

## ICE Strategic Plan for 2022-2023

### VISION

The Institute for Civic Engagement, as part of a public institution of higher education, will play a leading role in developing a culture of democratic engagement at SUNY Cortland. It will do so by serving as a resource for faculty, staff, students, and community partners in the development of applied learning projects through which students develop the academic knowledge and skills, the career competencies, and social dispositions that motivate them to contribute to collaborative democratic decision making.

### MISSION

The Institute for Civic Engagement is a Division of Academic Affairs resource for faculty, staff, students, and community partners as they develop, conduct, and assess applied learning (learning-by-doing) projects through which students strengthen their understanding of course content and cultural diversity, sharpen career readiness skills, and develop a disposition of applying their knowledge and skills to civic decision-making activities, including government-related activities (democratic engagement).

The Institute's (unofficial) motto is *Do Good; Learn Well*. The Institute is *not* a "volunteer" opportunity agency; rather, it focuses on *intentional learning by doing*, especially in the area of democratic engagement.

### VALUES (same as for SUNY Cortland)

- Focus on the students
- Integrity
- Intellectual Life

### PRIORITIES (same as for SUNY Cortland)

- Academic Excellence
- Transformational Education
- Well-Being
- Maximize Resource

### STRATEGIC PLAN

The Institute for Civic Engagement's Strategic Plan blends overlapping

- Democratic engagement-related elements of SUNY Cortland's mission and strategic objectives with
- The Carnegie Foundation's emphasis on civic and democratic engagement through reciprocal campus/community collaborations and with
- The All-In Campus Democracy Challenge's focus on students' democratic engagement through voting.

For 2022-2023 and – probably – for 2023-2024, the Institute for Civic Engagement's primary focus will be on building students' understanding of, and commitment to, democratic engagement. For us, "democratic engagement" is the act of participating in government-related activities, such as voting and other civic decision-making events: attending or speaking at city council meetings, for example. Our label for this focus is *Cortland Votes*. (As this plan describes, the Institute will not ignore other forms of civic engagement.) Incorporated into this work is the use of reflection a way of helping to ensure that students learn from their democratic engagement experiences.

The *Cortland Votes* focus grows out of two concerns –

1. SUNY Cortland students' voter registration and turnout rates are low. In 2016 and 2018, we averaged a 77% voter registration rate each year, with turnout rates of 45% in 2016 and 24% in 2018. In 2020, 85% of our students registering to vote, but only 69% of the 85% actually voted. Our NSLVE data reveal that only 59.1% of all eligible SUNY Cortland students voted, vs. 65% of all public masters-awarding institutions in the NSLVE study.

Within these numbers, we are also concerned about lower voter participation by students from marginalized populations and by those in younger age-groups. In 2020, for example, only

- 49% of Black students voted
- 51% of male students voted
- 55% of Hispanic students voted
- 58% of 18- to 21-year-olds voted

2. Based on anecdotal evidence, students' understanding of issues is limited by, at the least, their "sources" of information (often social media). Related to this is a misunderstanding of "free speech," which – for many students – seems to suggest that they can stop other people from speaking if the other people's messages are deemed, by students, to be offensive. To help address this situation, the Institute will continue to incorporate active listening skills in its voter education events.

To address these concerns, the Institute is increasing the number and kinds of steps that it took over the past few years to increase democratic engagement among our students. Those steps, which are noted in the goals named below, also help the Institute meet four of SUNY Cortland's Strategic Objectives –

- Objective #1: Enhance the assessment of student learning and development and utilize evidence to strengthen program.
- Objective #4: Promote faculty engagement in the life of the college and in their respective disciplines. Priority Alignment:
- Objective #6: Expand the impact of applied learning by increasing opportunities and increasing the quality of experiences.
- Objective #7: Strengthen our community through a focus on inclusion, civility, and accountability.

The Plan below is split into two parts –

- *Cortland Votes* goals
  - Democratic engagement: Short-term goals
    - Other than voting
    - Specifically voting
  - Democratic engagement: Long-term goals
    - Other than voting
    - Specifically voting
- Non-*Cortland Votes* (all other) goals
  - Short-term goals
  - Long-term goals

