



ALL IN-Democracy Challenge Action Plan for 2022

I. Executive Summary

The Office of Civic Engagement, housed in the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, serves the entire Cleveland State University campus community around voter and civic engagement. Cleveland State University is an urban, public research university in Cleveland, Ohio. Established in 1964, Cleveland State University has nearly 16,000 students and has one of the most racially and ethnically diverse student bodies among Ohio universities. It has 10 colleges and schools and more than 175 academic programs. Engaged Learning is at the center of Cleveland State University's mission along with creating meaningful, mutually beneficial partnerships with the communities around campus. Preparing students to be active and engaged citizens in the communities they call home is part of Cleveland State University's mission.

To support the civic engagement of Cleveland State University students, The Office of Civic Engagement drafts and implements an ALL In Action Plan to enhance voter and civic engagement efforts on campus and to foster a well-informed student population that understands issues surrounding voting and why their votes matter.

With record turnout for the 2020 General Election and Midterm Elections right around the corner, it is crucial to implement a plan and to find strategies on how to get students to the polls. These efforts seem to be working when data is considered:

In 2018, a midterm election year, 84.1% of CSU's students eligible to register to vote were registered to vote compared to 75.4% in 2014. Even better is that CSU's voting rate of registered students was 57.9% for the 2018 midterm elections, up from 23.6% in 2014! That is a double-digit increase in 4 years and nicely above the 39.1% voting rate for all other institutions in the NSLVE report. Voting rate in presidential election year 2016 for CSU students was 65% compared to 53% voting rate for all other institutions in the NSLVE report. In the 2020 presidential election year, 89% of CSU's students eligible to register to vote were registered, which was a +4.9 change from midterm election year 2018. The CSU student voting rate in the 2020 presidential election was 73.5% compared to 64.8% in the 2016 presidential election, up +8.7%. CSU's voting rate is

+7.5 higher than the voting rate of all institutions tracked by NSLVE which sat at 66% in 2020.

It is clear that the civic engagement work happening in the Office of Civic Engagement and across Cleveland State University's campus, including participating in the ALL IN Democracy Challenge, is working but there is always more work to do.

This plan seeks to implement many different nonpartisan programs and activities to ensure that students are registered, informed, and show up at the voting booth. The Office of Civic Engagement works in partnership with faculty, AIGA, Campus Vote Project, Civic Influencers, National Voter Registration Day, Vote Early Day, the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections, Greater Cleveland League of Women Voters, Cleveland NAACP, CSU's Student Government Association, Diversity, Inclusion and University Engagement, the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University Communications and Marketing, campaign managers, and Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates to ensure that the goals of this action plan are met. Through our continued partnerships with these organizations, Anita Ruf-Young, Director, in The Office of Civic Engagement developed this plan with clear goals for Cleveland State University, with the assistance of her Graduate Assistant, Gabi Pridemore.

The student voting rate for Cleveland State University increased significantly in the 2020 Presidential Election, rising to 73.5%, up 8.7% from the 2016 Presidential Election voting rate. The Voting Rate for All Institutions according to the 2020 **NSLVE (National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement) Report** was 66% which puts CSU's voting rate 7.5% higher than the average Voting Rate for All Institutions in the report.

Even more impressive is that 89% of CSU's students who were voting eligible were registered to vote in 2020 and of that percentage, 82.6% actually voted on Election Day. While voting rates are increasing across all age groups, recently, the most significant increases are being seen across all higher education institutions among first-time and the youngest eligible voters. This demonstrates that civic engagement around voter registration and get out the vote efforts on university campuses are having an impact. Voting rates are up among undergraduate (>8%) and graduate (>12%) student populations and all fields of study, except history. This trend is important for two reasons, first, younger voters used to significantly lag behind older voting populations and second, it is proven that if someone is voter engaged at a young age, they are more likely to continue having a voting habit for the rest of their lives. Although CSU does have fairly high voting rates, there is still work to be done so that all students are informed and choose to vote.

The Office of Civic Engagement continues to try to address low voter turnout for off-season elections. The following data is provided to depict the gap between voter turnout in Presidential Elections and Midterm Elections. In the 2014 Midterm Election, 74.8% of students were registered to vote, and 13% of those who were registered, voted. In the 2018 Midterm Elections, 28.2% of youth, 18 - 29, voted according to CIRCLE, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. It is clear that during off-season elections, less people are informed on what is going on or they feel as though it is not important to vote during those times. This plan seeks to bridge the gap and make sure students are staying informed and engaged during Midterm and local elections.

