

# Alabama A&M University

## Voting and Engagement Plan 2023-2024

### Executive Summary:

Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University (AAMU) is a historic, student-friendly and community-focused educational institution situated between the mountains and the engineering capitol of the world, Huntsville, Alabama. Reflecting on its heritage as a historical black college and university (HBCU) and a traditional 1890 land-grant institution, AAMU functions as a teaching, research and public service institution, including extension. Founded in 1875 by a former slave, Dr. William Hooper Councill, AAMU is a dynamic and progressive institution with a strong commitment to academic excellence, community engagement and service. Alabama A&M has a long history of civic engagement, social justice and student motivate activism. Alabama A&M University is a proud institution devoted to building students who are both academically and socially involved and active in both the classroom and the community.

The Fall, August 2022 through Spring, May 2023 Alabama A&M University's action plan will show how voter registration, voter engagement, and voter turnout will be implemented on AAMU's campus. The goal is to work with the University's Administration, Student Government Association (SGA), Residence Life, Freshman Academy, Athletics, Student Activities, and Civic Engagement Team in order to implement a plan to increase voter engagement, voter education and voter turnout. **The institutions overall goal is to institutionalize voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout indefinitely throughout AAMU's campus.**

**Alabama A&M University's Strategic Plan, Priority 6**, to enhance university engagement through expanded outreach; specifically, goal 1, to integrate community service-initiatives into student academic and developmental activities and Goal 4, to strengthen and expand the University's outreach, engagement, and service to benefit the people of Alabama, and goal 5, which is to promote and increase university-wide public service activities, which include faculty, staff, students, alumni, and partners in outreach and engagement efforts.

**The Mission:** Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University is a public, comprehensive 1890 Land-Grant institution, committed to access and opportunity, and dedicated to intellectual inquiry. The application of knowledge and excellence in teaching, research and service is responsive to the needs of a diverse student population and the social and economic needs of the state and region. The

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University offers contemporary baccalaureate, master's, educational specialist and doctoral level degrees to prepare students for careers in the arts, sciences, business, engineering, education, university's agriculture and technology. As a center of excellence, the University is dedicated to providing a student-centered educational environment for the emergence of scholars, scientists, leaders and critical thinkers, who are equipped to excel through their contributions and leadership in a 21st century national and global society.

**Vision:** The vision of Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University (AAMU) is to be recognized as the premier Land-Grant institution of choice for students, faculty, staff, and future employers of its students. The University will be recognized nationally and internationally for excellence in teaching, research, outreach, exceptional academic programs and globally competitive students.

**Core Values:** ENGAGEMENT: The University's extends its reach and impact through partnerships and collaboration with individuals, public and non-profit agencies, community activists' groups, educators, and businesses.

**Strategic Priorities:** Enhance University's Engagement through expanded outreach

#### **The Team**

This plan will be implemented by an appointed team and community volunteers:

**The AAMU Civic Engagement Team** – Founded in 2018 by the university's former President Dr. Andrew Hugine.

Vice-president of Student Affairs- appointed by the University President to serve as the lead administrator.

Major responsibility – serve as liaison between the University's President, Cabinet, and the Team. In addition, to serve as liaison with local and state elected officials.

Coordinator Service Learning - Appointed to serve as committee chair

Major Responsibility – organize events, lead meetings, recruit volunteers, identify and solicit resources, document and report on roadblocks and successes, represent the university on local, state, and national voter engagement committees

Director of Student Activities

Major Responsibilities- organize, recruit and train student leaders and student workers, advertisement and engagement with SGA, clubs and organization, assist with programs and activities related to voter engagement, civic and community engagement

SGA President

Major Responsibilities-represents the student body in decisions that incorporate the entire student body at Alabama A&M University. The SGA President will meet twice

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monthly with the AAMU Civic Team. In addition, the SGA President will report on activities, events, and announcement made by the Civic Team to the AAMU student body.