## CORTLAND VOTES, SHORT-TERM GOALS

### Democratic engagement other than voting. By June 2023,

- Civic readiness content and democratic engagement activities will be incorporated into at least two academic courses.
- The Institute will be coordinating its efforts with those of offices such as Campus Activities, SGA, and Greek Life.
- Seals of civic readiness. As of this writing, this project is in its initial stages. It has two parts –
  - 1. Partnering with the Cortland Expanded School District as it applies for the [NYS Seal of Civic Readiness Program](#), which uses an applied learning approach to help high school students learn how government works. SUNY Cortland Secondary History majors would help high school students learn through this program. The Institute is working on this project with the Cortland High School's Curriculum Director, a member of the School Board, the OCM-BOCES's Director of Educational Programs, the TC3 Registrar, and Professor Jared McBrady.
  - 2. Designing and launching the SUNY Cortland Seal of Civic Readiness. Professor McBrady and Suarez are planning to partner on this part of the project, which would mirror the State program, but would be tailored for college students. This could be a micro-credential.
- Town/Gown Project.
  - This project is being designed to strengthen campus/ community relations by having students conduct activities that focus on holistic wellness, mutual aid, safe and secure off-campus housing, support of small businesses, and the understanding of reasons for certain laws and regulations.
  - The twelve-member committee includes Mayor Steve, three council members, the Economic Development/Community Relations Specialist of the Cortland County Business Development Corporation, Sandy Wohlleber, Fred Pierce, Professor Jena Curtis, two Action Team interns, and John Suarez.

### Democratic engagement, specifically voting. By June 2023, we will conduct

- Stand-alone voter registration events in collaboration with groups such as NYPIRG, BridgeCortland, Black Student Union, and the League of Women Voters.
- At least one voter education dialogue, presentation, or debate that is hosted in collaboration with SGA clubs and/or community organizations such as
  - NYPIRG, which conducts voter registration, education, and turnout activities.
  - Black Student Union and MOVE. One of the Institute's Action Team interns is on the Executive Board of MOVE, so Suarez will work with her on these kinds of projects. During spring 2022, Suarez partnered with BSU on Black History Month projects, including one that addressed the issue of exceptionally low voter registration and turnout rates among Black and Latino students.
  - The Antiracism Taskforce's Educational Programming Subcommittee (of which Suarez is chair) to combine the subcommittee's work with that of SGA clubs. The Institute will work with these and other clubs to conduct voter education/registration events throughout the year, but especially before the November midterm elections.
  - BridgeCortland, a chapter of [BridgeUSA](#). Suarez is this club's advisor; he will work with the club to ensure that its members continue conducting current issues-related events as they did during the last academic year.
  - The League of Women Voters of Cortland County, which – among other projects – is planning to run a voter registration project to reach Cortland County residents who live in remote areas. SUNY Cortland students would help in this project.

- Other events in collaboration with other organizations, including the three-campus Freedom of Speech Team, which is planning
  - At least one event for each semester into fall 2024.
  - A four-part, participatory Constitution Day event that examines issues involving money in politics, such as the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision. One of the event's parts includes a discussion with an elected official from each of the represented regions. For Cortland's representative, President Bitterbaum's office has invited Senator Oberacker. The Senator's office will reply in early September.

#### CORTLAND VOTES, LONG-TERM GOALS:

##### Democratic engagement other than voting. By December 2024,

- At least ten students will engage in internships each year with elected officials, whether locally, state-wide, or nationally, excluding those in Political Science internships.
- 85% of students (especially those engaged in applied learning democratic engagement projects) will
  - Report using sources of information other than social media for their news.
  - Report using active listening skills in tense conversations.
  - Be able to articulate ways in which specific [NACE](#) competencies helped them in their projects.
  - Report being more inclined to participate in democratic engagement activities after graduation.
 The qualitative data reflecting this learning will be based on students' responses to surveys.
- Civic readiness content and democratic engagement activities will be incorporated into at least four academic courses.
- The Institute will be coordinating its efforts with those of offices such as Campus Activities, Residence Life, Athletics, SGA, Greek Life, and EOP.
- The two Seals of Civic Readiness projects will have been launched –
  - Students such as those in our Secondary Education History programs will be partnering students in the Cortland Expanded School District as those high school students work to earn their NYS Seal of Civic Readiness
  - At least 20 students will be registered for at least one section of a course that provides students with the SUNY Cortland Seal of Civic Readiness. (This could also be a micro-credential.)

##### Challenges – The Institute needs to

- Develop democratic engagement projects and internships.
- Identify ways of incorporating civic readiness and democratic engagement student learning outcomes into syllabi.
- Design and conduct easily-completed and -reviewed surveys and other assessment instruments.

