

**SPC VOTES: ALL IN for 2020!**

**Voter Engagement Action Plan**

Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement

St. Petersburg College

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**Summary**

SPCVOTES is an expression of St. Petersburg College's (SPC) institutional commitment to community engagement. Cultivating a campus and community culture invested in democratic and global citizenship is a priority for SPC. In that spirit, the Center for Civic Learning & Community Engagement (CCLCE) is collaborating with college and community partners to increase voter engagement and voter turnout.

The CCLCE's advisory group for this Action Plan includes a cross section of college partners including; the Dean's Council, Provost Council, the Honor's College, Learning Resources, Online Learning Services, SPC Collegiate High School & SPC's Early College, International Studies, Student Life & Leadership, SPC's Ethics Institute, SPC's Institute for Policy Studies and the Board of Trustees. Community partners include League of Women Voters, Area Agency on Aging, AARP, Delta Sorority, Alpha Sorority, Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections, City of St. Petersburg, and the League of Women Voters and other germane community organizations.

This plan was developed as a continuation of the CCLCE's 2015 election engagement Initiative to increase voter education and voter registration. This plan is the next iteration of that movement that includes SPC's commitment to **"20 in 2020"**, the promise that the SPC family will work towards each student, staff and faculty member will encourage 20 people to vote in the 2020 election.

The development of this plan has been informed by resources from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and its partners in the Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) Coalition. It has also be supported by best practices identified using tools like TurboVote and the League of Women Voters.

This plan is intended as a provisional map for SPC's election engagement efforts for 2020 and beyond. The plan includes both firm intentions and initial suggestions for how various departments might engage in this work, and as such it represents a starting point for conversations and collaborations with stakeholders that will take place throughout 2020. Outcomes from 2020, as well as evolving campus needs and resources, will be incorporated into future iterations of this plan as SPC continues to participate in the ALL IN challenge.

**Institutional Context**

SPC is an open-access institution whose hallmark is its commitment to individual and community building through academic excellence and community engagement.

To reflect SPC's ongoing commitment and show institutional support, SPC's Board of Trustees adopted and affirmed the College's guiding pillars for the future of SPC as: 1) Community Engagement; 2) Academic Excellence; and 3) Economic Mobility. This college-wide declaration is grounded in the belief that community engagement must be the lens through which every aspect of SPC is viewed. Much of our work is related to access, the results of which are evidenced by SPC's large community footprint of nine campuses and one of the largest online learning programs in the country. SPC is the very heartbeat of our community, listening to our neighbors, responding with innovative and reciprocal initiative, collaborating and strengthening the individuals and communities we serve.

The **mission** of St. Petersburg College is to empower our students and community to achieve success and economic mobility through academic excellence and engagement. This mission dovetails with the guiding principals of civic learning and democratic engagement

(CLDE) used by the SLSV Coalition in its guide for developing Election Engagement Plans.

According to the SLSV Coalition, CLDE is "promoting the education of students for engaged citizenship through democratic participation in their communities, respect and appreciation of diversity, applied learning, and social responsibility." The similarity of the values articulated by SPC and the SLSV Coalition suggests that CLDE are implicit goals of SPC's mission.

CLDE are also goals of many programs in SPC's co-curriculum, particularly within SPC's Student Life & Leadership departments which include the CCLCE. As the campus center dedicated to advancing SPC's historical commitment to community engagement, the CCLCE works continuously to advance students' democratic participation.

***SPC is outcome driven and intends to increase voter education, voter registration and positively impact voter turnout.***

To inform its election engagement effort, and join the national conversation around this issue, SPC participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). NLSVE data comparing both voter registration and turnout among eligible SPC students in 2014 and 2018 show that the launch of the CCLCE the adoption of community engagement as a formative and guiding foundational goal contributed to a voter registration increase of 11.5% from 34.1% to 45.6%. SPC's Voter Rate is significantly higher than the 2019 national average of 39.1%. SPC's voter registration efforts are 76% of the student population and the voting rate of registered students is 60%. With the advent of a booming online population, SPC is working toward both face to face and online learning strategies to increase voter registration, voter education and voter turnout.

