



BOWLING
GREEN STATE
UNIVERSITY
Center for Public
Impact
in partnership with
the BGSU Votes
Coalition

BGSU VOTES ACTION PLAN

2020-2021

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Executive Summary:

The Bowling Green State University Center for Public Impact (CPI) has led BGSU Votes, an initiative dedicated to increasing students' political engagement and civic learning since 2012 at Bowling Green State University. Through a variety of on campus partnerships with Residence Life, Undergraduate Student Government, Department of Political Science and off campus partnerships such as the Wood County Board of Elections, Bowling Green League of Women Voters, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, Campus Election Engagement Project, Campus Vote Project, All In Campus Democracy Challenge, and the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), a strong foundation has been established to increase capacity for more political engagement and participation at BGSU. Based on NSLVE data, our student voter participation for 2018 showed an increase of 23.1 percentage points since the 2014 midterm election and BGSU was recognized as a Silver Campus by the All In Campus Democracy Challenge with an overall voting participation rate of 35% in 2018. In 2019, BGSU received the Voter Friendly Campus Designation from Campus Vote Project for demonstrating the ways BGSU strives to institutionalize the voting process. Highlights of political engagement and civic learning accomplished to this point include:

- **Cultivating a Sustainable Student Leadership Model** – Through support from our national partners, we have recruited student leaders to identify strategies and engage peers in political engagement and participation. This team also includes a variety of volunteer roles to register, educate, and empower voters at major events. Through these networks, the BGSU Votes team has been able to recruit and maintain a plan for succession of student leadership.
- **Voter Identification Letter for On Campus Students** – Worked with the Board of Elections, Registration and Records, and Office of Residence Life to create a voter identification letter available to on campus voters via their online student portal.
- **Watch Parties for Presidential Elections & Debates** – Collaborated with a coalition of political student organizations to organize debate and election night watch parties.
- **City Council and Mayoral Forums** – Worked with the League of Women Voters, local candidates and elected officials to emphasize the importance of local elections and issues in off election years.
- **Midterm Election Forums** – Developed a series of events to engage and educate students on the various races involved in the 2018 midterm election.
- **BGSU Votes Website** (www.bgsu.edu/BGSUVotes) – This website has served as an easy one stop location for students to find voting information and get their questions answered about the voting process.
- **Texting Platform** – Worked with the Andrew Goodman Foundation to implement a mass-texting tool on BGSU's campus to update students on voter engagement events and provide registration information.
- **Social Media** – Cultivated a following on Facebook and Instagram to promote events, share voting information, and engage with students and community members. Developed a plan for increasing our presence on social media platforms.

Leadership:

The BGSU Votes Leadership Team is led by the staff and student leaders of the Center for Public Impact. Additionally, the BGSU Votes team has recruited volunteers in order to reach more students on campus, as well as to maintain a plan for leadership succession.

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Coalition & Commitment:

The BGSU Votes coalition is a group of partners from the community and on campus. Coalition members keep in regular contact with the leadership team as well as attend meetings to assess progress and develop new strategies to complete the goals of the coalition. We are in the process of expanding this coalition for the upcoming presidential election. With the help of these coalition members, the BGSU Votes team hopes to reach full student political participation.

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Landscape Analysis:

BGSU has always emphasized the importance of service learning and community engagement through several programs. The Center for Public Impact has supported alternative break programs, volunteer opportunities, community-based learning courses, and civic engagement programs such as BGSU Votes. All of these initiatives are in line with advancing BGSU's commitment to the public good.

BGSU has participated in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement since 2012. This report provides information about voter participation and registration at BGSU. The 2018 midterm report demonstrated that BGSU has made substantial improvement in political participation, with the voter turnout rate increasing by 23.1 percentage points in the 2018 midterm compared to the 2014 midterm. However, BGSU still fell behind the voter turnout rate for all institutions with 35% compared to 39.1%. This assessment data also demonstrates a lack of voter turnout among STEM and business students at BGSU, which we hope to address by implementing strategies to engage these students.

BGSU is currently in the process of incorporating democratic and political engagement into the curriculum for BGSU 1910: First Year Seminar courses taught to many first-year students. Voter registration is expected to be a component of the curriculum for these classes. This is expected to go into effect in Fall 2020. Also being implemented in Fall 2020 will be a voter registration survey for first year students who download the BGSU Navigate app. This app is used by students to schedule advising appointments and find information about financial aid and course registration. Starting in Fall 2020, all students who download the app will be prompted to answer the question, "Are you registered to vote?" Students will then be directed to information about voter participation. Between the BG1910 courses and the Navigate app, we hope to connect with a large number of students in a variety of ways.

