

Civic Engagement University

**Fall 2026 - Summer 2028
(Two Academic Years)**

Last Updated 5/18/2026



California
Secretary of State



STUDENTSVOTE**PROJECT**
CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE

Sample Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan

Overview

The *Sample Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan (CVEAP)* is designed as a strategic resource for colleges and universities aiming to earn the maximum number of points using the rubric outlined in the ***Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan Guidelines and Evaluation Rubric***. The *Sample CVEAP* provides a clear framework that illustrates the structure, language, and level of detail expected for an “Exceptional” rating across all rubric categories.

Disclaimer: The *Sample CVEAP* is intended solely as a guide and reference. Campuses are encouraged to adapt their own plans to reflect their unique context, goals, and student populations.



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Executive Summary

Civic Engagement University continues to provide an environment where students develop into informed, engaged, and active participants in our democracy. We aim to foster civic awareness, promote voter participation, and provide opportunities for meaningful civic dialogue and engagement.

This action plan describes our campus's strategic approach to civic engagement for the 2026-2028 academic years. It outlines specific strategies for increasing voter registration and turnout, details our plans for engaging historically underrepresented groups, and defines our approach to sustaining civic engagement during nonelection years. Our plan leverages data driven by insights from our reports, builds upon lessons learned from previous civic engagement efforts, and incorporates practices from peer institutions to ensure our plan remains equitable where all groups can benefit.

The CVEAP will be implemented by the Voter Engagement Coalition (VEC), a coalition comprised of students, faculty, staff and community members. We aim to raise voter registration rates to 85% by 2028, increase voter participation to consistently exceed national averages by at least 3%, and establish our institution as a leader in civic engagement both regionally and nationally. This plan reflects our university's core values of civic responsibility and democratic engagement, aligning with our mission to prepare students for meaningful participation in society.

Leadership

The VEC at Civic Engagement University was established in January 2022 and has evolved into a robust, cross functional team that coordinates civic engagement initiatives campuswide. The coalition meets biweekly during regular academic periods and weekly during the three months preceding major elections.

Coalition Co-Chairs:

- Sample Name #1, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, (samplename1@ceu.sample)
- Sample Name #2, Department of Political Science (samplename2@ceu.sample)

Campus Departments:

- **University Communications** - Sample Name #3, Director of Digital Communications, (samplename3@ceu.sample)
 - Manages social media campaigns, creates branded materials, and ensures consistent messaging across all platforms
 - Produces videos and digital content to boost voter education and registration
- **Student Government Association** - Sample Name #4, SGA President, (samplename4@ceu.sample)
 - Leads peer to peer outreach initiatives
 - Coordinates student organization involvement in civic engagement efforts
- **Office of Diversity and Inclusion** - Sample Name #5, Associate Director, (samplename5@ceu.sample)
 - Ensures equitable access to voting information and registration opportunities
 - Develops targeted programming for historically underrepresented groups

- **Academic Affairs** – Sample Name #6, Faculty Senate Representative (samplename6@ceu.sample)
 - o Facilitates faculty involvement and classroom integration of civic learning
 - o Oversees academic components of civic engagement initiatives
- **Athletics** - Sample Name #7, Assistant Athletic Director (samplename7@ceu.sample)
 - o Coordinates voter registration for student athletes
 - o Leverages sporting events for civic engagement visibility
- **Residential Life** – Sample Name #8, Residence Director (samplename8@ceu.sample)
 - o Implements residential programming and competitions
 - o Registers students to vote during move in day.

Community Partners:

- **County Elections Office**
 - o Regular consultations on voter registration procedures and election logistics
- **Civic Vote Project**
 - o Technical assistance and sharing best practices
- **Action Plans Rule**
 - o Action Plan Assessment and national networking

This Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan was developed through a comprehensive process that included a two-day strategic planning retreat with full committee participation. The final CVEAP represents a document that has been fully endorsed by university leadership and adopted as part of our institutional strategic plan.

Landscape

Campus Demographics and Civic Engagement Data Analysis

Civic Engagement University has a diverse student population of approximately 25,000 students, with the following demographic breakdown:

- 55% female, 45% male
- 32% first generation college students
- 45% students of color (12% Black/African American, 10% Hispanic/Latino, 10% Asian American, 9% Native American 4% multiracial,)
- 70% in-state students, 18% out-of-state students, 12% international students

Below is our campus’s civic engagement data that shows college student voter registration and college student voting plan percentages. College Student Voting Plans were only made available during the 2026 election cycle.

