Case Western Reserve University's
Center for Civic Engagement & Learning
Voter Engagement Action Plan 2024-2025

Executive Summary

This Voter Engagement Action Plan serves as a roadmap of Case Western Reserve University (CWRU)'s voter engagement initiatives and is compiled by the Center for Civic Engagement & Learning (CCEL) in collaboration with campus and community stakeholders. The plan focuses on voter registration, voter education, and get out the vote activities that are designed to inform our students and empower them to register and exercise their right to vote.

The activities in this plan primarily take place from August 2024 through November 2024 with follow-up activities and evaluation during Spring 2025. CCEL will oversee implementation of the plan in collaboration with partners in our working group. We will also reach out to additional stakeholders as necessary as the plan evolves. Through the initiatives outlined in the plan, we look forward to advancing civic learning and engagement on our campus in ways that equip students with the resources, tools, and motivation to be life-long, active community members.

The implementation of this action plan for the 2024-2025 year will serve to address our primary long-term goal: increasing the percentage of registered CWRU student voters who vote to above 85% by 2028 through the development of intentional strategies to engage typically under-served student voter populations. We intend to conduct evaluation of the plan with the aim of continuous improvement as we approach the 2024 United States presidential election and create ways to continue democratic engagement beyond Election Day, and in the following election cycles.

Leadership

Working group members have been identified to fully leverage collaborative relationships. They have also been identified due to their key connection with students, connection to current voter engagement initiatives, and/or role as a stakeholder in voter engagement.

Membership in the working group is inclusive of a variety of departments, student organizations, campus partner organizations and stakeholders. This diversity of perspectives will strengthen the action plan, foster innovative ideas, and increase outreach across campus. Working group member departments are listed below. Additional members for the working group will be considered and invited as needed.

Students
- Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows
- CWRUVotes Student Volunteer Team
- CCEL Student Executive Council

Faculty
- Department of Political Science

Student Affairs
- Center for Civic Engagement & Learning (CCEL)
- Greek Life Office
- Office of Student Activities & Leadership
- Office of Graduate Student Life
- Office of Residence Life
- Office of Multicultural Affairs
- LGBT Center

Community/National Organizations
- Campus Vote Project

Local Elections Office
- Cuyahoga County Board of Elections

The Center for Civic Engagement & Learning (CCEL) coordinates and oversees efforts to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. More specifically, Rachel VanArsdale, Coordinator at CCEL and Elizabeth Banks, Director of CCEL, will oversee voter engagement activities, including coordination of events and resources, training of volunteers, and educational activities. They will also manage the working group. CCEL staff will be assisted by three Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows. In the event of any staff turnover, the work will be continued by the successor(s) to the Coordinator and Director positions in the CCEL office, as democratic engagement is tied to the essential functions of those roles.

The working group provides input from a variety of diverse units, in addition to specialized knowledge and expertise. Member responsibilities will include providing feedback on programming ideas as well as providing additional input on how to best serve students they work with. Members will also collaborate on events when possible and promote activities to students across campus, based on their specific areas.

The working group will engage CWRU's University Marketing and Communications Office for guidance around any print, broadcast and online media produced. University Technology will also need to be involved at times to aid in media sharing and boosting voter engagement through virtual means.

The working group will meet just prior to the start of the 2024 fall semester to share ideas and can drop into the CCEL office to obtain resource kits for the November General Election. The group will then check-in as needed in the time leading up to and after Election Day.

Commitment

The Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) Mission, Vision, and Core Values statements emphasize democratic engagement through commitment to broad interdisciplinary collaboration and civic engagement, promoting an inclusive culture of global citizenship that recognizes broad interdependence with diverse communities, including local stakeholders in the university's backyard (University Circle), Cleveland and communities across the country and around the world.

CWRU's current strategic plan kicked off in Fall 2019, titled *Think Big*. The "North Star" statement of the plan articulates the university's commitment to community and justice: "Case Western Reserve University is a high-impact research university that aspires to be a community where humanity, science and technology meet to create a just and thriving world." Four pathways lead to the North Star and guide decision-making. Pathway 3 "Achieve Social Impact" makes visible CWRU's commitment to community engagement. The Pathway has multiple objectives that support its goal to "Foster social good through robust engagement of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff and alumni with the local and global community."

