

SF SANTA FE COLLEGE

The Democracy Commitment

Introduction

[Santa Fe College](#) is committed to fostering civic engagement and service, informing our campus and community about politically-relevant issues, and encouraging active participation in our country's democracy. Since January 2012, Santa Fe College has been a member of The Democracy Commitment, a national initiative to engage community college students in civic learning and democratic practices. The following represents a series of activities that our College sponsored during 2014 in an effort to advance this work.

Engage the Election 2014



Santa Fe College sponsored a series of events to raise awareness about the candidates and issues on the November 2014 ballot. The college hosted candidate forums for all seriously contested races in its service district. The semester began with an Alachua County School Board Candidate forum on August 22, 2014. This was followed by a forum on September 30, 2014 with Keith Perry (Rep) and Jon Uman (Dem), candidates for Florida House District 21 and a forum on October 8, 2014 with Ted Yoho (Rep) and Marihelen Wheeler (Dem), candidates for U.S. House District 3. Santa Fe also sponsored a gubernatorial debate watch party on October 15, 2014. Attendants were encouraged to ask questions via social media about the issues being debated and engage each other and college professors in a robust conversation about these. Election-related events culminated with an Election Results Prediction Party on November 4, 2014 led by our political science professors. Students were invited to predict the outcomes of the election and provide their reasoning for their forecast.

Florida Campus Compact

Santa Fe students were awarded a Florida Campus Compact grant to promote political awareness and civic engagement on our college this Fall. Santa Fe previously received this funding in 2012. Students devised, organized, and lead presentations and projects to raise awareness and engage peers on key political issues. The following exemplifies some of the events Santa Fe students organized under this initiative:

- “Democracy Project: Saints Speak,” October 8, 2014
- “Pros and Cons of Amendment 1 - Water & Land Conservation Funding,” October 15, 2014
- “Understanding Amendment 1 – Legalizing Medical Marijuana” October 28, 2014
- “Understanding The Affordable Care Act: What College Students Need to Know” October 29, 2014

Voter Registration



Santa Fe College makes voter registration information available to students throughout the year as is required by law. Beginning in the Spring of 2014, the college began a collaboration with Turbovote, an internet-based non-profit corporation that makes registering for elections easier and provides students with electronic reminders of upcoming elections. Turbovote was advertised to Santa Fe students online, through electronic newsletters, and during special events throughout 2014. In addition, the College hosted a national voter registration day drive on September 23, 2014 to encourage students to register to vote, update their voter information, and participate in the November election. Turbovote bookmarks were distributed at this and all other civic engagement activities sponsored by the College during the Fall of 2014.

Collaboration with League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters (LWV) began a new collaboration with Santa Fe College in 2014 in order to promote civic engagement. The LWV invited Santa Fe students to participate in its Spring and Fall luncheon events at a reduced cost, join the organization for free, and learn more about its advocacy work. The Spring luncheon allowed approximately 15 students to interact with former Congresswoman and presidential candidate Pat Schroeder, the keynote speaker. The Fall luncheon held on September 17, 2014 allowed another 15 students to listen to and interact with John Moran, a nature photographer and co-founder of the Florida Springs Forever Campaign. The League of Women Voters also created four internship opportunities for Santa Fe students that included hands-on education on how bills are passed at the state-level, advocacy training, opportunities to observe live sessions of the Florida legislature, and interactions with local representatives in Tallahassee.

Florida Model Legislature



Santa Fe College encourages students to participate in mock sessions of the Florida legislature and thus learn about our state-level government. Participants are required to learn about legislative committees, bill writing, how bills move through committee, parliamentary procedure, and the important role of dialogue and negotiation in our political system. Participants are encouraged to understand the role of our state's representatives and the importance of serving their constituents. Santa Fe College hosted a regional Florida Model Legislature from October 24-25, 2014 and invited students to participate in a state-wide Florida Model Legislature held in Tallahassee on November 19-21, 2014.

Model United Nations



Santa Fe College sponsors an active Model United Nations team that exposes students to international governance issues while preparing them for regional, state and national level competitions. Santa Fe College hosted the Florida Model United Nations (FMUN) conference for the ninth year in a row on October 3-4, 2014. Approximately 200 students from ten colleges and universities in the state participated in this event. Santa Fe students later participated in the Southern Regional Model United Nations conference from November 20-22, 2014 where they competed against over 500 students from approximately three dozen colleges and universities in the United States. College students were required to learn about the United Nations system, learn about international political issues that have been debated by this international body, research a member country's position on these issues, and debate these through written and oral communication.

Alternative Spring Break



Santa Fe College sponsored an [alternative Spring Break](#) trip to Selma, Alabama for the second year in a row. Students learned about the history of the Civil Rights movement, marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge (site of the famous 1965 Bloody Sunday March), learned about non-violent conflict resolution, participated in community service and engaged in youth mentorship.

For more information contact

Vilma Fuentes, Ph.D.

Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs

Vilma.fuentes@sfcollege.edu

Santa Fe College

Gainesville, FL, 32606

(352) 395-5030