There are several areas where democratic engagement is incorporated into co- and extracurriculars. BGSU has a wide variety of student organizations dedicated to advancing social justice initiatives and to provide support to different identity groups. One of BGSU Votes goals is to improve the collaborative relationship with these identity-based groups. The Marvin Center for Student Leadership, a division of the Dean of Students, also incorporates civic engagement into their leadership development programs open to all students. This relationship with the Marvin Center has helped BGSU Votes maintain institutional support and a collaborative relationship with the Office of the Dean of Students.

Additionally, BGSU has recently signed on to the Ask Every Student initiative, a collaborative effort led by the ALL IN Challenge, Campus Vote Project, the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, and NASPA. This initiative asks universities to commit to full student voter participation by integrating voter registration into existing processes for fall 2020, with the goal being to register every eligible student to vote. BGSU has signed on to this initiative as a Commitment Campus and will work to further institutionalize voter registration for the upcoming election.

In terms of barriers to improved voting access at BGSU, the NSLVE report for BGSU does not include data on method of voting. It would be helpful when planning events to know what

percent of students typically vote in-person as opposed to absentee. As a team, we would like to work with our Board of Elections to see how we can access this data for future elections. We also anticipate there might be some confusion about in-person and absentee voting as a result of COVID-19 and the Ohio Primary. As a campus, we will need to provide resources about in-person voting verses absentee voting, and work to address any confusion surrounding the election. BGSU also has an on-campus polling location available to students who are registered at the campus address.

Lastly, BGSU is well-positioned to increase democratic participation thanks to the wide variety of resources from our national partners. BGSU Votes has maintained a longstanding relationship with The Andrew Goodman Foundation and Campus Election Engagement Project, and we are very excited to have started working closely with Campus Vote Project in Spring 2020. Additionally, BGSU recently was designated as a Leader campus in The Andrew Goodman Foundation Vote Everywhere network. This recognizes BGSU's long-term commitment to voter participation and allows our campus to serve as mentors within the network. The funding and educational resources from our national partners have been instrumental in growing the BGSU Votes team and making BGSU a more civically engaged campus.

Action Plan Development:

Many steps were taken in developing this action plan for the coming school year, and a variety of resources were used to inform our goals, initiatives, and landscape analysis. The BGSU Votes leadership team met regularly throughout spring 2020 to brainstorm and discuss our goals for the upcoming election. We discussed the feedback we received from the 2019-2020 action plan, which was used to identify sections of the action plan needing more development. We reviewed our previous NSLVE data reports for BGSU to set realistic short and long-term goals using the SMART goal setting strategy. Once we identified our goals for 2020-2021, we solicited feedback during our coalition meetings and incorporated suggestions. All the information and feedback collected was used in creating a draft of the action plan that was later sent out to the full coalition team for review and additional response feedback. We also collaborated with a service-learning class of Social Work students at BGSU conducting research on the attitudes of students towards voting. These research findings were incorporated into the action plan to further inform our goals and ensure we are meeting the needs of our students.

COVID-19 Impact:

Like many institutions, the effect of COVID-19 leaves our team with a lot of uncertainties regarding our plans for the 2020-2021 school year. Our summer programming has typically consisted of a summer intern taking on the role of attending Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) to promote CPI programming, as well as prepare for Opening Weekend events. SOAR has officially been moved online for the summer, so we are exploring options to include voter registration information in online SOAR.

The temporary closure of campus has made it necessary to rethink how our work can continue virtually. Nearly all events scheduled for Fall 2020 can be transitioned to an online format if necessary, and we will likely need to adapt our plans as the semester approaches. It is more important now than ever that BGSU Votes has a strong social media presence to connect students to our resources and inform them of important updates regarding the General Election.

Additionally, our team anticipates there will be a significant financial impact on our students and the University because of COVID-19, so we are keeping this in mind as we move forward with preparing for the 2020-2021 school year. We are approaching our plans for fall semester with flexibility in mind so that we can continue to make BGSU a more civically engaged place.

Objective:

Create a positive climate for political engagement and civic learning at BGSU.