CWRU further demonstrates its commitment to democratic engagement through its ongoing membership with Campus Compact, the national organization that advances the public purposes of more than 1,000 colleges and universities by deepening their ability to educate students for civic and social responsibility.

Case Western Reserve University President, Eric W. Kaler, consistently promotes community, civic, and international engagement through support of programs, local, national and international partnerships, and in communications with faculty, staff, students, alumni, neighbors and friends. He is one of 15 college and university leaders serving on the President's Council of the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. President Kaler additionally supported CWRU's efforts in hosting both the 2022 and 2023 *Propel Ohio: Collegiate Leadership Summit*, a statewide initiative of Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown's Office, which promotes civic engagement and inspires and empowers college students to grow into civic leaders in Ohio. The Office of the President has further supported student ballot access by providing funding for shuttles to two primary polling locations near CWRU's campus on Election Day.

As a decentralized research university, many learning outcomes are determined within specific schools. The CWRU Division of Student Affairs reaches across these schools and provides a variety of educational, co-curricular programs and services that are designed to complement

and support campus initiatives. "Community Engagement" is one of the Division's five learning domains. The learning domains provide a co-curricular learning framework and demonstrate a variety of connections between other departmental programs and the university's academic programs. The learning outcomes that connect to the domains require students to focus internally on their personal development as well as externally on their contributions to their communities as they craft their personal vision for meaningful life and work.

A central resource for co-curricular education around civic learning and democratic engagement is the Center for Civic Engagement & Learning (CCEL). Housed in the Division of Student Affairs, CCEL works to create an engaged campus by providing and supporting opportunities for community service and collective action while promoting civic awareness and student leadership. CCEL offers a variety of programs, services, resources, educational training, and advising to connect students with the Cleveland community. CCEL also coordinates initiatives focused on campus-wide voter registration, voter education, and access to the polls.

CWRU's campus commitment to improving democratic engagement is further made visible and widely communicated to the campus and external community through the efforts of University Marketing and Communications. The UMC team diligently sends out voting related reminders via email, publishes stories regarding democratic engagement programming in CWRU's online communication newsletter - *The Daily*, and sends social media teams and local news channels to cover on-campus voter engagement programming.

Landscape

At CWRU, civic learning is represented in various individual, topical academic courses (such as courses offered by the Department of Political Science), rather than being incorporated into a general education requirement. However, civic learning and democratic engagement has a robust presence in the co-curricular activities of the Center for Civic Engagement & Learning (CCEL). CCEL coordinates programming related to voter registration, voter education, and getting out the vote. The department provides guidance to the Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows who engage their peers in activities such as National Voter Registration Day, debate watch parties, and panelist presentations that address social issues and political engagement. CCEL also promotes the TurboVote software platform and develops resources such as webpages and FAQs about voter registration, absentee ballot requests, campus addresses for residence halls and information on polling locations. CCEL also coordinates Early Voting excursions via bus and shuttles to the polls on Election Day. Students can drop by CCEL for in-person assistance at any time.

Student organizations also provide opportunities for co-curricular involvement on CWRU's campus. The university has several student organizations with a focus on political engagement, such as the College Republicans and Case Democrats.

CWRU participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), which analyzes voter registration and turnout rates across the US. While we do not yet have access to the 2022 NSLVE report data, according to the 2020 NSLVE report, CWRU's voting rate was 69.9% which parallels the national average of peer institutions. Looking more closely at the data reveals that, while CWRU student voter registration rate had increased to 83.2%, over 15% of those registered students still did not cast a vote. This shows that there are barriers between registering to vote and actually voting. When examining voting methods outlined in the report, 73% of the overall student population either utilized Early Voting or Vote-By-Mail. Comparatively, only 26% voted in-person on Election Day. This indicates two issues for the university to focus future efforts on regarding raising the voting turnout rate.

1. Focusing efforts on getting information to students about absentee and Early Voting may be beneficial, as this is how most students on CWRU's campus are participating in the voting process.
2. Additional efforts can be made to share information about polling locations and transportation options to bolster rates of in-person voting on Election Day.

Additionally, the NSLVE report reveals that the area of study of CWRU student voters relates to voting rates – those studying Computer and Information Sciences as well as those studying Mathematics had dramatically lower voting rates than the rest of the campus. It is important for our plan to outline how to bridge barriers and provide voter education so that students learn about the current political climate, impacts on issues they care about, and their ability to participate and make their voice heard.

