

**Bucknell University Campus Action Plan
BisonVotes Democracy Challenge 2020**



Executive Summary: The Democracy Challenge 2020 represents the first time Bucknell University is consolidating its campus-wide electoral engagement activities, using the Office of Civic Engagement as the central organizer. Our program name, Bison Votes, is our first, campus-wide effort to collaborate across university departments, engage students as researchers, planners and implementers, as well as include the surrounding community beyond the League of Women's Voters, while leveraging existing student involvement across issues of interest to them.

Our Goal is to increase Bucknell University electoral participation by 10% in the 2020 election and encourage greater community understanding while decreasing polarity. We are committed to nonpartisan electoral participation and a radically inclusive vision for community engagement.

The Leadership Team launching Bison Votes includes Theresa Cusimano, J.D. Director of the Office of Civic Engagement working in partnership with student intern, Emily Goldman, as the Bison Votes Chair. We are excited to be working with the Chair of the Political Science Department, Scott Meinke, along with Kari Conrad from the Campus Activities Program, as well as interested student organizations including the Bucknell Student Government, College Democrats, Independents and Republicans. Community Partners include the League of Women Voters, the Conflict Mediation Center, Secretary of State, County Elections Board, candidates, The Hub, Lewisburg Green New Deal, Redistricting efforts, Rise, etc.

In addition to our campus we will reach out to Penn State Main campus, Susquehanna and Bloomsberg universities as well as Luzerne Community College.

We will engage our mascot, Bucky the Bison, to help call attention to Bison Votes, especially during new student orientation in August 2020. We also plan to set up swings around campus to launch the Exercise Your Power to Swing voter registration campaign.

Bucknell's Self Assessment began in Fall 2019 and continues as we host one-on-one and small group meetings with various stakeholders to better understand efforts to date and areas ripe for growth and ready for improvement. We also reached out to our colleagues at CIRCLE to pull the

PA and Central PA voting data sets to extrapolate a bottom line for Bucknell University and regional benchmarks for comparison.

The Strategic Plan for Accomplishing the Goal of increased electoral participation across Bucknell includes the following Action Planning Steps for Fall 2019, Spring 2020 and Fall 2020: In Fall 2019 we've been

- 1) continuing to meet with campus stakeholders, one-one one to assess previous efforts and convene them as a group to identify areas for growth and improvement. We've asked for inclusion in the campus-wide, Posse 2020 February conference to recruit students to assist with voter registration and community electoral engagement.
- 2) Identifying regional and state stakeholders to establish baselines, partnership possibilities and identify training and resource needs. We've met with the Hub and the League of Women Voters to begin this, Exercise the Power to Swing campaign.
- 3) Mobilizing above groups into action. Align with existing non-partisan movements and collaborate with volunteers. Utilizing competitive campus mini grant program for community based research with students and faculty. Secured funding for three awards of \$10,000 each. Some topics of interest include Redistricting, Climate Action, and Women's Rights.
- 4) Continuing to establish and refine clear timelines through November election, 2020.
- 5) Further articulating distinct roles and responsibilities of each partner, stakeholder and various leaders.
- 6) Delineating specific partner and academic responsibilities to advance the goals of Bison votes.

Bison Votes will then shift to a **Spring 2020** plan to include:

- 1) Host logo design competition, awarding the top design \$250 for its use in the campaign.
- 2) Create, populate Moodle and resource web page for Bison Votes.
- 3) Build community-wide e-distribution lists, phone numbers, and text lists.
- 4) Select and train student researchers and registration volunteers.
- 5) Coordinate community engaged learning with interested faculty
Having recruited initial interest at the POSSE February conference
- 6) Identify community-based partners where students can engage in a Listen Up, Community Canvassing Campaign.
- 7) Convene Teach In to further recruit Fall 2020 volunteers.
- 8) Host two community dialogues in partnership with the Conflict Mediation Center and perhaps CNN's Town Hall Mtgs. One theme we are considering is Extraction State.
- 9) Kick off on-campus voter registration drives for existing students, beginning in March 16th through end of April.
- 10) Plan and staff student voter registration drives for new students to launch at August orientations.

