

# Clarke University Democratic Engagement Action Plan

2019-2021

## I. Executive Summary

The Clarke University Democratic Engagement Action Plan was developed by a planning committee, representing employees and the student body.

This plan was created to serve as a campus-wide guide for activities and efforts to increase campus community awareness of and participation in the democratic process. The plan is built to guide initiatives and activities during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years on Clarke's campus.

Clarke's mission includes a commitment to contributing to the common good in a global society. Clarke University is committed to supporting civic engagement among our community of learners – students, and employees. The primary focus of this action plan is engagement of the student body. It is the goal of this planning committee to both increase the percentage of student voter registration and student voter turnout in the 2020 election.

## II. Leadership

The planning committee consists of Callie Clark, Director of Engagement and Intercultural Programs; Michael Knock, Associate Professor of History; David Deifell, Associate Professor of Communication; Hunter Darrouzet, Director of Campus Ministry; and, Jocelyn Wiese, Vice President of Women in Politics and student at Clarke University.

While the elected student representatives are not direct participants on the planning committee, the Clarke Student Association, Clarke's student government will be included in various aspects of the implementation of campus activities and marketing strategies. Callie Clark serves as the advisor and is the conduit to the student government.

The committee will continue an existing relationship and work with NextGen Iowa in promoting voter registration among the campus community. Additionally, the committee will continue an existing relationship with the local elections commission in signing up to be a voting location for the 2020 presidential election.

## III. Landscape

Clarke University is located in Dubuque, Iowa. Dubuque is the 11<sup>th</sup> most populated city in the state, and is home to three private four-year colleges, a community college, and a bible college. Additionally, Dubuque is located on the Mississippi River at the meeting of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. Due to the tri-state location, and the area's population size, the city is a common stop

for political candidates which provides a unique opportunity for our residents to engage in dialogue with current issues and politics.

Clarke University enrolls one-thousand undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students. Sixty-percent of undergraduate students are athletes.

At the time of this writing, the planning committee has access to Clarke's NSLVE data for the 2012 presidential election, and the 2014 and 2018 midterm elections. The voter registration rate for the 2012 presidential election was 74.4% and voter turnout was 52%. The voter registration rate for 2014 was 72.2% but voter turnout was low at 25.8%. While the 2018 registration rate fell to 69.8%, the voter turnout increased to 30.6%, signifying that while a lower percentage of students were registered to vote, more actually followed through and cast a ballot.

#### IV. Goals

It is the intent of the planning committee to increase the number of students who register to vote and who cast a ballot in the 2020 election.

#### V. Strategy

Listed below are categories of types of education or engagement and activity ideas that the planning committee intends to implement throughout the duration of this action plan.

##### **Voter Registration Drive(s)**

Invitation for NextGen Iowa to assist campus efforts in voter registration at annual Student Involvement Fair in addition to other key times (ex. Constitution day, immediately prior to Iowa Caucus, dates surrounding televised candidate debates, etc.).

Utilization and promotion of the Campus Labs Engage partnership with TurboVote, which offers TurboVote to students through our student engagement site, The Source.

##### **Voting Location**

Sign the Clarke University campus up with the Dubuque County Elections office to be a voting location within the county. This may or may not be an early voting location, prior to election day in November 2020.

##### **Democratic Process Trainings**

Implementation of two training workshops to education on the process of the Iowa Caucus, to be held in November 2019 and January 2020.

Hold a "candy caucus" simulation on campus in late January 2020, prior to the Iowa Caucus.

Create voter education materials regarding how to vote in Iowa, in an attempt to share and debunk common myths. Additionally, we will prepare information for students regarding absentee voting. We will help students check their voter registration status.

### **Skills Building**

The committee plans to partner with Better Angels to host a Skills Workshop on campus for students and the local community.

### **Values Building & Understanding**

The committee plans to offer workshops and development sessions that allow students to evaluate and strengthen individual values and have dialogue regarding how their values are connected to the democratic process, their right to vote, as well as measures and candidates on ballots.

### **Academic Courses Available**

A course titled Movements and Advocacy will be offered in Spring 2020, and will focus on social movements throughout American history, how they came about, who they advocated for, etc.

Additional related courses will be offered in Fall 2020 including a political communication course, a argumentation and debate course, and a history through the headlines course.

### **Miscellaneous**

Additional ideas to engage students in the awareness and understanding of the democratic process are hosting political film watch party and discussion nights, engaging athletic coaches support to encourage student athlete involvement, and communicate action plans with the Faculty Senate so all faculty members are aware of and can encourage participation.

Additionally, we will investigate ways to provide transportation for students to participate in the Iowa Caucus which is at an off-campus location.

## **VI. Evaluation and Reporting**

The planning committee intends to share the goals and strategies of the plan to the campus community on the University's portal and student engagement platform. As noted above, faculty and coaches will be notified of activities and encouraged to support their students in participating.

The planning committee will track student participation in all events within the action plan strategy. The committee may also track the number of voter education resources shared / read by students through keeping count of online views or number of physical copies distributed (depending on final media selected, whether hard copy or virtual). Finally, we will utilize the NSLVE survey and report to gain results of voter registration and voter turnout numbers.