



California State University San Marcos  
**Democratic Engagement  
Action Plan**

Submitted to  ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge  
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## BACKGROUND

In 2015, California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) celebrated its 25th anniversary. Since its founding, CSUSM has distinguished itself as a forward-focused institution, dedicated to preparing future leaders, building great communities and solving critical issues. Today more than 17,000 students attend our 304-acre main campus, which is nestled in the foothills of San Marcos, California (northern San Diego County) an hour from the U.S.-Mexico border. CSUSM is the 20th campus established in the 23-campus CSU system.

Our diverse student population reflects the region we serve—we are an Hispanic-Serving Institution, with 41% of our students identifying as Latin@. Whereas the majority of our students (68%) are between the ages of 17 and 22, nearly 30% of our students are between the ages of 25 and 35. We pride ourselves in being accessible to the communities we serve; CSUSM has established fourteen guaranteed admission programs with regional school districts and organizational partners, providing increased college preparation and ongoing academic support to qualified graduating high school students. Moreover, CSUSM is ranked among the top twenty universities in the nation for veterans by *Military Times*, and is currently the second-highest rated university in California. Our campus serves more former foster youth per capita than any other institution in the United States.

CSU San Marcos prides itself as a democratically-engaged university, most especially in the context of community engagement. CSUSM emphasizes university-community partnerships that are collaborative, participatory, empowering, systemic, and transformative. CSU San Marcos reaches out intentionally and strategically to all the communities it serves, from underrepresented students to tribal neighbors to military establishments to health organizations to the business community to create partnerships that help address the region's most critical issues. CSUSM works in collaboration with its community partners to serve the public good. This commitment is reflected in both the University Mission and Values.

## CSUSM MISSION STATEMENT

CSUSM has a well-established commitment to community engagement. As a Carnegie classified "community engaged" university, CSUSM students work closely with a faculty whose commitment to sustained excellence in teaching, research, and community partnership enhances student learning. As a public university, CSUSM grounds its mission in the public trust, alignment with regional needs, and sustained enrichment of the intellectual, civic, economic, and cultural life of our region and state.

## CSUSM VALUES

CSUSM is an academic community dedicated to the values of:

- Intellectual Engagement: learning, teaching, discovery, and application of knowledge
- Community: shared commitments to service, teamwork, and partnership
- Integrity: respect, honesty, trust, fairness, academic freedom and responsibility

- Innovation: creativity, openness to change, flexibility, responsiveness, and future focus
- Inclusiveness: individual and cultural diversity, and multiple perspectives

## CIVIC LEARNING INITIATIVE IN THE DIVISION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Civic Learning Initiative at CSU San Marcos is housed in the Division of Community Engagement, which was established in 2012. The Division of Community Engagement is committed to building connections between the University and community to create powerful, mutually beneficial partnerships that serve the public good. We accomplish this through curricular and co-curricular activities and outreach with our community partners.

In addition to the institutional commitment to community engagement provided by the President and her executive team, the University's Academic Senate stepped forward in 2012/13 FY with the offer to form a [Community Engagement Faculty Advisory Committee](#) (CEFAC). CEFAC's mission is "to identify ways in which CSUSM can work collaboratively to build strong university-community partnerships anchored in the rigor of scholarship, and designed to help build community capacity as well as contribute to classroom pedagogy and future scholarship and creative activity."

In 2014, the Division of Community Engagement launched the Civic Learning Initiative to address a need for intentional efforts aimed at increasing CSUSM's civic engagement. Today, the Civic Learning Initiative is home to programs like the [Town Hall Meeting](#), a partnership between Community Engagement and academic departments and courses. The Town Hall Meeting provides an opportunity for students who are studying a social issue in a particular course to have robust conversations with experts working daily in the community to address that issue. Students consult with community experts who help them to relate the global ramifications of a particular topic to local concerns and potential actions. The program is designed to provide students the opportunity to engage in civic discourse and begin to develop the tools needed for lifelong democratic participation.

