



## **Bridgewater State University 2020 Action Plan**

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### **Executive Summary:**

Bridgewater State University works in an interdisciplinary and interdivisional fashion to offer events and opportunities that educate, inform, engage, and empower our students and broader community about civic and democratic engagement. The Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice (MRISJ) is positioned to convene and help weave together civic engagement efforts at BSU with campus and community partners. We are actively building a coalition of stakeholders to guide the development of a civic and voting action plan for the 2020 election season. This coalition and the emerging framework will serve as a foundation to build upon beyond the current election cycle.

The civic action plan which we will develop more fully will focus on innovative ways to engage and educate students and the community on the importance of civic participation, civic action, and social responsibility at the local, state and national levels of democracy. It will prioritize education, awareness, and action regarding the issues of systemic racism and bias that impact civic and democratic pathways and opportunities and will develop strategies to identify and remove barriers. This will be an ongoing priority and will be embedded in the institutional strategic plan.

Because of COVID19, all academic year 2020 events have been hosted virtually and have been widely accessible to all students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community members – including the BSU College for Seniors. To borrow from our colleagues at Campus Compact, an objective for these programs has been to “improve community life and educate students on civic and social responsibility”.

Our University’s civic action plan will:

- Develop knowledge about the importance of civic engagement, civic education, and civic action
- Engage in the emerging work of citizen professionals
- Cultivate voter agency and provide information about the voting process
- Mobilize the community to engage in the democratic process on a local, state and national level
- Increase voter registration and voting rates of BSU students.

### **Leadership:**

Our leadership team includes the following:

The civic action plan will be developed by a coalition of faculty, staff, administrators, students, community and national partners, and local election officials. Dr. Mary K. Grant and Laura Mulvey of the Martin Richard Institute will play key roles in convening and organizing the work of the leadership team - currently the leadership team is made up of:

- Courtney Crowley, Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellow, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice
- Vinny DeMacedo, Director, Office of Regional Partnerships, Former State Senator
- Kaitlyn Dyleski, Assistant Director of Operations, Center for Student Engagement
- Dr. Mary K. Grant, Senior Administrative Fellow for Civics and Social Justice, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice
- Dr. Jo Hoffman, Associate Professor in Elementary and Early Childhood Education and, College of Education and Health Sciences and Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice Faculty Associate, Academic Affairs
- Dr. Karim Ismaili, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Academic Affairs
- Dr. Cindy Kane, Special Assistant to the Provost for Strategic Initiatives, Academic Affairs

- Dr. Mark Kemper, Professor and Director of Democratic Governance and Leadership, Political Science, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Dr. Michael Kryzaneck, Professor Emeritus, Political Science, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Matt Miller, Director, Center for Student Engagement
- Laura Mulvey, Program Manager, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice
- Dr. Luis Paredes, Director, Office of Institutional Diversity
- Anna Rice, President, Student Government Association
- Demi Riendeau, Student Civic Fellow, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice
- Michael Somers, Director, Library Services
- Jennifer Thibodeau, Director Community Service, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice
- Jasmine Won, Student Civic Fellow, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice

### **Commitment:**

Our campus has signed the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

Our campus has used the following methods to communicate with students about the election:

By email, By posting on institutional social media channels, Mobile App, Faculty Online Learning Toolkit Materials, Website, Educational Events

### **Landscape:**

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Voting Rates: • 2016 Presidential: 61.1% (Based on NSLVE) • 2018 Midterms: 42.1% (Based on NSLVE)  
 Due to COVID campus is currently de-densified 1,200 are living on campus. Undergraduate students: 9,463\* Graduate students: 1,418\* Total Enrollment: 10,881\* Based off of Fall 2019\* In Fall 2019, 59% of the 9,463 enrolled undergraduate students were female, and 27% were students of color. Specifically, 71% undergraduate students were White, 12% were Black, 8% were Hispanic, 5% were of two or more races, 2% were Asian, <1% were international students, <1% were Native American, and <1% were Native Hawaiian, and 2% were unreported. 37% of undergraduates were considered low-income in Fall 2019, and 53% were first-generation students. Regarding age, approximately 84% students were between 17-24 years old, 16% were older than 25. The average age of undergraduate students in Fall 2019 was 22. Regarding the 1,418 graduate students enrolled in Fall of 2019, 74% were female, and 13% were students of color. More specifically, 83% were White, 6% were Black, 3% were Hispanic, 2% were international students, 2% were of two or more races, 1% were Asian, <1% were Native American, <1% were Native Hawaiian, and 2% were unreported. 26% of graduate students were between 17-24 years old, and 74% were over the age of 25. The mean age of graduate students in Fall 2019 was 31.

