

Boston College

Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Voter Friendly Campus Initiative

Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

Updated August 9, 2022

Executive Summary

Boston College believes in educating the entire person in promoting learning, health, leadership development and community engagement with all students. One area of focus is on civic engagement. Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation through both political and non-political processes. Because of this commitment, we continue to be a Voter Friendly Campus, and have outlined a plan that would bring others together in striving for this important and meaningful educational opportunity for our students. Throughout the semester we have focused on voter registration, education, and turnout through marketing, advertising, and in person opportunities as permitted. We have created a coalition of individuals around campus whose areas support one of these three pillars.

This plan was built through conversations with various stakeholders at Boston College, highlights work we have done, and provides our group with tangible realistic next steps. Additionally, we have taken feedback from previous years and provided updates, solidified partnerships and relationships and hope to build a foundation for active participation for our student population.

Leadership

Chairs

Katie Dalton, Director of the Women's Center

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Kyle Neary, Interim Associate Director Office of Student Involvement

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Dan Ponsetto, Welles Remy Crowther Director, Volunteer and Service Learning Center

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Boston College Civic Engagement Committee

Established in Spring 2022, the former Division of Student Affairs Civic Engagement Committee expanded our reach and became a University Wide Committee. In doing so, we have grown our reach. This group was recruited by the three chairs, and has met a few times to discuss short and long term goals, as well as define "Civic Engagement" how it exists at Boston College, and the thread through which many of our programs, events and services are woven.

This group will also be thinking about the connections students have within the community, and has also identified voter education, registration and turnout as being a priority for promoting positive long-term community engagement at Boston College and beyond.

As this group was newly reconstructed, we are still working on some of the output and outcomes, but we believe being recognized as a University Committee, we will be able to provide stronger programs long term. Members of this group have agreed to commit themselves to supporting the conversation of Civic Engagement, framing student experience as such, and supporting initiatives, such as Voter Education, Registration and Turnout in their perspective Areas.

Student Engagement and Involvement in the Committee

As this group was formalized in Spring 2022, there will be a recruiting effort done by this group to engage with students. Some student groups (listed below) are already beginning to plan Voter Registration drives for the general BC student population, as well as Asian Caucus focusing on creating a Asian Pacific Islander Voter Drive.

Lastly, the Committee was just given approval to hire a work study student who will assist the committee in efforts of engaging students in conversation, initiatives, and increasing understanding of Civic Engagement. They will create a digital resource hub to centralize all relevant events and resources at BC, marketing and engaging with BC students on social

media, and providing leadership for a student committee to expand and provide student input into this work.

Campus Partners

Boston College has many campus partners that have supported Voting efforts. Below are some departments, offices, or groups that exist at Boston College that have provided support, hosted events, and continue to contribute to helping BC be a Voter Friendly Campus.

Academic Affairs

Clough Center for Constitutional Democracy, Political Science Department, Boston College Lowell Humanities Series, Boston College Law School, Center for Teaching Excellence, Library Services. We will be reaching out for additional connections and support throughout the summer.

Student Affairs

Student Organizations - Eagle Political Society, BC Democrats, BC Republicans, Americans for Informed Democracy, BC Law Democrats, BC Law Republicans, Model United Nations, Young Democratic Socialists of America. Departments include Thea Bowman AHANA and Intercultural Center, Career Center, Counseling Services, Dean of Students, Graduate Student Life, Center for Student Wellness, Office of Student Involvement, Residential Life, Robsham Theater, Student Outreach and Support and the Women's Center.

Campus Mission and Ministry

Volunteer & Service Learning Center, Center for Student Formation, First Year Experience, Intersections, and Montserrat.

These organizations all have been invited to participate and support in various capacities ranging from tabling, to sharing of information, being highlighted in our monthly newsletter, or offering support for various events.

Community Partners and Commitments

These groups actively provide resources, recognition, ideas and personal support as needed.

- NASPA Voter Friendly Campus
- Every Vote Counts
- All In Challenge
- Boston Votes Initiative
- DemocrACCy
- Every Vote Counts

Commitment

Boston College has made substantial steps in commitment in regards to increasing civic learning and democratic engagement. Growing a divisional committee to be a University wide opportunity for professional staff, hiring a dedicated work study student, and providing additional funding and support to keep these efforts going.

