

Denison University Voter Engagement Initiative

Fall 2022 Action Plan



*Developed by the DU Votes Leadership Team
- and -
The Alford Community Leadership & Involvement Center*

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Executive Summary

This plan, developed in part with feedback from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, outlines civic engagement initiatives regarding the 2022 election cycle for Denison University's campus. Denison's campus saw a tremendously active 2020 election cycle, with 99.6% of students registering to vote and over 82% turning out at the ballot box. Denison University currently conducts civic learning and democratic engagement work through the Alford Community Leadership & Involvement Center (CLIC), with work driven by the non-partisan student run organization "DU Votes." DU Votes has been present on campus since the 2018 election cycle, with the primary mission of promoting civic and election education for students while making the voting process as easy as possible. This plan was developed by students and staff working within DU Votes and CLIC, incorporating feedback from various other campus stakeholders. The goal of this plan is to demonstrate how DU Votes and CLIC plan to expand upon 2020 successes and facilitate record voter engagement and education during the 2022 midterm elections. This work is completed primarily through collaboration with campus offices, athletic teams, Greek houses, student organizations, faculty, and external organizations. DU Votes works with / has worked in the past with Civic Influencers (on-campus fellowship), Campus Compact (Newman on-campus fellowship), Vote for Astra, the ALL-IN Campus Democracy Challenge, and the local county Board of Elections and League of Women Voters. This plan will guide voter engagement throughout the 2022 midterm elections cycle.

Leadership

The Denison Voter Engagement Initiative will be executed in large part by the student leadership for DU Votes in conjunction with the student Civic Influencers representative. These students will be responsible for much of the planning and on-the-ground efforts surrounding voter registration and civic engagement. They will be responsible for collaborating with other campus organizations, Denison faculty, administrative offices, and other community stakeholders.

Denison does not currently have an office for civic engagement, but the Alford Community Leadership & Involvement Center (hereinafter, "CLIC") serves as the primary office through which voter initiative efforts are coordinated and planned. Student representatives as listed below will work with CLIC in receiving resources, materials, funds, and other items needed to implement the 2022 Voter Engagement Initiative. The Associate Director and the Program Coordinator for CLIC will work closest with DU Votes and the Civic Influencers representative in the execution of this plan.

Members listed below that are not representatives of DU Votes, CEEP, or CLIC will serve as either members of a Fall 2022 Voting Committee or as department/office contacts that have

committed to helping facilitate and coordinate the Voter Engagement Initiative. This Committee will meet at least bi-weekly to discuss further initiatives, planning, and best practices for the implementation of this plan.

DU Votes Leadership Team:

Civic Influencers Fellow	Jakob Lucas ‘24
DU Votes Co-Coordinator	Hannah Wedepohl ‘23
DU Votes Co-Coordinator	Tait Ferguson ‘23
Alford CLIC Director	Dana Pursley
Alford CLIC Associate Director	Emily Vermillion
Alford CLIC Program Coordinator	Katie McKenney
DU Votes Volunteer Coordinator	TBD
DU Votes Communications Chair	AJ Hartwick ‘25
DU Votes Data Chair	Margaret Demchak ‘23
DU Votes Greek Life Liaison	TBD

DU Votes Partners:

Office of Student Life	Dr. Nicole Ausmer / Julie Tucker
Center for Belonging and Inclusion	TBD w/ Fall hiring
Lisska Center Director	Dr. Adam Davis
Business Services / Mailroom	Amy Hannahs
Community Coordinator for Civic Engagement	TBD w/ Fall hiring
Doane Library Representative	Debra Andreadis
Residential Communities Representative	Thea Smekens / Adam Wood
Housing Office Representative	Doug Lisko
Athletics Department Representative	Nan Carney-Debord
Fraternity & Sorority Life Representative	TBD
League of Women Voters	Rita Kipp / Emily Vermillion
Licking County Board of Elections	Luke Burton / Brian Mead
DCGA Student Government Representatives	Faith Boirard ‘25 / Grace Brady ‘25
DU Votes Student Ambassadors (General/Greek/Athletics)	

Various Student Leaders (Not a complete list):

- (Black Student Union Chief Minister)**
- (La Fuerza Latina Co-Presidents)**
- (Partisan organizations’ Presidents)**
- (Student Body President)**
- (Student Body Vice President)**

Succession Plan

Student members of the DU Votes Leadership Team are recruited whenever there is an opening due to a student graduating or choosing to leave the team. The process of recruiting new leadership team members involves an open application phase, followed by interviews, and the selection of new team members by a unanimous vote within the existing student leadership team. Open spots for Fall 2022 are indicated by “TBD,” all spots will be filled by August, 2022.