Two Democracy Fellows hired through Campus Vote Project will work with student organizations, community organizations, faculty, and staff to promote the goals of this action plan. In collaboration with The Office of Civic Engagement, the Democracy Fellows will help execute strategies, activities and programs that will target different populations within the university. The Office of Civic Engagement will continue to work to institutionalize voting within freshman Introduction to University Life courses so that students are engaged and informed as they enter their college careers.

In addition to the voter engagement curriculum developed by Anita Ruf-Young, OCE Director, and Graduate Assistant, Gabriella Pridemore, for the Introduction to University Life course, voter registration tabling (39 so far from July 1, 2021 - May 26, 2022), classroom presentations, constantly updated social media and website content, civic holiday events, candidate video series, and other civic engagement events will regularly occur. Through these initiatives, the Office of Civic Engagement will successfully increase voter engagement and participation on campus and create an informed student body that will continue to be civically engaged far beyond their college years.

II. Leadership

Anita Ruf-Young, Director of the Office of Civic Engagement, will direct and coordinate all events, programs and activities surrounding voter engagement held at Cleveland State University. She will collaborate with community organizations as well as faculty and staff of CSU to create programming surrounding voter issues. Anita will be assisted by Democracy Fellows through Campus Vote Project and Gabi Pridemore, Democracy Fellow through Campus Election Engagement Project to execute these events, activities, and programs.

This plan indicates the partners of the coalition, or working group, which consists of organizations and community stakeholders whose roles are to assist in the implementation of this plan by providing resources, materials, data, funds, and other

items needed to ensure the success of the action plan. These coalition partners are representative of a variety of different populations and backgrounds that all bring different qualifications to the table.

Coalition partners are selected by Anita Ruf-Young to ensure they are nonpartisan in their approach and passionate about voter engagement with the CSU community. Partners commit to providing strategies and programs on campus that create involvement for students. These partnerships will vary in their degree of overall mutuality. Partner responsibility will vary depending on the level of commitment agreed upon by Anita Ruf-Young and the partner. Some members may provide resources and data, while other members will volunteer at events or help in launching different programming. This group will meet when deemed necessary by Anita Ruf-Young or other coalition partners.

Coalition Partners

Anita Ruf-Young, Director in The Office of Civic Engagement, Cleveland State University

Gabi Pridemore, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Graduate Student, Cleveland State University

Susan Alcorn, Representative from Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates

Fouad Yared, Representative from Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates

Meredith Hellmer, Representative from Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates

Dr. Ronnie Dunn, Executive Director, Diversity Institute, Cleveland State University

Dr. Beth Nagy, Assistant College Lecturer of Planning Practice, Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University

Dr. Mittie Jones, Associate Professor Emerita at Cleveland State University and member of Alpha Kappa Alpha

Catherine Ryan, League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland

Alexis Crosby, Ohio State Coordinator at Campus Vote Project

Samantha Phillips, Program Manager, First Year Experience

Marissa Perlatti, Democracy Fellow, Cleveland State University Student

Lacie Costello, Democracy Fellow, Cleveland State University Student

Dr. Mamadou Seck, Faculty Fellow for Civic Engagement and Cleveland State University Associate Professor

Anthony Perlatti, Director in the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections

Brent Lawler, Cuyahoga County Board of Elections

Ryan Schmelz, Spectrum 1 News Reporter

Jennifer McMillian, Cleveland State University Director of Sustainability

El Jay'em, Cleveland NAACP

Sebastian Canales, Student Government Association

III. Commitment

Cleveland State University (CSU) has developed a strong reputation for its level of engagement and commitment to serve the Greater Cleveland Community and Northeast Ohio region. This commitment to work with the community to address its most significant challenges is part of the identity of Cleveland State University and is clearly exhibited by the efforts of our staff, faculty, colleges, student organizations and leadership to focus resources and intellectual capital to make Cleveland an ideal place to live, work and play.

