

# Alabama A&M University

## Voting and Engagement Plan 2022-2023

### 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 Council, 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.**

Our plan was discussed, agreed upon, and written by a university designated administrator, student voting ambassadors, the Student Government Associate President, the AAMU Civic Engagement Team, faculty and staff representatives, and campus voting champions. The team relied upon the university's mission, strategic plan, points of excellence, vision, Strategic Priorities, and core values that are reflected on the university's website.

**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 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 co-chair
  - Major Responsibility – organize events, lead meetings, recruit volunteers
- Director of Student Activities – Appointed to serve as committee co-chair
  - Major Responsibilities- organize students, advertisement and engagement with SGA, clubs and organizations.
- SGA President
  - Represents the student body in decisions that incorporate the entire student body at Alabama A&M University. The SGA President will meet twice 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.
  - **Major Responsibility** – assist with all programming efforts, organize and communicate with student body
- Panhellenic President
  - Represents all Greek organizations on campus. The role to the Panhellenic president is to take information back to and bring suggestions

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from the Greek organizations pertaining to voter registration and voter engagement. Panhellenic Council also trains all organizations on voter registration and voter engagement.

- **Major Responsibility-** assist with all programming efforts, organize and communicate with Greek organizations
- 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; bring staff perspectives
- Student Ambassadors representing outside agencies
  - 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.
  - Major Responsibilities- 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 Presidents leads 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. Therefore, our leadership team will consist of administrators, faculty, staff and students with the same passion for student voter engagement.

Our leadership appointed The AAMU's Civic Engagement Team: which consists of: Student Ambassadors, AAMU Faculty and Staff, AAMU Administrators, SGA President, Panhellenic President, faculty and staff representatives; Other committed Leaders: The Office of Service Learning; Office of Student Affairs: Student Activities, Athletics, Freshman Academy, and 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.

Our Succession plan consist of recruiting and training faculty, staff, and student leaders at the end of each year.

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#### 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 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 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 is 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, has 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 1300 to 1500 new freshmen each year. Our recruitment class consist of mostly first-generation, low-income students who rely of Federal Financial Aid.

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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 seen or witnessed their parents voting.

#### 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.
2. Increase overall faculty and staff involvement in civic engagement activities and education efforts in and outside the classroom.

- **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.

**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 share with all stakeholders in an effort to gather and maintain support across the campus and in the community.

#### 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. We work with Residents Assistants (RAs) to register and engage students in residence halls. Also, we working 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.*

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### Activities:

- **“Civic Week”**: AAMU institutes a fall and spring “Civic Week” on campus. Our 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 in Montgomery, Alabama and The Selma Jubilee in Selma, Alabama).
- **1<sup>st</sup> Six Weeks: (geared to Freshman only)** We will include voter registration drives during the first six weeks at all events.
- **“Every Sunny Wednesday”** and **“Every Sunny Friday”**: These are SGA sponsored events where students hang out, listen to music and fellowship in the middle of the day on the Quad, if its sunny. We attend and set-up voter registration and “check Your Status” tables.
- **Service and Civic Engagement Fair**: The University invites community service and civic organizations to campus to recruit students to get involved with their agencies.
- **“National Voter Registration Day”**: Service -learning hosts a party on the Quad. We invite social and Greek organizations to come out to promote voter registration. We have a DJ and lots of freebees.
- **“National Voter Registration Week”**: We have an entire week of voter registration. We break it up like: Monday- residence halls, Tuesdays- clubs and organizations, Wednesday- athletics, etc.
- **“Debate Watch Party”**: Host 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. We serve something different at each documentary (pizza, ice cream, tacos, popcorn, etc.)
- **“Kickball/Volleyball Game Rally” (a week before election day)** Students come out to play and we talk about election day, voting, knowing your candidates, and checking statuses.
- **“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.
- **“Watch Party”** Students watch the results while enjoying popcorn and other goodies.

### Challenges:

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Our team has done really well at educating and registering students. We have implemented a strategy to change the culture by being visible at more campus events and activities. We had several barriers this year on campus.

- COVID-19 was a huge barrier and limited our access to students.
- Students returned to classrooms in fewer numbers.
- Programming was more difficult. Most programs were on ZOOM, so again we had limited access to students.
- AAMU had a change in administration. A new president and a new cabinet made efforts more interesting.
- Faculty and staff changes have been consistent, more retirees and changes due to COVID-19.
- Overall student participation and involvement was low.

#### Reporting:

**Sharing Your Plan:** The plan will be shared with all interested parties on campus via a meeting and during faculty/staff conference.

**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. I am not sure at this time.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation

1. **Meetings:** We will continue to meet bi-weekly with our campus Civic Engagement Team.
2. **Event Reports:** We will write submit reports about events or activities on campus.
3. **NSLV:** We plan to get the report and 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.