The DU Votes team and the CLIC office are jointly developing a master engagement plan to ensure that best practices are communicated consistently even after students graduate and/or CLIC staff leave their position.

Commitment

Denison’s mission statement is to “inspire and educate our students to become autonomous thinkers, discerning moral agents and active citizens of a democratic society.” As our mission statement makes evident, getting students to be civically engaged is at the heart of Denison’s identity. This work goes beyond voter registration and turnout, it extends to ensuring all Denison graduates are informed civic community members who feel empowered to participate in American democracy. To this end, The CLIC office and the DU Votes organization are committed to utilizing all relevant campus resources and stakeholders to achieve full campus civic participation at the ballot box and in the community.

Our Mission

Through passionate and consistent efforts, we will spread information on campus that showcases how civic engagement can lead to a more connected and well-informed society.

Our Vision

As a small campus, we want to ensure a highly visible and active “voter committee” that intimately connects campus resources and empowers students to access their right to vote and be active democratic citizens. We believe Denison University can be a nation-wide model for civic participation at the ballot box and beyond.

Landscape

The 2022 election cycle marks 10 years since Denison first joined the NSLVE study, and voter and civic engagement efforts have evolved significantly since then. Both the number of Denison students who register to vote and the number of students who turn out to the ballot box have increased drastically. In 2012, 71.9% of eligible Denison students were reported by NSLVE as

registered. In 2016, this number jumped to 91%. In 2020, Denison recorded the highest registration rate among eligible voters across all four year NSLVE institutions, 99.6%. Similar jumps occurred for the voting rate of Denison students. Our campus saw a nearly 15% increase in voter turnout from 2016 to 2020, a greater jump than national averages as reported by NSLVE.

Of course, these numbers all reflect high-momentum, high-energy Presidential election cycles. As with many institutions, Denison tends to see dips in both registration and turnout rates in midterm and off-year election cycles. Although Denison still saw increased registration and turnout rates from 2014 to 2018, rates remained 5 - 10 points below Presidential cycles. While there are a myriad of factors that contribute to this problem at Denison and many other colleges and universities, the primary problem identified by campus stakeholders has been the lack of sustained civic and voter engagement activity on campus in non-Presidential election years. We believe creating an environment with sustained and institutionalized activity and programming around civic and voter engagement is crucial to meeting Denison's goals to increase civic engagement across campus and in our local community. With the 2022 midterm elections looming, and following Denison's strongest election cycle since NSLVE reporting began, Denison is committed to ensuring a sustained civic engagement effort.

In the summer of 2018, Denison's CLIC office formed a non-partisan voter engagement committee headed up by student fellows from CLIC and a student fellow with Civic Influencers. Since 2018, this committee (DU Votes) has expanded to include campus stakeholders from a variety of offices, departments, and organizations. Some of these include (but are not limited to): Residential Communities, Student Life, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Athletics, and various academic departments. Further, DU Votes has expanded its student leadership team to include a volunteer and events coordinator, communications coordinator, greek life liaison, and data collection coordinator. These additions have furthered the scope of the student-run committee and allowed for a two-pronged approach tackling voter registration/turnout and education. DU Votes represents a unified effort to further institutionalize the civic engagement work occurring on campus and increase the availability and accessibility of voting information and resources. The work done by the fellows, CLIC, and other student organizations on campus contributed to a more visible and robust non-partisan voter initiative.

Since the 2020 election, DU Votes has continued to institutionalize voter registration, piloting programs in first-year orientation, the housing selection process (required for all students), and Denison's all-campus mailroom. This engagement allows DU Votes to mobilize students in all election cycles, including local elections in 2019 and 2021, both of which saw high engagement. Denison and DU Votes have also worked to strengthen ties between community partners like the Licking County League of Women Voters, the Licking County Board of Elections, and several local municipal elected officials. We will also be looking to build a relationship with the Licking County NAACP in future cycles.

Following the momentum of the 2020 election cycle, and a larger leadership team, DU Votes believes 2022 could see record midterm voting rates for Denison's campus. Strong groundwork was laid throughout 2021 as campus stakeholders remained informed and engaged in voter registration, turnout, and education efforts. Over the last few cycles, an increasing number of Denison students have chosen to vote using their home address, instead of their campus address. This may be associated with declining activity among campus partisan organizations, which tended to encourage local registration. Nearly 80% of Denison students are out-of-state, making this trend a significant shift for voter engagement efforts. DU Votes and CLIC continue to monitor this trend in order to ensure every student receives adequate voting support regardless of where they choose to vote. The DU Votes leadership team continues to meet weekly to coordinate and plan for the 2022 midterm cycle, and ran many events throughout the spring 2022 primary season.

