



## Rappahannock Community College 2022-24 Report on Civic Engagement

### What does Civic Engagement mean at RCC?

**Civic Engagement** is the ability to contribute to the civic life and well-being of local, national, and global communities. It is both a social responsibility and a life-long learning process.

Degree graduates will demonstrate the knowledge and values necessary to become informed and contributing participants in a democratic society.

### How are RCC degree graduates expected to use Civic Engagement skills?

*Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)* are defined to guide the instruction of Civic Engagement skills.

RCC degree graduates will:

- a. Define civic engagement and discuss basic principles regarding democracy and citizenship in local, state, and national communities.
- b. Identify a problem or conflict of civic importance in their campus, local, or regional community.
- c. Complete a written proposal for action on the issue, targeting the relevant campus or community leader(s).

### How are RCC students doing?

#### *RCC General Education Assessment*

The Civic Engagement assessment plan was implemented in Fall 2020. In Spring 2021, the *RCC General Education Assessment* was not administered as the college testing centers were closed during the COVID 19 pandemic. In Spring 2022, testing resumed. The multiple-choice test includes five Civic Engagement items and is given to a sample of degree graduates (33 in Spring 2022, 24 in Spring 2023, and 89 in Spring 2024). All testing can now be done online using Lockdown Browser.

The overall benchmark of 60% correct civic engagement items was met in Spring 2022 at 77%, 65% in both Spring 2023 and Spring 2024. The correct response rates per item in Spring 2024 were 57% to 94%. The lowest score was on the item: Which word **best** completes the blank in the following statement? Obeying the law, paying taxes, and voting are all \_\_\_\_\_ of US citizens. 57% chose the correct choice, responsibilities. Thirty-six percent chose “all of the above” (required, responsibilities, and rights).

Thirty percent of the students chose a wrong answer on the items:

1. Which of the following is NOT an example of Civic Engagement? 17% chose "Being involved in planning a state political campaign," 9% chose "Supporting the local food bank," and 4% chose "Volunteering during a national disaster." The correct answer was "Being involved in the planning of a high school reunion."
2. Which phrase best completes the blank in the following statement? Rights of US citizens are \_\_\_\_\_. The correct choice is "freedoms protected by the government." Twenty-two percent (22%) chose "All of the above" (actions expected of you as a citizen of the US, freedoms protected by the government, recognitions for volunteer work).

### *Common Course Assessment*

Throughout the pandemic years 2019-20 and 2020-21, common course assessments continued in all courses. The Civic Engagement Common Assessment began in 2020-21 as part of the English 111 curriculum. English 111 is the required English course in all RCC degree programs. The assignment described below is used as the primary assessment of the Civic Engagement SLOs.

### **The Assignment (2020-21 to 2023-24)**

Write a 1500 to 1700-word **Proposal** essay on a topic of local or regional civic significance. Proposal arguments identify a conflict or problem, demonstrate why the issue matters or needs to be addressed, and then propose a solution or response. As explained in your English 111 textbook, *The Norton Field Guide to Writing*, it is not necessary to tackle issues of national or global importance to make a difference in your community. Rather, "focusing on a smaller problem or a limited aspect of a large problem will yield a more manageable proposal." Instead of proposing a way to solve world hunger, for example, you might consider the "problem faced by people in your community who have lost jobs and need help until they find employment" (Bullock 251).

### **Some topic ideas (remember to focus on these as *local* issues):**

- Opioid epidemic
- Lack of reliable internet service
- Lack of affordable housing and/or lack of new housing
- Casinos and gambling in Virginia (specifically on Native American land or nearby)
- Lack of qualified teachers
- Reduced oyster population in Chesapeake Bay
- Decreased population in the Northern Neck or Middle Peninsula
- Increase in coastal flooding
- Lack of affordable child care in the region or for students
- Lack of recycling at RCC
- Need for clubs and more activities on campus
- Need for more food options on campus

Because you are proposing a specific course of action, your argument will target a particular audience that you must identify. For example, if you propose that RCC should offer more recycling opportunities, you would probably direct your argument to the Board of Trustees or the President's office. A proposal recommending that local schools incorporate more locally grown fruits and vegetables might target the county board of education. You must identify the target audience at the top of your paper.

Proposals must be supported by research that includes the following sources:

- at least **two credible secondary sources** (newspaper articles, books, journals, etc.)
- at least **one primary source** (interview OR survey), see pp. 382-393 in *IA*
- at least **one multimedia source** (documentary, video, film) OR another primary or secondary source.

