

Denison University Voter Engagement Initiative 2020 Action Plan

Developed by DU Votes and the Alford Community Leadership & Involvement Center

Executive Summary:

This plan is being developed by DU Votes and the Campus Election Engagement Project representatives in partnership with the Alford Community Leadership & Involvement Center for the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge at Denison University. Focusing on voter registration and civic engagement during the Fall 2020 semester general election, this plan outlines a comprehensive overview of our efforts leading up to and during the Fall semester. This updated plan is also meant to focus on the revisions recommended by the ALL IN team, incorporating more long-term plans for the encouraging voter engagement at Denison University. We also hoped to incorporate more context and narrative for the Denison voting landscape, providing an all-encompassing view of civic engagement at Denison.

Leadership:

The Denison Voter Engagement Initiative will be executed in large part by the student representatives for DU Votes in conjunction with the student Campus Election Engagement Project (hereinafter, “CEEP”) representative(s). 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, and administrative offices and representatives.

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 above will work with CLIC in receiving resources, materials, funds, and other items needed to implement the 2020 Voter Engagement Initiative. The Associate Director and the Program Coordinator for CLIC will work closest with DU Votes and the CEEP representatives 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 2020 Voting Committee or as department/office contacts that have committed to helping facilitate and coordinate the Voter Engagement Initiative.

CEEP Fellow/DU Votes: Tait Ferguson

CLIC Fellow/DU Votes: Jacob Rains

Alford CLIC Director: Dana Pursley

Alford CLIC Associate Director: Susie Kalinoski

Alford CLIC Program Coordinator: Katie McKenney
Office of Multicultural Student Affairs: TBD
Office of Student Development: Julie Tucker
Denison Business Services: Amy Hannahs
Community Coordinator for Civic Engagement: TBD (August)
Denison Faculty Representative: TBD
Denison Athletics Representative: TBD
Denison Library Representative: Debra Andreadis
Denison Residential Communities Representative: TBD
League of Women Voters: Rita Kipp
Various Student Leaders:
 Tim Dowling (Denison Democrats Representative)
 TBD (Denison College Republicans Representative)
 TBD - not yet elected (Student Body President)

*unfilled representatives will be contacted after June 15th with more information, once Denison has released its plans for the Fall 2020 semester amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 the work Denison does. Specifically the Alford Community Leadership & Involvement Center (CLIC), DU Votes, and CEEP are working together to ensure we meet all of our civic engagement goals.

Our Mission

Through passionate and consistent efforts, we will spread information on campus that showcases how voting can lead to a more connected and well-informed society. Our aim for the 2020 presidential election is to increase voter registration, education, and participation among Denison students, staff, and the community.

Our Vision

As a small campus, we want to ensure a highly visible and active "voter committee" that connects campus resources and empowers students to access their right to vote and be civically engaged.

Landscape

Denison civic and voter engagement efforts have evolved significantly since the 2012 election cycle when Denison first joined the NSLVE study. Over the last eight years the number of

students who are registered to vote and the number of students who have in fact voted in the Midterm and Presidential elections has increased, but the location in which students choose to be registered has changed. During the 2012 cycle according to NSLVE 71.9% of students were registered to vote, this number dropped to 61.0% during the 2014 cycle, came back up to 85.4% during the 2016 cycle, and most recently rested at 79.3% for the 2018 Midterm elections. The shifting levels of registration between cycles reflects a prior loss of momentum that was occurring in non-Presidential election years. 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 the campus and in our local community.

In the summer of 2018, CLIC formed a non-partisan voter engagement committee headed up by student fellows from CLIC and CEEP which also included stakeholders from campus offices and the League of Women Voters. This committee represented 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 large reduction in registration drop off that Denison had experienced in the past and a much improved voting rate compared to the 2014 midterm cycle (8.6% vs. 33.5%).

Following the 2018 cycle the Denison Voter Engagement Team continued work to institutionalize civic engagement efforts in the classroom, at orientations, and via extracurricular organizations on campus. These efforts and the continued programming and engagement work being done led to record student turnout in the Fall 2019 local elections in Granville, Ohio and high interest among students for the Spring 2020 Presidential Primary.

Heading into the Fall of 2020 the Denison Voter Engagement Team remains committed to making this our most successful election cycle yet despite the unique challenges the campus and country are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the groundwork has already been laid for increased efforts around civic engagement which we are confident will lead to greater participation. The Voter Engagement Team continues to meet weekly and is coordinating with a wide variety of stakeholders and campus offices to ensure that our efforts remain on track for the Fall.

