

Virginia Commonwealth University – Civic Engagement Action Plan, 2018-2019

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Mission Statement

In alignment with VCU's strategic goals, VCU will promote a culture that encourages students to be civically engaged through curricular and co-curricular opportunities leading to active citizenship for the 21st century.

Background

The physical, social, and economic connections between VCU and the City of Richmond offer abundant opportunities for students to participate in civic engagement. VCU often partners with local organizations, area residents, and thought leaders to promote civic discourse. Additionally, there are many groups involved in civic engagement and recently there has been a greater emphasis on establishing collaboration between these groups. These groups are represented by the Honors College, Division of Student Affairs, Division of Community Engagement, and faculty in the department of Political Science and the Robertson School of Media and Culture. However, the university does not have a comprehensive plan to promote voter registration, voter education or voter participation.

Goal

Develop a comprehensive approach to improve upon existing civic engagement efforts and to establish new initiatives to build and sustain a culture of civic engagement.

Short-term Goals (Summer/Fall 2018)

Improve communication across various stakeholder groups to increase civic engagement

Create voter registration calendar and host tabling in high traffic locations for a minimum of six times per semester

- Hold voter registration during new student orientation sessions
- Hold at least one panel discussion hosted by faculty and community leaders about upcoming elections
- Provide information to students about the role of election officers and encourage them to consider serving in that capacity
- Continue to partner with non-partisan organizations to promote voter education
- Continue conversations with local non-profit organization that provides services to the homeless about ways to facilitate voter engagement among the homeless population
- Continue conversations with local organizations to support restoration of voting rights efforts
- Continue collaboration with the Division of Community Engagement to promote voter engagement in local communities surrounding the campus
- Continue social media campaigns that are embedded within curriculum and through co-curricular activities
- Analyze NSLVE data

Assets

- Effective fall 2017, a polling place was established on campus
- High interest among faculty, staff and students in promoting civic engagement

Challenges

- VCU is an open campus and numerous organizations can conduct voter registration on campus
- Residence halls are located in varying voting precincts

Long-term Goals

- Identify university requirements for establishing a civic engagement standing committee
- Explore ways to implement high impact practices to support civic engagement (e.g., undergraduate research, service learning)
- Continue to seek ways to move civic engagement work out of departmental silos