Santa Monica College most visibly through our Public Policy Institute and our Global Citizenship Initiative, but our civic engagement reaches beyond this. Civic engagement is also practiced in our students clubs, such as:

- Future Alumni Club
- Democratic Socialist Club
- Students Supporting Israel
- Young Democrats Club
- Young Americans For Freedom
- SMC Investment Club
- SMC Rotaract Club
- SMC Model United Nations
- Student Veterans Association
- Intersectional Feminist Society
- Pre-Law Society
- Westside For All

Our success in fostering civic engagement, however, is still limited. Internally, a lack of a unified team and reliable funding to lead the effort seem to be key barriers. Joining the All in Challenge and the Voter Friendly Campus programs have provided the impetus for pulling a team and this plan together. We are hopeful that this will help further our efforts, but funding still remains an issue. Additionally, we are finding that many students, faculty and staff complain of political burn-out and concerns over jury duty as reasons for not engaging more actively and in avoiding registering to vote.



External factors include being a commuter campus that boasts large international and immigrant populations that are not eligible to vote. Additionally, we, like all community colleges in California, are now using the CCC Apply statewide enrollment system that does not provide us the flexibility to offer or track our own voter registration link. However, we do include a link on our admissions website. SMC also participated as a Vote Center for the Los Angeles County in the 2020 primary elections.

#### **IV. Goals**

Long-term: increase voter registration and voter turnout to pre-2016 levels in the 2020 election, increase student engagement through letter-writing, campaigning, organizing, and participation in civic-related events and activities. Specifically, this means a registration and voting rate increase of at least 8%. In terms of letter writing, we would like to have at least 200 notes to Congress written and mailed next year on a variety of student-identified issues. We hope to have our student leaders address at least one national and/or statewide issue per year through organizing, campaigning, developing resolutions, and coordinating with other student leaders across the country and state. Finally, we hope to increase the number and variety of civic-related speakers and events each year by at least one per semester that is fully attended.

In the more immediate, our plan is to increase our day-to-day voter registration through direct registration efforts. We will work with Senior Administration to institutionalize civic education and democratic engagement through more campus-wide initiatives, including Guided Pathways, Institutional Learning Outcomes, messaging to students, staff, and faculty, and developing a civic leader speaker series. Additionally, we intend to increase understanding and appreciation for the Constitution, in particular, the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment through a variety of activities.

#### **V. Strategies**

Our planned activities are still evolving, but the following chart outlines the work we have already committed to as well as activities, events and programs we are still developing.

- SMC Civic Engagement Website: [smc.edu/civicengagement](http://smc.edu/civicengagement)
  - Register to Vote Link
  - Important Dates
  - Resources
  - Student Opportunities
  - Ballot Drop Off locations
  - Voter Center Locations
- Civic Engagement Meetings
  - Attended by the Civic Engagement Committee
  - Every other Wednesday at 4pm, via Zoom.



- Collaboration with Associated Students (AS) and the Inter-Club Council (ICC)
  - All members of A.S. and the ICC were invited to attend the meetings.
  - Some of their respective responsibilities align with the goals of the Civic Engagement team
- Institutional Support
  - Executive management is a part of the team
  - SMC's Manager for Web Content and Social Media is on the Civic Engagement Team
  - Faculty and the Public Policy Institute are a part of the Civic Engagement Team
- California Assembly Bill 963 (AB 963). AB 963 has provided a solid footprint for the SMC Civic Engagement Team, which includes the following:

#### **Section A**

- (1) In consultation with the Secretary of State, during the first month of each academic semester or quarter, distribute **campuswide emails** to all students providing the following civic and election dates and information:
  - (A) National Voter Registration Day, held annually on the fourth Tuesday in September.
  - (B) The last day to register to vote online or to register to vote by mail or in person.
  - (C) The date when a county may begin to offer early voting at the office of the elections official or at a satellite location, pursuant to Section 3018 of the Elections Code, and a statement that the date, times, and locations for early voting and conditional voter registration may be confirmed on the internet website of the Secretary of State or at the county elections office.
  - (D) The primary and general election dates as provided in Chapter 4 of Division 0.5 of the Elections Code and Division 1 of the Elections Code.
  - (E) A statement that, pursuant to Chapter 1 of Division 3 of the Elections Code, a voter may apply to vote by mail at any time until after the seventh day prior to an election, and that a vote by mail voter may vote in person at the office of the county elections official or at a satellite location established by the county elections official on or before the day of the election.
  - (F) A link to the internet web page for the Secretary of State's Students Vote Project, established pursuant to Section 2148.5 of the Elections Code.
- (2) In consultation with the Secretary of State, **one month before each statewide election, distribute by campuswide emails** to all students the dates and information specified in subparagraphs (A) through (F) of paragraph (1) **and an internet website address link** or unique Uniform Resource Locator (URL) link furnished by the Secretary of State's office providing all of the following election information:
  - (A) The Secretary of State's internet web page for online voter registration. That website shall include a statement providing the information specified in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1).
  - (B) The Secretary of State's internet website address for election information.