In years past, Father Leahy has signed the President's commitment, and Boston College has been supporting NSLVE by providing our data at every opportunity. Boston College Athletics has had a number of coaches support these efforts by bringing in speakers, making commitments themselves. Currently, Civic Engagement exists at Boston College housed within various departments, offices, and programs. Our goal is to highlight these opportunities, as well as directly talk with students about how the work they're doing on campus is increasing their civic learning.

From a logistical perspective, TurboVote is still a tool Boston College uses, and integrates into our Anthology Engage platform - students will be prompted upon signing in to register with TurboVote. This is especially helpful as our students are from all over the country (and world) and learning about how to vote (and change their registration) to local, or learn about the mail-in ballot process is imperative.

Landscape

Our group will continue to review the data from the NSLVE report for the past 8 years. We see our undergraduate students are registering to vote but still are having lower turnouts. In the last election, we saw higher rates of registration and turnout, moving above our peer institutions in participation.

The landscape of Civic Engagement at Boston College is vast - and our hope is that by creating a more formalized group we'll be able to get a better idea of how civic learning and democratic engagement exists in the classroom, event spaces, and online communities.

Civic engagement is imperative to the education that Boston College provides to our students - some of the barriers stem from not having a centralized hub, and not using language to help align student experience, with truly being civic learning and democratic engagement.

Goals

Short Term

Our goals are to identify our major points of success and charge. We want to clearly identify the direction of this committee. At the end of spring, we had decided that evaluating student's opinions, concerns or needs for civic engagement, creating a resource hub, and creating an information campaign defining civic engagement and creating a call to action would be what we would hope to accomplish this year.

Long Term

Creating a university wide committee presents many new challenges - learning how different areas work, how to plan, evaluate and assess as a unit. On the whole, we hope to help students engage in civic learning and the democratic throughout their time at Boston College in a fruitful way that prepares and energizes them to do so in their communities after they leave. One of BC's mantras is to be men and women for others, and in doing so it's imperative to understand the impact of being involved in your community..

Strategy

Voter Registration

- TurboVote Integration into MyBC, continual marketing campaign from move in through the election
- Newsletter emails/updates as students return to campus in the fall urging them to register and vote
- Supporting student organizations who want to host voter drives
- Absentee Ballot “how to” instructions emailed and provided by TurboVote
- Engaging involved students in tabling efforts to promote voter registration

Voter Education

- Creating an information hub of events, resources, literature, etc. that exists at BC that would be engaging for students
- Promote non-partisan events and discussions that focus on present day issues
- Support student organizations who are hosting events and promoting them through our channels
- Focusing on nonpartisan speakers and journalists in understanding and critically evaluating news media
- Created a sign campaign around statistics associated with voting and voter turnout.
- Creating an on-campus photo opportunity with the letters VOTE

Ballot Access

- Create access points for absentee ballot pickup in Maloney Hall
- Providing transportation to local venues for students who register in Massachusetts
- Clearly identifying mail drop boxes and advertising them around campus.

Voter Turnout

- Create an event/process to celebrate students who voted
- Ask for feedback from students formally/informally about their experience voting for future benchmarking
- Tabling for 3 weeks up to the election to review voting plans with students and providing incentives for students who are willing to share their voting plan.
- Review NSLVE Data
- Passing out buttons, stickers, masks, and tshirts for students to celebrate their participation.

Timeline

- August - Recruit students who are interested in supporting voter registration, or voter education events. Hire a work study student who is passionate and creating a student-led plan for this fall.
- September - Host events, continue to recruit student participation and support their specific initiatives. Meet with the Civic Engagement Committee to reaffirm short term goals, share information, as well as brainstorm and execute events or information opportunities that are identified as missing.
- October - Continue to promote students hosting events, hosting registration drives, and continuing to build the resource hub and information campaign.
- November - Final marketing/communication push, support events, and create celebrations for active voters.

Reporting

- We'll plan to share TurboVote registration data, as well as signing up for NSLVE and are willing to share all information garnered for the All In Challenge. We will plan on creating an awareness campaign upon receiving the data to share with the community in recapping civic engagement efforts.
- We'll be recapping these efforts with students, as well as with the civic engagement committee. From here, we'll hopefully be able to create a longer-term timeline and utilize the spring to focus on continuing to help students feel connected.

Evaluation

- We'll have two points of evaluation - we'll be revisiting our short and long term goals after winter break.
- We'll revisit our colleagues at the university to ask them for their reports of their events.
- Long term, we hope to see our NSLV data and be able to follow up with the community for their registration and turnout.
- Using information about what we learn and highlighting it via social media, and reconnecting with students who were involved in voter drives to talk about their impact.