- 11) Recruit teams to attend the Pittsburg, Philly and Boston conferences to excite and encourage innovative approaches to electoral and democratic engagement.
- 12) Offer presentations at each of those venues in partnership with CIRCLE data.
- 13) Model community canvassing for students to have the opportunities to listen to differing opinions from Trump's base, Religious beliefs as they relate to politics and economic isolation points of view from the Coal Region, perhaps co-hosted by the Small Business Development Corporation. Invite Van Jones to co-host a regional dialogue in Central, PA.

Fall 2020:

- 1) Conduct student voter education to ensure understanding of where, when and how to vote
 - a) Especially during new student orientation in August 2020
 - b) Fall Fest the second week of September, in front of KLARC gym
 - c) at Welcome Week Tabling in front of Bison Cafe
 - d) within the Campus Cafeteria
 - e) Present at Res College meetings and Res Life meetings
- 2) Host issue forums, candidate debates, and electoral education opportunities utilizing issues that came up during the Listen Up campaign
- 3) Invite early absentee voting where possible
- 4) Host debate watch parties in student residences and in the student union.
- 5) Staff on-campus polling sites.
- 6) Offer and train community volunteers to assist with voting questions.
- 7) Convene election celebration on voting day.

Reporting and Evaluation

Conduct Pre vs Post Student and Campus Stakeholder participation surveys

Conduct random sampling to determine the knowledge of PA voter registration

Participate in the NSLVE survey

On-Line Central Hub

Together we will create a shared Moodle and web page with resources for students, Bucknellians and Central PA communities to access in support of voter registration, voter education and electoral engagement resources.

Academic Engagement

We will explore and/or pitch potential projects for the Senior Political Science Seminar.

Political Science Chair, Scott Meinke, teaches the Senior Seminar on Political Polarization.

Professor Luke Wood is interested in co-convening a regional dialog on how economic class relates to electoral engagement in Spring Semester, *POLS 205 Comparative Politics*.

We are also recruiting visiting Faculty, Professor Joe Wozniak.

We aspire to offer independent credit to any BU students interested in engaging and recruiting other students to engage in the 2020 election.

Public Policy

Invite the BU Institute for Public Policy to co-host campus dialogues, debates and discussions on issues, candidates and ballot initiatives in preparation for the 2020 election.

Student Engagement

We are engaging New Student Orientation, Director Kari Conrad and the Campus Activities Programs (CAPS) who manage student voter registration drives to expand their efforts by inviting teams of students to become trained in voter registration specific to Bucknell University in PA, as well as assisting other students in and out of state with absentee voting. We plan to invite all student political organizations to our January planning meeting.

We will create 3 actual swings outside on the lawn with large signs, “Exercise Your Power to Swing”:

- 1) outside of Bertrand Library Quad
- 2) in front of the Engineering Quad
- 3) in front of the ELC (the side facing 7th street)

These visual attractions will be staffed by voter registration and trained electoral education volunteers to help Bucknellians register, answer and election related questions and receive input for the various campus dialogues and potential debates.

Community Engagement

- The Lewisburg League of Women Voters offers fellowships to High School, College & Professionals. Bucknell will begin recruiting college fellows in Spring of 2020.

Susan Jordan from the Center for Conflict Mediation will also be partnering with Bucknell University to co-host two dialogues to engage in community conversations.

Research

BU is working in partnership with Tuft University's CIRCLE's to establish benchmarks for Central PA's voting history in Presidential election years. Student assistant, Emily Goldman will facilitate BU's participation in the NSLVE Survey

BU hopes to send a team to the June Frontiers of Democracy Conference at Tuft University's Boston campus in 2020. Here we want to share our plan with international democracy advocates to elicit their feedback for our final Fall 2020 push.