



Albion College Democratic Engagement Action Plan: 2022-2023

This plan was created using the Votes & Ballots Action Planning Form. We highly recommend editing and expanding upon this draft before submitting for review.

Throughout this document, we mention the Strengthening American Democracy Guide as a resource for your review. We encourage you to turn to that resource for guidance and support as you complete your action plan!

I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by Elizabeth Netcher, Assistant Director of Campus Life to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at Albion College. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2022-2023, on and around our campus in Albion, Michigan.

The following groups will be leading this work at Albion College in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections:

- Faculty
- Civic/Political/Community Engagement Center
- Student Affairs Staff
- Academic Affairs Staff

How can you improve this section? Visit the Strengthening American Democracy Guide and review the Guiding Questions to ensure your Executive Summary includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

II. Leadership

Elizabeth Netcher - Assistant Director of Campus Life will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. They will be supported in this work by:

- William Rose - Political Science Dept.
- Jonathan Stander - Asian Awareness
- Jada Stewart - Black Student Alliance
- Kaitlyn Hernandez - Diversability
- Grace Hoffman - Hillel
- Jess Garcia - LGBrits
- Adriana Valero - Latinx
- Tanya Jagdish - Muslim Student Asso.
- Jana Rajab - MSA
- Sheridan Leinbach - College Dems
- Skylyr Zink - Stu. Senate
- Brittany Burch - President's Office
- Kaydee Hall - Gender Equity Center
- Cristen Casey - Center for Int. Ed.
- Keena Williams - Office of Belonging
- Eddie Visco - Ford
- Carrie Walling - Ford/Poly Sci.
- Esmeralda Trevino - NAACP
- Laurie Merian - Athletics, Women's Lacrosse
- Kacie Miller - Athletics, M/W Tennis
- Jake DeCola - Athletics, Men's Lacrosse
- Karlo Delos-Angeles - Athletics, eSports
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- I wish we could have more direct involvement from the President and Board of Trustees because I believe this would ensure buy-in from all of campus and make it obvious that this truly is a presidential directive and important to the college. I also wish we could get more academic departments involved.

This coalition is diverse and inclusive of:

- Representation from different parts of campus, including student leadership, Representation from different perspectives and areas of expertise, Trusted leaders and organizations who support communities that are historically underrepresented in democracy, Leaders who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus in to our work

Our group plans to meet Once a month, until fall 2022 and then more frequently at Most likely virtual, for a 1-2 hours meeting

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Leadership Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

III. Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrates commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values. They state, "Public Purpose & Leadership Albion College equips students to build just communities and make meaningful contributions to the society at large by developing leaders who have a strong moral compass and the courage required to be effective agents of change. Community Partnership Albion College builds long-term, reciprocal and mutually beneficial partnerships with local residents, organizations, and leaders to address shared needs and realize shared aspirations. Environmental & Social Justice Albion College promotes the critical analysis of both the historical causes of oppression and the contemporary needs of society. Equipped with this analysis, faculty, staff, and students serve as responsible stewards of the environment and advocate for the fair and equitable treatment of all humans and non-human species."

We also have had a senior leader commit to civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.

On campus, we've seen:

- Voter education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
- Campus leaders promoting voting
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- Voter registration tables
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- Signage promoting Election Day
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On campus, we've experienced:

- Voting in student body elections
- Political speakers
- Walks / rides to polls
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- Registering to vote
- Civic Holiday events (such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day)
- Deliberative dialogues
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The emphasis on civic learning and democratic engagement could be increased.

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Commitment Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

IV. Landscape

We do not have access to comprehensive demographic information about our student body at this time.

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Landscape Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

V. Goals

Before setting our civic learning and democratic engagement goals on campus, we took the following information into consideration.