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

Goals

LONG-TERM GOALS

1. Institutionalize voter engagement efforts via June and August Orientation for first-year students.
2. Fostering an equitable approach to voter registration and civic engagement in conjunction with the Office for Multicultural Affairs.
3. Incorporate voter re-registration (updating of dorm address) into annual housing registration process beginning in Spring 2021.
4. Build out infrastructure for ongoing conversations around civic engagement through CLIC, Leadership Fellows, DCA, Sustained Dialogue, and other student organization programming.
5. Make civic and voter engagement a learning objective for every first-year advising circle.
6. Making voting and civic engagement a primary function of the Denison Campus Governance Association (DCGA), the student representative body.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

- To increase our Voting Rate by 10 points, from 42.7% to 52.7%.
- Host two to three voter information forums/panels to help inform students on issues and candidates running in Fall 2020 with assistance from faculty and staff.
- Giving all students a calendar of Fall 2020 voting events (in-person or virtual)
- To increase our Registration Rate by 5 points, from 85.4% to 90.4%.
- To increase our Rate of Registered Students who Voted by 10 points, from 50.4% to 60.4%.
- Provide more comprehensive resources for students who are voting in their home counties (82% of Denison students are from out-of-state).
- Build a Fall 2020 Voter Engagement Committee of student representatives, faculty, and staff to help facilitate and coordinate the efforts of DU Votes, CEEP, and CLIC on campus.

*Goals are based on NSLVE data and baselines from the 2016 Presidential Cycle data but also include insights from the 2018 Midterm Cycle data.

Plan Overview/Strategy

Due to COVID-19, there is uncertainty as to how virtual the Fall 2020 semester will be for Denison students, faculty, and staff. In order to be as prepared as possible for any circumstance, we have put together different methods of achieving our above listed goals for a normal semester (Plan A), an on-campus modified semester (Plan B), or an entirely virtual semester (Plan C). It is our understanding that Denison's Fall semester is most likely to fall under Plan B or Plan C, with social distancing, gathering limitations, and virtual learning/engagement. Many of the ideas we had prior to the COVID-19 pandemic can still be implemented on a virtual level, utilizing Zoom or Google Meet. Every plan incorporates a voting/civic engagement calendar that will be sent and accessible to students at the beginning of the semester. This calendar will outline bi-weekly events that will include panels, information sessions, question/answer sessions, and other ways to stay informed on the issues, candidates, and voting process. Further, the calendar will include important dates for voters, such as registration and absentee deadlines. The bi-weekly events will be held in all three plans, but in Plans B and C they will become virtual, with information sent out/posted advertising the date and time.

For Plan B, which is a modified on-campus experience, we will be doing non face-to-face on-campus events. These will include slipping information under students dorm doors, and designated times for information tables that will not have an attendant. We also plan to run virtual events students can access from dorms, along with potential gatherings that follow the guidelines of the federal, state, and campus regulations.

Plan C is an entirely virtual semester, where students do not return to campus and continue to complete coursework from home. As stated above, we will continue to have bi-weekly, virtual events and ensure that students have access to a calendar outlining important deadlines and information. Student email, social media, and phone banking will be utilized to communicate important information to students.

Below are *general outlines* of each plan; the plans are subject to change.

PLAN A: Normal Campus Operations Return in the Fall

- Bi-weekly events in various spots on campus
- Panel/Q&A on voting and issues included in ballot
- Trainings for students, faculty, and staff (in-person) via club and organization meetings
- Walk in voting hours (advertised)
- Information posted around campus with important dates/deadlines

PLAN B: Modified Campus Operations Return in the Fall (Social-Distancing and Gathering Limitations are in place)

- Panel Zoom/ Google Meet calls on issues/candidates

- 2020 Election Series, bi-weekly
- Slipping information under doors of students to avoid face-to-face contact
- Empty tables with information in Slayter (set hours/dates?)
- Information posted around campus with important dates/deadlines

PLAN C: Fall 2020 Semester is held Remotely

- Continue bi-weekly events virtually, virtual calendar
- Panel Zoom/Google Meet on issues/candidates
- Zoom/Google Meet “office hours” for voting Q&A
- Phone Banking with voter information and reminders.

Reporting

In order to receive feedback on the effectiveness of the 2020 Voter Engagement Initiative we intend to utilize several collection methods already in place across the school. 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 that would direct feedback directly to us. Finally, we plan to have all first-year students complete an entry survey that will give us information regarding their intentions to vote from home or in Licking County (Denison’s home).

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 voting info survey

Pre-existing Reflection Tools:

- Office of Student Development Student Experience Survey - add questions on involvement and civic engagement
- Access to CEEP reviews and reflections
- CLIC senior reflections

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.

