



Arkansas Tech University
2024 Democratic
Action Plan

VOTE
EVERY VOTE COUNTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document serves as Arkansas Tech University's Democratic Engagement Plan for 2024-2025. It was developed by the Office of Civic and Community Engagement and the Voter Engagement Coalition. This engagement plan details the partnerships, programs, and initiatives that Arkansas Tech University will implement. The plan's purpose is to increase student voter registration, education, and voter turnout. The engagement plan will serve as a guide and timeline for the office of Civic Engagement. This will also serve as a resource to increase and integrate civic engagement work throughout the university as we strive to create a campus-wide mindset for civic engagement work.

This academic year, it is our goal to increase voter participation. Along with these efforts, we will continue to increase our participation with Residence Life to create more opportunities for incoming students to get connected in voter registration and education in their Residence halls. A focus on asking every student about voter registration will be integrated during this academic year, along with innovative programs, practices, and partnerships.

This plan is effective from January 18, 2024, through December 13, 2025.

LEADERSHIP

The Office of Civic Engagement has assembled a multi-disciplinary team of institutional partners who have all committed to supporting this effort and our ALL IN-Challenge pursuits. The Voter Engagement Coalition meets regularly during the academic year to set strategic direction, share information, address challenges, brainstorm ideas and plan events and programs.

The Arkansas Tech University coalition includes:

Megan Bell, Coordinator of Civic & Community Engagement

Dr. Michael Rogers, Professor of Political Science

Dr. Bethany Swindell, Assistant Professor of Emergency Management

Dr. Alejandra Carballo, Professor of Spanish

Kera Coleman, Head Volleyball Coach

Abbygayle Cook, Area Coordinator for Residence Education

Brittany Thomas, Administrative Analyst for Disability Services

Dr. Christopher Housenick, Assistant Professor of Political Science

Malik McBride, Assistant Dean for Multicultural services

Sofia Beggiatto, Graduate Assistant for Civic Engagement

Kadance Lane, Student Government Association Member

We strategically engaged a wide diversity of students, faculty, staff, and administrators, along with external partners from Pope County and Russellville Area Chamber of Commerce to ensure comprehensive buy-in and multilayered support.

Primary Contact for this initiative and the coalition:

Megan Bell

Coordinator of Civic and Community Engagement and Student Leadership Development.
This initiative is a part of the job description of the person holding this title.

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Community Partners:

City Clerk's Office, City of Russellville

Pope County Election Headquarters

Mayor Fred Teague, Mayor's Office

Russellville Area Chamber of Commerce

Campus Stakeholder:

Voter Engagement Advocates (Campus staff, faculty and students)

Marketing and Communications Office

Athletics

Residence Life

ATU Student Union

Ross Pendergraft Library

Fraternity and Sorority Life

National Partners:

Ask Every Student

All In Campus Democracy Challenge

NSLVE

NASPA

Campus Vote Project

COMMITMENT

Arkansas Tech University institutional commitment to democratic engagement and civic learning is evident in its Mission Statement, the university's programming, in our administration, faculty, staff and student population.

Arkansas Tech University Mission

Arkansas Tech University is dedicated to student success, access, and excellence as a responsive campus community providing opportunities for progressive intellectual development and **civic engagement**. Embracing and expanding upon its technological traditions, Tech inspires and empowers members of the community to achieve their goals while striving for the betterment of Arkansas, the nation, and the world.

Civic Engagement Learning Outcomes

Arkansas Tech University is committed to providing an educational foundation for life-long learning to a diverse community. The Office of Civic and Community Engagement is just as committed to that mission. As a result of participation, students will:

- Develop their own identities and backgrounds, particularly as citizens in democracy
- Develop and expand their understanding of and capacity for active participation in a community
- Experience the personal benefits of forming reciprocal relationships in one's community
- Develop their capacity for empathy, learning to relate to and appreciate people different from themselves
- Connect and apply knowledge from their civic engagement experiences back to their areas of study, using these experiences to comprehend, analyze, and/or challenge theories and frameworks

As shown through the university's mission, Arkansas Tech University strives to inspire and empower its students to achieve their goals and remain civically active. Our goal is to help students develop the knowledge, understanding, values, and skills to sustain a commitment to community well-being and civic action throughout their lives.

Arkansas Tech University's Interim President, Dr. Russell Jones, signed the [ALL IN President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation](#). This reaffirms the University's commitment to weave civic engagement into the curriculum and every academic college. Our interest in this designation is to enhance the democratic engagement of our students, particularly related to voting and participation in the civic life of their communities.

