

2020-2021

ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge

Democratic Engagement Action Plan



**UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA**

Student Success

Center for Leadership & Civic Engagement



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Executive Summary

As of Spring 2020, civic learning and democratic engagement efforts at the University of South Florida Tampa Campus (USF) are shared between various offices at the university without a central source of coordination and alignment. This document presents a framework intended to expand collaborative and systematic campus-wide student voter engagement activities as a critical first step toward long-term conspicuous and sustainable institutionalization of civic learning and democratic engagement practices.

The action plan was prepared by the professional staff of the USF Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement (CLCE), the campus hub for student leadership, organization, and civic development, in collaboration with campus partners within the USF Division of Student Success. The plan explicitly focuses on voter engagement strategies and goals throughout the 2020-2021 academic year to allow USF to continue to be recognized by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. Initiatives related to student voter outreach and education, registration, and mobilization will guide much of our work through summer and fall 2020, while assessment and long-term planning will be the emphasis for spring 2021.

The writers intend this plan to be flexible and anticipate substantial revision moving into initial implementation as the USF community continues to navigate the widespread impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and are poised to complete consolidation of our three regional campuses into a unified system effective July 2020. The campus-level vision, goals, and strategies presented will undoubtedly shift in multiple dimensions as the context of our “new normal” comes into view in the fall of 2020.

Beyond the scope of this preliminary action plan is a vision of USF recognized as an institution fully committed to democratic engagement and civic learning, harnessing the full talent and resources of our campus and community to nurture a culture of voting, activism, philanthropy, informed political discourse, and community service.



Part I: Leadership Coalition

Coalition

The USF ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge coalition represents a range of stakeholder perspectives, areas of expertise, resources, and influence who will contribute to ensuring a comprehensive approach to student voter engagement, voter registration, voter mobilization, and ongoing assessment of the campus political climate. Coalition efforts during the 2020-2021 academic year will be led by the professional staff of the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement (CLCE) and the Student Government Advising and Training Office (SGATO), in close collaboration with faculty, community organizations, local election authorities, and student leaders:

Student Success Staff

Dr. Mike Severy CLCE Director	Austin Arias CLCE Associate Director	Dr. Kim Fabbri-Greener CLCE Associate Director
Dris Stephen CLCE Assistant Director	Sabrina Alt CLCE Coordinator	Kaylan Burns CLCE Coordinator
Olivia Norton CLCE Graduate Assistant	Christina Borg CLCE Graduate Assistant	Erica Parris CLCE Administrative Assistant
Gary Manka SGATO Director	Jennifer Bielen SGATO Assistant Director	Ren Bradley-Tyler SGATO Coordinator
Heba El-Tall OCEP Program Planner		

Faculty

Dr. Steven Tauber
Associate Professor and Director, School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies

Community Organizations

Susan Greenbaum Hillsborough County League of Women Voters	Chris Conn Hillsborough County League of Women Voters
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Student Leadership

CLCE Vice Chair for Active Citizenship Student Government Executive Board

Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections Office

Gerri Kramer Director of Communications	Digna Alvarez Deputy Director of Communications
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Coalition members will meet at least two times per semester in the fall and spring, and once during the summer, beginning in the fall of 2020. Interested parties and collaborators will be welcome and encouraged to participate in these meetings to the extent possible (i.e., as physical distancing,



technology, and timing allow).

Minutes and/or meeting summaries will be made available to campus and community partners, and a mechanism for sharing initiative plans and outcomes will be developed early in the working group's efforts. The plan assumes the coalition roster above is neither inflexibly binding nor exhaustive and is subject to change in response to shifting individual, institutional, and community priorities and resources.