We know our campus faces following challenges internally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan do not mention civic learning and democratic engagement.
- We don't have someone whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
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- We don't have processes in place for registering large percentages of our students.
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- We don't use the resources readily available to develop and implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- The voter engagement work on our campus is very siloed within one office.
- We don't have sustainable or consistent funding.
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- We have trouble engaging student leaders for the leadership of our initiative.
- Some academic departments do not see the connection of voting to their department, making them reluctant to be involved

We also know our campus faces the following challenges externally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- We don't have a working relationship with our local election office.
- We don't have working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement.
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- The political views of our students do not generally align with our institution's surrounding communities.
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With that said, we know our campus has the following strengths when we approach our voter engagement work:

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- We have a coalition of people who are positioned to implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
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- We have ways in which we communicate voting information to our students.
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- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan.
- We are able to engage student leaders for the leadership of our initiative.
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With this in mind, we have set the three goals that we would like to achieve over the next academic year:

1. Raising the voter turnout on Albion's campus to the national average of 66%. Currently Albion's voter turnout for 2020 was 61.7%
2. Albion College to install an absentee ballot drop-box on campus, directly expanding voter access
3. Gain some much needed PR boost by having the Interim President, Board of Trustees, and other prominent figures on campus promoting voting and its importance

We have also set three goals that we would like to achieve over the next five years:

1. Require all professors to have a paragraph about voter registration in their syllabus
2. Require either that all students register in order to get student senate funding OR require all students to register in order to get their room key
3. Raise Albion's voter turnout above the national average

Bonus goal: Have civic learning and democratic engagement added to at least one (or more!) of: mission/vision/values/strategic plan

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Goals Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

VI. Strategy

Below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months and years.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** in the **short term** (within the next year):

- Voter registration drives, passive engagement like encouraging emails (communication toolkit), student newspaper ads, debate watch parties, debates with local candidates, non-partisan voter information about candidates, contract with TurboVote to have a dedicated website to register, request ballot, and election reminders, calls-to-action from administration

These are tactics that we **plan to do** in the **short term**:

- Update web page to be more user friendly and provide more information, Provide free stamps for absentee ballots, promote voter registration through our events software, direct students to turbovote more often, update communication toolkit to include slides that can be added to presentations, long and short email templates, long and short blurbs to say before/after class, coaches email templates/blurbs, encourage the use of a voting plan, encourage students to hold their peers accountable - "I am voting, are you?"

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **short term**:

- Have an absentee ballot drop-box installed on campus, have the ID office ask every student if they are registered to vote, encourage staff and faculty to also vote, Waived new ID fee during early voting period-election day, sharing the NSLVE reports with departments that had low turnout and emphasizing the need for engagement.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** for the **long term** (beyond the next year):

- Voter registration drives, passive engagement like encouraging emails (communication toolkit), student newspaper ads, debate watch parties, debates with local candidates, non-partisan voter information about candidates, contract with TurboVote to have a dedicated website to register, request ballot, and election reminders, calls-to-action from administration

These are tactics that we **want to do** in the **long term**:

- Rides to the polls, get Voter Friendly Campus designated, Orientation station to encourage new students (and their parents!) to register to vote, host debates on important issues on campus (gun control, police reform, etc.) that involve voting,

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **long term**:

- Have an absentee ballot drop-box installed on campus, Require all professors to have a paragraph about registering to vote on all syllabuses, making registering to vote a pre-requisite to getting funding for events/student organizations, making registering to vote a pre-requisite to getting your room key, grant any requests for faculty/staff to leave work and vote on election day (w/ no repercussions), "free vacation day" for faculty/staff who choose to be poll workers, get "Voting Coordinator" or similar language put directly in someone's job description, have affinity student organizations give recommendations based on candidates support of their affinity ("this candidate supports BLM so the black student alliance recommends students vote for this candidate")

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Strategy Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

VII. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

Our campus has access to our National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data for 2020. In 2020 our registration rate was 84.7. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased.

In 2020, our voting rate was 61.7 and our voting rate among registered students was 72.8. During this year, our voting rate was lower than the national average.

I thought the fields of study section was interesting to see which fields had more engagement than others.

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your NSLVE section includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

VIII. Reporting & Evaluation

We plan to share this Action Plan internally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Email to members of our campus coalition
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- Email to the President
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We plan to share this Action Plan externally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

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We will collect feedback on this plan by:

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- Regrouping with campus coalition to debrief and reflect
- Integrating feedback collection into individual campus efforts
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We plan to evaluate our success by:

- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year
- Seeking out feedback throughout the action planning process from people outside of our action planning team
- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly
- Observing a campus wide shift of focus towards voting every year, not just election years

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Reporting & Evaluation Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.