#### Panhellenic President

Major Responsibilities- Represents all Greek organizations on campus, be a liaison between the Civic Team and Greek Life, assist with programs and activities that foster civic and community engagement

#### 2-Faculty Members

Major Responsibility- assist with all programming efforts, communicate with faculty; bring faculty perspective

#### 2- Staff Members

Major responsibility - assist with all programming efforts, communicate with Staff and bring staff perspectives

#### Student Ambassadors representing outside agencies

Major Responsibilities- AAMU is proud and lucky to have student ambassadors who represent national organizations. These students bring wisdom, best practices and new ideas to the team assist with all programming efforts, recruiting efforts, and organizing efforts

### **Leadership**

Alabama A&M University is 100% focused on student voter engagement. The University's President lead with a passion for students to vote and for students to understand why they are voting. His leadership paints a clear picture of what voter engagement should be on this campus. **The continuation of a team to lead the efforts on campus is priority in order to guarantee AAMU's students get the best access to voter engagement, voter registration, and voter turnout opportunities.**

The leadership team consists of administrators, faculty, staff and students with a passion for student voter engagement. The main team will consist of the following university students, faculty, and staff.

- AAMU Administrator
  - Shannon Reeves, Vice President of Government Affairs
- Chair, Monica Clarke, Service Learning Coordinator, English Faculty
- Andrew Goodman Foundation Student Ambassadors
  - Mike Jones, Senior, AAMU's SGA President
  - Alexis Powell, Senior, AAMU's SGA Secretary
- Campus Vote Project Student Ambassadors
  - Zia George, Junior
  - Isiah Horn, Junior
  - Genesis Powe, Junior
  - Elon Sole, Sophomore
- AAMU Staff

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- o Erica Washington, Manager Radio Station WJAB
- o Dr. Jessica Brown, Director of Student Activities
- AAMU Faculty
  - o Dr. Theresa Wessels, English Faculty
  - o Dr. Tonya Perry, Associate Dean, Chair Social Work Department
- SGA President
  - o Mike Jones, Senior
- Panhellenic President
  - o Jaylon Hall, Alpha Phi Alpha
- Athletic Association President
  - o Open Position

Other committed university departments: The Office of the President, The Office of Government Affairs, Service Learning, Office of Student Affairs, Student Activities, Athletics, Freshman Academy, Orientation 101 and 102 classes, University Band, Residence Life, and Panhellenic Hall.

#### **Community Partners:**

Include, but are not limited to: Indivisible Inc., Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, NAACP of Madison County, Madison County Democrats, Coalition for Justice and Civic Engagement, The Rosa Parks Committee, Lift Our Vote, League of Women Voters, United Women of Color; National partners include, but are not limited to: The Andrew Goodman Foundation, Student Learn Student Vote, Ask Every Student, Campus Vote Project, and All-In; Elected Officials support includes, but not limited to: State Representative Laura Hall, State Representative Anthony Daniels, County Commissioner Violet Edwards, City Councilman Devyn Keith.

**The University Succession plan** will be discussed, planned and made policy by the Civic Team. The plan will focus on institutionalizing voter registration, voter education, and voter turn-out in university classroom curriculums. The priority will be incoming freshman enrolled and Orientation 101 and 102 classrooms. The plan will give instructions on updating the syllabus and curriculum yearly. In addition, the plan will include,

1. Step by step voter registration instructions
2. Step by step ‘check your status’ instructions
3. How to obtain a list of ORI 101 and ORI 102 faculty members
4. Step by step directions to train all faculty teaching ORI 101 and ORI 102 classes
5. Step by step guide to training all persons interested in doing voter registration on campus
6. A best practice guide
7. A list of partners on campus and in the community
8. A copy of the Civic Engagement Manual

#### **Commitment:**

AAMU takes pride in instituting democracy across campus. The former President of the University established the Civic Engagement Team. His mission was to make sure we educate every student about voting and help each one to understand the importance of

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registering to vote, knowing the issues, and showing up at the polls. The current President of AAMU shares the same goal and passion for student-led Civic Engagement efforts. In addition, the university implemented Civic Engagement in the First-Year Experience/Orientation 101 and 102 courses as well as in the residence halls. The institution's goal is to establish a culture of voting and civic engagement throughout AAMU's campus. This includes, but not limited to open discussions on voting rights and other tough subjects, giving both students and faculty platforms to engage students civilly, creating classroom environments that not only engage students but motivate students to be more responsible and hold leadership positions, and celebrating student success in civic and community engagement. This commitment is further embedded in the University's mission, strategic plan, points of excellence, vision, strategic priorities, and core values that reflected on the university's website.

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**The Mission:** ...The application of knowledge and excellence in teaching, research and service is responsive to the needs of a diverse student population and the social and economic needs of the state and region...