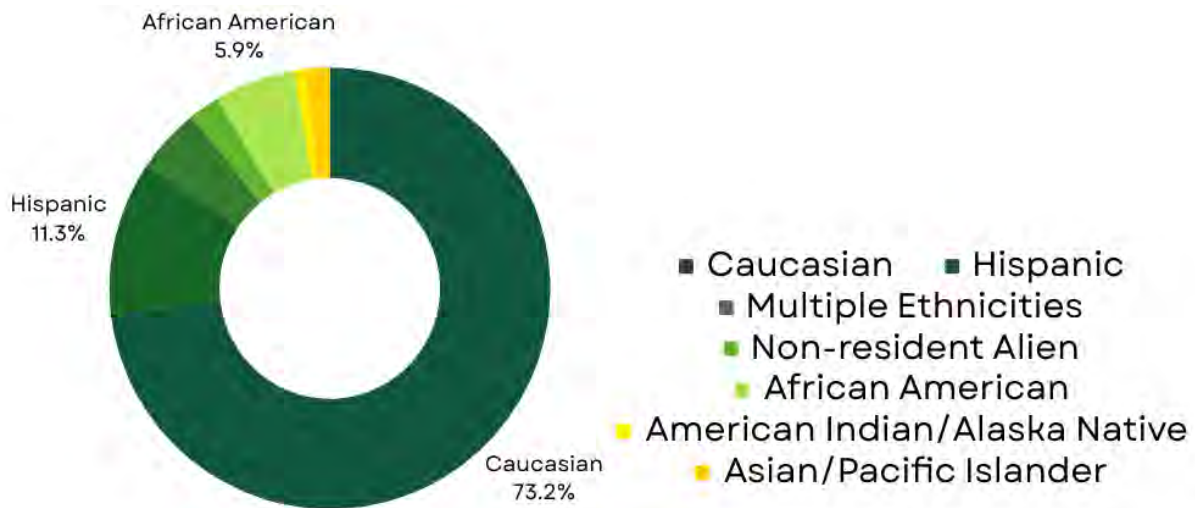
LANDSCAPE

NSLVE Data (2018-2020) - 2022 NSLVE Report will be included in this document once received.

Arkansas Tech University is a public four-year institution that offers the unique opportunity to experience the best of higher education at not just one, but two exceptional campuses. With our Russellville campus nestled in the heart of the natural beauty of the Arkansas River Valley and our Ozark campus providing a more intimate, community-focused environment.

NSLVE Data indicates that Arkansas Tech University students have become more democratically engaged over the past elections. The current learning outcomes for civic engagement are based in the Office of Civic Engagement. Civic engagement is present in Arkansas Tech’s mission and strategic plan. As such, the number of faculty including CLDE in their courses has grown. This is most notable in the business and marketing, behavioral sciences, and the agriculture departments. These three academic departments have incorporated some form of civic engagement or community-based into their curriculum.

As of the 2023-2024 academic year, Arkansas Tech University has 9,487 students, 58% of whom are female identified, 28% first-generation students, 73% Caucasian. In 2020 52% of our female student population voted. Our average age group is 18-25 years. The rate in which our 18–21-year-old students voted was 49% in 2020 in comparison to our 22–24-year-old was 45% and both were up from 2018. A breakdown of ethnicities is presented below:



The Office of Civic Engagement is housed in the Department of Campus Life in the Division of Student Affairs. This office creates programming, events, and opportunities for students to learn about civic duties and leadership. These programs include voter registration, voter education, and ballot access.

Arkansas Tech University had 75.2% registration rate for 2020 in comparison to 72.0% registration rate in 2018. Our voting rates were 51.4% in 2020 in comparison to 26% in 2018 according to our NSLVE data.

Students recognized in the past by ALL IN:

Allie Davis – Honor Roll (2023)

Megan Bell – Honor Roll (2021)

Most Engaged Campus (2022)

Presidential Commitment (2022 – Present)

2020 – Bronze Seal

2018 – Bronze Seal

To facilitate voting, our university will provide shuttles to and from the voting station on election day. We also make sure every student is “Vote Ready” through informative events, workshops, tables and social media campaigns.

ATU also participates in the Ask Every Student program. *Ask Every Student* is a national joint initiative that facilitates collaboration between campus leaders and nonprofit partners to help campuses ask every student to participate in the democratic process and achieve full student voter registration. This will give us an opportunity to integrate new practices on our campus with their Tool Kits. This is a great opportunity for our university to learn from others and be part of designing innovative new programming and practices.