Election Year	College Student Voter Registrations	College Student Voting Plans
2022	67.2%	N/A
2024	75.8%	N/A
2026	80.2%	26.5%

Our campus data also reveals several other significant findings:

- **Strengths:** We have consistently increased voter registration rates across election cycles, with particularly strong improvement between 2022 and 2024.
- **Areas for Improvement:** We observe a significant drop-off in registrations when comparing midterm/special election years to presidential election cycles. This registration gap is an area our campus would like to improve.

These findings highlight opportunities for more targeted outreach to ensure all students are supported and engaged in the democratic process.

Reflection

During the past two academic years (Fall 2024 - Summer 2026), Civic Engagement University implemented a variety of civic engagement initiatives with varying degrees of success. This reflection provides a comprehensive analysis of our efforts, lessons learned, and implications for future programming.

Civic Engagement Initiatives

Integrated New Student Orientation Voter Registration

Our integration of voter registration into new student orientation resulted in registering over 92% of eligible incoming students. This success was driven by several key strategies, including training orientation leaders to assist with registration, setting up a dedicated civic engagement station at the orientation resource fair, and following up with email reminders to ensure students completed the registration process. Additionally, building strong relationships with the county election office provided essential support and resources, contributing significantly to the program's effectiveness.

Faculty Engagement Program

To enhance civic learning, we developed the **Democracy Teaching Fellows** program, where selected faculty received stipends to integrate voter education into their courses. This initiative successfully engaged 35 faculty members across various disciplines, reaching approximately 3,800 students. The program contributed to a notable 12% increase in voting rates among students in participating classes.

Student Voter Registration Competition

Our student government organized a highly successful competition between student organizations, leading to 1,700 new voter registrations. Clear metrics and real time tracking kept participants engaged. The competition leveraged social media visibility and peer to peer messaging, creating widespread enthusiasm and participation across campus.

Relationships with Internal and External Organizations

Internal Organizations

Athletics Department

The Athletics Department coordinates voter registration drives specifically for student athletes, ensuring they have access to election related resources despite demanding schedules. By leveraging sporting events to enhance civic engagement efforts, they raise awareness and encourage participation among the university's athletic community.

Student Government Association (SGA)

The Student Government Association plays a pivotal role in promoting voter participation through peer-to-peer outreach and organizational competitions. By mobilizing student organizations, coordinating advocacy initiatives, and hosting voter registration challenges, SGA fosters a culture of civic responsibility among the student body.

Residential Life Civic Ambassadors

Operating within campus housing, Residential Life Civic Ambassadors ensure that students living on campus have easy access to voter registration and educational resources. By organizing debates, discussion forums, and election themed competitions, they embed civic engagement into the residential student experience.

External Organizations

County Election Office

Our partnership with the county election office has significantly strengthened voter engagement efforts. The office provided deputy registrars for campus events, established an early voting location on campus, and offered technical assistance with registration procedures.

National Voter Organizations

Collaborations with national organizations have provided valuable resources and support. The Civic Vote Project supplied essential training, Action Plans Rule offered action planning assistance, and the Student Voter Education Network connected us with peer institutions working toward similar goals. While adapting national resources to our specific campus needs was sometimes challenging, these partnerships have enriched our voter engagement efforts.

Local Civic Organizations

Strong relationships with local organizations have further amplified our impact. The League of Voters co-sponsored candidate forums, the Community Foundation funded student civic leadership development, and the Chamber of Commerce facilitated issue-based discussions. A key challenge has been balancing a nonpartisan approach while engaging with diverse community perspectives, but overall, these collaborations have strengthened our commitment to civic engagement.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Digital Engagement Limitations

Our reliance on digital communication channels proved less effective than anticipated. Email open rates for election related content averaged only 22%, making outreach through email a limited tool for engagement. Additionally, social media campaigns required significant paid promotion to effectively reach students, reducing organic engagement. Digital only approaches also created barriers for students with limited technological access, preventing some from fully participating in civic initiatives. To address these challenges, we have adopted an approach that integrates both digital and in person strategies to maximize accessibility and impact.

Partnership Coordination

Initial efforts to collaborate with external partners lacked structure and clear expectations, leading to duplicated efforts across campus, inconsistent messaging, and missed opportunities for resource sharing. Without a clearly defined framework, coordination proved challenging and sometimes inefficient. In response, we have established a formal partnership management process that includes clearly defined roles and regular communication channels, ensuring streamlined collaboration and more effective resource distribution.

Through these experiences, we have learned that successful civic engagement requires sustained institutional commitment, diverse outreach strategies, well-structured external partnerships, and adaptability. These insights serve as the foundation for our goals and strategies for 2026-2028.

