



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

ALL IN Campus
Democracy
Challenge

Ball State University 2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by:

Abby Haworth, Director of the *Office of Student Life*
David J. Roof, Director of the *Center for Economic and Civic Learning*

Ball State University

Executive Summary

Ball State University is working to advance civic education in our local communities, across Indiana, and throughout our nation. This nonpartisan voter engagement action plan was developed for the 2024 election and beyond. The purpose of this plan is to provide Ball State students more access to voting information and increase democratic engagement.¹

Our voter engagement action plan includes multiple interconnected components. First, we will develop Ball State's **Cardinals Vote!** campaign as a comprehensive initiative designed to empower the campus and community with the knowledge and resources needed to engage in informed and active voting. The campaign will focus on voter education and election information designed to foster a more engaged and informed electorate. The second component will be a **Democracy Fellows** program. This program will offer a unique opportunity to recruit and select Ball State students who are dedicated to exploring and promoting democratic values, civic responsibility, and community engagement. This program will engage students in voter information campaigns and promote citizenship on our campus.



**CARDINALS
VOTE!**

¹ *Nonpartisan Student Voting Group Toolkit*, Civic Nation (2023).

Goals: The primary goal of the voter engagement action plan is to enhance understanding of democratic principles and civic engagement across the university. This campaign seeks to achieve the following goals:

- **Educate and Inform:** Provide easily accessible and unbiased information about the electoral process, candidates, and the importance of voting. Encourage voter registration and invite students to exercise their right to vote.
- **Cultivate Civic Responsibility:** Promote the understanding that voting is a fundamental civic duty, and engaged citizens play a vital role in shaping the community and nation.

Ball State is committed to a nonpartisan campaign focused on voter information. Our strategies and tactics focus on local, state, and federal elections. Ball State will focus on registering, educating, and providing election information for eligible students; and engaging all students in civic learning and the democratic process.²

This action plan is designed to be an ongoing and sustainable initiative. It will adapt to address the evolving needs of our campus and community aiming to maintain an enduring commitment to civic engagement.

We consider this campaign as a vital effort to cultivate an informed and engaged electorate across our University. By providing the knowledge and resources necessary for active civic participation, our campaign aims to inspire lasting change and a deeper appreciation for the importance of engagement in our democracy. Through this initiative, Ball State University reaffirms its commitment to the principles of democracy and the development of responsible and engaged citizens.

Leadership

Our leadership team includes the following, campus groups, and organizations:

VOTER ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Our voter engagement efforts at Ball State will involve input from a committee of students, faculty, staff, and community partners who meet quarterly to share ideas, collaborate on projects, and address student voting barriers. Our voter engagement advisory committee includes the following individuals:

- Abby Haworth, Office of Student Life
- David J. Roof, Center for Economic and Civic Learning
- Linda Hanson, League of Women Voters

² *Strengthening American Democracy, Students Learn Students Vote (2023).*

- Lindsey Blom, Ball State Athletics
- Kelli Huth, Office of Community Engagement
- Jim Dittoe, Sagamore Institute
- Nathan Gotsch, Indiana Business Alliance for Civics
- Chad Kinsella, Bowen Center for Public Affairs
- Liz Hartley, Assistant Director of Student Leadership and Inclusion for Housing and Residence Life
- Reza Paikar, 2024/2025 Fellow for Economic Education
- Sarah Owens, Honors College (Ball State Student)
- Brian Truell, Miller College of Business (Ball State Student)

Athletic coaches at our institution have been involved in our nonpartisan democratic engagement efforts by signing the **ALL IN Coaches Voter Engagement Pledge** in 2020 and 2022.



The **Center for Economic and Civic Learning (CECL)** at Ball State is committed to implementing this Action Plan. CECL strives to innovate and improve economic and civic learning throughout local communities and our country. To improve the economic and civic life of our citizenry. To cultivate a lifelong process of transforming economic and civic information and experience into knowledge, skills, and behaviors. To build meaningful lasting relationships and opportunities for learning that advance democracy, economic vitality, and the public good.

Our **Voter Engagement Action Plan** will advance Ball State’s mission to engage students in educational, research, and creative endeavors that empower graduates to have fulfilling careers and meaningful lives.

Our Action Plan is interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary and focuses on cultivating partnerships with external stakeholders.

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT

Ball State University and the **Indiana League of Women Voters** have come together to collaborate on various civic engagement initiatives. These initiatives are designed to encourage civic participation and voter education among students and the broader community.