**Civic Engagement Project Rubric**

Criteria	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1	Score
Define civic engagement and discuss basic principles regarding democracy and citizenship in local, state, and national communities.	Provides a groundbreaking and thought-provoking discussion of civic engagement, democracy, and citizenship, that challenges the status quo.	Provides a comprehensive and insightful discussion of civic engagement, democracy, and citizenship, drawing on a variety of sources.	Provides a clear and concise definition of civic engagement and discusses the basic principles of democracy and citizenship in detail.	Provides a basic definition of civic engagement and discusses some basic principles of democracy and citizenship.	
Identify a problem or conflict of civic importance in the campus, local, or regional community.	Identifies a problem or conflict of civic importance			Does not clearly identify a problem or conflict of civic importance	
The student's essay or presentation should be well-organized and easy to follow.	The student's essay/presentation is well-organized, easy to follow, and it flows smoothly from one point to the next.	The student's essay/presentation is clear, concise, and easy to understand.	The student's essay/presentation is clear and easy to understand, but could be more concise.	The student's essay/presentation is unclear, confusing, or difficult to understand.	
The student should provide evidence to support the claim, meeting the source requirements. Formatting is appropriate.	The student provides overwhelming evidence to support the claims, and cite sources appropriately. Formatting is correct.	The student provides strong evidence to support claims. May have issues in citing sources. Formatting is mostly correct.	The student provides some evidence to support their claims, but it is not very convincing. Has significant issues in citing sources and/or formatting.	The student does not provide any evidence to support claims. Does not cite sources or properly format the assignment.	

The student should analyze the problem or conflict and propose solutions that are based on sound reasoning.	The student analyzes the problem or conflict in depth and proposes solutions that are innovative and effective.	The student analyzes the problem or conflict and proposes solutions that are based on sound reasoning.	The student analyzes the problem or conflict, but the proposed solutions are not very convincing.	The student does not analyze the problem or conflict, and the proposed solutions are not based on sound reasoning.	
The student should communicate ideas effectively to the intended audience.	The student's ideas are communicated effectively, and the intended audience is likely to be inspired and motivated to take action.	The student's ideas are communicated effectively, and the intended audience is likely to understand and be persuaded by them.	The student's ideas are communicated somewhat effectively, but they could be improved.	The student's ideas are not communicated effectively, and the intended audience is likely to be confused or misled.	

**Common Course Assessment Results**

A sample of the students assigned the essay are entered in Canvas where the rubric is used to grade the assignment and each criteria can be analyzed. The Benchmark is 75% of students will earn at least a grade of C (70% or higher.) A total score possible is 24, so 70% is a score of 17 or higher.

During COVID in 2020-21, the benchmark was not met as only 73% of students passed with a grade of 70% or higher.

The benchmark has been met in every year since:

- 2021-22, **79% of students passed with a grade 70% or higher.**
- 2022-23, **85% of students passed with a grade 70% or higher.**
- 2023-24. **77% of students passed with a grade 70% or higher.**

This data shows that students demonstrate the highest proficiency in learning about civic engagement overall (Criterion #1). This indicates that students are doing especially well on the first learning outcome of this assessment:

- a. Define civic engagement and discuss basic principles regarding democracy and citizenship in local, state, and national communities.

Starting in 2024-25, students may choose an essay or a multimodal project.

### ***RCC Graduating Student Survey***

Students' confidence in their Civic Engagement is measured each spring on the *RCC Graduating Student Survey*. This survey is administered to all Spring graduates. Students are asked to rate their skill level when they entered RCC and now that they are graduating. One item assessed their civic engagement skill. In Spring 2024, there were 220 responses. Results were:

- "To contribute to the civic life and well-being of local, national, and global communities." Thirty-six percent (36%) marked excellent when they entered and 67% when they graduated. Fourteen percent (14%) marked "fair" or "poor" at entry but only 3% at graduation.

### **Civic Engagement throughout RCC**

The English faculty takes the lead in teaching and assessing civic engagement, but all RCC faculty are responsible for supporting civic engagement skills.

Some recent civic engagement activities are:

- The College participated in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge again this year. The Challenge empowers colleges and universities across the country to achieve excellence in nonpartisan student democratic engagement. RCC earned the inaugural ALL IN Most Engaged Campus for Student Voting. In total 394 colleges and universities earned this recognition. Only three community colleges in Virginia made the list.

A message sent to students was:

October 11th Student Voter Registration Day- Glens and Warsaw Campuses

If you are a student who has not yet registered to vote, please join us in the Student Lounges on the Glens and Warsaw and register on the spot and get a VRD cupcake to celebrate the moment. Laptops will be set up in the lounge and Ambassadors will be available to assist you in the process. No better time than now to let your voices be heard! We look forward to seeing you there. If you are not able to attend in person, click the link and register from anywhere.

- RCC health sciences students have volunteered in the RAM Free Medical Clinics. Remote Area Medical (RAM)—a major nonprofit of free pop-up clinics— coordinated with RCC to find a location, sign up volunteers, advertise the event, and set up and take down the clinic. Medical, vision, and dental services are provided.
- Culinary students participate in food preparation and service for the RAM Clinic and the annual RCC Foundation fundraiser, the Preakness Party.
- Chemistry students researched the use of plastics and plastic pollution in the community.
- Mathematics students researched the taxes on houses in their communities and selected a mathematical model to help predict future increases in the real estate tax.

### **How Assessment Results Are Used**

The English faculty analyze and discuss the Civic Engagement Project results at English discipline meetings. A civic engagement assessment report is prepared that includes the results, analysis, and recommendations for improvement.

The results of the Civic Engagement items on the End-of-Program RCC General Education Assessment and the Graduating Student Survey are shared with faculty who look for opportunities to include the teaching of civic engagement in their courses.