



# William & Mary Democratic Engagement Action Plan: 2022-23 Academic Year

*This plan was created using the Votes & Ballots Action Planning Form. We highly recommend editing and expanding upon this draft before submitting for review.*

*Throughout this document, we mention the Strengthening American Democracy Guide as a resource for your review. We encourage you to turn to that resource for guidance and support as you complete your action plan!*

## I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by Richard Thompson, Associate Director, Office of Community Engagement to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at William & Mary. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2022-23 Academic Year, on and around our campus in Williamsburg, Virginia.

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

- Undergraduate Students
- Faculty
- Student Affairs Staff

The mission of our initiative is:

- Voter Engagement aims to enhance William & Mary's mission of civic engagement among students by sharing information to build capacity, knowledge, skills, and values that prepare students for an active and informed role in democracy.

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the Strengthening American Democracy Guide and review the Guiding Questions to ensure your Executive Summary includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

## II. Leadership

Richard Thompson will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. They will be supported in this work by:

- Dr. John McGlennon - Government Department
- Madeline Doane - Campus Vote Project
- City of Williamsburg & James City County Registrars
- Jisu/Sophie Kim - Undergraduate Student Fellow/Campus Vote Project
- Marley Fishburne - Undergraduate Government/Social Media Marketing Student

This coalition is diverse and inclusive of:

- Representation from different perspectives and areas of expertise, Leaders who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus in to our work

Our group plans to meet Weekly at In person/William & Mary Student Center or via zoom for upto 1 hour

In the event that our leadership leaves campus or is no longer involved in this work, we have a succession plan in place. In the event that Rich Thompson changes roles or leaves William & Mary. Another staff member from the Office of Community Engagement would be identified to assume the role as Advisor of the Voter Engagement Action Committee.

We are also partnering with the following organizations from the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition to support our efforts on campus:

- - Campus Vote Project

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Leadership Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

### III. Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrates commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. As stated in our mission statement, **Vision** - William & Mary transcends the boundaries between research and teaching, teaching, and learning, learning and living. People come to William & Mary wanting to understand and change the world – and together we do. **Mission** - A preeminent, public research university, grounded in the liberal arts and sciences since 1693, William & Mary is a vibrant and inclusive community. Through close mentoring and collaboration, we inspire lifelong learning, generate new knowledge, and expand understanding. We cultivate creative thinkers, principled leaders, and compassionate global citizens equipped for lives of meaning and distinction. William & Mary convenes great minds and hearts to meet the most pressing needs of our time. William & Mary is a community that fosters deep human connection. We reflect on the lessons of history to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. We engage diverse perspectives and seek wisdom in bridging differences. Together, we are unceasing in our efforts to make a meaningful difference in our communities, the state, the nation, and the world. We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values. They state, "W&M recognized for its commitment to civic learning, engagement - <https://www.wm.edu/news/stories/2013/william--mary-recognized-for-its-commitment-to-civic-learning1.php> W&M launches Democracy Initiative to promote civic engagement, civil discourse - <https://www.wm.edu/news/stories/2021/wm-launches-democracy-initiative-to-promote-civic-engagement,-civil-discourse.php>"

In addition, our campus has mentioned civic learning and democratic engagement in their strategic plan, stating Elevate civic engagement and service for the 21st century Double down on W&M's abiding commitment to evidence-based argument and discovery as a public good Rekindle and model civil discourse, convening disparate views to advance democratic values Promote community-engaged teaching, research and learning

On campus, we've seen:

- Voter education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
- Campus leaders promoting voting
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- Voter registration tables
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- Signage promoting Election Day
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On campus, we've experienced:

- Voting in student body elections
- Political speakers
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- Registering to vote

- Civic Holiday events (such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day)
- Deliberative dialogues
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We can point to the above institutional commitments to support our work.

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Commitment Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

## IV. Landscape

We do not have access to comprehensive demographic information about our student body at this time.