We plan to use the university's NSLVE report data to inform our 2024 efforts to reduce barriers to voting. Several internal and external barriers persist, which are described below.

- Timing has been a challenge as students arrive on campus at the end of August and voter registration deadlines occur approximately 5 weeks after the start of classes. It is often difficult to get students' attention during this time, given everything going on at the start of the academic year.
- Additionally, it can be difficult to navigate non-partisanship when designing voter education events. Given the country's political polarization, many social issues are now perceived through a partisan lens, even when information is presented in a non-partisan manner. CCEL has a positive relationship with the University's Government Relations Office as well as with the University Office of General Counsel; both offices are helpful contacts to assist with any questions around maintaining our non-partisanship commitment.
- CWRU also faces the challenge of having multiple polling locations that cover on-campus residence hall addresses. Students often move to a different residence each year, which then creates confusion about whether their registration is current and what polling location they should visit. Additionally, students are often confused by the new voter ID requirements in Ohio, which presented a new set of barriers for student voters from other states. Each of these layers of confusion can hinder voter turnout.

There are several resources that will be fundamental in helping to overcome barriers. Weekly electronic campus newsletters and publicity outlets are key resources that will be utilized to spotlight voting related information leading up to the voter registration deadline, absentee ballot request deadline, and Election Day. CCEL utilizes a promotional spreadsheet to guide submissions to a large variety of campus e-newsletters that are sent to diverse student constituencies. In addition, CCEL has three minivans that are utilized for civic engagement opportunities. The vans can be helpful for Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts to reduce transportation barriers.

CWRU also has renewed its partnership with TurboVote, which enables us to continue integrating the software platform "one-stop" voter engagement link into resources for students. This can help reduce confusion for students and provides election reminders about polling locations, forms of ID to take to the polls, etc.

With the changing landscape of many higher education events going virtual, innovative ideas of how best to outreach to students are also going to be important resources. We plan to take full advantage of webinars and Zoom meetings offered by organizations such as Ohio Campus Compact, Campus Vote Project, All In Challenge, SLSV Coalition, etc. to learn about various models for voter engagement. We also look forward to utilizing their social media kits and concise, non-partisan, voter education guides on candidates and issues that students can reference.

Goals

The long-term vision CCEL hopes to achieve is an active and engaged campus community. More specifically, CCEL's aim is to develop and provide sustained information, programming, and resources to empower eligible students to register to vote, become informed on election and community issues, and exercise their vote. Longer term goals related to this are as follows.
- By 2028, increase the percentage of registered CWRU student voters who vote to above 85% by developing intentional strategies to engage typically under-served student voter populations, including some of the following action steps:
  - Develop new networks by reaching out to faculty members representing disciplines such as Computer & Information Science and Mathematics & Statistics (these were the areas the NSLVE data conveyed as having the lowest voting rates).
  - Include voting related events on the CWRU campus calendar, such as National Voter Registration Day and Election Days.
  - Coordinate with student organizations to ensure that those organizations that register students to vote are carrying out their responsibilities in submitting those registrations appropriately.

o Increase partnerships with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the LGBT Center to collaborate on addressing specific voting barriers faced by typically under-served student voter populations at CWRU.

The following goals will be focused on in the next four years to align with the vision above. We will continue to rely on the resources and expertise of the working group, the Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows, and TurboVote to accomplish these goals.

- Within the next year, work with the Office of Residence Life to update the MyHousing portal to include information about the change in voter ID requirements, as the Proof of Residency form is no longer a valid form of voter ID in the state of Ohio.
- Within the next year, retrain Democracy Fellows, student volunteers, and staff on updated voter registration policies and ID laws in Ohio to ensure they are able to provide accurate information to the CWRU community.
- Within the next two years, recruit and train at least 10 new student volunteers to grow the CWRUVotes team to assist with voter events and extend impact across campus.
- Over the course of the next academic year, collaborate with on campus organizations to organize one larger event per semester, either virtually or in person, that promotes political education and engagement on topics such as diversity in politics, political redistricting, climate change, etc.
- Over the next two years, increase social media reach about political engagement programming through CCEL social media accounts by at least 25%.