Areas of Focus:

1. Connecting on and off-campus partners.
2. Voter registration
3. Voter education and skill development
4. Get out the vote
5. Removing barriers to voting
6. Civic engagement and political participation

Long-term Goals (3-5 years):

1. Continue to grow democratic and political engagement as a priority on campus by inviting more faculty, staff, students, and community members to lead this work.
2. Conduct a climate study with a focus on understanding our overall campus climate for political participation and engagement.
3. Build stronger collaborations and relationships with identity-based and underrepresented groups on campus and increase diversity of our leadership team and volunteer base.
4. Position BGSU as a leader/resource for voter engagement work regionally and nationally.

Goals for 2020-2021:

The following are the specific goals we hope to accomplish with the initiatives outlined in more detail below:

1. Voter Participation
 - a. 65% voter participation in 2020 election on campus (60% if online for fall)
 - b. Maintain 80% voter registration, but aim for 100% voter registration rate
 - c. Measured through NSLVE report
2. Coalition
 - a. Maintain regular communication through email
 - b. Continue ongoing meetings twice a semester (online option)
 - c. Increase attendance to coalition meetings by doubling the number of attendees
3. Classroom & Organization Presentations
 - a. Present to at least 1000 people over the course of the 2020-2021 year
4. Communications
 - a. Increase Instagram followers to 500, Facebook followers to 500, Twitter followers to 100 and start using regularly
 - b. Involve volunteers with promoting social media posts
 - c. Improve use of texting platform with survey feedback
 - d. Develop and promote the BGSU Votes newsletter
5. Leadership
 - a. Develop plan for succession of leadership within the BGSU Votes team
 - b. Solidify structure and leadership roles on the BGSU Votes team by developing a Team Management Plan

Strategies for 2020-2021:

To make improvements in the above focus areas, the BGSU Votes Coalition will continue the following initiatives:

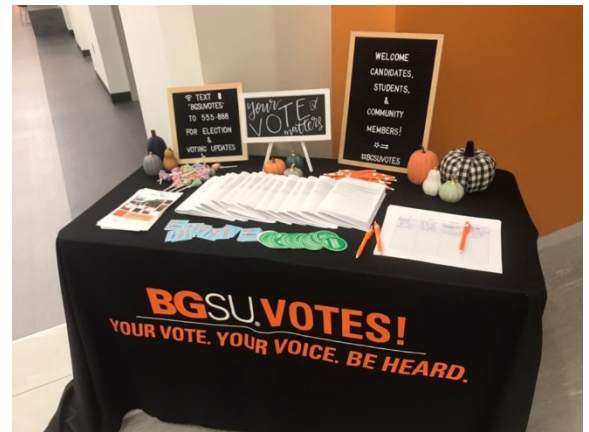
SUMMER 2020:

New Student Orientation (Throughout 2020-2021)

Description: Interact with new students and their guests during New Student Orientation. Summer orientation has been moved online, so we will need to develop virtual resources, such as a video, for incoming students. BGSU Votes is present at SOAR throughout the academic year for new and transfer students.

Coalition Members: Center for Public Impact

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, Civic engagement, and skill development



Marketing and Social Media Schedule

Description: Develop a schedule with deadlines for highlighting campus-wide information about voter engagement to educate students, faculty, and staff about upcoming election information. Incorporate university social media platforms and communication outlets. Create outline of schedule for planned text messages to be released in fall semesters. Work to finalize design of marketing materials.

Coalition Members: Center for Public Impact, Marketing and Communication

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, GOTV, Civic engagement

Coalition Update and Meeting

Description: Reconnect with coalition members listed previously to identify areas on campus they see room for more democratic engagement opportunities. Work with coalition to learn how we can tap into various aspects of campus to identify needs for democratic engagement that are currently being unmet. Include their feedback in updated campus action plan.