### **Goals:**

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

In response to the 2020 election faculty, staff, and students have connected to national and statewide efforts on civic and voter engagement. We have created a roadmap and framework around voter education, engagement and civil discourse.

#### **Short Term Goals:**

- Develop knowledge about the importance of civic engagement and voting.
- Cultivate voter agency among a diverse population and provide accurate and up to date information about how to navigate the 2020 voting process.
- Mobilize the community to engage in the democratic process on a local, state and national level.
- Develop a campus strategy for debriefing and coalescing post-election.
- Increase voter registration and voting rates of BSU students.

Long Term Goals for 2022 and beyond:

- Embed civics education, engagement, and action into University strategic plan, academics, and campus life.
- Offer multiple pathways through which students will develop knowledge about the importance of civic education, engagement, and action.
- Prioritize education, awareness, and action regarding the issues of systemic racism and bias that impact civic and democratic pathways and opportunities – develop strategies to identify and remove barriers.
- Inform students about how to navigate local, state and national voting processes.
- Cultivate voter agency in students and all other BSU community members.
- Encourage students to mobilize their networks to engage in the democratic process.
- Increase voter registration and voting rates of BSU students.
- Offer opportunities for students and other community members to engage in civic action, social change, and racial justice work.

**Strategy:**

Our campus has used the following strategies and organized the following events:

In-person voter registration drives, Classroom voter registration presentations (in-person or virtual), Virtual voter registration drives (e.g. Couch Party text banking events), Virtual voter education events (e.g. film screening, debates, lectures series, etc.)

We have have created an accessible webpage (<https://www.bridgew.edu/bsuvotes>) dedicated to providing accurate, up-to-date, and easily accessible information about the voting process, voting deadlines, and a calendar of civic engagement events on campus and in the community. We have utilized social media and the University Mobile App to widely share important voting information.

The MRISJ has developed a faculty integration toolkit which includes PowerPoint slides and sample language for faculty to share on their online teaching sites, in virtual classrooms, and through direct communication with students. We have convened campus leaders to implement pre- and post-election plans to inform, mobilize and support students through the voting process.

The Division of Academic Affairs has organized workshops and panel discussions and has hosted community leaders to share their expertise on voting trends, legislation, the voting process, and statewide ballot questions. The Division of Student Affairs has engaged the Student Government Association in publicizing information about voting and ballot questions. Additionally, Student Affairs has organized discussion events to talk about relevant voting topics, arranged for Resident Assistants to host in person voter registration drives and voting focused programs, and have promoted national events to increase voter registration and voter agency.

The Marketing & Communications department has developed and widely shared media content to encourage a culture of civic engagement and increase voter turnout.

MRISJ Civic Fellows along with our Newman Fellow (students working with the MRISJ) have developed a resource guide and programming to support post-election conversations. A menu of post-election events and opportunities has been organized to educate and support students after the 2020 election. Efforts have been focused on providing education, space to process and connect with community, and ways to continue their civic involvement.

**NSLVE:**

Bridgewater State University has authorized NSLVE.

**Evaluation:**

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

Participation levels, communication outreach, and campus wide and alumni surveys will be used to measure the success of our action plan.

We will track participation levels at civic events and program through attendance lists which we will use to gather student demographic and curricular information. We will monitor our outreach measures by tracking communications with the university community. Our communication efforts will include direct emails, campus announcements, newsletters and social media engagement.

In the past our university has evaluated civic engagement through alumni surveys, and through the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey, a national survey conducted by the higher education research institute of UCLA. Alumni surveys have inquired about the importance of civic engagement in alumni's lives and the rate of how much BSU contributed to their knowledge in the area of civic engagement. The CIRP has surveyed incoming first year students about their level of participation in the following activities: demonstrating for a cause (e.g. boycott, rally, protest), performing volunteer work, voting in a student election, discussing politics, publicly communicating their opinion about a cause (e.g. blog, email, petition), and helping to raise money for a cause or campaign. Additionally, the CIRP assessed the importance of influencing social values and keeping up to date with political affairs, the likelihood that participants would participate in student government in college; likelihood that respondents would participate in volunteer or community service work.

We will continue to incorporate civic engagement focused questions on campus wide assessments, to measure our progress on goals identified in our strategic plan and civic action plan. We will integrate civic action, social justice, and racial justice work in our planning process and identify ways to evaluate engagement strategies and outcomes. We will work collaboratively with Institutional Research and other campus and community partners.

**Reporting:**

We will report our campus action plan and NSLVE reports in the following ways:

Our action plan will be posted on our campus website and shared with the campus community. Our campus NSLVE reports will be posted on our campus website and shared. with the campus community.