Most recent data on registration among Denison students (self-reported):

Are you registered to vote? Which of the following statements best captures your status?

- 9.4% I am not a US citizen
- 28.8% I am registered to vote in Granville
- 52.0% I am registered in my home state*
- 9.0% I am not registered to vote and am a US citizen

Spring 2020 127 Survey (Paul Djupe), n=500

*We estimate that this number has risen since the survey was completed in Spring 2020, likely closer between 55%-60% of eligible Denison students. Further, this data does not accurately represent that number of Denison students who are not U.S. citizens. This number is more likely between 18%-20%.

Goals

Short-Term Goals

- To increase our midterm Registration Rate among eligible students by five percentage points from 86.5% (2018) to 91.5%.
- To increase our midterm Rate of Registered Students who Voted by ten percentage points from 52% (2018) to 62%.
- Host at least four collaborative events focused on civic education and dialogue open to the entire Denison campus community.

- Give all students a calendar of Fall 2022 voting events and make this calendar accessible publicly online via DU Votes social media and Denison’s website.
- Provide more robust election education for students choosing to vote out-of-state using their home address (~80% of Denison students are out-of-state).
- Ensure that the Denison Campus Governance Association sufficiently implements a partner ambassador program with DU Votes for the Fall 2022 cycle (program previously voted on and approved by campus government).
- Reconvene weekly campus civic engagement committee meetings with representatives from DU Votes, CLIC, Residential Communities, Student Life, and others.

Long-Term Goals

1. Ensure a comprehensive and adequate program for voter registration and civic education / community-building in first-year August Orientation
2. Ensure a comprehensive and adequate program for civic education and dialogue in the classroom-space through relationship-building with faculty and academic departments
3. Fostering an equitable approach to voter registration and civic engagement in conjunction with the Center for Belonging and Inclusion and campus organizations for underrepresented campus populations.
4. Build a consistent civil dialogue and discourse program in conjunction with the Lisska Center for Intellectual Engagement, the Denison Debate Society, and campus partisan organizations.
5. Maintain a stronger and more productive relationship with local elected officials and political community organizations.
6. Work with campus and community stakeholders to combat the spread of misinformation surrounding students’ right to vote using their campus address.

Strategy

Detailed information regarding voter registration, absentee ballot request, and other voting processes beyond general engagement strategy is included in the Appendix

Since the 2020 election, DU Votes has shifted its focus to include more civic education initiatives as a route to encourage voter registration and turnout. Many of our standard voter registration and GOTV strategies remain the same, but we plan to be more intentional about engaging stakeholders and building a strong civic community on Denison’s campus throughout Fall 2022. Our primary focus remains peer-to-peer / relational organizing that prioritizes opportunities where registration and turnout is grounded in civic education. Below are the two primary foundations for our campus voter engagement strategy: Stakeholder Identification and Relational Contact.

Stakeholder Identification

During the 2020 and 2021 elections, we found that students did not respond well to mailers, emails, or in-person contact from a volunteer they did not know. Therefore, we plan to focus our 2022 strategy on stakeholder contact and engagement. Ideally, we will identify a list of key campus leaders in Athletics, Greek Life, Student Organizations, Campus Government, Faculty, and others that will be able to hold student communities (like a Varsity sports team) accountable. We have already built relationships with the Denison Athletics Department and Greek Life representatives. Leading up to Fall 2022, we plan to train these stakeholders on the basics of voter registration and GOTV efforts, while also developing plans for them to engage their respective campus community.

Relational Contact

Following 2020, the DU Votes leadership team expanded to include a “Campaigns Coordinator” who develops and manages a team of student volunteers. Building a broad volunteer program with ample opportunities to assist students in the voting process is a new core strategy for DU Votes. We have already piloted text-banking, canvassing, and tabling programs on campus, and plan to utilize these methods (combined with a wide volunteer base) to reach as many students as possible through peer-to-peer engagement. The more volunteers, the more likely it is we can engage students using someone they know.

To make these core foundations actionable, below is information regarding our short-term and long-term strategies for Fall 2022 developed in tandem with the goals listed above.