GOALS

Learning Outcomes

Arkansas Tech University is committed to providing voter education, increasing voter participation and turnout for life-long learning. As a result of participation, students will:

- Develop and expand their understanding of and capacity for active participation in a community
- Connect and apply knowledge from their civic engagement experiences back to their areas of study, using these experiences to comprehend, analyze, and/or challenge theories and frameworks

Long-Term Goals

Our three top long-term goals for the next three to five years are:

- Maintain a working relationship with the Pope County election office and officers

- Build an identity of nonpartisan resources through the Voter Engagement Coalition
- Maintain the Voter Friendly Campus designation

Short-Term Goals

Our three top goals for the 2024 election cycle:

- Increase voter registration rate by 3%, based on NSLVE data
- Increase voting rates by 6%, based on NSLVE data
- Increase peer engagement dialogue using our student advocate program

NATIONAL STUDY OF LEARNING, VOTING, AND ENGAGEMENT (NSLVE)

The voting rate at Arkansas Tech University has increased. In 2014 the rate was 24%, in 2018 the rate was 26% and in 2020 the voting rate increased up to 51.4%. This is an improvement over the last 6 years and shows a pattern of consistent growth.

The average voting rate for all institutions according to NSLVE is 39.1% and Arkansas Tech University had a percentage of 51% in 2020. Our two races/ethnicities that the rate went down were Asians and American Indian/Alaska Native.

We can see that educating and engaging our campus minorities is key to increasing our voting rate. Our 18-21 age group only had a 49% voting rate. Our goal will be to target our underrepresented groups and areas on campus that have not been engaged previously by enrolling more advocates in our program from all different areas of campus and working with our Multicultural Student Services office.

STRATEGY

Arkansas Tech University will implement these strategies to increase voter turnout and increase nonpartisan democratic engagement.

Voter Registration

The Office of Civic Engagement will be partnering with the Voter Engagement Coalition to provide incoming students exposure to voter registration during orientation and Welcome Week.

Our programs will begin after Arkansas Tech University's Move-In Event and will coincide with Welcome Week. During Welcome Week, we will have multiple opportunities for students to register to vote. There will be a table every day encouraging students to stop and get registered. At each table, there will be a cheat sheet about the registration process and important dates for students to remember. Along with move-in and Welcome Week, Arkansas Tech department of History and Political Science will host a Constitution Day, September 17.

The Office of Civic Engagement will be working with the Student Government Association, Student Activities Board, the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life and Arkansas Tech Athletics to host voter registration drives throughout the fall semester. We are also creating “Voter Registration Tuesday”. This will be a program held every Tuesday until the last day to register to vote. Students will have to opportunity to come to the “Voter Registration Headquarters” and get all the information they need to vote. The Coordinator of Civic Engagement will be there, along with student volunteers, to answer voting questions. Students will also be able to register to vote during these programs. The Coordinator of Civic Engagement will also make special visits to classes to reach students where they are at. This gives students easier access to voter registration information with the hope of increasing our numbers of student voters.

The Department of Campus Life will be sending out monthly emails to students with reminders on voter registration drives and updates for the upcoming election. These emails will be sent using the university’s mailing system, which goes to all enrolled students. From this system, we will gain metrics on how effective the emails were, as well as, what links were clicked on, what information was shown to be most relevant, and more.

All of this will lead up to our participation in the National Voter Registration Day campus wide drive, on September 17, 2024. This day will be a feature event of our Election Watch Week. We will host multiple registration drives across campus, pop-up election parties, social media trivia campaign. We will end the day with a big announcement revealing how many students we got to register to vote. This will be announced at an election party and on social media. The campus library, our highest traffic building, will have voter information and registrations all semester long.

Voter Education:

Through our partnership with academic departments and local government, we will host an Election Watch Week. This series will host speakers from various political backgrounds, debate watch parties, and the National Voter Registration Drive. The speakers will include various areas, for example, state senators, campaign managers, campaign volunteers, non-profit managers, and social media managers. The office of Civic and Community Engagement will play a big role in planning and implementing this week, with the assistance of the Voter Engagement Coalition and different Registered Student Organizations.

We will be hosting debate watch parties throughout campus. These watch parties will include polls, trivia, pick the Electoral College competition and anonymous Q&A from the audience. In the spring semester, the coalition will focus on voter education. Passive and active programming will be weaved into the daily lives of our students.

Passive programming will be presented through social media posts (infographics, videos, trivia questions, etc.) monthly newsletter called “Wonder Connections” and podcasts focused on non-partisan information regarding civic learning and democratic engagement.

Active programming will be presented through “Political Pop-Ups” held on random days and times, educational workshops, classroom visits, and online activities to increase students' awareness of government. Political Pop-Ups are a new program for Arkansas Tech University. The idea behind these is that it is a way for students to obtain a quick nugget of information about politics. Topics for the Political Pop-Up could include Types of Parties, Election Process, Specific Issue Cheat Sheet, Important Dates Cheat Sheet, and Electoral Votes vs. Popular Votes.