Our partnership with the Indiana **League of Women Voters** will focus on promoting voter education and awareness. Ball State University may host events, workshops, and informational sessions on voting rights, registration, and the importance of informed voting. The Indiana **League of Women Voters** can provide expertise on these topics.

Commitment

Ball State is committed to voter engagement. President Geoffrey Mearns is a current signatory to the **ALL IN Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation**, signing the commitment in 2023.

Ball State hosts an annual **Civic Learning Symposium** for students, faculty, national experts, and other interested stakeholders. This symposium presents a unique opportunity to address developments in student civic engagement and to model engaged citizenship for students. This annual symposium involves national experts in civics and history as event speakers. We can use this symposium as a capstone event to recap achievements in voter engagement during the previous year.



Ball State has demonstrated a commitment to the development of evidence-based approaches to improve the quality of civic engagement. Ball State's approach to civics education stems from a collaboration with a multi-institutional team of nationally recognized scholars currently piloting a civics curriculum for undergraduates. Ball State currently oversees civics and democracy projects funded by the Teagle Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Department of Education.

Ball State is committed to the documented desire of college students for a practically democratic education: one that positions them for economic success but also prepares them for lives of public purpose and productive citizenship.³

³ Gallup, Inc. and Bates College. (2019). Forging Pathways to Purposeful Work: The Role of Higher Education. Washington, D.C.: Gallup, Inc.

Ball State’s approach to our ALL IN programming will be informed by the Educating for American Democracy project (EAD). The EAD Roadmap seeks to spark a civic renaissance in American education, while also bridging deep divides over what that renaissance should entail and even the definitions of “civics” and “civics education.”⁴ EAD seeks to guide educators and other school stakeholders in devising their own means to promote civic literacy and civic agency, while also equipping students to seek common values and interests across even deep differences of experience and perspective.

In 2021, Ball State worked with partner institutions to design a special civics course for undergraduates. Data from this course showed that students who registered to vote increased from 46.27% to 64.52% and the number of students who voted in local, state, or federal elections increased from 38.46% to 61.29%. We look to expand these efforts across our campus.

Landscape

Ball State University is a public research university located in Muncie, Indiana. Our public 4-year institution joined the **ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge** in 2022. Ball State University has 21,597 students.



Ball State has a long-standing commitment and obligation to serve disadvantaged individuals. Approximately **35% of Ball State students are Pell Grant eligible** and 33% are the first generation in their family to attend higher education. The University has and continues to be recognized for its work to support and welcome other student populations of increasing ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, and linguistic diversity, and for whom the relevance of civic engagement should not be dismissed.

⁴ Please see 2021a. Educating for American Democracy: Excellence in History and Civics for All Learners. Cambridge, MA: iCivics. And. Educating for American Democracy. 2021b. Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy. Cambridge, MA: iCivics. www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

- **Founded:** Ball State University was founded in 1918.
- **Named After Benefactors:** The University is named after the Ball Brothers, five brothers who founded the Ball Corporation and the University.
- **Campus:** Ball State's main campus covers approximately 1,140 acres and is known for its beautiful architecture—including the iconic Shafer Tower—which houses a set of bells that chime regularly.
- **Academic Excellence:** Ball State is known for its strong academic programs, particularly in areas such as education, business, architecture, telecommunications, and health sciences.
- **Accreditation:** Ball State University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.
- **Digital Media Programs:** Ball State is well-regarded for its programs in digital media and communication. The University's David Letterman Communication and Media Building houses state-of-the-art facilities for media and communication students.
- **Telecommunications:** The University is home to WIPB, a PBS member station, and the Ball State University Radio Network, which includes NPR-affiliated station WBST.
- **College of Architecture and Planning:** The R. Wayne Estopinal College of Architecture and Planning is known for its programs in architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning.
- **NCAA Athletics:** Ball State competes in NCAA Division I athletics as a member of the Mid-American Conference (MAC). Their sports teams are known as the Cardinals.
- **Notable Alumni:** Ball State has produced notable alumni in various fields, including comedian and television host David Letterman, Garfield creator Jim Davis, and actress Joyce DeWitt.
- **Beneficence Statue:** The statue of Beneficence—often referred to as "Benny"—is a prominent symbol on campus. It represents the University's commitment to excellence, integrity, and social responsibility.
- **Community Engagement:** The University is actively involved in the Muncie community and encourages student involvement in service and volunteer activities.



- **Cardinal Green Initiative:** Ball State is committed to sustainability and has a "Cardinal Green" initiative to promote environmentally responsible practices on campus.