Short-Term

In the short term, the DU Votes will prioritize relational contact in an effort to turnout voters for the 2022 midterm elections. As a foundation, DU Votes plans to table in and around the Denison Student Union at least twice a week. This will offer students a constant reminder of the election in a high traffic environment. Further, this table will be equipped with forms and resources to assist a student voting in any state through the entire registration and ballot request process. To build on this, DU Votes will complete at least two all-campus mail drops with specific voting information and work closely with campus offices and departments to communicate important deadlines and upcoming events.

DU Votes’ Campaigns Coordinator will also be implementing campus canvass and text bank opportunities for DU Votes volunteers at least four times leading up to the November election. These campaigns will focus on different aspects of the voting process, and will rely heavily on peer-to-peer contact from volunteers. Further, text banking will allow consistent and fast voting information to be transmitted to students.

In order to have constant contact with key campus stakeholders throughout the semester, DU Votes will hold once weekly leadership team meetings and bi-weekly stakeholder meetings to review processes, progress, and new initiatives.

Long-Term

DU Votes will be grounding all short term voter engagement strategies in institutionalized voter assistance programs across campus. Over the past year, the DU Votes team has been working with several key offices across campus to institutionalize voter assistance leading up to the 2022 midterms. First, DU Votes worked with the First Year Office to conduct a voter registration and civic community program in August Orientation. The pilot program ran in August 2021, with great success. A civic engagement program will now be a staple part of the August Orientation process each year. Second, DU Votes has worked with Denison's Housing Office to ensure that key voter registration and deadline information will be included in housing assignment emails given to each student, beginning in spring 2022. This will be key since students must re-register using their new campus address each year. Traditionally, emails are not effective voter engagement, but the housing assignment email is one of few that every Denison student must read in its entirety, in order to receive all vital housing information. Third, DU Votes is working with over a dozen academic departments to institutionalize voter registration and education into their classrooms and programming leading up to August 2022. DU Votes will also be speaking in classes throughout the fall to work directly with students. This initiative will be key, voter engagement has yet to play a large role in classroom settings at Denison.

All three of the long term strategies described above will be piloted for the 2022 midterms and will be considered permanent programs within each respective office and department.

Reporting

In order to receive feedback on the effectiveness of the 2022 DU Votes initiative we intend to utilize several collection methods already in place across Denison's campus. Most of these surveys could be easily modified to include a question on civic engagement. We also plan to develop our own survey that could be given to students via email / at the completion of events. Finally, we have incorporated a first-year entry survey into August Orientation. This will give us information on where first-years intend to vote and an understanding of their knowledge.

Following the November election, we also plan to reach out to all closely-affiliated campus stakeholders and ask for feedback on our election organizing. We want to make sure that each of our stakeholders feel empowered and excited about their involvement with DU Votes. This

feedback form will ensure that DU Votes is best able to engage and work with our campus stakeholders in future election cycles.

Various collection methods listed below:

Voter Engagement Initiative Reflection Tools:

- Feedback form after events
- Develop student survey to annually or each semester collect data on effect of our voter civic engagement outreach
- First-year orientation voting info survey
- Feedback forms distributed to closely affiliated stakeholders

Pre-existing Reflection Tools:

- Office of Student Development Student Experience Survey – add questions on involvement and civic engagement
- CLIC senior reflections and staff reviews

DU Votes is coordinated with the CLIC office and the University Communications team to publicly display the Fall 2022 Action Plan, alongside NSLVE data. The plan will be included alongside voter registration and ballot request information on the www.denison.edu website.

Evaluation

The Denison Voter Engagement Initiative will convene with CLIC staff and other campus stakeholders on a monthly basis to review data arriving via all of our reporting systems and reevaluate and discuss improvements we can make in the short and long-term to our programs. Our feedback forms from various campus stakeholders and event volunteers will be a critical component of internal evaluation.

A simple metric for evaluating success during the fall semester will be the number of volunteers and attendees at DU Votes events. Each semester requires a trial-and-error period for determining how and when to best turnout interested students. Further, DU Votes conducts its own internal data collection monitoring the voter status of each student. This data is collected through either direct contact with students or when a student uses the DU Votes VR/Ballot Request Tool. Leading up to each deadline (registration, ballot request, election day), DU Votes leadership will compile data on percent of registered students leading up to key registration deadlines (30 days prior to election day) and compare against Action Plan Goals. The same will be done with ballot requests and early voting self-collected data.

We used this strategy in the Fall 2020 election, and it allowed us to more effectively target students in need of assistance and indicated if current programming was on track.