Another Civic Learning program, [Democracy in Action](#), is a partnership with a municipal government to address community needs by embedding projects in academic courses. Faculty and students conduct research, gathering qualitative and quantitative data to benefit city projects that pose challenges and/or are backlogged. In the process, students learn about city government, attend city council meetings, and ideally consider the prospects of working in local government.

The [American Democracy Project](#), another program of the Civic Learning Initiative, provides forums for students, faculty and staff to practice good citizenship and encourage spaces to openly dialogue about the health of our American democracy through a series of drop-in discussions and signature events. The Civic Learning Initiative facilitates programming in which students can see theory come alive in practice, while simultaneously helping reveal their own potential agency and influence within their community.

## **STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN**

CSUSM relies on a strong spirit of collaboration across divisions combined with its unique infrastructure to create an environment that supports the development and success of civically engaged efforts—on campus and in the community. Through the administrative support of the Civic Learning Initiative in the Division of Community Engagement, along with the collegiality of other units around campus, CSUSM will ensure fertile ground supporting faculty, students, and staff to develop and facilitate civic engagement that will flourish.

Part of the strategic approach with this plan also includes leveraging the lessons learned from existing models and practices of the Office of Service Learning and the Office of Internships. At CSUSM, both Offices have dedicated resources within the Division of Community Engagement. For example, each has a Faculty Director and full-time staff. Additionally, these programs have infrastructure including a centralized database (S4), which serves as a repository for community partners and assists in the process of “matching” students with their placement site. While this plan has an intentional focus on building the sustainability of civic learning and democratic engagement efforts, much can be learned from other efforts like service learning and internships.

### **ASSIGNED LEADERSHIP AND ADVISORY TASK FORCE**

The primary designated leaders to implement and continually assess the plan are the Campus Coordinator for the American Democracy Project and the Coordinator for Civic Learning, in the Division of Community Engagement.

In an effort to include a variety of perspectives and lenses, the campus will seat a cross-divisional Advisory Task Force that will provide input and guidance for the plan.

Membership of the Task Force is proposed to include:

- Academic Senate Representation (1)
- Faculty Representation (3)
- Academic Affairs Administrator (1)
- Student Government Representation (1)
- Student Affairs Representation (1)
- Diversity and Inclusion Office Representation (1)
- Office of Communications Representation (1)
- Legislative Affairs Representation (1)
- Finance and Administrative Services Representation (1)
- Community Engagement Representation (1)

The Task Force will also be “staffed” by the Civic Learning Team, including the Community Engagement data analyst, to ensure all perspectives and contributions are captured and considered.

## ASSESSING CURRENT WORK AND OUTCOMES

Our Democratic Engagement Action Plan is heavily informed by our Civic Action Plan developed in 2017 through our membership in Campus Compact. This plan was developed by conducting a campus-wide self-study of current work that is related to civic learning and democratic engagement.

After attending the Civic Action Planning Institute offered by Campus Compact at the University of San Diego in October 2016, the Civic Learning Team integrated the best practices presented at the conference by strategizing about ways in which we could gather data from across the campus to inform the Civic Action Plan, while ultimately ensuring stakeholder participation in the final version of the plan.

We will naturally rely heavily on the Campus Compact Civic Action Plan to guide our work with regard to the ALL IN Democratic Engagement Action Plan. What follows are the goals that were developed for the Civic Action Plan; these goals will also serve for the Democratic Engagement Action Plan.

## GOALS

### **1. Grow and enhance programming to prepare students for an engaged civic life, locally and globally**

Some existing programs include: Democracy in Action, Global Commitment Initiative, Town Hall Meeting, Tukwut Leadership Circle, American Democracy Project, César Chávez Day of Service, and others. This goal ensures the campus will leverage promising practices learned from successful programs to support faculty and others interested in growing and enhancing civic engagement programs.

### **2. Provide faculty development opportunities to identify and incorporate best practices for civic engagement in teaching**

This effort could involve faculty learning communities, workshops in partnership with the Faculty Center, or incentives to encourage faculty to adopt best practices for incorporating civic engagement in their teaching.

### **3. Create a mechanism to learn about democratic engagement activities occurring across campus**

With the intent to share lessons learned and be aware of potential duplication of efforts, some mechanism will be created to increase awareness of civic engagement efforts from around campus.

