



# **Buena Vista University Democratic Engagement Action Plan: 2022 - 2023 academic year**

## **I. Executive Summary**

This action plan was developed by Megan Wescoat, Director of Community and Student Engagement to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at Buena Vista University. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2022 - 2023 academic year, on and around our campus in Storm Lake, Iowa.

The following groups will be leading this work at Buena Vista University in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections:

- Undergraduate Students
- Staff
- Faculty

## **II. Leadership**

Megan Wescoat, Director of Community and Student Engagement will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. She will be supported in this work by:

- Brayden Bergum, 2022-2023 Student Senate President
- Lisa Minick, Assistant Director of Community and Student Engagement
- Matthew Swiec, Residence Life Area Coordinator
- Brad Best, Political Science Faculty Member
- Admissions Representative- recruited by May 2023
- Center for Diversity and Inclusion employee – recruited by May 2023

The Civic Engagement Coalition is diverse and inclusive of:

- Representation from different parts of campus, including student leadership

The Coalition will meet once monthly.

### III. Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrate commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values. They state, "Inspiring students to serve, empower, and transform communities through education for service."

We also have had a senior leader commit to civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.

On campus, we've seen:

- Voter education resources

On campus, we've experienced:

- Voting in student body elections
- Civic Holiday events (such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day)

### IV. Landscape

The following tables provide a brief overview of the landscape of our campus. This information is based on data collected from 2021 when our total student enrollment was 1959.

#### Enrollment Data:

Undergraduate	Graduate	Full Time	Part Time
76.80%	23.00%	34.00%	66.00%

In-State	Out-of-State	International Students	On-Campus Residents	Commuter
80.00%	20.00%	1.00%	88.00%	12.00%

#### Gender Demographics:

Men	Women	Non-Binary	Transgender
32.00%	68.00%		

**Age:**

18-21	22-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50+
48.00%			18.00%	9.00%	2.00%

**Racial Demographics:**

Asian	American Indian / Alaska Native	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	2 or More Races
1.00%	1.00%	2.00%	9.00%	0.20%	80.00%	3.00%

**V. Goals**

Before setting our civic learning and democratic engagement goals on campus, we took the following information into consideration.

We know our campus faces the following challenges internally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- We don't have processes in place for registering large percentages of our students.
- The voter engagement work on our campus is very siloed within one office.

We also know our campus faces the following challenges externally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- We don't have a working relationship with our local election office.
- The political views of our students do not generally align with our institution's surrounding communities.

With that said, we know our campus has the following strengths when we approach our voter engagement work:

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan mention civic learning and democratic engagement.
- We have someone whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have a coalition of people who are positioned to implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have ways in which we communicate voting information to our students.
- We use the resources readily available to develop and implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have sustainable or consistent funding.

- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan.
- We are able to engage student leaders for the leadership of our initiative.
- We have working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement.

With this in mind, we have set the three goals that we would like to achieve over the next academic year:

- By September 2022, the Civic Engagement Coalition will be assembled with its members comprised of Community and Student Engagement, faculty, student representation, and Residence Life.
- Student Senate and the Civic Engagement Coalition will recognize Constitution Day on September 17, 2022.
- By mid-October 2022, the Civic Engagement Coalition will provide voter registration cards to students and employees.

We have also set three goals that we would like to achieve over the next five years:

- By May 2023, the Civic Engagement Coalition will have a working relationship with the local election office.
- By fall 2024, the Civic Engagement Coalition will provide voter information tables of candidates running for office and proposed legislation.
- The Civic Engagement Coalition will provide a watch party for the next Presidential race, November 2024.

## VI. Strategy

Below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months and years.

These are tactics that we **plan to do** in the **short term**:

- Begin piecing the committee together to be fully functioning by Fall 2022.
- Recognizing Constitution Day- September 17, 2022- giving out Constitution booklets to students.
- Host Voter Registration Days- October 17-18, 2022

These are tactics that we **want to do** in the **long term**:

- Provide voter information tables.
- Host election night watch party.

## **VII. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)**

Our campus has access to our National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data for 2020. In 2020 our registration rate was 87.9. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate decreased.

In 2020, our voting rate was 68.6 and our voting rate among registered students was 78.1. During this year, our voting rate was higher than the national average.

We need to increase our data in general, especially voting data by race.

## **VIII. Reporting & Evaluation**

We plan to share this Action Plan internally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Email to members of our campus coalition
- Email to campus administration

We plan to share this Action Plan externally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Post on the campus website

We will collect feedback on this plan by:

- Sending a post-election survey to students
- Regrouping with campus coalition to debrief and reflect
- Integrating feedback collection into individual campus efforts

We plan to evaluate our success by:

- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year
- Seeking out feedback throughout the action planning process from people outside of our action planning team
- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly