



## **Bridgewater State University 2022 Action Plan**

**Developed by: Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice**

### **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 2022 and 2024 election seasons and beyond. This coalition and the emerging framework will serve as a foundation to build upon beyond the current election cycle.

The civic action plan 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 that is embedded in the institutional strategic plan.

Our university's civic action plan will:

- Develop knowledge about the importance of democratic engagement, civic learning, and civic participation and 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:**

The Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice plays a key role in convening, organizing, and promoting the civic engagement work of campus and community leaders.

The leaders on campus and in our community who are actively involved in civic engagement at Bridgewater State University include (alphabetical by first name):

- Aidan Mordas, Undergraduate student, President, Student Government Association
- Dr. Aeon Skoble, Professor, Philosophy, and Bartlett Chair in Free Speech and Expression, and Co-coordinator, Interdisciplinary Minor in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics,

- Dr. Brian Frederick, Professor and Chairperson Political Science, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Bridgewater Communities for Civil Rights, Community Organization (multiple people)
- Carrie Provost, Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellow, Undergraduate Student, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice, Division of Outreach and Engagement
- Civic Justice Fellows, Cohort of 3-6 Undergraduate Students, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice
- Dr. Deniz Leuenberger, Interim Vice President, Division of Outreach and Engagement, Vice President of Strategy and Planning, Chief of Staff, and Professor of Political Science
- Diane Bell, Interim Assistant Vice President, Division of Outreach and Engagement and Director of Internship Program Office
- Fernanda Ferreira, Professor and acting Chairperson, Global Languages and Literatures, College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Faculty Associate, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice
- Fred W. Clark, Jr., President
- Jennifer Reid, Director of Professional, Corporate, & Community Education, College of Continuing Studies
- Jennifer Thibodeau, Director of Programs, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice, Division of Outreach and Engagement
- Jill Beckwith, Executive Director, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice, Division of Outreach and Engagement
- Dr. Jo Hoffman, Associate Professor in Elementary and Early Childhood Education, College of Education and Health Sciences and Patricia Bartlett Endowed Professor of Civic Education and Engagement
- Dr. Joe Oravec, Vice President, Division of Student Life
- Dr. Jordon Barkalow, Associate Professor of Political Science and Co-Coordinator, Interdisciplinary Minor in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Dr. Joyce Rain Anderson, Professor, English Department and Native American and Indigenous Studies Coordinator, and Faculty Associate for the Pine Ridge Partnership, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Kaitlyn Dyleski, Associate Director of Operations, Center for Student Engagement, Division of Student Life
- Dr. Karim Ismaili, Executive Vice President and Provost, Academic Affairs
- Dr. Kevin Donnelly, Professor, Graduate Chairperson, and Co-Coordinator, Democratic Governance and Leadership Program, Political Science

- Kevin Kidd, Dean, Library Services, Division of Academic Affairs
- Dr. Kevin McGowan, Associate Professor, Elementary and Early Childhood Education, College of Education and Health Sciences, and Academic Director Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice
- Kristen Romanelli, Web Content Manager, Division of Enrollment, Marketing & Communications
- Laura Mulvey, Community Programs Manager, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice, Division of Outreach and Engagement
- Dr. Luis Paredes, Director, Office of Institutional Diversity, Division of Student Success and Diversity
- Dr. Luzi Shi, Associate Professor, Criminal Justice, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Faculty Associate, Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice
- Dr. Mark Kemper, Professor and Director of Democratic Governance and Leadership Program, Political Science, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Matt Miller, Director, Center for Student Engagement, Division of Student Life
- Dr. Melinda Tarsi, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science & Master of Public Administration Program, and Coordinator, Community Engaged Teaching and Scholarship (CETS)
- Dr. Michael Kryzanek, Professor Emeritus, Political Science, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Paul Jean, Vice President, Division of Enrollment, Marketing & Communications
- Shaneé LeBaron, Assistant Director, Residence Life and Housing, Division of Student Life
- Dr. Sidita Kushi, Assistant Professor, Political Science, College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Co-Coordinator Democratic Governance and Leadership Program
- Dr. Tom Tong-Ching Wu, Interim Dean College of Education and Health Sciences
- Victoria Field, Assistant Director, Center for Student Engagement, Division of Student Life
- Vinny DeMacedo, Special Advisor to the President, President's Office

**Commitment:**

Bridgewater State University has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2020.

The importance of civic engagement at BSU is reflected in BSU's strategic plan, which includes a special focus on Preparing Citizens. The strategic plan lays out achievable tasks to enhance civic engagement at BSU including 1) facilitate faculty leadership of service learning, civic engagement, and community service opportunities for students and 2) prepare citizens for civic and community leadership in Southeast Massachusetts. As future strategic plans are

developed, civic engagement will be a pillar to our work and integrated throughout the curricular and co-curricular experiences.

Our campus has used the following methods to communicate with students about the upcoming election and voting process: email, institutional social media channels, Mobile App, faculty online learning toolkit materials, civic engagement website, BSU votes website, educational events.

Bridgewater State University also has two unique endowed professorships relating to civic engagement.

In December 2021, BSU announced the establishment of the Bartlett Endowed Professorship for Civic Education and Engagement and appointed Dr. Jo Hoffman, Associate Professor of Elementary and Early Childhood Education. In this position, Dr. Hoffman helps to develop enhanced civics education tools in the region with PreK-12 partners, BSU students, and community stakeholders. She supports students, educators, and interested members of the greater community to learn about civics and government through historical exploration and current contexts and to realize their capacity to make change and participate in a healthy democracy. Additionally, she collaborates with education partners, statewide civic-focused organizations, and other programs working toward like-minded civic learning goals.