**Vision:** ...The University will be recognized nationally and internationally for excellence in teaching, research, outreach ...

**Core Values:** ENGAGEMENT: The University's extends its reach and impact through partnerships and collaboration with individuals, public and non-profit agencies, community activists' groups, educators, and businesses.

**Strategic Priorities:** Enhance University's Engagement through expanded outreach

(Complete descriptions are located in the Executive Summary)

#### **Landscape:**

The historical Alabama A&M University, is a serene, intimate campus that is situated on "The Hill," only a short distance from downtown Huntsville. This HBCU has an undergraduate enrollment of about 5000 and a graduate enrollment of about 1100 students. The University averages between 1800 to 2000 new freshmen and transfer students each year. Our recruitment class consist of mostly first-generation, low-income students who rely of Federal Financial Aid.

Unfortunately, many of our students come to campus with no voting experience and little to no priority for voting. Our surveys show that only 15% of our incoming freshmen have

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seen or witnessed their parents voting. Voting initiatives are mostly led by female freshmen and sophomore students. This concern is highlighted in the NSLVE and the university's private data. As a result, AAMU averages less than 20 percent of male participation in voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout activity. According to the 2020 NSLVE report, AAMU follows national statistics as to low registration and voting activity by young, black, male students. This concern draws attention to the greater need to program and educate black male students on campus. As a fact, because of the concerns, the university has charged male faculty and staff to serve on the front line to get more male students involved in both civic and community engagement.

#### **Goals:**

##### **• Long-term Goal Strategies:**

1. Continue to hold Civic Engagement Weeks (Spring and Fall) and Seminars, infuse Civic Engagement Education into Orientation classes, and work to create excitement around voting in non-election years as well as work to improve overall understanding of the voting process.  
Understanding will be assessed using surveys and questionnaires.
  
2. Increase overall faculty and staff involvement in civic engagement activities and education efforts in and outside the classroom.  
Understanding will be assessed using surveys and questionnaires.

Long term goals will be assessed each semester using voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout data gathered at all out of the classroom events, activities, and workshops. In addition, data collected from ORI 101 and 102 will also be used to assess long-term goals.

##### **• Short-term Goal Strategies:**

1. Expanding our coalition will likely involve engaging and collaborating with more on-campus and off-campus organizations/agencies during the semester to provide students with event opportunities, opportunities to check their voter registration and to register them to vote, and voter education opportunities.
  
2. Introduce Freshmen to a voting culture quickly by sending out welcome emails and text messages, attending freshmen events, visiting all freshmen in their Orientation 101 and 102 classes.

Short-term goals will be assessed middle and end of the semester using voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout data gathered at all out of the classroom events, activities, and workshops. In addition, data collected from ORI 101 and 102 will also be used to assess short-term goals.

**NSLVE:** Alabama A&M University improved significantly in 2020, increasing to 61% voting rate from a previous 43.9% in 2016. In addition, our registration rate increased from 78.4% to 88.3%. The university will continue to use the NSLVE data to focus on areas of concern. In addition, the report will be shared with all stakeholders in an effort to gather and maintain support across the campus and in the community.

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### Strategy:

We partner with campus clubs and organizations, faculty, residence life, athletics, Freshman Academy, and Student Government Association. We will also partner with off-campus non-profit organizations and agencies.

**Resources:** Working to get more departments to participate like Human Resources Department and Financial Aid

**Institutionalization:** AAMU is currently implementing voter registration and voter education in First Year Experience Classes/Orientation 102. Work with Residents Assistants (RAs) to register and engage students in residence halls, Also, work to incorporate voter information into AAMU admission packets

**Programming:** Include examples of programs, events, activities, and initiatives that have been previously successful or regularly occurring

### Activities:

**Civic Week:** AAMU institutes a fall and spring “Civic Week” on campus.

Civic Weeks are entire weeks of activities and events surrounding voter registration and voting education. For example, Kick-off faculty/staff vs Students Kickball games, Intensive Voter Education lock-in, mock Selma March on campus, Speakers, Town halls, documentaries, debates, and field trips (Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) in Montgomery, Alabama; The Selma Jubilee in Selma, Alabama, (Clotilda, last America slave ship) Africatown, Mobile Alabama).