Voter Turnout:

Arkansas Tech University will be promoting the local polling station in Russellville. The Voter Engagement Coalition will be hosting a shuttle service to and from the polling station. We understand that a barrier to voter turnout is not being able to get to the polls so we will offer transportation for those that need it or want it. The office of Civic and Community engagement will be working with the Pope County Election Commission to discuss best times and best practices, so we do not overwhelm the volunteers on the day of.

The Voter Engagement Coalition will be asking and promoting student volunteers to work at the polling station. This will create a more student-friendly experience and serve to remind other volunteers that university ID cards are a valid form of ID, and the address on a driver's license (or lack of driver's license) should not deter the ability to register and vote locally.

The week prior to election day Arkansas Tech University plans to distribute and email a reminder to all faculty members that our policy will allow students to receive excused absences on election day and encourage faculty members to offer incentives for students to participate in voting. If the only time a student can vote is during the time of a class, we want the student to be able to fulfill their civic duty.

On election day, we plan to have a social media campaign for live election coverage. This will be in the form of election statistics updates, guerilla interviews across campus asking if students have voted yet, and coverage of events happening that day and night. The Department of Campus Life will be hosting an Election Watch Party with food, drinks, and little activities for students to participate in during the event. According to our NSLVE data, getting out the vote is a huge area of growth for our campus. Therefore, programming on election day will be a huge push to get students out to the polling stations.

On Election Day, we will be posting live updates on the Department of Campus Life social media pages. We will also be hosting Election Day coverage in the Student Union, which will later turn into an Election Day Watch party.

Marketing:

The Office of Civic Engagement will be utilizing the “Wonder Connections” Newsletter to alert students about important dates, upcoming events, and quick facts about democratic engagement. Typically, a monthly publication, these newsletters will be sent on a bi-weekly schedule starting in September 2024. These newsletters go to all enrolled students. The goal of this decision is to increase the number of times students see any information about the election, which will hopefully increase their follow-through on voting.

This will be in conjunction with all our programs being promoted through our event registration platform, social media sites (we will be cross-promoting in collaboration with other departments/offices/organizations social media accounts), flyer routes and website. Utilizing social media to get the word out will be a huge factor for each step of the voting process. As such, the Office of Civic Engagement will create a short video series highlighting each step for voting. This series will include how to get registered to vote, how to stay up to date with the election, how to vote, and where to vote. Each video/reel will be no longer than 2 minutes and will have enough information for students to understand the basics and give details on how to find more information if necessary.

The Department of Campus Life has also teamed up with the Department of Residence Life to have the Resident Assistants push important dates, share important information in each residence hall and promote to their residents the Election Watch Week programs.

We will be reaching out to all faculty members to keep faculty up-to-date on the events, programs, and opportunities provided for students. This is with the hope that the faculty will speak about it in their classes or offer incentives for students to attend these programs.

The coalition will meet on a monthly basis. These meetings will serve to give status reports and any updates or reflections over programming or marketing strategies. Our programs will begin after Arkansas Tech University’s Move-In Day and will coincide with Welcome Week. During Welcome Week, we will have multiple opportunities for students to register to vote. At each table, there will also be a cheat sheet about the election and important dates for students to remember.

In addition, we have staff and faculty that have signed up to be Voter Engagement Advocates “Wondervoter Advocates”. These advocates have registration forms, important information and FAQ’s in the office as well as an email signature. Our Civic Engagement website also has long term information; “How to”, where to vote, check voter registered, important dates, etc.

REPORTING

This action plan will be shared with the office of the President, and everyone mentioned in the Leadership. It will also be shared on the Civic Engagement website for our students and community. Additionally, the plan and activities covered will be shared to all enrolled students in the monthly newsletter and will also be sent out to community partners.

Our NSLVE data is currently shared on the website, where it is easily accessible along with our voter resources. Our own data will also be shared via social media. The NSLVE data will be updated when we receive the new one and will also be shared with all students via Newsletter and a press release from our university communications office. It will also be shared with our local media to further increase visibility.

EVALUATION

The office of Civic Engagement will evaluate all political engagement programming in several ways:

- The office of Civic Engagement will conduct a debrief and report after every event. Another at the end of each semester to review what worked, what needs improvement, and potential changes for the future.
- Following a meeting, the Civic Engagement Graduate Assistant will complete an event summary which will detail the event, debrief discussion and any primary metrics and outcomes.
- The office of Civic Engagement will track voter registration numbers with the Voter Engagement Coalition and assess which activities are most effective at encouraging student registration.
- The Voter Engagement Coalition will participate in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) to track student voting rates.

Once all data has been compiled and assessed, this information will be shared with the Arkansas Tech University Executive Council and Board of Trustees. We will also post the results on the Arkansas Tech website for the public to access. This process will take place and be complete by the end of each semester.