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Landscape Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

## 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 following challenges internally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

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- We don't have sustainable or consistent funding.
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- We have trouble engaging student leaders for the leadership of our initiative.
- W&M has a high and historical culture for Voter Engagement. Consequently - there is some apathy to implement additional voter engagement programming

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

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- The political views of our students do not generally align with our institution's surrounding communities.
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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 processes in place for registering large percentages of our students.
- 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.
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- We have a working relationship with our local election office.
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With this in mind, we have set the three goals that we would like to achieve over the next academic year:

- Encourage at least 10% of out of state students to transfer the Voter Registration to Virginia (Williamsburg or James City County)
- Maintain Voter Registration Rate of 70% or higher
- Have at least 70% of all new students registered to vote by Oct. 1, 2022

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

- Build the Voter Engagement Action Committee which reflects W&M's Gender/Orientation and ethnicity percentage wise. Currently, we are heavy in regards to female participants/leadership in regards to student our student committee participants.
- Endeavor to recruit 20% more males and people of color over the next 5 years
- Obtain more institutional funding where W&M can potentially offer a graduate assistant position that is focused on Voter Engagement.

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Goals Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

## 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 **are already doing** in the **short term** (within the next year):

- Heavily promoting Voter Registration to new students and faculty/staff via these outlets
- - Office of Community Engagement Annual Community Resource and Volunteer Fair
- - Faculty/Staff List Servs
- - Student List Servs
- - Tabling/National Voter Registration Day Event
- - Collaborations with the City of Williamsburg & James City County Registrars
- - Social Media
- - Couch Party Text Banking Events
- - Voter Education Programs/Collaborations with W&M Government Department
- - Election Watch Parties

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

- - Same as above + promotions/giveaways to promote Voter Awareness Events (ex. Voter Engagement T-Shirts)
- - Bolster W&M Voter Engagement Action Committee and expanding its reach on campus and in the community

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

- Collaborate/Engage with more student politically affiliated student organizations on W&M's campus and encourage them to cross promote our non-partisan voter engagement efforts

These are tactics that we **are already doing** for the **long term** (beyond the next year):

- - Updating our website with all pertinent Voter Engagement Information by each August 15 for each election cycle Continue to heavily promote voter registration on our campus via these outlets - Office of Community Engagement Annual Community Resource and Volunteer Fair - Faculty/Staff List Servs - Student List Servs - Tabling/National Voter Registration Day Event - Collaborations with the City of Williamsburg & James City County Registrars - Social Media - Couch Party Text Banking Events - Voter Education Programs/Collaborations with W&M Government Department - Election Watch Parties

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

- Work with the W&M Government Department to encourage them and their students to promote at least one Voter Education Program per year.



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

- - Develop more 'How To' and 'Did You Know' Voter Engagement videos - Encourage out of state students to transfer their voter registration to Virginia, City of Williamsburg, or James City County so that they can vote in Virginia and local elections.

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Strategy Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

## 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 92%. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased.

In 2020, our voting rate was 82.4% and our voting rate among registered students was 89.6%. During this year, our voting rate was higher than the national average.

In our NSLVE report, we had racial data for the following groups:

- Asian
- American Indian / Alaska Native
- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- 2 or More Races

For the racial groups that have recent voter turnout data, we saw the following groups increase in voter turnout compared to four years ago.

- Asian
- American Indian / Alaska Native
- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- 2 or More Races

William & Mary has a strong tradition of Voter Engagement. For the 2020 voting cycle William & Mary was recognized for not only being a Voter Friendly University, but was also recognized as Platinum Level University. William & Mary was the only Platinum Award winning 4-year state university in Virginia and tied for 1st for the highest level of voter registration. Math majors were our lowest level, but we saw an increase of 9%. We also saw an increase of Asian (20%), Black (19%), and Hispanic (19%) voting

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your NSLVE section includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

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

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- Share for the W&M Voter Engagement Action Committee which is composed of students, faculty/staff, and community/election officials, the Director of Community Engagement, and liason with the Campus Vote Project

We will collect feedback on this plan by:

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- Regrouping with campus coalition to debrief and reflect
- Integrating feedback collection into individual campus efforts
- Recommendations from the Director of the Office of Community Engagement

We plan to evaluate our success by:

- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year
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- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly
- Reviews from the Director of the Office of Community Engagement and liason with the Campus Vote Project

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Reporting & Evaluation Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.