The Office of Civic Engagement provides support to staff, faculty, students, and administrators by developing, expanding and sustaining collaborative, mutually beneficial partnerships with community residents, organizations and institutions. Rather than serving as a gatekeeper for all engagement activities, the Office works to create an infrastructure to track our civic and community engagement activities with five key objectives:

- 1) Establishing and upholding an institution-wide framework for defining civic engagement.
- 2) Creating a consistent process to comprehensively inventory voter engagement across campus.
- 3) Developing and tracking metrics that quantify and qualify the internal and external impact of Office of Civic Engagement civic and community engagement activities.

- 4) Communicating Office of Civic Engagement civic and community engagement efforts consistently to the campus community and broader community.
- 5) Encouraging and promoting work of faculty, students, and staff who successfully advance engagement.
- 6) Continuously work to expand our civic internal and external network.

The Office of Civic Engagement leads several efforts to achieve these objectives, including:

Create an action plan for democratic engagement which resulted in our consecutive award of Voter Friendly Campus for 2020-2022.

Consistently increased voter registration and participation earning the All In Campus Democracy Challenge Certificate of Excellence in Student Voter Engagement Gold Campus rating which increased from Silver in 2016.

Continue to hire Democracy Fellows through Campus Vote Project, and this coming Fall 2022, Civic Influencers, who work to provide nonpartisan information, register students to vote, and promote civic engagement on campus.

Created a “Vikes! Vote” initiative which includes a course to be taught in all First Year Experience courses to engage CSU’s incoming freshman. This initiative was implemented in the Spring 2020 semester, updated for 2021, and will be retooled for the upcoming Fall 2022 semester.

Built partnerships with faculty, The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections, The League of Women Voters Greater Cleveland, The U.S. Census Bureau, Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project, CSU Democrats, CSU Republicans, CSU Student Government, Ohio Student Association, Cleveland NAACP, the CSU Diversity Institute, CSU Office of Sustainability, NOVA, AIGA, Alpha Kappa Alpha, and local news media to enhance our efforts within CSU as well as throughout the Greater Cleveland community.

Collaborated with The League of Women Voters Greater Cleveland to create a student chapter at CSU which will allow students to act on issues they are passionate about.

Host annual event for National Voter Registration Day in partnership with The Board of

Elections, Greater Cleveland League of Women Voters, Cleveland NAACP, Alpha Kappa Alpha, CSU Student Government, NOVA, and local media where students are registered to vote, can apply to vote-by-mail, receive nonpartisan information, sign up to be an election day poll worker, or election night ballot box opener.

IV. Landscape

- Promoted our democratic engagement efforts on all our social media platforms.
- Provided community service-learning opportunities for CSU students each academic year that result in thousands of community service hours with thousands of community members by CSU students.
- Created and launched the “Meet the Candidates Video Series”. First, with the Cleveland Mayoral Race, and most recently with the 11th Congressional District race in Ohio. Candidates enable CSU students to learn more about candidates in the races and learn how they can get engaged with a campaign.
- Regularly and consistently update our Office of Civic Engagement website that provides information on election days, deadlines, vote by mail, where to find nonpartisan information, opportunities to become an election night ballot box opener, election day poll worker, and much more.
- The Office of Civic Engagement at Cleveland State University has and continues to work hard along with our community and university partners to increase democratic and civic engagement on campus by hosting registration tables,
- Provide parking sponsorship at the Cleveland Asian Festival each year and set up a voter registration table at the event.

Cleveland State University has a strong political climate and is passionate about democratic engagement efforts that inform students on voting issues, the process of voting and why their votes matter. CSU is a highly diverse campus with many passionate students who want to have their voices heard. The university also stresses the need for civic and community engagement on

campus to provide students the skills they need to be successful community leaders. As stated earlier, NSLVE data shows that Cleveland State University's voting rate is higher than the average institutions. Also, in 2020 our voter registration rates were at an all-time high of 89% at Cleveland State University. This does however pose the question, what is happening to all the students who register and do not vote. Because of these discrepancies, The Office of Civic Engagement has implemented a voter engagement course within the Introduction to University Life courses that are required for every freshman that attends the university. Providing voter information to freshman is a great way to reach the incoming voter population and light a fire of civic passion within these students, so that they will continue to be civically and democratically engaged their whole lives.