Strategy

All planned activities and initiatives will be led by CCEL staff, the working group members, the Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows, and/or the CWRU Voting Outreach Team student volunteers. The work will begin in Fall 2024 and continue through the end of the Spring 2025 semester. Training of all individuals implementing these activities will occur throughout the action plan period.

The planned activities and initiatives will be focused and categorized around four main democratic engagement topics to achieve the plan's goals.

Voter Registration
- Continue to utilize TurboVote software to provide an online portal for student access to various state voter registration forms, absentee ballot requests, and election reminders. Include TurboVote on the First Year Student Orientation Checklist and other virtual platforms such as Canvas.
- Recruit, train, and engage additional student volunteers for the CWRUVotes Team.
- Conduct voter registration drives at events across campus.
- Promote voter registration resources to departments, students, staff, and faculty across campus.

- Collaborate with campus departments to have paper voter registration forms in their office spaces.
- Include a regular political engagement/voter registration story in CCEL e-newsletters each week from the start of the school year through the Voter Registration deadline.
- Provide training for student organizations interested in hosting voter registration tables/drives.
- Present to student organizations, Resident Assistants, Greek Chapters, classes, etc. interested in a session that encourages their students to register to vote.

Voter Education
- Utilize Campus Vote Project, BallotReady, Ohio Voter Guide, and other resources to provide non-partisan voter education information to students.
- After the voter registration deadline, include a voter education tool or resource in CCEL's newsletter every week through Election Day.
- Provide speaker presentations, panels, and/or workshops for students related to voter education issues.
- Develop an event(s) for students regarding what is on the ballot and why voting in elections is important.
- Provide opportunities (such as a debate watch party) for student led dialogue about local, national, and/or international political issues.

Get Out the Vote (GOTV)
- Provide resources to students regarding residence hall street addresses and polling locations for students living on campus.
- Provide information sessions regarding Election Day (what type of ID is needed to vote, how to find a polling location, best practices, students' voting rights, etc.).
- Provide targeted information about absentee ballots, especially if students are unsure about getting to the polls on Election Day or do not have a form of in-person voter ID.
- Create reminders and events (e.g. an Absen-Tea Party) to encourage students to request and send their absentee ballots on time.
- Provide Early Voting excursions during the weeks before Election Day.
- Promote Election Day events the weekend prior to Election Day.
- Provide student shuttles to the polls on Election Day.

Creating sustained commitment to political engagement is an ongoing challenge, given competing demands on students' time and attention. We will address this challenge throughout the action plan timeframe as we work to establish programming beyond Election Day.

CCEL will work with student leaders (such as the CVP Democracy Fellows and CWRUVotes team) to determine what types of programming are of most interest to a diverse body of students. We will also collaborate with working group campus partners, such as the Office of Multicultural Affairs, to amplify their important work of building a more inclusive campus, through political engagement events. CCEL plans to utilize resources of local and national

partners to learn, share, and apply additional best practices of how programming can be more inclusive and equitable.

These partner organizations can also provide models of campuses that have made successful progress on institutionalization of civic learning and political engagement. We hope to use these models to plan and implement our own events and initiatives, with the understanding that institutionalization is a long-term process and would need to be aligned with university leadership's priorities for this area. Below is our preliminary list of work that needs to take place to move our campus toward a vision of more institutionalized civic engagement, including the party who will take the lead on each effort. We anticipate that this list will continue to evolve.

- Update CCEL's Election and Voter Resources webpages to provide the campus community easy access to clear and accurate information. (CCEL Coordinator)
- Research other universities' events to gain innovative ideas for making political engagement attractive and increase participant turnout. (Democracy Fellows and Voting Outreach Team)
- Reach out to additional campus organizations and departments to incorporate events that promote political education and engagement in their annual program planning. (Working Group)
- Invite speakers (elected officials, professors, etc.) to have roundtable discussions and presentations that educate students on political topics beyond Election Day. Interact with students to find out what kind of speakers and topics most interest them. (CCEL Coordinator and Democracy Fellows)
- Reach out to political student organizations on campus to host and collaborate on events beyond Election Day. (Democracy Fellows)
- Continue efforts around implementing a "class-free day" on Election Day to help facilitate in-person voting for students who may not otherwise have time to get to their polling location. (Democracy Fellows)

Timeline
The following timeline will guide event implementation, with adjustments being made as necessary.