Goals

Short-term (2-year)

Civic Engagement University has established ambitious yet achievable short-term goals for the 2026-2028 year:

- **Increase Student Voter Registration to 87% by November 2026**
 - Strategies:
 - Implement a comprehensive "Registration Blitz" during the first two weeks of Fall 2026 semester.
 - Integrate voter registration into course registration process.
 - Train and deploy 50 student Voter Registration Ambassadors across campus.
 - Create department specific registration competitions.
 - Track registration rates through the California SOS Online College Student Voter Registration Tool.
- **Increase Civic Participation with Underrepresented Groups**
 - Strategies:
 - Partner with multicultural student organizations to design targeted outreach.
 - Host affinity group civic engagement dialogues.
- **Engage 75% of Faculty in Voter Education Efforts**
 - Strategies:
 - Expand "Democracy Teaching Fellows" program to all academic departments.
 - Create disciplinary specific voting issue guides for faculty use.
 - Provide sample syllabi language and assignments related to voting.
 - Recognize faculty civic engagement efforts in promotion processes.
 - Track participation rates and classroom impact through faculty surveys.
- **Grow the Voter Engagement Coalition**
 - Strategies:
 - Increase representation from academic and administrative units.
 - Hold monthly coalition meetings with structured agendas and action items.
 - Create specialized working groups for key initiatives.

These short-term goals build upon our previous successes while addressing identified challenges.

Long-term (5-year)

Civic Engagement University has established the following transformative long-term goals for civic engagement:

- **Increase Student Voter Registration Rate by 20%**
 - Strategies:
 - Institutionalize voter registration in the university processes (orientation, course registration, housing check-in).
 - Create a university wide expectation of universal registration.
 - Implement "Democracy Graduation Requirement" ensuring all students verify registration status before graduation.
- **Establish Civic Engagement University as a National Leader in Civic Learning**
 - Strategies:
 - Develop comprehensive civic learning outcomes across all majors.
 - Create and implement university wide civic literacy assessment.
 - Establish dedicated Center for Democratic Engagement with faculty lines and research agenda.
 - Host annual national conference on higher education civic engagement.
- **Build Sustainable Civic Engagement Infrastructure**
 - Strategies:
 - Secure a permanent budget line for civic engagement initiatives.
 - Establish funds for civic leadership scholarships.
 - Create dedicated staff positions for civic engagement coordination.
 - Develop physical space for civic engagement activities and organizations.

These long-term goals represent our aspiration to transform Civic Engagement University from an institution with strong civic engagement programming to one where democratic engagement is embedded into our campus culture.

Event Requirements

Academic Year 2026-2027

Fall 2026

Civic Leadership Academy Launch (September 28, 2026)

Summary: The kickoff event for a new student leadership development program, the Civic Leadership Academy introduces students to civic engagement and leadership principles. This application-based cohort program includes weekly sessions led by civic leaders and faculty, offering hands-on learning opportunities. Participants design their own campus and community projects, gaining practical experience. The program also features a mentorship component, connecting students with civic professionals, and culminates in summer internship placements to further leadership development.

Democracy Day (October 6, 2026) - Within 30 days of a statewide election

Summary: Democracy Day is a campuswide celebration of democratic participation that features a keynote address by a prominent civic leader. Throughout the day, themed activities highlight different aspects of democracy, including a Democracy Fair showcasing civic organizations and volunteer opportunities. To enhance engagement, the campus billboard will illustrate voting rights history, providing a visual and educational experience for the campus community.

Election Night Watch Party (November 3, 2026)

Summary: This campuswide event invites students to gather and watch election results. Multiple viewing areas provide access to different media sources, while coalition members offer real-time context and analysis. Interactive electoral map activities allow students to track results, and designated reflection spaces provide opportunities for processing reactions. Late-night refreshments and community building activities will allow for engagement and discussion.

Academic Year 2027-2028

Fall 2027

Public Service Career Fair (October 4, 2027)

Summary: A career development event focused on public service, this fair connects students with government agencies, nonprofits, elected official offices, and advocacy organizations. Workshops offer guidance on career pathways in civic and government related fields, while alumni panels feature civic leaders who share their professional experiences. Resume and interview preparation sessions help students navigate job opportunities, and information on postgraduate service programs encourages long-term civic engagement.

Local Election Education Series (February 1, 2028)

Summary: This comprehensive education program informs students about local elections and their impact. It includes a "Know Your Local Government" workshop series, forums featuring candidates for local races, and issue-based dialogues on ballot initiatives. The "Why Local Elections Matter" campaign raises awareness about the significance of civic participation at the community level.

Primary Election Academy (February 22, 2028) - Within 30 days of a statewide election

Summary: This educational program prepares students for primary election participation. Sessions provide an overview of the primary election in California and help students update their voter registration to ensure eligibility. The program will have students make a plan to vote to assist with understanding different voting options.