Although Cleveland State University is highly engaged democratically, there are a few barriers that prevent the university from reaching as many students as it could. The main barrier that CSU faces is the fact that it is primarily a commuter school. Many students commute to campus from home and are only on campus when they need to be for class. It is difficult to find times that large groups of students are in different areas of the university and to plan events around those times. Another barrier is that The Office of Civic Engagement has a one-woman staff currently along with student assistants, so it is difficult to take on as many voter engagement projects as we could on top of all the other programs run in the office. With that being said, the office has created many connections throughout the university and with outside organizations that help and volunteer for many of the events planned. With these partnerships and programs, the university has built a strong civic and democratic presence on campus and with the continued support, democratic engagement will become second nature to all CSU students.

V. Goals

LONG-TERM GOALS

1. Institutionalize voter engagement efforts through ASC 101: Introduction to University Life courses by providing each class with voter engagement presentations.

2. Continue to find strategies to maximize our small office's ways to reach Cleveland State University students around civic and voter engagement with a primary focus on how to engage voter registration and participation in under-served populations.
3. Partner with other university departments and faculty to plan and execute an Election Day station in each college where students can come to have fun and learn more about voter and civic engagement.
4. Include "Election Days" as university holidays to give students, staff, and faculty the opportunity to participate in elections with no barriers.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

1. Move the "Vikes! Vote" curriculum in the ASC 101: Introduction to University Life courses from an instructor choice topic to require by Spring 2023.
2. Continue to support the development of the Civic Engagement Certificate currently in the pilot phase with Dr. Seck.
3. Aim to have one "Meet the Candidates" video series each election cycle to engage CSU students.
4. Keep our website current on local, state, and national elections, deadlines, and how to get civically engaged and keep it one of the highest visited webpages in our Maxine, Goodman, Levin College of Urban Affairs.
5. Increase the number of students in STEM majors that are registered and informed on voting as they tend to have low registration and voter turnout rates.
6. Continue to maintain a database of voter registrations we collect.
7. Promote a variety of civic engagement opportunities on our social media to increase the high metrics we have already achieved in certain areas like recruiting 175 election night ballot openers for the November 2021 and May 2022 Primary elections.

8. Fund and bring on an additional graduate assistant whose focus will be to assist the Office of Civic Engagement with these goals.

VI. Strategy

In order to achieve the goals, set forth above, it is important to create a strategy for how the work will be accomplished and by whom. For the summer, we already have 4 voter registration tabling events planned for “See You at CSU Days” and will recruit election night ballot box openers again for the August Primary Election. The “Vikes! Vote” curriculum is already being updated for the Fall 2022 semester. Planning for the 2022 - 2023 academic year is well underway as well. We have scheduled our tabling locations for National Voter Registration Day, we have been offered 3 Democracy Fellows from CVP, social media slides have already been put out with information about voter registration and vote by mail deadlines, civic holidays, and races students should be paying attention to. Our community civic partner, NOVA, is already planning on being at Magnus Fest and tabling around campus to target hard to reach populations like STEM or theater majors to ensure all populations are being served. The Office of Civic Engagement will oversee each event and ensuring all resources are distributed for each event.

The following are planned activities for the upcoming year:

- National Voter Registration and Vote Early Day participation
- ASC 101: Introduction to Student Life “Vikes!” Vote course
- Freshman Orientation Tabling at “See You at CSU Days”
- Magnus Fest Tabling
- Social media slide development for upcoming Midterm Elections in November
- Reach out to local news media such as Fox 8, Spectrum 1 Ohio, and 19 News that have covered our events in the past to join us again for further promotion and coverage.

VII. Reporting

This plan along with the NSLVE data cited in the plan will be shared on our All-In landing page as well as our Office of Civic Engagement homepage. Any results and accomplishments will be marketed through press releases on the Cleveland State University website and The Office of Civic Engagement's Twitter and Instagram accounts.

VIII. Evaluation

This plan will be evaluated every year to ensure that goals are being met. If goals and priorities change, the plan will be altered to meet those changes as needed. The Office of Civic Engagement collects all voter registrations so that a database can be kept on how many registrations the university has achieved. We will also rely on NSLVE data to provide voter turnout data so that success can be measured based on voting rates. Reports and press releases will demonstrate the results of these evaluations.