



**BOWLING GREEN
STATE UNIVERSITY**
BGSU Votes in the C.
*Raymond Marvin
Center for Student
Leadership & Civic
Engagement*

BGSU VOTES ACTION PLAN

2022-2023

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Executive Summary:

The Bowling Green State University C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership has recently undertaken 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 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 2020 showed an increase of 11.9 percentage points since the 2016 general election and BGSU was recognized as a Silver Campus by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge with an overall voting participation rate of 67.6% in 2020, which is 1.6 percentage points higher than the national institutional voting average. In 2021, BGSU received the Voter Friendly Campus Designation from Campus Vote Project for demonstrating the ways BGSU strives to institutionalize the voting process.

Leadership:

The BGSU Votes Leadership Team is led by the staff and student leaders of the C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement. 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. With the help of these coalition members, the BGSU Votes team hopes to make full student political participation a priority at the University.

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Landscape Analysis:

BGSU has always emphasized the importance of service learning and community engagement and leadership through many different programs. The C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement supports volunteer opportunities, leadership certificates, and civic engagement programs such as BGSU Votes.

BGSU has participated in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement by Tufts University since 2012. This report provides information about voter participation and registration at BGSU. The 2020 election report demonstrated that BGSU has made substantial improvement in political participation, with the voter turnout rate increasing by 11.9 percentage points in the 2020 general election compared to the 2016 general election. BGSU even passed the voter turnout rate by all institutions by 1.6 percentage points. This assessment data demonstrates a consistent lack of voter turnout among STEM and business students at BGSU, which we hope to address over time by implementing strategies to engage these students.

BGSU Votes is currently in the process of incorporating a new challenge to unify students of all political parties. We will begin collaborating with Unify America to incorporate the Unify Challenge for our students to ensure that all ideas and thoughts are being heard. We would like to offer this challenge to professors to allow their students to participate, along with other students in the Marvin Center. Additionally, there are several areas where democratic engagement is incorporated into 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 & Civic Engagement also incorporates civic engagement into their leadership development programs open to all students.

There have historically been barriers to voting access across the United States and at BGSU. However, the NSLVE data shows that not-in-person voting, or voting by mail, increased by 10 percentage points since the 2016 general election. This is helpful for BGSU Votes to know, because it shows us that our students are interested in voting by mail and may need more information on it. Our goal is to ensure that all students know of their voting options for all future elections.

Lastly, BGSU is well-positioned to increase democratic participation thanks to the wide variety of resources from our national partners. Both funding and educational resources have been instrumental in growing the BGSU Votes team and making BGSU a more civically engaged campus.

COVID-19 Impact:

Like many institutions, COVID-19 has affected our campus and our team's plans. Our team has been in more of a reactive than proactive state since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. Our goal is to continue using what we have learned from the pandemic in future events and how we reach our students. We will continue to utilize social media, campus updates, and emails to reach students and get information to campus about future elections.

Although we are fully back in person, we feel that it is necessary to keep this online presence to ensure that we are reaching the most amount of our campus as possible and we will be prepared if our university is shut down due to COVID-19 again.

Objective:

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

Areas of Focus:

1. Voter registration
2. Voter education and skill development
3. Get out the vote
4. Removing barriers to voting
5. Civic engagement and political participation
6. Reaching more diverse students

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. Build stronger collaborations and relationships with identity-based and underrepresented groups on campus and increase diversity of our leadership team and volunteer base.
3. Position BGSU as a leader and resource for voter engagement work regionally and nationally.
4. Removing voting barriers by providing education about how to get off-campus students' proof of address, revisiting a conversation about allowing rides to the polls, and ensuring we are using all mediums to provide information to students, faculty, staff, and our community.
5. Establishing the Unify Challenge on our campus as a regular part of BGSU Votes, the Marvin Center, and classroom experience.

Goals for 2022-2023:

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

1. Voter Participation
 - a. 50% voter participation in 2022 midterm election
 - i. Our voter participation rate for the 2018 midterm election was 35%
 - b. Maintain 75% voter registration, but aim for 85% voter registration rate
 - i. Our voter registration rate for the 2018 midterm election was 75.8%
2. Classroom & Community Outreach
 - a. Present to at least 500 people through classrooms or organizations over the course of the 2022-2023 year
 - b. Engage with over 2,000 people through presentations, voter registration efforts, orientations, and events over the course of the 2022-2023 year
3. Social Media
 - a. Increase Instagram followers to 600
 - b. Increase Facebook followers to 500 and start using regularly
 - c. Increase Twitter followers to 300 and start using regularly
 - d. Create a TikTok account and reach 100 followers
 - e. Get more volunteers involved with promoting social media posts
4. Volunteers
 - a. Continue growing our Thompson Voter Engagement team in collaboration with the Thompson Family Scholars
 - b. Create a larger volunteer team outside of the Thompson scholars
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
 - c. Work towards a more diverse leadership team
6. Communications
 - a. Begin to utilize Andrew Goodman Foundation texting platform once again and create a texting schedule
 - b. Begin sending out monthly emails to students as reminders for deadlines and election information
 - c. Updating BGSU Votes website to ensure all information is up-to-date and accurate
7. Faculty Engagement
 - a. Send out Canvas portal for voting and elections for professors to use in their classes
 - b. Present to faculty, especially STEM and business faculty, to explain the importance of students voting
8. Coalitions and Collaborations
 - a. Collaborate and work more closely with diverse student leaders and student organizations
 - b. Attend more national partner events and advertise events to campus

Initiatives for 2022-2023:

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

Summer 2022:

University Orientation

Description: Interact with new students and their guests during university orientation, which takes place throughout the summer. Educate families about voting procedures, options available to students, and upcoming issues and elections.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, civic engagement and voter education

Ohio Campus Compact

Description: Develop a presentation about BGSU Votes and our voter participation efforts throughout the pandemic and present at the Ohio Campus Compact alongside other voter engagement organizations or institutions.