Coalition Members: All

Focus Area(s): All

Student Leader Retreat

Description: Create a presentation for student leaders describing what resources BGSU Votes provides for them. Create take-home resources for students and explore room for collaboration.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Office of the Dean of Students, student organizations

Focus Area(s): Voter education and skill development

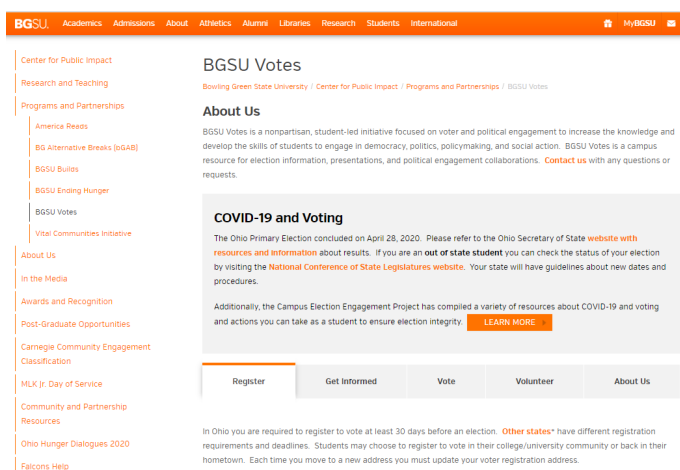
BGSU Votes Website

Description: Update voter information and hyperlinks to ensure that the BGSU Votes website (www.bgsu.edu/bgsuvotes) serves as a hub for BGSU student voter information. Add new resources including:

- Ballot information for Bowling Green residents in Fall 2020 election
- Highlights of political engagement on campus, including faculty spotlight, student spotlight, and upcoming events/opportunities
- Updated Voting 101 videos
- List of potential ways to increase understanding of political engagement

Coalition Members: Center for Public Impact

Focus Area(s): Voter education and skill development



Off-Campus Student Outreach

Description: Work with the large rental companies in Bowling Green to include voter registration forms in the leasing packets as students sign leases for the coming school year, or as students pick up their keys when their lease starts. This would make it easier for students to update their registrations.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, USG

Focus Area(s): Connecting on and off-campus partners, voter registration

FALL 2020:

Opening Weekend and Welcome Week

Description: Establish a volunteer plan to have a large presence at Opening Weekend and Welcome Week events to register voters and educate about voting rights history, voting procedures, options available to students, and upcoming issues and elections. Work with Fall Welcome Group Leaders to encourage new student participation. Ensure all volunteers and leaders have proper personal protective equipment and materials to prevent spread of COVID-19. Events will include:

- University Welcome and Playfair
- Evening and Late-Night Events
- Campus Picnic
- Commuter Breakfasts
- Multicultural Welcome

Coalition Members: Center for Public Impact, Student Orientation and Registration

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, Voter education, Civic engagement

Major Campus Events

Description: In the fall semester a variety of high profile and well attended events occur to support new and returning students. BGSU Votes will attend these events and educate about voting rights history, voting procedures, options available to students, and upcoming issues and elections. These events may look different in the fall due to the global pandemic, and we will adapt to have a presence virtually or with proper protective gear and social distancing. Events include:

- [Campus Fest](#) – Get involved fair, roughly 5,000-8,000 in attendance.
- [Expand Your Horizons Fair](#) – Experiential learning fair, 700 in attendance.
- Constitution Day – Hosted with Office of Campus Activities

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, Civic engagement and political participation, Connecting partners

Voter Registration Training

Description: Update resource on BGSU Votes website to include Board of Elections training video about voter registration. Publicize and promote this resource to groups wishing to do voter registration on campus.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Office of the Dean of Students, Wood County Board of Elections

Focus Area(s): Voter education and skill development

Residence Hall Student Voter Outreach

Description: Develop resources to distribute in residence halls and collaborate with Hall Councils/Hall Directors to create programming.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Office of Residence Life

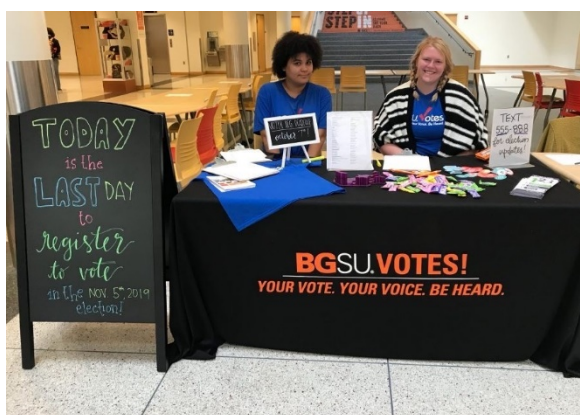
Focus Area(s): Voter registration, voter education

Tabling on the Road

Description: Expand tabling efforts to where majors that vote in lower numbers NSLVE data showed Health and Human Services, Sciences, and Tourism/Leisure/Sport Management, and Business as low rates. Tabling in the buildings where these majors are housed, well as areas that commuter students use.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes

Focus Area(s): Voter Registration.