Partnerships

Explicit in the work of planning a successful campus-wide voter engagement initiative is the desire and need for collaboration and consultation between and beyond the working group members and their respective areas of responsibility and influence. The working group will be charged to pursue and leverage opportunities to coordinate efforts with internal and external partners including, but not limited to those identified below:

Potential Internal Partners

Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA)	Student Publications (The Oracle)
Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL)	Campus/Outdoor Recreation
Student Accessibility Services (SAS)	Faculty Senate
New Student Connections (NSC)	Global Citizen Project (GCP)
University Communications and Marketing (UCM)	Information Technology (IT)

Potential External Partners

Campus Vote Project/Fair Elections Center	Florida PIRG Students
Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE)	Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP)
Democracy Works/Turbovote	

Coalition Priorities

The priorities of the working group will be to:

1. Promote and provide structures for coordinated and collaborative campus-wide voter engagement activities on the USF Tampa campus.
2. Provide leadership in the design, implementation, and evaluation of voter engagement activities on the USF Tampa campus, to include voter outreach, voter and civic education, voter registration, and voter mobilization initiatives.
3. Assess and challenge barriers to student voting and progress toward a visible, campus-wide culture of democratic engagement.



Part II: Commitment

USF has demonstrated a desire to improve civic learning and democratic engagement outcomes through a comprehensive emphasis on global citizenship development and continues to indicate support for the evolution of both the general education curriculum and co-curricular initiatives as domains for civic education and action. A brief review public documents, policies, and statements reveals the following visible indicators of institutional commitment:

USF Mission and Goals

USF has established five goals aligned with the University mission statement¹, four of which explicitly use language indicative of an interest in civic culture and activity. Phrases such as “engaged citizen,” “solve global problems and improve lives,” “build a prosperous and sustainable future,” and “provide a safe, inclusive and vibrant community” embedded in this public declaration of the institution’s work help to orient stakeholders toward a culture of awareness and involvement.

USF Principles of Community

As a component of our ongoing strategic renewal process, USF recently unveiled the administration’s Principles of Community² – a set of aspirational ideals intended to “reinforce inclusion, civility, open expression, evidence-based deliberations and vigorous debate.” Like the USF Mission and Goals, these guiding principles (Excellence with Equity, Diversity with Inclusion, Freedom with Responsibility, Dialogue with Respect, and Transparency with Accountability) support the foundation for an institutional culture rooted in democratic ideals, including an explicit emphasis on the value of equity, diversity, inclusion, and dialogue across differences.

Global Citizens Project

The USF Global Citizens Project (GCP) is a university-wide initiative aimed at enhancing undergraduate students’ global awareness, responsibility, and participation. GCP pursues these objectives by incorporating and aligning civic learning outcomes across the general education curriculum and providing recognition for student engagement in community service, research, internships, study abroad, and coursework with a global focus.

Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement

The USF Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement (CLCE) trains, educates and develops USF community members to be effective, ethical, and positively engaged among the global community. CLCE programs and experiences encourage participants to examine the root causes of social issues and find opportunities to participate in conscientious and active citizenship. The mere existence, staffing, and funding of the CLCE is an act of institutional commitment to the advancement of democratic engagement and civic learning at USF.

¹ University of South Florida. (2020). Mission and Goals. Retrieved from <https://www.usf.edu/about-usf/mission-vision.aspx>.

² University of South Florida Office of the President. (2020). Principles of Community. Retrieved from <https://www.usf.edu/president/principles-of-community/index.aspx>

Co-curricular Artifacts

The following co-curricular events and activities serve as evidence of institutional commitment to democratic engagement on campus:

- Constitution Day observance
- Day at the Capitol
- Politically focused student organizations
- National Voter Registration Day observance
- On-campus polling place
- Voter registration drives and tabling
- Campus protests, rallies, and/or walkouts

Part III: Landscape/NSLVE

Campus Climate

Internal factors impacting campus climate and the success of this plan include coordination and communication among stakeholders, office-level efforts driving engagement, and strong data security practices. The deliberate and transparent communication between coalition members will improve the coordination of outreach, registration, and mobilization efforts among campus and community partners. In turn, these coordinated efforts will increase the visibility and frequency of interoffice, interdepartmental, interdivisional, and intercampus collaboration. Sharing of assessment and research data will continue to be thoughtful and intentional, as the best interests of students and other university stakeholders continue to be a priority.