Coalition Members: Ohio Campus Compact, others TBD

Focus Area(s): Voter education, civic engagement

New Student Move-In

Description: Provide a one-sheet resource to all students moving in about BGSU Votes, how to register to vote, and who to contact with any questions. Also providing a space for students to come and register to vote in person or ask questions in person while they are getting settled at BGSU. Ensure that new students are aware of our presence on campus.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, voter education, civic engagement

Student Leader Retreat

Description: Create a presentation for student leaders describing what resources BGSU Votes provides for them. Go over what BGSU Votes is and does, what their roles will be for the academic year, and go over any concerns they may have.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter education and skill development

BGSU Votes Website Updates

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 for 2022 midterm election
- Highlights of political engagement on campus and upcoming events/opportunities
- List of potential ways to increase understanding of political engagement

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter education and skill development

Fall 2022:

Campus Fest & Expand Your Horizons Fair

Description: Have a BGSU Votes table during these events, which typically attracts over 5,000 students looking to join organizations or just to see what is going on around campus.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, voter education, civic engagement

Civic Holidays

Description: Have BGSU Votes tables across campus to either register voters, educate students about voting, help them request absentee ballots, or guide them to their local board of elections to vote early during the civic holidays, which include:

- National Voter Registration Day: September 20, 2022
- National Voter Education Week: October 3-7, 2022
- Early Vote Day: October 28, 2022

National Voter Education Week will also include several events surrounding voter education including:

- The Unify Challenge
- Election information session with the Jerome Library at BGSU

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, student organizations, Undergraduate Student Government

Focus Area(s): Voter education, voter registration, civic engagement, GOTV

Unify Challenge

Description: The Unify Challenge is a challenge hosted by Unify America to facilitate an online video conversation between people who vote differently than each other to have a guided discussion about certain topics. This helps students better understand each other and where people who are different from them are coming from.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement, Unify America, BGSU faculty and staff

Focus Area(s): Voter education

Civic Discourse Event

Description: The topic of discussion will be determined closer to the date of the event. Civic discourse events give students a safe environment to discuss difficult topics without judgement and a space to learn and hear new perspectives.

- Constitution Day – Hosted with Office of Campus Activities

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, student organizations

Focus Area(s): Civic engagement

Midterm Watch Party

Description: Work with campus partners including Undergraduate Student Government, diverse student unions, and University Activities Organization to host a Midterm Watch Party. This will include:

- Watching the results of the midterm election
- Games
- Snacks and drinks
- Other activities

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement, USG, UAO, student unions

Focus Area(s): 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, on-campus organizations

Focus Area(s): Voter education, voter registration

Spring 2023:

MLK Day of Service – Library of Congress Transcribe-a-thon

Description: BGSU holds MLK Day of Service each year, and BGSU Votes started our own project for the day in 2021. The Library of Congress offers on their website a “transcribe-a-thon” for large groups that want to transcribe documents for them. We will be hosting this in the Jerome Library on BGSU’s campus.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement, Jerome Library

Focus Area(s): Civic engagement

Campus Fest

Description: Have a BGSU Votes table during this event, which typically attracts over 5,000 students looking to join organizations or just to see what is going on around campus.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, voter education, civic engagement

I <3 Democracy Week

Description: Share “voting valentines” in person and on social media to show our love for democracy during the week of Valentine’s Day.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes

Focus Area(s): Civic engagement

Speaker Series

Description: Series of events hosting guest speakers on a panel to discuss topics such as the importance of youth voting.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement, USG, student organizations

Focus Area(s): Civic engagement

2022-2023 Action Plan

Description: Develop an Action Plan for the next academic year. Focus on transition materials for new graduate assistant taking over BGSU Votes.

Coalition Members: All

Focus Area(s): All

Reporting:

This action plan will ultimately be shared on the BGSU Votes website in Fall 2022 so that it is accessible to all students, administrators, and community members. The NSLVE reports that were used to inform this action plan will also be available on the BGSU Votes website.

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, 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.

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. 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, since BGSU Votes is currently run by a student in the Master of Public Administration program, the BGSU Votes team would like to collaborate with the 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 2022 and throughout the 2022-2023 academic year. After much success increasing democratic and political participation through the 2018 midterm election and the 2020 general election, this team is hopeful we will meet similar success for the 2022 midterm election. We are thankful for all the support we have received from our national partners, including the Andrew Goodman Foundation, Campus Vote Project, Voter Friendly Campus, SLSV, ALL IN Democracy Challenge, and many more. With their support, BGSU is a more civically engaged university creating public good.