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National Voter Registration Day

Description: Work with University Activities Organization and Undergraduate Student Government to create a campus-wide push for voter registration. Hold a celebration for voter registration in the Union Oval or Union tables. Use this event to increase recognition of BGSU

Votes as a resource to students and to further encourage students to vote. This event will be the largest push for voter registration of the year prior to the November election, and will also be an opportunity to increase subscribers to the BGSU Votes texting platform provided by the Andrew Goodman Foundation. Emphasize online resources through social media in addition to in person activities.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Undergraduate Student Government, University Activities Organization, Andrew Goodman Foundation, National Voter Registration Day.

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, Voter education, Civic engagement

Presentations

Description: Give presentations to classes and organizations about political engagement and voting. Register any students who need to be registered and offer volunteer opportunities to those needing service hours. Presentations initiated through our request form online. Additionally, classes and organizations affiliated with majors with historically lower voter rates as indicated by NSLVE data, will outreach about hosting a presentation.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Campus Activities

Focus Area(s): Voter education, Voter registration

Athletics

Description: Engage with athletic teams to encourage voter registration and participation. Work with these students to have them visibly promote voting to encourage the rest of campus to participate.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Athletics

Focus Area(s): GOTV

Texting Platform

Description: The Andrew Goodman Foundation has provided BGSU with a texting subscription platform that can be used to connect students to civic engagement opportunities happening on campus and inform them of voter registration deadlines. Increase subscribers by promoting this platform at our events and using raffle prizes.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Undergraduate Student Government, Marketing and Communications

Focus Area(s): All

Presidential Debate Watch Parties

Description: Host watch parties for the Presidential Debates and to celebrate election night. Collaborate with the political organizations on campus to provide resources for students, and work with our national partners to make this a nonpartisan experience.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, student organizations, Department of Political Science

Focus Area(s): Voter education

Candidate and Issue Forum

Description: Bring in local candidates and experts on the issues on the ballot to answer questions from students.

Coalition Members: League of Women Voters, Undergraduate Student Government, Falcon Media

Focus Area(s): Voter education, GOTV, Connecting partners



Bowling Green City Council and School Board candidates at 2019 Candidates Forum

Sample Ballot

Description: Develop a non-partisan sample ballot with general information and resources for all the candidates and issues that will be on the ballot for November 2020. Distribute during events and outreach.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Political Science Department, League of Women Voters

Focus Area(s): Voter education

Vote Early Day

Description: BGSU Votes will organize a Vote Early Day event at BGSU on October 24th, 2020. Vote Early Day will be a nationwide event to encourage people to learn about their voting options and to create their plan to vote, whether by absentee or early voting.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Marketing & Communication

Focus Area(s): GOTV

Rides to the Polls

Description: Organize free transportation from the student union to the early voting location for Wood County to encourage students to participate in early voting and Election Day voting. Promote this event through the various departments and organizations. Offer free rides during Voter Early Day and on Election Day.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Marketing & Communication

Focus Area(s): GOTV

Absentee Voting Workshop

Description: Host an educational event/workshop to help students understand the mechanics of absentee voting in Ohio. Whether the Ohio General Election is vote by mail like the Primary, or if Ohioans can choose to vote in-person, it is still going to be paramount for BGSU Votes to promote vote by mail/absentee information.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Board of Elections, Marketing & Communication

Focus Area(s): Removing barriers to voting, voter education and skill development

Election Day

Description: Election Day for the November 3rd election consist of several activities. Student leaders and volunteers table around campus to promote the election and encourage eligible students to use the on-campus polling location. Once polling locations have closed, there will be an Election Night Watch Party held to celebrate the election. This can be held either in the student union or virtually to accommodate limits gatherings.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Marketing & Communication

Focus Area(s): GOTV, Civic engagement and political participation



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Voting Video Series

Description: Expand the video series by developing a 3-4-minute quick reference videos explaining the basics of voting: registration, early voting, Election Day voting, absentee voting, unique accommodations, getting informed, and where to find more information. Audience is intended for residents of Wood County with some student specific information. Script development and gathering of B-roll footage to take place in Fall 2020 with final video produced for use Spring 2021 and into the future.