Appendix

Voter Registration

Registration of First-Year Students

Some students may be previously registered using their home address, but most will not be. Be sure to explain both the process for registering using their home address and registering using their Denison campus address. Be mindful that some students may not yet be 18 years old. If that is the case, they may register only if their 18th birthday is on or before election day.

Registration and Re-Registration of Returning Students

Returning students who are registered to vote using their Denison address will need to re-register every Fall, since housing assignments will change. Make clear to returning students that their Licking County voter registration will NOT be valid unless they update their dorm address in the Fall. Students registered using their home address need not update their voter registration unless their home address has changed between election cycles.

Voter Education and Engagement

DU Votes will be working closely with campus and community stakeholders to provide at least bi-weekly voter education events. In collaboration with partners, DU Votes plans to bring relevant candidates to campus to speak, to host issues-based discussions with expert faculty, host discussions with visiting speakers on democracy and civic participation, and much more!

Get Out The Vote (GOTV)

Early Voting / Absentee Voting

Students registered in Licking County (or in surrounding counties, like Franklin) may choose to vote early at their Board of Elections. The CLIC office will provide shuttles to the Licking County BoE once early voting begins in Fall 2022. Out-of-state students registered using their Denison address who do not possess an Ohio Driver's License may vote early using their social security number.

With a greater number of students registered using their home address, voting by mail (using an absentee ballot) will be widespread even after COVID-19 related concerns. Many students will

need to start this process early, especially those registered in the Western, Southern, and Northeastern sections of the United States. Ensure students request their absentee ballots weeks ahead of deadlines, it is best practice to encourage this at the same time a student registers.

Below is the process for students to request a ballot via mail:

Ensure voter registration at Denison or at home is up-to-date → Request an absentee ballot to be mailed to their Slayter Box → Complete absentee ballot in its entirety → mail back to local Board of Elections → Counted!

Election Day

With the introduction of vaccines and booster shots, students may be more inclined to vote in-person. Mostly, this option will be available to students who choose to register using their Denison address and vote at Denison’s polling location in Granville. Occasionally, students may choose to drive home and vote in-person on election day.

Below is the process for students to vote in-person:

Ensure voter registration at Denison or at home is up-to-date → Arrive at the corresponding precinct polling location on election day and vote using a valid form of identification OR vote early in-person at the Board of Elections → Counted!

IMPORTANT: For students who choose to vote in-person on or before election day, it is vital that they understand and provide the proper form of identification. Information on valid forms of identification may be found on the Ohio Secretary of State’s website (<https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/id-requirements>). Out-of-state students registered using their Denison dorm address who vote in-person on election day and do NOT have an Ohio Driver’s License will need to use a zero-balance Denison utility bill that can be picked up from the Denison campus bookstore.

We plan to make election day on November 8th, 2022 a fun and exciting event for all students. We will be organizing a collaborative election day rally with a “march” to the polling location in Granville. Further, we will work with faculty and staff to ensure students may get time off class and work in order to vote.

Ohio 2022 Elections Calendar

This calendar is specifically for Ohio voting deadlines. Given that a large number of Denison students vote using their home state address, DU Votes ensures students are educated on all of the relevant deadlines for their state. For the sake of brevity, only the Ohio deadlines are included here.

April 4th	Deadline for voter registration for May 3 primary election (30 days before)
April 30th	Absentee ballot applications must be received by noon (three days before)
May 2nd	Absentee ballots returned by U.S. Mail must be postmarked no later than May 2
May 3rd	Primary Election Day. Polls open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
May 3rd	Absentee ballots must be returned in person or via a method other than the U.S. Mail to the Board of Elections by the close of polls
May 13th	Absentee ballots must be received by Board of Elections by this date to be counted (10 days after)
May 13th	UOCAVA absentee ballots must be received by Board of Elections by this date to be counted (10 days after)
October 11th	Deadline for voter registration for November 8 general election (30 days before)
October 12th	Early voting and Absentee voting begins
November 5th	Absentee ballots application must be received by noon (three days before)
November 7th	Absentee ballots returned by U.S. mail must be postmarked no later than Nov. 7
November 8th	General Election Day. Polls open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
November 8th	Absentee ballots must be returned in person or via a method other than the U.S. Mail to the Board of Elections by the close of polls
November 18th	Absentee ballots must be received by Board of Elections by this date to be counted (10 days after)
November 18th	UOCAVA absentee ballots must be received by Board of Elections by this date to be counted (10 days after)