External Campus Climate

External factors impacting campus climate and the success of this plan include the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, geographic dispersion of community partners, and variations in voting requirements and processes between states. Although a return to physical spaces on campus for fall 2020 is imminent, the implications of that shift for students, faculty, staff, and the local community remain unknowable. Implementation of some initiatives may need to be modified, delayed, postponed, or canceled in response to unprecedented and highly dynamic circumstances. Even prior to the public health crisis, some community organizations struggled to maintain a predictable presence on campus due to travel limitations, and those challenges are likely to continue into the coming year. As our students returned and remained home for the second half of the spring 2020 term and the summer term, the disparities in local voting requirements and procedures across the country have become more apparent. Students need more information and support than ever in this environment to be informed and participate in voting and other civic actions.

NSLVE Data

USF has participated in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) to track student voting and registration rates across the institution. Data from the 2018 report position USF as a potential peer leader in both voter registration rate and voting rate despite our aspirations for greater engagement.

USF's 2018 NSLVE report indicated a 2.8 percentage point increase in registration rate from 2014 to 2018. Registration rate is the ratio of registered voters to eligible voters; an increase in this metric means the total number of additional registrations in that period outpaced the total number of additional students eligible to be registered. Our registration rate remains above the national average.

The report also indicated a 24.3 percentage point increase in the voting rate of registered students and a 21.2 percentage point increase in overall voting rate. Voting rate is the ratio of actual voters to the number of eligible voters; this is the key metric that we need to focus on improving because it captures the measurable impact of our cumulative outreach, registration, and mobilization efforts.

Part IV: Goals

Goal 1: Outreach and Education

We will facilitate student access to multichannel, nonpartisan voting information and political education throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, to include collaborative campus events. Potential learning outcomes for students participating in outreach and education events include:

- Understand common political processes and the interactions among political, social, and economic systems.
- Demonstrate foundational information literacy, critical thinking, and active communication skills.
- Develop and expand a sense of civic identity and responsibility within a framework of empathy, open-mindedness, and diversity.

Goal 2: Registration

We will increase our 2020 registration rate from the reported 2018 NSLVE level. USF Institutional Research & Analytics will be consulted for assistance in setting an appropriate target registration rate.

Goal 3: Mobilization

We will maintain our reported 2018 NSLVE voting rate for the 2020 election cycle. USF Institutional Research & Analytics will be consulted for assistance in setting an appropriate target voting rate for future election cycles.

Goal 4: Long-term Democratic Engagement Goal Planning

The coalition will assess the institution's political climate throughout the 2020-2021 academic year and develop a plan for further institutionalization of civic learning and democratic engagement practices.

Part V: Strategy

Guiding Questions for Implementation

Progress toward the goals established in Part IV of this plan will be implemented through a series of strategic initiatives. Tactics aligned with each initiative will be designed with specific attention to the following guiding questions:

1. How does the activity satisfy one or more goals or priorities? What are the metrics for success?
2. Who is the primary audience for the activity?
3. Is the activity design accessible and inclusive?
4. Who is responsible for implementing and reporting on the activity?
5. Where will the activity occur and what resources are needed to ensure success?

Outreach and Education (Goal 1) Initiatives

1. Facilitate student access to multichannel, nonpartisan voting information and political education throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, to include collaborative campus events.
 - a. CLCE will utilize BullSync to communicate opportunities related to voting process information and political education information (June 2020 – June 2021).
 - b. Coordinate access to resources for voter registration information and updates on political issues, legislation, and research (July 2020-June 2021).
 - c. Request Student Government support to encourage student registration and voting in the fall prior to the 2020 election (August-November 2020).
 - d. Request USF Communications and Marketing support to encourage student registration and voting in the fall prior to the 2020 election and to direct campus community to accurate sources of nonpartisan election information (August-November 2020).
2. Deliver collaborative civic learning and democratic engagement events throughout the 2020-2021 academic year.
 - a. Coordinate campus and community partner participation in speaker panels providing perspectives about the impact of public policy and democratic engagement in different academic/economic/social communities (July 2020-June 2021).
 - b. Encourage watch parties for National Conventions and Presidential and Vice-

Presidential debates (August-October 2020).

