



ALL IN Campus
Democracy
Challenge



Bryant University

Bryant University 2024 Nonpartisan Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Compiled by: Tristan M. Hightower, PhD¹

Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Bryant Votes – a committee of students, faculty, and staff at Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island for the 2024 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 election across campus. The goals for Bryant University for the 2024 election are increasing stakeholder engagement (e.g., administration and other campus leaders), providing a full suite of programming related to nonpartisan civic engagement, and strategic dissemination of voter education tools.

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following persons representing faculty, academic staff, athletic staff, and students:

Ilisabeth Bornstein -- Chair, Lecturer, Legal Studies
Brooke Bock, Class of 2025, Student and President of Bryant Law Society
Laura Kohl, Director of Library Services, Krupp Library
Ilisabeth Bornstein, Lecturer, Legal Studies
Dymond Bush, Research and Instruction Librarian, Krupp Library
Mary Anne Clark, Lecturer, Political Science
Kelly Ford, Class of 2026, Student

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Tristan Hightower, Assistant Professor, Political Science
Drew Hutchinson, Director of Student Activities, Student Life
Stefano Luis, Class of 2027, Student
Britt King, Assistant Director for Inclusive Excellence, Athletics
Rosemary McIlroy, Class of 2025, Student
Nicholas Olszewski, Assistant Director, Student Life
Toby Sagar, Class of 2026, Student
Jana Valentine, Assistant Vice President, Student Life

Commitment:

Bryant University's mission statement is "to educate and inspire students to discover their passion and become innovative leaders with character around the world." We believe that to be an innovative leader means also to be civically engaged. Bryant's general education curriculum — known as the Impact Core — gives students a holistic education rooted in social impact, while also preparing graduates for successful and purpose-driven careers. Through the Impact Core Bryant takes a unique approach to the standard educational requirements by embedding the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into our curriculum. This program differentiator helps our students make sense of their place in the world — and find their path to success within it. Designed as a cohesive program rather than a series of disconnected courses, the Impact Core uses the framework of social impact to bring the curriculum together, centering around the Sustainable Development Goals to help students understand how they fit within a global society. To this end, we believe civic engagement is a critical part of being both a citizen of the United States and a citizen of the world.

In 2024, we began a full suite of voter education events in addition to enlisting the support of individual campus units. Media promoting the importance of nonpartisan civic engagement has been, or will be, displayed prominently on campus through physical flyers and digital signage. The Departments of Politics, Law, and Society, and History, Literature, and the Arts have both internally promoted Bryant Votes events to students. The Deans of the Colleges of Arts & Sciences and Business have both publicly supported our efforts and internally communicated them to our faculty. The President of Bryant University has filmed social media "spots" speaking on the importance of civic engagement and the importance of voting.

At the time of this report, Bryant Votes has scheduled a meeting with the president to inform him about signing the [ALL IN Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation](#).

This is the first action plan that Bryant University has developed for ALL IN.

Landscape:

Situated in the northeast of Rhode Island, we draw a regional student population from this state along with Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. Because of this, and despite our small size, there is considerable variation in the specific deadlines applicable to each student in terms of registration and voting. To address this, we have developed educational materials and invested in platforms that allow us to reach students with tailored information based on their primary residence.

Bryant University is a private 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2024. Our institution has a total enrollment of approximately 3,674 students. Our institution consists of approximately 76% white students, 16% nonwhite students, and 6% international students (based on 2019 enrollment data). Approximately 62% of students are male. Approximately 87% of students live on campus.

Our 2020 voting data:

- Approximately 94% of our student population was eligible to vote
- 84% of our eligible students registered to vote
- 76% of those registered voted
- This yields a total voting rate (of those eligible) of 64%
- We slightly outperformed national averages for white voters but slightly underperformed national averages for non-white voters
- Only 16% of those who voted did so in-person, likely reflecting the diversity of home states among our students
- As a primarily undergraduate institution (PUI), approximately 87% of our students are between the ages of 18 and 21; of those, the voting rate was 60%

Bryant University has authorized the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement.

Goals:

Our institution's nonpartisan democratic engagement goals are:

- Have our president sign the ALL IN Higher Education President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation by September 30, 2024
- Have our president create a video "call to action"
- Increase the frequency and promotion of student engagement voter events
- Increase our student registration rate to over 90%

Strategy:

Bryant University will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation:

- Tabling for National Voter Registration Day at the library
- Plan, fund, and promote a series of civic engagement-focused events, featuring the following speakers/topics:

- Laura Dove, Chair of the James Madison Foundation, to speak on the importance of the Constitution in modern times (September 19)
- Robert Rock (RI Deputy Secretary of State) and Kathy Placencia (RI Director of Elections), to speak on election integrity (September 24)
- Evan Stewart (Assistant Professor of Sociology, UMASS-Boston), to speak on religion and politics, September 25
- Evelyn Pérez-Verdía (We Are Más) to speak on countering disinformation, October 16
- Hosting talks on ballot initiatives during Bryant’s Day of Understanding in addition to tabling a voter education booth at the student center (October 10)
- Utilize student social media team to engage students about voting and inform them how to register
- Post digital and physical signage throughout campus with QR codes to learn about voting

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

- Track the number of students that attend events
- Use “Motivote” software to track when and to what extent new students are engaging with our resources
- Solicit feedback from faculty across campus
- Conduct post-election interviews with focus groups
- Review the 2024 NSLVE when it is available (Bryant has already authorized the report)

Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN’s website, distributed to the president’s office, and the offices of the deans. Bryant Votes Committee Members will have access to the report and the ability to share with stakeholders.