### **Goals**

1. Develop a collaborative, dynamic campus-wide initiative that provides a consistent, cross disciplinary & multi-modality approach to increasing voter education, registration and voter turnout among SPC students, faculty and staff.
2. Educate SPC family & service community on germane issues & candidates that will appear on the ballot, as well as related public policy topics and basic civics.
4. Register students, staff and faculty to vote.
5. Increase SPC families' voter turnout.

### **Strategy**

SPC has strong collaborative muscles as it relates to community engagement. SPC champions and community partners will support face to face and online tactics to register more eligible voters, provide multi-platform voter education opportunities and engage in get out the vote efforts.

### **Fall 2020**

- ✓ Convene electronic communication with campus stakeholders to invite input and share proposed plans.
- ✓ Invite SPC VOTES partners to commit to strategy tactics dependent on their department/organizational strengths.
- ✓ Secure student Election Engagement Fellow (Campus Election Engagement Fellow CEEP) to support activities for Winter 2020.
- ✓ Continue Contract with TurboVote.
- ✓ Develop marketing plan commensurate to a college wide PSA.
- ✓ Map out potential candidate forums, issue forums and voter registration drives.

### **Spring & Summer 2020**

- ✓ Develop CCLCE SPC VOTES website material for students to easily find election resources (example: voter registration, issues/candidates, volunteering with campaigns).
- ✓ Highlight Pinellas County & state of Florida election deadlines with all efforts.
- ✓ Link SPC's CCLCE to MyCourses
- ✓ Explore adopting a campus-wide political social media platform (example: Brigade, iCitizen) to increase political discussion online.
- ✓ Continue embedding TurboVote into the SPC experience-is it still on MyCourses, screen saver.
- ✓ Utilize MyCourses survey tool to ask questions about election.
- ✓ Draft survey(s) to gather feedback from students.
- ✓ Develop methods for assessing SPCVotes, possibly launch pre-survey to gather
- ✓ baseline data on student attitudes and election engagement.

### **Fall Semester 2020**

- ✓ Use social media platforms and email to reach students electronically with reminders and updates.
  - Recruit and train volunteers to help with tabling and social media output.
  - Table at high turnout events (example: athletics, speakers) and other strategic dates (EXAMPLE: Nat'l Voter Registration Day); continue using TurboVote.
  - Distribute nonpartisan materials prepared by National Organization (example: CEEP candidate guides, League of Women Voters ballot guide).
  - Co-organize debate watching parties and topical debates with campaign representatives and/or faculty experts; aim to cover every statewide question on the ballot.
  - Encourage SGA and leaders of campus clubs, teams and affinity groups to personally urge their participants to register and vote.
  - After registration push, Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaigns: To motivate, create peer photo posts with #SPCVOTES message; also myth debunking posts.
  - Registered students pledge to vote effort (need to track).
  - Offer incentives to SPC family who commit to "20 in 2020" submit 'voting selfies' at mail room (absentee) or polling place.
  - Organize SPC vans to the local polls on election day, including snacks, fun, and campus
  - Host campus-wide election results viewing party
  - Send out campus-wide SPC Votes program survey on election day or soon thereafter
  - Debrief with staff, and individually with collaborators (email, meeting, and/or survey) to get their feedback
  - Analyze feedback, summarize findings, and make recommendations for 2021.

**Proposed collaborations**

Athletics

Pirg

Council of Presidents for Florida's Community College system

Arts Alliance

**Evaluation & Reporting**

Evaluation of this plan's efforts will allow stakeholders to understand the effectiveness of our efforts, understand students' needs and preferences, and make informed adjustments to the plan's goals and strategies. We will measure the degree of democratic participation comparing SPC's 2018 data (through NSLVE) with the 2020 data. We will also make sure we use college wide survey to assess student perceptions of voter efficacy and access to voting issues. Data will be analyzed qualitatively for trends in both who responds and patterns in the responses. Relevant portions will be direct our future voter education and registration efforts.