- c. CLCE Civic Engagement Board and Leadership Board host peer-lead discussions around key issues in the 2020 election (August-November 2020).
- d. Collaborate on campus-wide observance of Constitution Day (September 17, 2020).

Registration (Goal 2) Initiatives

1. Increase our 2020 registration rate from reported 2018 NSLVE level.
 - a. Coordinate campus-wide observance of National Voter Registration Day (September 22, 2020).
 - b. Coordinate with campus partners to encourage voter registration through USF.TurboVote.org and provide referral links to track impact of digital registration campaigns. (June 2020-June 2021).
 - c. Coordinate with the local Supervisor of Elections Office and community partners to conduct regular on-campus and/or virtual registration drives and provide training for student volunteers to promote voter registration (August 2020-June 2021).
 - d. Ensure that students have direct access to registration information and resources (June 2020-June 2021).

Upcoming Key Dates for USF Students and Florida Voters:

- June 29, 2020: Summer Session B first day of classes
- August 7, 2020: Summer Session B classes end
- August 24, 2020: Fall classes begin
- September 19 – October 1, 2020: Vote-by-Mail Ballot ‘send’ period
- October 5, 2020: Registration deadline for General Election
- October 24-31, 2020: Mandatory early voting period for General Election
- November 3, 2020: General Election

Mobilization (Goal 3) Initiatives

1. We will maintain our reported 2018 NSLVE voting rate for the 2020 election cycle.

- a. Encourage Faculty to create assignments or generate class discussion around voting and political issues (July-August 2020).
- b. Promote absentee voting and vote-by-mail (September-October 2020).
- c. Coordinate a campus-wide “pledge to vote” campaign (November 2020).
- d. Promote early voting and Election Day polling locations on campus (November 2020).
- e. Encourage on- and off-campus Election Day watch parties (November 2020).

Long-term Democratic Engagement Goal Planning (Goal 4) Initiatives

- 1. Assess the institution’s political climate throughout the 2020-2021 academic year.
- 2. Develop a plan for further institutionalization of civic learning and democratic engagement practices.

Part VI: Reporting

Outcomes of the 2020-2021 action plan will be informally reported as appropriate on a continuous basis through the coalition membership and compiled into a formal written report by the CLCE and SGATO staff at the end of the academic year. The formal report will be shared with Voter Friendly Campus and the coalition members as appropriate, and will be used to inform the next cycle of planning to begin in spring 2021; updated NSLVE data will be incorporated into that planning process when the 202 report is made available. The culmination of this plan and the subsequent formal report will result in a more extensive action plan for the next 1-2 elections cycles.

Part VII: Evaluation

Outcomes of the 2020-2021 action plan will be assessed on a continuous basis throughout the year by coalition members as they engage in planned and unplanned tactics to address each initiative. Evaluation methods will be determined for each set of initiatives as coalition resources are determined.

Goal 1: Outreach and Education

This goal will be measured by quantitative student engagements, such as number of direct communications initiated or attendance at face-to-face or virtual events, as well as by assessment of learning outcomes and observable changes in campus climate and artifacts.

Goal 2: Registration

The primary evaluation method for this goal will be our 2020 NSLVE report. TurboVote data will provide additional insight about student responses to specific tactics and provide baseline data for future comparison.

Goal 3: Mobilization

The primary evaluation method for this goal will be our 2020 NSLVE report. Students will be encouraged to display their participation by wearing “I voted” stickers and tagging the institution in social media posts at their polling locations.

Goal 4: Long-term Democratic Engagement Goal Planning (Goal 4) Initiatives

The success of this goal will be evaluated by completion of a future democratic engagement action plan in spring 2021 that builds upon the successes and opportunities identified through the implementation of the 2020-2021 plan.