2024 VOTER INFORMATION FOR INDIANA

The following are some key dates related to voting and elections in Indiana:

- **October 7, 2024:** Deadline for **VOTER REGISTRATION**. The online voter registration application must be completed and submitted by midnight.
- **October 11, 2024:** End of pre-election campaign finance reporting period.
- **October 24, 2024:** Deadline for the circuit court clerk to receive an absentee ballot application.
- **October 26, 2024:** The office of the circuit court clerk must be open for at least seven hours to permit early voting. However, in a county with a population of less than 20,000, the county election board may reduce hours to a minimum of four hours on this date.
- **November 2, 2024:** The office of the circuit court clerk must be open for at least seven hours to permit early voting.
- **November 4, 2024:** Noon is the deadline for circuit court clerks to receive absentee ballot applications from confined voters or voters caring for a confined person requesting delivery of a ballot by the absentee voter board. Applications may be submitted to the circuit court clerk in person or by mail, fax, email, or online through the Indiana Voter Portal at indianavoters.com.
- **November 5, 2024:** Indiana's **GENERAL ELECTION DAY**. Polls are open 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- **December 2, 2024:** Indiana **VOTER REGISTRATION REOPENS**.

BALL STATE'S CAMPUS DEMOGRAPHIC AND VOTING DATA

Ball State University has authorized the **National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement** (NSLVE) from the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education at Tufts University to collect data. It will receive campus voting data for the 2022 election in fall 2023.⁵ Our NSLVE authorization runs through 2033.

The following are some key data points from the most recent NSLVE reports:



⁵ At the time of developing this Action Plan, Ball State is still awaiting the NSLVE campus voting data.

National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement				
CAMPUS REPORT: Ball State University				
	2014	2018	2020	Change
Total student enrollment per NSC	20,14	20,87	20,53	+723
Total eligible voters	18,218	19,636	19,300	+1,418
Number of students who registered	11,766	15,577	16,572	+3,811
Number of students who voted	1,635	6,251	12,356	+4,616
Registration Rate %	65	79	86	+15
Voting Rate of Registered Students %	14	40	75	+26
Voting Rate %	9	32	64	+23

National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement						
CAMPUS REPORT: Ball State University						
	2014		2018		2020	
	Enrolled	Voted	Enrolled	Voted	Enrolled	Voted
Undergraduate	15,764	1,010	15,201	4,103	14,788	9,220
Graduate	3,097	609	4,822	2,148	4,755	3,110
Class Unknown	84	16	-	-	33	26
Class Year						
Freshman	4,302	183	3,816	762	3,905	2,132
Sophomore	3,937	197	3,719	895	3,451	2,135
Upperclassman	7,528	632	7,673	2,448	7,445	4,962
Enrollment Status						
Full-time	16,530	1,065	15,888	4,406	15,488	9,670
Part-time	2,415	570	4,135	1,845	4,088	2,686

The **Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement** at Tufts University’s Tisch College of Civic Life “estimates of youth voter turnout in the 2022 midterm elections highlight major variations and inequities in young people’s electoral participation across the country.” Recent data has shown that youth turnout ranged from as high as 37% in some states to as low as 13% in others.⁶ According to this new data, Indiana’s youth voter turnout was at 13%, among the lowest youth turnout rates in the nation.⁷ CIRCLE’s analyses suggest that “along with issues and electoral competitiveness, election laws may be playing a central role in shaping whether youth cast a ballot in national elections.”⁸ This data will inform our strategies and goals at Ball State, to significantly surpass the state average for youth turnout.

⁶ CIRCLE, *State-by-State Youth Voter Turnout Data and the Impact of Election Laws in 2022*, Tufts University’s Tisch College of Civic Life (Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement April 6 2023 2023), <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/state-state-youth-voter-turnout-data-and-impact-election-laws-2022>.

⁷ Indiana: According to technical documentation provided by Catalist, CIRCLE’s data indicates that the number of voters in the aggregated voter file for Indiana is smaller than the total number of votes cast as documented by the office of the Indiana Secretary of State by -8.57% (162,000 fewer votes cast) due to 15 counties that are missing votes. CIRCLE adjusted their estimate accordingly to account for this variance.

⁸ CIRCLE, *State-by-State Youth Voter Turnout Data and the Impact of Election Laws in 2022*.

Goals

Ball State's nonpartisan voter engagement action plan seeks to utilize best practices in civic education, those that influence young people's interest in politics, their knowledge of government, and their sense of political efficacy.⁹

LONG-TERM GOALS

Ball State President Geoffrey Mearns has signed the ALL IN Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to **Full Student Voter Participation**.

