



Lewis University
Civic Action Plan
May 21, 2018

I. Executive Summary

1. This civic action plan was developed by the Committee for Civic Engagement (CCE) at Lewis University and was created to document our current strengths and weaknesses as an institution, to identify areas for potential improvement, and to plan how the university can better address civic education and engagement in the coming years.
2. This action plan serves as a guideline for Lewis University's efforts towards civic engagement. Specifically, this plan is focused on the Committee for Civic Engagement, academics, and administrative offices that serve students.
3. We intend to define the role of the Committee for Civic Engagement to include all relevant offices relating to civic engagement in order to coordinate activities and events.
4. This document attempts to catalog recent civic engagement activities at Lewis University through 2018 and looks beyond to the 2020 Presidential election in our planning.
5. The activities described in the plan are to be carried out by the Committee for Civic Engagement and relevant departments.

II. Leadership

1. The coordinating committee for this action plan is the Committee for Civic Engagement, which reports to the Office of Mission and Identity at Lewis University. The CCE is composed of relevant stakeholders including faculty, staff, administrators, and students, comprising of people who expressed a desire to work on civic engagement-related issues.
2. The CCE is currently chaired by Dr. Steven Nawara.
3. This Civic Action Plan was initially drafted by Dr. Steven Nawara, Dr. Laurette Liesen, Dr. Andrea Krieg, Dr. Liz Sturm, Chris Swanson, and Laura Wilmarth Tyna.
4. The Committee for Civic Engagement, sponsored by the Provost's Office, has a formal charge, with Dr. Kurt Schackmuth operating as the group's liaison to the Provost. The CCE needs to articulate a mission statement to define the Committee for Civic Engagement role at the university (see Section V: Goals)
5. A variety of offices and departments are represented on the CCE, including: Political Science; Sociology; Education; Justice, Law, and Public Safety; Theology; Community Engaged Learning; Library; Student Development and Leadership; Office of Study Abroad; Multicultural Student Services; Career Services; Academic Services; Office of Mission & Identity; Pi Sigma Alpha, the Political Science Honor Society; and the Student Senate.
 - a. The CCE has working relationships with groups such as Illinois Campus Compact, the League of Women Voters, NASPA's Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Lead Initiative, the Will County Clerk, and the Campus Election Engagement Project.
 - b. The Committee for Civic Engagement meets roughly 2-3 times per semester, though will meet additionally as needed to support relevant projects.

III. Commitment

1. Lewis University supports civic learning and democratic engagement. Lewis University's core values are based on its Catholic and Lasallian heritage. Saint John Baptist de La Salle believed in creating a community of educators to teach students, no matter their social class. Civic engagement is an integral part of the Lasallian tradition, as shown in Pillar I of the University's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan, which calls on graduates to be engaged citizens. The Lasallian tradition has also played a role in the development of the Committee for Civic Engagement consists of faculty and staff from across campus. The Committee for Civic Engagement has support from the Provost's office and focuses on civic engagement, specifically democratic engagement. In addition to the committee's creation, Lewis has included a civic engagement requirement within its new general education requirements, based on the AAC&U LEAP Learning Outcomes. The University drew on the idea that students should prepare for post-college life by learning personal and social responsibility, which includes civic knowledge, engagement, and intercultural knowledge and competence (AAC&U, 2017). Finally, the university's Baccalaureate Characteristics include a requirement that graduates shall "become an informed, involved, and responsible citizen of a diverse yet interconnected national and global community through a grounding in economic, political, social, and historical influences that are inherent in shaping, developing, and advancing nations and the world."
 - a. This commitment is communicated to the University and the external community in many ways, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - i. President David Livingston signed the Campus Compact 30th Anniversary Action State of Presidents and Chancellors in 2017.
 - ii. Lewis University has hosted numerous candidate forums prior to local elections.
 - iii. Elected officials have frequently spoken on campus.
 - iv. President Livingston urged action on multiple political issues on both the state and national level.
 - v. The University sponsors a Civic Engagement website and Twitter account.
 - vi. Lewis University has an active presence in the community and partners in the region with community-based, nonprofit, and governmental organizations focused on community development. The University funds the Office of Community Engaged Learning, which enrolled 600 students in over 35 community-based courses during the 2016-2017 academic year.
 - vii. Over the past 20 years, faculty and staff have donated over \$1,000,000 to the United Way of Will County.
 - viii. The administration has also provided funds to allow faculty and staff to attend civic engagement conferences and supported the creation of the Committee for Civic Engagement.
2. The University is committed to civic education among our students and is now implementing a civic engagement requirement for the General Education curriculum. In addition, the Arts & Ideas program frequently educates students and the community about civic matters.
 - a. This commitment to civic engagement has produced measurable effects. The number of community engaged learning classes has grown dramatically, with nearly 30 offered each semester, voter turnout of Lewis students rose 8.4 percentage points up to 59% in presidential elections, Arts & Ideas events are well-attended, and starting in 2019, every incoming student to Lewis University will be required to take a course with a civic engagement and issue advocacy component.