Appendix

Additional PLAN A Specific Action Items and Events:

Voter Registration

Registration of First-Year Students

- In partnership with our August Orientation Program, a formalized process will be added to the orientation experience where students will have the opportunity to register to vote and sign up to receive election related reminders from DU Votes.
- DU Votes plans to collect information from students on whether they plan to vote in Ohio or another state in order to better target our Get Out The Vote efforts later in the semester.
- Copies of Denison's Student Voting Guide will be made available to all First-Year Students during August Orientation.
- DU Votes volunteers will conduct a dorm storm during the first week of the academic year to follow-up with students who need assistance completing voter registration and absentee ballot request forms.
- Registration and Absentee Voting Information flyers specific to First-Year Students will be put up in all First-Year Residence Halls.

Registration and Re-Registration of Returning Students

- All students who are registered to vote using a campus address are required to update their voter registration each school year due to their change in campus address. In collaboration with Residential Communities and Student Housing Operations and Planning we plan to provide students with registration forms during Upperclass Student Move-In.
- DU Votes volunteers will conduct several dorm storms during September to follow-up with students who need assistance completing voter registration and absentee ballot request forms.
- Registration and Absentee Voting Information flyers will be put up in Upperclass Residence Halls.

Voter Education and Engagement

- Information Table - DU Votes will set up a voter engagement table in our student union (Slayter) 24/7. A volunteer will be present at the table weekly to help students register, leading up to the voter- registration deadline of October 5. After the registration deadline ends, there will be a candidate and ballot information available for students at all times at the table.

- Debate Watch Parties - DU Votes plans to host debate watch parties for the three Presidential debates and the Vice Presidential debate.
- Candidate Forum - In partnership with political organizations on campus and the League of Women Voters DU Votes will invite candidates for local, state, and federal office for a candidate forum.
- National Voter Registration Day and Constitution Day - DU Votes plans to hold special voter registration and engagement events in partnership with other campus offices and student organizations on these dates.
- Bulletin Boards - DU Votes plans to create bulletin boards that have voter registration forms, voter guides, sample ballots, and issue guides that will be showcased in different offices and student-heavy locations around the university.
- MyDenison - DU Votes plans to collaborate with ITS and University Communications to create a voting information page that provides timely information and relevant resources for students.

Get Out The Vote (GOTV)

Early Voting/Absentee Voting

- Early Voting Shuttles - DU Votes in partnership with CLIC will provide shuttles to the Licking County Board of Elections throughout early voting.
- Halloween Trick or Vote in the Residence Halls (Dorm Storm) - DU Votes will go door to door encouraging early voting and hand out voter information on October 29.
- Absentee Voting Reminders - DU Votes will table and send reminders to students planning on voting absentee to ensure they return their ballots prior to election day. DU Votes will assist students in filling out Absentee Ballot Requests as needed.

Election Day

- Election Day Shuttles - DU Votes in partnership with CLIC will provide shuttles to the polling place in Granville on Election Day.
- Election Day Rally - In partnership with CLIC, all interested campus organizations and offices DU Votes will hold an election day rally to excite students about voting and distribute voting information.

Days to Register First-Year Students: 43 days

Days to Register Upperclass Students: 40 days

Tentative Calendar of Events

August 23 – First-Year Voter Registration Effort Begins

August 26 – Upperclass Student Voter Registration forms distributed during Upperclass Move In

September 9 – [OFFICIAL EMAIL] About Voter Registration, Events, and Resources, Calendar

September 29 – Presidential Debate Viewing #1 (Slayter Auditorium, 9-10:30 pm)

October 7 – Vice Presidential Debate Viewing (Slayter Auditorium, 9-10:30 pm)

October 15 – Presidential Debate Viewing #2 (Slayter Auditorium, 9-10:30 pm)

October 22 – Presidential Debate Viewing #3 (Slayter Auditorium, 9-10:30 pm)

Application Deadlines

December 15, 2019 - All In Campus Democracy Challenge

January 30, 2020 - Voter Friendly Campus Designation

Ohio 2020 Tentative Elections Calendar

October 5	Deadline for voter registration for the Nov. 3, 2020 general election (30 days before general election)
October 6	EARLY VOTING BEGINS: Hours to be Announced
November 2	Absentee ballots returned by U.S. Mail must be postmarked no later than this date.
November 3	General Election Day. Polls open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
November 3	Absentee ballots, returned in person or via a method other than U.S. Mail, must be received by the boards of elections by close of polls
November 13	Absentee ballots returned by U.S. Mail must be postmarked no later than Nov. 2 and received by boards of elections by this date to be counted (10 days after general election)
November 13	UOCAVA absentee ballots must be received by boards of elections by this date to be counted (10 days after general election)