Professor of Philosophy Dr. Aeon J. Skoble was named in March 2022 as the inaugural Bartlett Chair in Free Speech and Expression at BSU. In this role, Dr. Skoble will be developing and participating in an annual forum about the role of freedom of expression in a liberal education; create a free speech and expression speaker series; and identify co-sponsorship opportunities with other BSU organizations to foster cross-campus collaboration on the intersection of free speech with other important values and priorities. Additionally, he will serve as a consulting resource for junior faculty to create dialogue and viewpoint diversity on campus; organize faculty panels on related themes; and create leadership and organizational experiences for students in this critical area.

### **Landscape:**

Bridgewater State University is a public 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2020.

Our latest campus demographic data (\*Fall 2021):

- Undergraduate students: 8,369\*
- Graduate students: 1,573\*
- Total Enrollment: 9,942\*

As of Fall 2021, 59% of the 8,369 enrolled undergraduate students were female, and 28% were students of color. Specifically, 71% of undergraduate students were White, 10% were Black, 8.3% were Hispanic, 5% were of two or more races, 2% were Asian, <1% were international students, <1% were Native American, <1% were Native Hawaiian, and 1% were unreported. In Fall 2021, 32% of undergraduates were considered low-income and 50% were first-generation students. Regarding age, approximately 85% of undergraduate students were between 17-24 years old, 15% were older than twenty-five. The average age of undergraduate students in Fall 2021 was twenty-two.

Among the 1,573 graduate students enrolled in Fall of 2021, 77% were female, and 15% were students of color. More specifically, 81% of graduate students were White, 5% were Black, 4% were Hispanic, 1.5% were international students, 3% were of two or more races, 2% were Asian, <1% were Native American, <1% were Native Hawaiian, and 2% were unreported. In Fall 2021, 22% of graduate students were considered low-income and 44% were first-generation students. As for age ranges, 26% of graduate students were between 17-24 years old, and 74% were over the age of twenty-five. The average age of graduate students in Fall 2021 was thirty-one.

In terms of where our students reside, 5.6% of undergraduates are from out of state and 72% of all BSU students are commuters.

Our campus voting data:

Bridgewater State University has authorized NSLVE. Our institution has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals: 2016 Silver, 2018 Gold, 2020 Silver. We continue to use our NSLVE data to acknowledge any participation gaps by race or area of study and use this information to inform our goals and strategies to close those gaps.

Our institution had a 2020 campus voting rate of 69.3%.

Our institution had a 2020 voter registration rate of 86.3%.

Our institution had a 2018 voter turnout rate of 40.6%.

Our institution had a 2018 voter registration rate of 76.5%.

### **Goals:**

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

- Increase student voter turnout rate to 50% in 2022 and 80% in 2024.
- Increase student voter registration rate to 80% in 2022 and 90% in 2024.

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 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.

Long Term Goals for 2022 and beyond:

- Embed civics education, engagement, and action into the 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.
- Cultivate voter agency in students and all other BSU community members.
- Encourage students to mobilize their networks to engage in the democratic process.
- 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:

Offered in-person voter registration drives, scheduled in alignment with National Voter Registration Day and Student Government elections.

Held an in-person “Get Out the Vote Fair” in coordination with National Voter Education Week.

Held voter education events including film screenings, guest speakers, and workshops hosted by the Martin Richard Institute for Social Justice, the Democratic Governance and Leadership Program, and the Political Science department.

During the early voting period (late October), we will be sponsoring a community standout, including students, with a local organization to encourage community members to vote.

The MRISJ created and maintains an accessible webpage (<https://www.bridgew.edu/bsuvotes>) dedicated to providing accurate, up-to-date, and easily accessible information about the voting process and voting deadlines. We have utilized social media and the University Mobile App to widely share important voting information.

Additionally, BSU have launched a new Civic Engagement website that was a collaborative effort across divisions and departments (<https://www.bridgew.edu/civic-engagement>). The website provides a place to share the opportunities offered at BSU with a broad audience and hosts a calendar of civic engagement events on campus and in the community.

The MRISJ has developed and shared a faculty integration toolkit promoting voting that includes PowerPoint slides and sample language for faculty to share on their online teaching sites, in virtual classrooms, and through direct communication with students.

The Division of Academic Affairs has organized events to increase knowledge about statewide ballot questions. The Division of Student Life has engaged the Student Government Association in publicizing information about voting and ballot questions.

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

collaborated with campus partners to increase visibility of civic engagement content on internal and external facing websites.

MRISJ employs undergraduate students to serve as Civic Justice Fellows and hosts a Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellow to engage students in peer-to-peer education on voting, and other important community issues.

### **Reporting:**

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website (<https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/bridgewater-state-university>) and is posted on the Democratic Engagement section of BSU's new civic engagement website (<https://www.bridgew.edu/civic-engagement/democratic-engagement>)

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our NSLVE reports which are posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website and on the Democratic Engagement section of BSU's new civic engagement website (<https://www.bridgew.edu/civic-engagement/democratic-engagement>)

We will also widely share our campus action plan and NSLVE reports with the campus community through internal communication and email.

### **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 consult and analyze our Campus NSLVE data to inform future programming. We will track participation levels at civic events and programs 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 BSU contributed to their knowledge 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.

BSU 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 work collaboratively with Institutional Research, the Office of Assessment, and

other campus and community partners. We will integrate civic action, social justice, and racial justice work in our planning process and identify ways to evaluate engagement strategies and outcomes and use them to improve our future civic engagement efforts.