- b. Assessment of civic and democratic learning outcomes is currently fairly siloed at Lewis University. Different assessment data is available through various offices. There is a university Assessment Committee that has been trying to collect data and connect efforts across departments.
3. Civic learning is present throughout the co-curriculum through Arts & Ideas programs, the Peace Teach-in, the Student Senate, Multicultural Student Services programs, University Ministry social justice and service opportunities, student organizations, student leadership fraternities, and honors societies.

IV. Landscape

1. Civic learning and democratic engagement are not overall campus learning outcomes. There is a Baccalaureate Characteristic of “Responsible Citizenship” and a new General Education Requirement of civic engagement for undergraduates. There is a Graduate Student Learning Outcome requiring “promotion of civic knowledge and engagement activities.”
2. Lewis University participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement [NSLVE], the Diverse Learning Environments Survey out of the Higher Education Research Institute, the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement [BCSSE], the Campus Compact Annual Membership Survey, as well as, National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE].
3. Dr. Anne Figus, Assistant Provost in the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, tracks which courses at Lewis University fulfill the Responsible Citizenship Baccalaureate Characteristic and the Graduate Learning Outcome.
4. Dr. Figus also tracks what parts of the co-curriculum reach the Responsible Citizenship Baccalaureate Characteristic.
5. Lewis University faces numerous common internal barriers, including a lack of assigned staff, which leads to decentralized work. The Committee is comprised of faculty and staff, all of whom volunteer their time and are also working a full-time position at the University. The Committee also has no budget or space for activities and no defined role within the campus. The CCE is sponsored by the Provost’s Office and reports to Dr. Kurt Schackmuth, Vice President for Mission and Associate Provost of Academic Affairs. Further, Lewis’ large commuter population requires a unique approach to getting students involved. Related to this, the student population, both residential and commuter, are employed, often full-time, which offers another challenge when getting students engaged. Lastly, the University is currently experiencing a high turnover in upper administration. This leaves the Committee with a lack of consistency in leadership from above.
6. Regarding external barriers, Lewis faces uncertainty regarding funding from the State of Illinois. Additionally, the campus is isolated from the city centers near campus. Therefore, it is challenging for students, faculty, and staff to easily be involved with the community. For example, there is no way to get to other locations without driving a car or taking a bus. Lastly, due to the commuter population, students are often engaging with communities away from their home. This causes challenges for them. For example, students who live within Will County, but not in Romeoville, have been required to vote using a provisional ballot, which can be discouraging.
7. The CCE has strong support from Student Services and the Office of Mission and Identity. For example, conference funding is available, although on an ad hoc basis. The University, as a whole, and more specifically the Office of Community Engaged Learning, has a strong relationship with community agencies, and a significant number of faculty and staff across campus are fully involved in civic engagement. Lastly, Lewis is involved with numerous national and local organizations, including

Campus Compact and the Campus Election Engagement Project. The CCE has requested funds for next year's budget and has been told that money could be available for projects from various sources on campus.

V. Goals

Long-term Goals - what does the institution want to accomplish over the next 10 years?

1. Having a permanent structure and defined mission statement for the Committee for Civic Engagement.
2. Having a budget line for the CCE.
3. Having a graduate assistant position to support civic engagement efforts. This individual could aid in maintaining the website, running social media, assessing civic engagement efforts, promoting and planning events, and serving as a point-person for communications relating to civic engagement.
4. Continuing to develop a strong general education requirement.
5. More community engaged learning classes.
6. Increased voter registration and voter turnout.
7. Institutionalized student engagement recognition, whether through transcripts, cords at commencement, etc.
8. Continue developing community relationships through the Offices of Community Engaged Learning, University Ministry, Mission and Identity, Multicultural Student Services, and Marketing.
9. Increase student engagement with the political process through student organizations focused on the democratic process.
10. Increase experiential learning activities, including travel study activities and internships within and outside of the United States.

Short-Term Goals - what does the institution want to accomplish in the next year or two? What needs to be accomplished in order to move towards the achievement of long-term goals?

1. Writing a mission statement for the Committee for Civic Engagement. This mission statement should define our group's structure and membership, draw parallels to the university's strategic plan, make it clear that the committee is sponsored by the Provost's Office, and identify the committee as being tasked with delivering on the aspects of the strategic plan relating to civic engagement.
2. Submitting budget requests for the CCE's events and committee development.
3. Continuing to hold voter registration drives, while adapting to the new automatic voter registration (AVR) system in Illinois.
4. Holding voter education events regarding local, state, and federal elections.
5. Organizing the university's annual Constitution Day event.
6. Creating a pre-packaged civic engagement module to incorporate into the new Cornerstone seminar that is required for all incoming freshmen (formerly ICE class).
7. Developing a presence for the Committee for Civic Engagement at SOAR sessions, Welcome Days, and/or Freshman Convocation.
8. Increasing the number of community engaged learning classes.
9. Institutionalizing student engagement recognition, whether through transcripts, cords at commencement, etc.
10. Increasing student involvement on the Committee for Civic Engagement.