Coalition Members: CPI, Wood County Board of Elections, Marketing and Communications

Focus Area(s): All

SPRING 2021:

Major Campus Events

Description: In the spring semester a variety of high profile and well attended events occur to support new and returning students. BGSU Votes will attend these events and educate about voting rights history, voting procedures, options available to students, and upcoming issues and elections. Events include:

- Transfer and New Student Orientation
- Get Involved Fair
- Black Issues Conference
- Latino Issues Conference

Coalition Members: Center for Public Impact

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, Voter education, Connecting partners

Leadership Team Recruitment & Training

Description: Identify student leaders from across campus and encourage them to apply for the BGSU Votes Leadership Team. Use Spring 2021 to mentor and train these new student leaders on the best practices for voter engagement at BGSU, relationships with national partners, and to continue this important work.

Coalition Members: CPI, BGSU Votes, student organizations

Focus Area(s): Civic engagement

Hub Model Project

Description: Build a relationship between BGSU and other institutions in the region to share best practices for democratic and voter engagement. Establish this relationship with community colleges and universities in order to serve as mentor as they incorporate democratic engagement into their campus climate.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes

Focus Area(s): Connecting on an off-campus partners, civic engagement, and participation

Regional Convening of Hub Institutions

Description: Organize a civic engagement summit bringing together all the Northwest Ohio regional institutions. This summit would involve sharing resources and best practices for increasing political participation on these campuses, as well as helping other institutions creating their plan of action.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes

Focus Area(s): Connecting on and off-campus partners, civic engagement, and participation

USG Elections

Description: Promote student participation in our on-campus elections.

Coalition Members: Center for Public Impact, USG

Focus Area(s): Civic engagement

2021-2022 Action Plan

Description: Develop an Action Plan for the next academic year incorporating feedback and lessons learned from the past year.

Coalition Members: All

Focus Area(s): All



Reporting:

This action plan will be shared on the BGSU Votes website in Fall 2020 so that it is accessible to all students, administrators, and community members. The action plan will be sent to members of the coalition for feedback before being published on the website, with a final copy being sent out to the entire coalition. The NSLVE reports that were used to inform this action plan are also available on the BGSU Votes website, available to the public.

As the BGSU Votes team seeks to grow its relationship with other institutions in the region, this action plan may be shared with other schools. This could include Owens Community College, University of Toledo, University of Findlay and several other institutions. By sharing information and best practices, it would help other institutions increase voter engagement and establish BGSU has a credible model.

Additionally, the BGSU Votes team also works to satisfy the reporting requirements for all of our national partners and organizations we work with. The student leaders on the team are affiliated with The Andrew Goodman Foundation, Campus Election Engagement Project, and Campus Vote Project, all of which have different reporting requirements. We keep track of all event details for reporting to these national partners, as well as to ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and to maintain our Voter Friendly Campus Designation.

Evaluation:

The BGSU Votes team has been intentional about reflecting on the work accomplished each election cycle and evaluating our levels of success. This is done frequently throughout the semester, but intentionally at the end of an election cycle to prepare for future events. The BGSU Votes team carries out these reflections and evaluations for the university and incorporates the new information into future strategic plans. A large part of how we evaluate our work is using the NSLVE report to note areas needing improvement, incorporate this information into our goals, and make plans to meet those goals.

As a team, we recognize that a major part of evaluation is receiving feedback from students and faculty at the university and community members. Our team is working on ways to retrieve feedback from members of the BGSU Votes coalition on how these strategies have been effective in their spaces, as well as reaching out to student leaders for feedback on how BGSU Votes can better serve the campus community.

Additionally, the BGSU Votes team also plans to collaborate with NSLVE and the Master of Public Administration program to develop a plan for evaluation of our initiatives. By having the MPA program conduct an external evaluation of our programming, it would add to the credibility and structure of the BGSU Votes team. This campus climate survey would help BGSU learn more about what practices are best for engaging students in political participation.

Success:

The BGSU Votes coalition will carry out these plans throughout the summer of 2020 through the 2020-2021 academic year. After much success increasing democratic and political participation through the 2018 midterm election, this team is hopeful we will meet similar success for the

Presidential Election. We are thankful for all the support we have received from our national partners, including the Andrew Goodman Foundation, Campus Election Engagement Project, and Campus Vote Project. With their support, BGSU is a more civically engaged university creating public good.