#### **4. Create infrastructure to support scalability**

Building on existing organizational support through the Civic Learning Initiative in Community Engagement, this goal ensures the necessary staff support and continued faculty liaison position to achieve long-term sustainability.

#### **5. Create a Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Steering Committee**

The Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Action Steering Committee will be comprised of all stakeholders: faculty, staff, students and community partners. The Steering Committee will specifically focus on providing advice and guidance regarding the implementation of this plan.

#### **6. Amplify civic engagement through a marketing and communication plan**

This goal will result in telling the story of civic engagement efforts by highlighting specific projects in a strategic and coordinated manner.

#### **7. Raise profile of CSUSM's efforts of democratic engagement**

By monitoring opportunities for local and national awards as well as grants, the campus will assist with the nomination of projects and programs for these awards and grants, resulting in additional recognition and awareness for both the programs and the campus.

### **VOTER EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

Among the seven (7) goals articulated above and also included in our Civic Action Plan is an essential goal related to democratic engagement that is NOT identified: increasing voter engagement. Our ALL IN Democratic Engagement Action Plan thus includes **Voter Education and Engagement** as central to a democratically engaged campus. As such, the following goal will be added to those identified above.

#### **8. Increase voter awareness and engagement at CSUSM**

Building on National Voter Registration Day, create opportunities for voter engagement and education throughout the entire academic year, with the objective of boosting voter awareness and quantifiable participation in midterm and presidential elections.

To work toward this goal and to help us to assess our progress in meeting our objectives, we will of course rely upon the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) at Tufts University. Below are our results from the 2016 election. Our immediate objective will be to boost voter participation beyond 52.1% in the upcoming 2018 midterm elections. But we will also focus on voter education and awareness as a separate, ongoing goal at CSUSM.

YOUR STUDENTS' VOTING DATA | PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

# Voting and Registration Rates

2016 Voting Rate

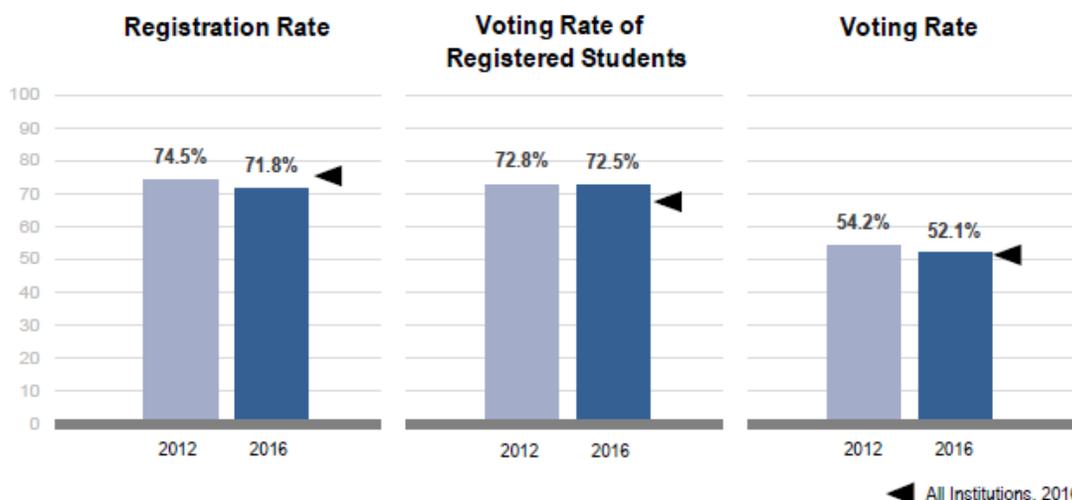
**52.1%**

CHANGE FROM 2012

**-2.2**

2016 VOTING RATE FOR ALL INSTITUTIONS

**50.4%**



	2012	2016	Change
Total student enrollment	11,151	15,439	↑ 4,288
Age under 18/Unknown	(125)	(166)	
IPEDS estimated non-resident aliens	(225)	(399)	
FERPA records blocked	*	*	
Total eligible voters	10,794	14,872	↑ 4,078
Number of students who registered	8,041	10,677	↑ 2,636
Number of students who voted	5,855	7,741	↑ 1,886
Registration rate	74.5%	71.8%	↓ -2.7
Voting rate of registered students	72.8%	72.5%	↓ -0.3
Voting rate	54.2%	52.1%	↓ -2.2
Difference from all institutions	+7.3	+1.7	

2014 NSLVE Voting Summary | California State University-San Marcos

**Institutional Voting Rates**

Total student enrollment  
**12,743**

Ineligible to vote (under 18)  
**129**

IPEDS estimated non-resident aliens  
**290**

FERPA blocked records  
**\***

Eligible student population  
**12,321**

Number of students who registered  
**7,574**

Number of students who voted  
**1,960**

Average Voting Rate for All Institutions

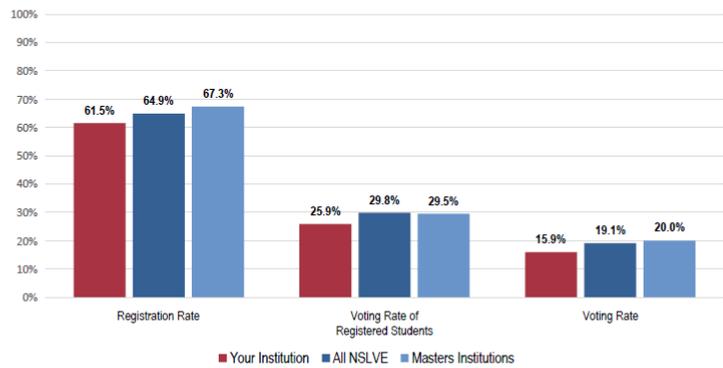
**19.1%**

HIGH  
54.0%

LOW  
5.2%

Voting Rate for Your Institution

**15.9%**

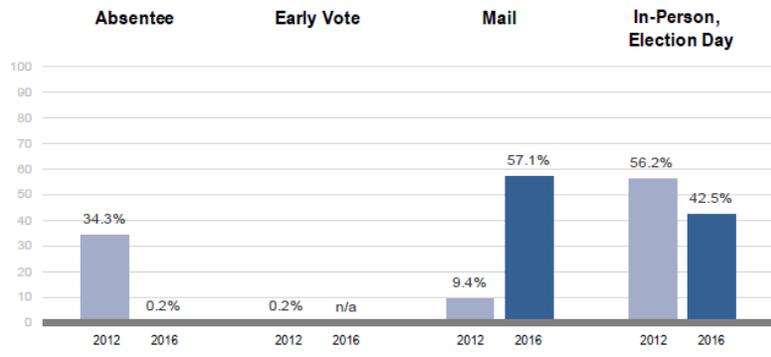


The National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) is a signature initiative of the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) at Tisch College, Tufts University. The mission of IDHE is to shift college and university priorities and culture to advance political learning, agency, and equity. We achieve our mission through research, resource development, technical assistance, and advocacy.  
<https://tischcollege.tufts.edu/NSLVE>

NSLVE CAMPUS REPORT | California State University-San Marcos

YOUR STUDENTS' VOTING DATA | PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

By Voting Method\*



	2012		2016		Change
	Voted	Rate	Voted	Rate	
Absentee	2,006	34.3%	17	0.2%	↓ -34.0
Early Vote	10	0.2%	*	n/a	n/a
Mail	548	9.4%	4,419	57.1%	↑ 47.7
In-Person, Election Day	3,289	56.2%	3,289	42.5%	↓ -13.7
Unknown	*	n/a	13	0.2%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,855</b>		<b>7,741</b>		

## IMPLEMENTATION

We made an intentional decision to invite partners and stakeholders to define specific action items in the implementation of our goals, as the stakeholders are essential to their being successfully carried out.

Below is a chart that identifies goals, projected timeline, and stakeholders. Once the Advisory Task Force is convened (beginning in Spring 2018), one of the primary tasks of that working group will be to review the implementation of the goals below and design a process by which next steps can be taken.