Summer 2024

June	- Reach out to First Year Experience about details regarding Orientation Week to ensure that TurboVote is still on new student checklist - Make changes and updates on CCEL's webpages in regard to Voter Registration and Election Information - Update information as needed pertaining to ID requirements for voting, voter registration, campus housing addresses and corresponding polling locations, and TurboVote
July	Complete marketing materials and educational workshop facilitation guides and supplemental materials

	• Research Election Day transportation quotes • Develop staff and faculty Voter Engagement Toolkits

Fall 2024

August	• Working Group "kick-off meeting"
	• Democracy Fellows "kick-off meeting"
	• Begin recruiting volunteers to join the CWRUVotes Team Team
	• New Student Orientation Week
	   ○ First-Year service day - Election information & voter registration table at service day
	   ○ Student Activities Fair - Election information & voter registration table

September	• CWRUVotes Team meetings - current member meet-up & new member training
	• CCEL event focused on faculty/staff: drop-in to pick up Voter Engagement Toolkits
	• Extend invitations to attend student organization general body meetings to share voter registration information including: Greek Life General Body Meeting, Residence Life Committee Meeting, and Student Service Alliance Meeting
	• Start in-class voter registration presentations (either in person or via Zoom drop-ins)
	• Host a voter registration table at the Community Service Fair
	• National Voter Registration Day
	   ○ Implement social media posts & emails with information about NVRD
	   ○ Host an in-person event with Democracy Fellows (other partners TBD) & utilize CWRUVotes team to facilitate voter registration tables in multiple locations around campus.
	• Develop Election Day transportation plan and Early Voting volunteer planning for Early Voting excursions to Board of Elections

October	• Tues., Oct. 7: Ohio Voter Registration deadline • Begin organizing volunteers for shuttles to the polls & implement publicity regarding shuttles to the polls • Early Voting excursions to County Board of Elections
November	• Tues., Oct 29: Absentee Ballot Request Deadline ○ Make trips to the Board of Elections to drop off forms as needed • Mon., Nov. 4: Absentee Ballot postmark deadline • Tues., Nov. 5: Election Day shuttles to the Polls • Volunteer debrief and thank you

Spring 2025

January	• Continue recruiting for student volunteers for the Voting Outreach Team

	• Complete marketing materials and educational workshop facilitation guides and supplemental materials
February	• Promote information regarding local elections/deadlines coming up in 2025
March	• Continue to organize Early Voting excursions to Board of Elections for local elections • Organize volunteers for shuttles to the polls
April	• Boost social media presence to promote census information and election updates
May	• Student volunteer debrief and thank you • Evaluate successes and areas of improvement based on data from this past year

Reporting

The action plan will be made available to the campus community and the public via CCEL's Voting Resources webpage and All In's public website, pending permission from CWRU's University Marketing and Communications Office. That weblink will be shared with various stakeholders, including student organizations, departments, and community partners. CWRU's NSLVE report will be utilized to inform future action plans and that report data will only be made available to the public if approved by CWRU's University Marketing and Communications and Institutional Research offices.

Evaluation

CCEL will oversee the evaluation of successes and challenges on an ongoing basis throughout the plan's time period by gathering both qualitative information and quantitative data as programming is implemented. Quantitative data from NSLVE, once it is received, will be examined to understand voter turnout rates, voter registration rates and what specific demographics are engaging in these activities. We will utilize custom TurboVote URLs for different media outlets, social media, websites, etc. to track which sites have the highest click rates, and where we're receiving the most reach. We additionally will track click rates on our political engagement webpage to see which resources are most readily utilized and continue to promote those on a broader scale for the campus community.

Our Democracy Fellows and CWRUVotes team members will collect attendance data from voter registration tables, events, and programs. The data from voter registration tables will be utilized to determine which areas of campus are proven to have higher traffic and yield a larger registration count. Our event and program attendance data will be useful in determining which programs were most popular, and what times/dates seem to work well for students when

planning future programs. We additionally will request qualitative data via feedback forms following larger democratic engagement events.

Success will be determined by increased participation in voter registration and turnout rates, as well as by positive feedback received from students and partners. CCEL, in collaboration with the working group, will collect all information related to the evaluation of this action plan to begin analyzing it in early January of each year. Results will be shared to improve the impact of voter engagement efforts in future years.

References

Institute for Democracy & Higher Education: National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement.
(2021). 2020 report for Case Western Reserve University. Medford, MA.

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