Goals: The primary goal of the Ball State action plan and Cardinals Vote! campaign is to enhance understanding of democratic principles and civic engagement across the University. This campaign seeks to achieve the following goals:

- **Educate and Inform:** Provide easily accessible and unbiased information about the electoral process, candidates, and the importance of voting. Encourage voter registration and invite students to exercise their right to vote.
- **Cultivate Civic Responsibility:** Promote the understanding that voting is a fundamental civic duty, and engaged citizens play a vital role in shaping the community and nation.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

In the coming year, Ball State will aim to:

- Exceed the Indiana 18–24-year-old voting rate by 50% in 2024.
- Engage our entire student population with information on voting and the political process including specific actions to target those who face unique barriers to participation.
- Surpass our campus voter turnout rate from 2020.
- Build the habit of political participation, with a direct focus on first-time voters, including first-generation college students.
- Strengthen our voter information outreach and resources.

We seek to foster civic reflection and the capacities of Ball State students.

⁹ Feldman, L., Pasek, J., Romer, D., & Jamieson, K. (2007). Identifying Best Practices in Civic Education: Lessons from the Student Voices Program. *American Journal of Education*, 114(1), 75-100. doi:10.1086/520692

ACTIVITIES & INITIATIVES

Ball State's **Cardinals Vote!** campaign encompasses a range of initiatives:

- **Student Involvement:** Cultivate strong relationships with student organizations. Encourage Ball State students to actively participate in the campaign, offering internships, volunteer opportunities, and leadership roles in voter information efforts. Enhance support for students and student leaders.
- **Educational Workshops:** Host workshops and seminars to inform participants about voting processes, election timelines, and the significance of their participation in the democratic process.
- **Online Resources:** Provide an online hub where individuals can access informative materials, registration guides, and resources for engaging in local and national elections.
- **Community Engagement:** Collaborate with local organizations and the Indiana League of Women Voters to facilitate community engagement activities, such as candidate forums, voter registration drives, and outreach events.
- **Informational Campaigns:** Launch targeted informational campaigns to raise awareness about important election dates, issues, and candidate profiles.
- **Partnerships:** Build partnerships with local government agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders to amplify the campaign's reach and impact.
- **Measurement and Evaluation:** The campaign's success will be evaluated through various metrics, including voter registration rates, voter turnout, the number of educational events hosted, and the level of engagement in community-based activities. Regular assessments will provide insight into the effectiveness of the campaign's initiatives. Ball State is a member of the *Student Voting Rates for Ball State University*.¹⁰

Ball State University will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and increase student voter participation.

Strategy

Ball State has traditionally participated in the following initiatives to support the development and implementation of our nonpartisan democratic engagement efforts on campus: National Voter Registration Day (2020, 2022); National Voter Education Week (2022); and Vote Early Day (2022).

In the coming year, we commit to engage in the following national initiatives:

- **National Voter Registration Day:** Ball State's activities will include a voter registration information campaign at prominent locations on campus, a campus-wide email with voting information, partnerships with student organizations, social media outreach, and more.

¹⁰ *Student Voting Rates for Ball State University*, Tufts University (Tisch College of Civic Life studies, 2022).

- **National Voter Education Week:** Ball State will host a week-long non-partisan initiative designed to encourage voter education and participation. Our campaign will provide information and resources to students and student organizations. Our Democracy Fellows will conduct student-led Voter Education Workshops to educate students about the electoral process, how to cast their vote, and to understand the issues and candidates on the ballot.
- **Constitution Day:** As part of the Constitution Day celebration, a table will be set up to engage students in the Ball State L.A. Pittenger Student Center. In addition to voter information, this event will include opportunities for students to articulate why voting matters and contribute to a social media campaign. Copies of the U.S. Constitution will be distributed, and students, faculty, and staff can participate in activities.

Ball State aims to align our civic engagement efforts with career readiness. According to Hart Research Associates, “The college learning outcomes that both [executives and hiring managers] rate as most important include oral communication, critical thinking, ethical judgment, working effectively in teams, working independently, self-motivation, written communication, and real-world application of skills and knowledge.”¹¹ A recent National Association of Colleges and Employers Jobs Outlook survey (2022) found that nearly all employers surveyed ranked critical thinking, communication, and teamwork as “very” to “extremely” important qualities in new hires out of college; technological proficiency, though desired, was far lower on the NACE group’s scale of priorities. Yet only around half of surveyed employers rated recent graduates “very” or “extremely” proficient critical thinkers and communicators. This situation presents an opportunity for Ball State to assert its relevance to public calls for better-prepared citizens and better-prepared workers—calls that will inform our voter engagement efforts.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Ball State will use a social media campaign for a voting campaign to reach and engage a wide audience, especially among younger voters. For our social media campaign, we will:

- **Create Engaging Content:** Develop content that is informative, engaging, and shareable. This can include educational posts, infographics, videos, memes, and user-generated content.
- **Consistent Branding:** Use a consistent visual and messaging style across social media profiles to build brand recognition. Include a campaign logo or visual identity to tie everything together.
- **Leverage Hashtags:** Create and use campaign-specific hashtags to make it easy for users to find and join the conversation. Encourage supporters to use these hashtags in their posts.
- **Engage with Our Audience:** We will respond to comments, questions, and messages promptly. Encourage two-way communication by asking for feedback and opinions.