Goal	Anticipated Completion Date	Partners/Stakeholders	Action Items	Status
Grow and enhance programming to prepare students for an engaged life	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ASI Vice President of Student and University Affairs</li> <li>- Community Centers</li> <li>- Community Engagement</li> <li>- Faculty Representation</li> <li>- Office of Diversity, Educational Equity, Inclusion &amp; Ombuds</li> <li>- Resident Advisors</li> <li>- Student Life &amp; Leadership</li> <li>- Community Partners</li> </ul>	Stakeholders will convene to identify action items	
Provide faculty development opportunities to identify and incorporate best practices for civic learning in teaching	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Engagement</li> <li>- Faculty Center</li> <li>- Office of Diversity, Educational Equity, Inclusion &amp; Ombuds</li> </ul>	Stakeholders will convene to identify action items	
Create a mechanism to learn about civic engagement activities occurring across campus	Fall 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ASI Vice President of Student and University Affairs</li> <li>- Community Engagement</li> <li>- Instructional &amp; Information Technology Services</li> <li>- Library</li> </ul>	Stakeholders will convene to identify action items	

		- Office of Communications		
Create infrastructure to support scalability	Fall 2020	- Community Engagement		
Create a Civic Action Steering Committee	Fall 2017	- Stakeholders from all goals		
Amplify civic engagement through a Marketing and Communication plan	Fall 2017 and ongoing	- Community Engagement - Office of Communications	Stakeholders will convene to identify action items	
Raise profile of CSUSM's efforts of civic engagement	Ongoing	- ASI Vice President of Student and University Affairs - Community Engagement - Development Team - Office of Communications	Stakeholders will convene to identify action items	
Increase voter awareness and engagement at CSUSM	Ongoing	- ASI Vice President of Student and University Affairs - Community Engagement - Office of Communications	Stakeholders will convene to identify action items	

## ASSESS PROGRESS TOWARDS GOALS

### 1. Grow and enhance programming to prepare students for an engaged civic life, locally and globally

- Students will discover civic learning opportunities and practice being an engaged citizen throughout their time at CSUSM
- Increase number of students attending civic engagement activities
- Increase degree to which students perceive that CSUSM emphasizes attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues

## **2. Provide faculty development opportunities to identify and incorporate best practices for civic engagement in teaching**

- Over time, an increasing number of faculty members will be able to describe how they can adopt best practices for incorporating civic learning in their teaching
- Increase in number of faculty members who are able to give examples of how they can apply best practices of civic learning in their teaching

## **3. Create a mechanism to learn about civic engagement activities occurring across campus**

- Faculty, staff, and students will use the mechanism to increase awareness of civic engagement activities across campus
- Increased participation in civic engagement activities
- The number of staff and faculty reporting civic engagement activities through the central mechanism increases

## **4. Create infrastructure to support scalability**

- Civic learning will be recognized as a sustained initiative on campus
- An Office of Civic Learning will be designated

## **5. Create a Civic Action Steering Committee**

- Stakeholders across campus and in the community will be actively involved in continually evaluating the implementation and improvement of initiatives integral to the Civic Action Plan
- Number of meetings held will sustain over time

## **6. Amplify civic engagement through a marketing and communication plan**

- Students, faculty, staff and community members will be able to give examples of CSUSM's commitment to civic learning
- Increase number of CSUSM civic learning news articles  
Increase degree to which students feel CSUSM emphasizes attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues  
Increase degree to which community partners are aware of the civic learning initiatives taking place at CSUSM

## **7. Raise profile of CSUSM's efforts of civic engagement**

- The value of the civic learning initiative at CSUSM will be recognized on a local and national level
- Increase number of awards and grants applied for/awarded

## **8. Increase voter awareness and engagement at CSUSM**

- Voter participation will increase per the NSLVE survey and data
- Increase opportunities for voter awareness beyond National Voter Registration Day

We will continue to review the plan and return to the specific action steps, as they are developed and implemented. We will reassess the Democratic Engagement Action Plan on an annual basis, based on the academic year cycle.

#### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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