**1st Six Weeks:** (geared to Freshman only) Include voter registration drives during the first six weeks at all events, Orientation 101 and 102 visits

**“Every Sunny Wednesday” and “Every Sunny Friday”:** SGA sponsored events where students hang out, listen to music and fellowship in the middle of the day on the Quad, if its sunny. Voter registration and “check Your Status” tables at each event

**Student-led Town Hall:** AAMU and Oakwood Campuses

**Election Day Planning Workshop**

**“This Is Why We Vote”** student panel discussion talking to students

**“Man to Man” Barbershop Conversation** with young black males about voting (1 held in each male residence hall)

**Residence Halls Voter Registration Competition:** 11 residence halls will compete for \$500.00 to go into their activity budget

**Service and Civic Engagement Fair:** invite community, religious, service and civic organizations to campus to recruit students to get involved with their agencies

**Get Out to Vote Valentine’s Day Masquerade Ball (AAMU and Oakwood University):** event hosted by SGA’s, Panhellenic Hall, Service Learning, Student Activities’, Athletic Association

**March Madness:** young black male students come together to watch basketball and register to vote and/or check registration statuses

**March on the Block:** “AAMU and Oakwood, Battle of the Drumlines”

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**“National Voter Registration Day”:** Service -learning and The Civic Team hosts a party on the Quad, invite social and Greek organizations to come out to promote voter registration, include a DJ and lots of freebees

**National Voter Registration Week:** an entire week of voter registration. Break it up like: Monday- residence halls, Tuesdays- clubs and organizations, Wednesday- athletics, etc.

**Dorm Raids:** night before Election Day, campus organizations knock on all residence hall doors and place door knockers on each door knob

**Debate Watch Party:** a debate party and serve ice cream sundaes

**Social Justice/Civic Engagement Film Festival:** host several documentaries on voter registration efforts and The Civil Rights Movement, serve something different at each documentary (pizza, ice cream, tacos, popcorn, etc.) Possible Films: “Descendant”, “The Price of Protest, Colin Kaepernick”, “With Drawn Arms”

**Kickball/Volleyball Game Rally:** (a week before election day) students come out to play and talk about Election Day, voting, knowing your candidates, and checking statuses

**“Get Out to Vote/Check Your Voter Registration Status” Faculty/Staff vs Students Basketball Game**

**Election Day President Visits:** AAMU’s President visits every dorm and knock on student doors

**Election Day Party and Parade to the Polls:** students meet on the Quad to march with the band to our campus polling site (Elmore Gym). At the gym students go vote then enjoy the festivities: food, music, and giveaways, etc.

**Greek Stroll Off at the Polls:** Election Day activity to get students to the gym to vote

**Watch Party:** students watch the results while enjoying popcorn and other goodies

#### **Challenges:**

The team has done really well educating and registering students.

The goal was to implement a strategy to change the current culture by being visible at more campus events, activities, and in the classrooms daily.

We had several barriers on and off campus.

- COVID-19 and the flu are barriers and limits some access to students.
- A change in administration.
- Volunteers, faculty, and staff are dealing with burnout
- Fewer resources during the entire year
- Overall student participation and involvement is low.
- Students are not motivated and frustrated with current state of the country
- Student enrollment up but fewer staff and volunteers

#### **Reporting:**

Sharing Your Plan: The plan will be shared with all interested parties on campus via a



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meeting and during faculty/staff conference. The plan will be used to promote and inform all faculty and staff about voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout efforts. The Civic Team meets with the faculty senate, staff senate, and Student Government to gather support for the plan.

**Publishing Your Plan:** Plan to publish the plan through email to all faculty, staff, administrators, and students. The plan will also be published in the campus newspaper.

**Reporting NSLVE Data:** The University's President will make this decision.

#### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

1. **Meetings:** The AAMU Civic Engagement will meet bi weekly, leading up to big events and Election Days the team will meet weekly
2. **Event Reports:** Reports are used bi-weekly to assist with future programming and registration. In addition, a monthly report about events or activities on campus.
3. **NSLV:** meet with our team to discuss a plan on how we are going to address the results on campus. Once we have a plan then we will present to the University's President and he will decide the next step.
4. **Research:** A focus group and surveys  
We also plan to track how many students attend events and register to vote. In addition, we will student the NSLVE report to determine our progress.