- (C) The Secretary of State's internet website address for the most current voter information guide, required to be prepared pursuant to Section 9082.7 of the Elections Code.
- (D) The Secretary of State's internet website address for the voter registration status tool, or a similar web page that directs the recipient to voter or election information for the county of the recipient.
- (E) A disclaimer stating all of the following:
  - (i) That the civic and election information provided applies to the county where the campus is located.
  - (ii) That election information varies by county.
  - (iii) That recipients of the email are encouraged to check the internet website containing the Secretary of State's voter registration status tool, or a similar web page, to find election information for the county where the recipient's voter registration is active.
- (3) Include in both **printed and electronic academic calendars** the dates specified in subparagraphs (A), (B), (C), and (D) of paragraph (1).

#### **Section B**

- (1) **Post on social media** reminders to students, at least one day before each event occurs unless specified otherwise, of all of the following:
  - (A) The early voting and conditional voter registration information specified in subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a).
  - (B) Election day, including a reminder the day before and the day of the election. The reminders shall state that a qualified voter may register to vote on the day of the election, if necessary, at a conditional voter registration site established by the voter's county elections official.
  - (C) After the emails required by paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) are sent, the voter information guide and county sample ballot information provided in that email.

#### **Section C**

- (1) Designate one person per campus to act as a **Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator (Dr. Isaac A. Rodriguez Lupercio)**, who shall do all of the following:
  - (A) Implement the requirements of this section.
  - (B) Ensure that, in **every academic year, each campus holds a minimum of three election outreach events** to increase civic learning, democratic participation, civic engagement, and voter turnout consistent with all of the following:
    - (i) During an academic term in each even-numbered year, **an outreach event shall occur within the final 30 days preceding each statewide primary and general election.**
    - (ii) **All students shall be invited to participate** in the coordination of and to attend these events.
    - (iii) All events may be sponsored by a campus-based student organization.



- (C) **Develop a Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan** consistent with all of the following:
  - (i) The coordinator shall **invite leadership from faculty and students, and administrators** from each of student affairs, academic affairs, and government relations or a similar office to participate in a meeting or meetings to develop the action plan.
  - (ii) **The action plan shall include**, but not necessarily be limited to, a campus-specific **effort to increase civic learning and democratic participation, with an emphasis on civic engagement, voter turnout, and community building.**
  - (iii) **Students shall be invited to develop the action plan and to coordinate the meeting or meetings to develop the action plan.**
  - (D) The coordinator shall share the action plan developed pursuant to subparagraph (C) with the Secretary of State no later than December 1, 2020, for inclusion in the report to the Legislature submitted pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 66851. The action plan shall be periodically updated and resubmitted to the Secretary of State, as determined necessary by the coordinator.
- (2) The Civic and Voter Empowerment Coordinator shall be nonpartisan.

We continue to receive guidance, updates, and resources from the Students Vote Project through the California Secretary of state. (<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/castudentsvote/>)

Santa Monica College is also participating in the University and College Ballot Bowl competition: an effort to increase college student voter registration. (<https://caballotbowl.sos.ca.gov>)

### **Reporting**

This plan will be reviewed by Civic Engagement Committee who will help the committee prioritize the activities and events, provide guidance on how, with whom, and where to share the report, and decide if the information should be made public. In accordance with AB 963, we will also be submitting a report to the California Secretary of State.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation of Santa Monica College's Civic Engagement Plan is multifaceted. Each activity will be assessed in terms of overall attendance/participation, attendee feedback, surveys, and outcomes. Outcomes will be primarily assessed according to our rates of voter registration and turnout as reported in the NSLVE report and other measures made available to us through our participation in the Voter Friendly Campus, the All in Challenge and other student engagement programs. Additionally, the activities of the Civic Engagement Committee will be evaluated through the annual Office of Student Life Program Review and various components of the plan, such as the PPI Forum Constitution Day, will be assessed through the



departments primarily responsible for those activities. All information will be shared among the various groups and individuals on campus engaged in Civic Engagement activities overall.

-End of Plan-