¹¹ Please see: The National Association of Colleges and Employers Jobs Outlook 2022 at: <https://www.naceweb.org/store/2021/job-outlook-2022>

- **Voter Registration and Election Information:** Share information about voter registration deadlines, polling locations, absentee voting, and the importance of exercising the right to vote.
- **Calls to Action (CTAs):** Encourage specific actions, such as registering to vote or sharing voter information with friends and family.

Evaluation

Ball State University will use the **National, Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)** to evaluate our action plan and to increase student voting by comparing our campus voter turnout and voter registration rates to past elections to measure progress on increasing both.¹²

The NSLVE is a project conducted by the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education at Tufts University's Tisch College of Civic Life. It is designed to provide colleges and universities with data on student voting rates in federal elections. The NSLVE data helps institutions understand and improve civic engagement on their campuses. Here's how you can use NSLVE:

PARTICIPATION IN NSLVE

Ball State is enrolled in NSLVE. We will continue to submit our institutional information and designate a campus contact. After receiving NSLVE data we will focus on:

- **Data Collection:** Generate meaningful reports on student voting rates.
- **Analysis:** Ball State will use the NSLVE reports to share information on student voting rates and look for patterns among our students.
- **Interpretation and Action:** Ball State will use the NSLVE reports to assess our students' civic engagement and identify areas for improvement.
- **Action Planning:** Based on the NSLVE reports, Ball State will develop action plans to enhance civic engagement on campus. This might include strategies to increase voter registration, education, and turnout among students.
- **Outreach and Engagement Programs:** Ball State will use NSLVE data to inform the development of voter education programs, and initiatives to encourage student engagement in elections.
- **Share Results:** Ball State will share its NSLVE results within the campus community and with external stakeholders, such as trustees, can help build support for civic engagement efforts.
- **Research and Academic Use:** CECL and other centers on campus will use NSLVE data to study voting patterns and civic engagement among Ball State students.

¹² Please see the National, Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement at: <https://idhe.tufts.edu/nslve>

- **Community Partnerships:** Collaboration with community organizations like the League of Women Voters will help Ball State further engage students in the civic and electoral process.

NSLVE provides participating institutions with valuable insights into student voting behavior, which can inform efforts to enhance civic education and engagement on campus. It's a powerful tool for colleges and universities to encourage their students to become active and informed citizens.

Reporting

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/ball-state-university/>

Our institution has given **ALL IN** permission to publish our past NSLVE reports, which can also be found on our campus page above. We will work with organizations across our state to share information and collaborate on our activities. Ball State and CECL are part of three statewide civic education-related committees:

- **Indiana Civic Education Committee:** Focused on improving civic education at all levels to ensure students and adults are equipped with the knowledge to be effective citizens.
- **Indiana Civic Health Committee:** Dedicated to fostering community partnership, philanthropy, volunteerism, and civic engagement through local and statewide collaboration.
- **Indiana Civic Advocacy Committee:** Advocate for policies that can impact the improvement of civics via public policy, formally or informally.

The Indiana Civics Coalition is dedicated to improving Indiana's civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes through the means of education, advocacy, and state initiatives.

Our reporting plan for Ball State voter engagement will involve outlining the key metrics and data points as well as a timeline for reporting and analysis. We will collect data on some of the following metrics:

- Number of voter information events
- Number of attendees at campaign events
- Social media engagement (likes, shares, comments, etc.)
- Website traffic and engagement
- Number of students reached through campaign efforts

Ball State's reporting interval will be quarterly. CECL will be responsible for collecting and reporting data. Our reporting will inform us of our decisions and adjustments to our campaign strategy.

REFERENCES

- CIRCLE. *State-by-State Youth Voter Turnout Data and the Impact of Election Laws in 2022*. Tufts University's Tisch College of Civic Life (Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement April 6 2023 2023). <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/state-state-youth-voter-turnout-data-and-impact-election-laws-2022>.
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