11. Expanding membership or representation on the Committee to additional offices, including Career Services, Residence Life, the Center for Academic Support and Enrichment, Veterans Affairs, and Ministry, as well as additional colleges.
12. Increasing the communication between the Committee and Lewis media outlets, including Marketing, Communications, LUTN, and WLRA, and external media.
13. Improving upon the committee's abilities to share information with students. This will involve determining where students tend to get their information. Possible avenues to explore include the use of mass emails, a calendar of events hosted on the website, and the role of social media. Similarly, CCE members are frequently approached with internship requests from political causes and charities looking for volunteers, so there is a need to explore ways of posting these requests for the Lewis community, perhaps through Career Services.
14. Increasing communication within the Committee, including the need for a regular meeting time throughout the semester and possibly the creation of various subcommittees/small working groups that focus on particular aspects of civic engagement (e.g. separate groups for democratic engagement, social media and web outreach, organizing large events, and community/external relationships).

VI. Strategy

1. What is the work? What are the planned activities?

- a. Student Services (MSS, SD&L, Student Senate): Help facilitate student organizations to promote engagement.

The Office of Multicultural Student Services (MSS) will continue to offer a one (1) credit hour course/weekend workshop titled Community Excursion. In this course, students learn and become familiar with a city, town, and/or village that is more than likely unfamiliar to them. Designed to engross students in the act of community awareness, this course evaluates one's understanding of a variety of cultures and diversity that surround them. Upon introduction to the community, students will complete a community service project in partnership with said community. Separate from Community Excursion, MSS will continue to work toward exposing students to external outlets that expand their knowledge of local and national grassroots organizations.

Provost Office (Study Abroad, Office of Mission and Identity): The creation of a permanent structure for the Committee for Civic Engagement and budget line to fund its efforts

- b. Community Engaged Learning: The Office of Community Engaged Learning (OCEL) will continue expanding community-based course offerings, including designated service learning courses, and community-based research. The office will focus on expanding and deepening off-campus partnerships and increasing the number of relationships between partners and faculty members. OCEL will grow community-based leadership experiences for students through the Community Engaged Learning Facilitator (CELF) program, which pairs student leaders with community engaged learning courses. Additionally, community voice will be fostered by continuing to establish the Community Partner Advisory Board, which has created an avenue for more formal community feedback on OCEL programs and general campus involvement in the community.
- c. Democratic Engagement Subcommittee: Organize voter registration drives and host voter information events and promote voting on election day

- i. Voter registration table, nonpartisan voter guide distribution, information table on election day and letters of residency, FAQ and shuttle bus for election day, election night party, voter registration day during move-in in the residence halls, RA programming within the Residence Hall (creating a pre-packaged voter registration program that can be shared each year)
 - d. Overall Committee for Civic Engagement: Help expand membership on the Committee and increase communication within the Committee by using a streamlined communication service
 - i. Twitter and website creation and maintenance.
 - ii. Creation of subcommittees and working groups to achieve the defined goals.
 - iii. The establishment of a regular meeting time for the committee.
- 2. Each department will be responsible for implementing their own goals and activities, though cooperation across departments and with the Committee for Civic Engagement is encouraged.
- 3. These strategies are aimed to help Lewis students, the Committee, the Lewis community, and the Romeoville and larger Will County community.

VII. Reporting

- 1. This Civic Action Plan will first be shared among the University offices and departments that would be the stakeholders in promoting civic engagement. After these offices provide input and it is approved by administration, the plan can be hosted on the University website, the Civic Engagement website, and shared externally with the All-In Challenge.

VIII. Evaluation

- 1. Pillar IV of the university's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan says that "Lewis will advance a data-informed culture of stewardship, which maximizes performance, efficiencies and the strategic allocation of resources." Therefore, it is important to continually evaluate the goals, programs, and strategies suggested in this civic action plan to determine if efforts are successful in promoting civic engagement, to reassess the needs of the university community, and to determine if a better course of action is available.
- 2. Evaluation of efforts can be made available to the Committee for Civic Engagement and administrators at the University.
- 3. The Committee for Civic Engagement will carry out evaluation of the University's civic engagement efforts on an annual basis.
 - a. Relevant offices and stakeholders should report to the Committee for Civic Engagement at the end of the academic year to detail what events and activities they conducted to reach their civic engagement goals. It would be ideal to provide the dates and details of all events, as well as an estimate of the number of participants and a subjective judgment of the event's efficacy in promoting civic engagement.
 - b. The university will continue to participate in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement [NSLVE], the Diverse Learning Environments Survey out of the Higher Education Research Institute, the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement [BCSSE], the Campus Compact Annual Membership Survey, as well as, National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE]. These surveys will allow us to monitor changes in rates of political and community participation.