##### Resources include

- [All-In Campus Democracy Challenge](#)
- [CIRCLE](#) Resources, including the [Growing Voters](#) materials.
- [National Issues Forum Institute](#) provides a variety of public deliberation resources.
- SUNY Applied Learning Community of Practice
- SUNY Cortland faculty who have expertise in topics such as the US Constitution (Associate Professor Timothy Delaune, for example)
- [Voter Friendly Campus](#)

Democratic engagement, specifically voting. By December 2024,

- Our students – including those from traditionally marginalized communities – will reach and maintain at least 90% rates for
  - Voter registration
  - Voter turnout, as measured by our NSLVE surveys
- SUNY Cortland will be a SUNY leader in organizing multiple campus voter education events. It has begun this move with its leadership in the three-campus Freedom of Speech Team.
- At least 10% of our students will participate in a minimum of one voter education event on- or off-campus each year.

NON-CORTLAND VOTES SHORT-TERM GOALS

- Regarding students
  - Further develop the SUNY Cortland Cupboard by, for example, expanding hours into weekends
  - Refine Action Team internships to foster NACE-based leadership skills
  - Increase the number of applications for the Campus Compact Newman Fellowship
  - Increase the number of applications for the SUNY Strategic, Academic, and Innovative Leadership (SAIL) Program
- Regarding faculty
  - Recruit at least two faculty members each academic year to be mentees in the Cortland Applied Learning Practitioners (CALP) program, and to then serve as CALP Fellows
  - Promote the use of the SUNY Applied Learning Community of Practice as a resource for faculty and staff – and as an avenue for sharing their applied learning expertise (which then builds SUNY Cortland’s reputation as a leader in this field)
- Regarding SUNY Cortland
  - Transform the *SUNY Journal of the Scholarship of Engagement* from its original design as SUNY’s only open source, peer reviewed journal that focuses on applied learning-related research to the same kind of publication that serves as a source of scholarship that
    - ... Publishes students’ work
    - ... Is reviewed (with faculty advisors) by students. Doing so serves as another applied learning way for students to sharpen their academic and professional skills. As of this writing, JoSE’s co-managing editors (Dr. Laura Dunbar [English] and John Suarez) are polling applied learning colleagues across the SUNY system for their input.
  - Draw on the new Institute for Civic Engagement’s *Council* for guidance in determining focus.
  - Participate in the new Micro-credentialling Committee as a way of helping to develop this way of serving students and as a way of providing additional applied learning-related recognition for students.
- Regarding Marketing
  - Continue developing the Institute’s monthly newsletter, with the goal of having at least one student author during each academic year.
  - Continue developing the effectiveness of the Institute’s Instagram account and webpage.
  - Continue conducting Sandwich Seminars and Community Roundtables
  - Continue conducting the Leadership in Civic Engagement Awards

NON-CORTLAND VOTES LONG-TERM GOALS: By December 2024,

- Regarding students
  - The SUNY Cortland Cupboard will be open during weekends.
  - Action Team internships will provide students with more effective leadership experiences.
  - The Campus Compact Newman Fellowship will have at least five applicants each year.
  - SUNY Strategic, Academic, and Innovative Leadership (SAIL) Program will have at least five applicants each year.
- Regarding Faculty
  - The Cortland Applied Learning Practitioners will add at least two new Fellows each year.
  - SUNY Applied Learning Community of Practice will serve as an effective resource for faculty *and* as an effective way for faculty to represent their respective campus's applied learning expertise.
- Regarding SUNY Cortland
  - The *SUNY Journal of the Scholarship of Engagement* will be unique in that it will be student-led in terms of both authors and editors (in each case, with faculty guidance).
  - The Institute for Civic Engagement's Council will
    - ... Work closely with the Institute's director to help align the Institute's work with the college's mission and strategic objectives.
    - ... Help generate additional resources for the Institute in terms of personnel, funding, and assessment.
  - The Institute's director will help the Micro-credentialing Committee
    - ... Achieve its goals.
    - ... Generate at least one micro-credential related to applied learning and/or to civic readiness.
  - The Institute will guide development of the college's *Carnegie Foundation Elective Community Engagement Classification* (if approved by the President's Cabinet).
- Regarding Marketing
  - The Institute's monthly newsletter will be a way for interns to refine their writing skills.
  - The Institute's Instagram account and webpage will be accessed an increasing number of readers for updates on civic engagement events.
  - The Institute will conduct at least one Sandwich Seminar each semester and at least one Community Roundtable each academic year.
  - The Leadership in Civic Engagement Awards will continue to serve as a way of celebrating the good work of people in Cortland County.