

# Dickinson

Campus Action Plan  
for  
Voter Registration, Education, & Engagement  
2022-2023



Dickinson



CENTER FOR CIVIC  
LEARNING & ACTION

## **Executive Summary**

Dickinson College provides a useful, innovative, and interdisciplinary education in the liberal arts and sciences to prepare students to lead rich and fulfilling lives of engaged global citizenship, working for the common good. In keeping with this core mission, Dickinson has long fostered meaningful civic engagement including encouraging participation in elections.

Dickinson Votes, a volunteer, nonpartisan group of students, staff, and faculty at Dickinson College, is dedicated to educating all members of the Dickinson community about voting and enabling voters to participate in local, state, and federal elections. Dickinson has participated in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) since 2012, and in recent years Dickinson Votes has organized initiatives to encourage voter education, registration and participation in all national and Pennsylvania elections. Data from NSLVE have confirmed that Dickinson's efforts have improved voter participation and have helped Dickinson Votes identify areas for focused action.

While preparing for general and primary elections held in 2021-2022, Dickinson Votes updated its existing Action Plan to coordinate efforts toward the following goals.

Dickinson Votes: Goals for 2022-2023

1. Educate the Dickinson community about voting and voter participation in Pennsylvania.
2. Increase voter registration rate among Dickinson students compared to 2016 and 2018 with particular emphasis on racial and ethnic groups that voted at lower rates than the overall campus in 2018.
3. Increase the voter participation rate among Dickinson students compared to 2016 with particular emphasis on racial and ethnic groups that voted at lower rates than the overall campus in 2018.
4. Recruit, train, and engage new student, staff, and faculty representatives in Dickinson Votes initiatives.
5. Provide additional resources to enable and encourage voting by mail among the substantial number of students studying off-campus during elections.
6. Increase our equity and inclusivity efforts by building stronger relationships with Dickinson's Greek Life and Athletics organizations.

The Action Plan that follows describes the status of these actions and lays out key elements of our voter engagement strategy for 2022-2023.

## **1) Educate the Dickinson Community about voting and voter participation in Pennsylvania**

Dickinson College, founded for the purpose of preparing students for lives of engaged citizenship, has long encouraged voter participation. In recent years, the college has rededicated itself to the priorities of voter education and registration, while expanding efforts to turn out student voters during elections.

Recently, Dickinson Votes has made progress in the following areas. These items also serve as the framework for our future efforts:

- a. Established the Dickinson Votes Committee, a volunteer group of students, faculty, and staff, that coordinates efforts across the campus.
- b. Affiliated with Dickinson's Center for Civic Learning & Action to establish [a permanent web presence](#) and fund a part-time student Voter Engagement Coordinator position to organize the Dickinson Votes Committee, lead event planning, recruit and train volunteers, and staff campus and community registration efforts.
- c. Partnered with local, county, and state agencies to expand opportunities for voter education and participation.
- d. Joined with local, regional, and national campaigns to share resources, coordinate efforts around student voting, and [increase visibility of Dickinson Votes initiatives and outcomes](#).
- e. Developed materials and marshaled resources specific to Dickinson's unique challenges, especially around engagement of international students and students studying overseas.
- f. Coordinated expanded voter education and registration programs in classrooms, residence halls, study abroad sites, and new student orientation.
- g. Published and distributed nonpartisan information about voting and elections.
- h. Hosted a series of events for voter education including candidate forums, debates, issue-focused discussions, and ballot machine demonstrations.

This section briefly describes each of these efforts, while later sections in the report expand upon specific efforts relevant to that section.

- a. Established the Dickinson Votes Committee, a volunteer group of students, faculty, and staff, that coordinates efforts across the campus.

Dickinson students, faculty, and staff began informally expanding efforts to educate and register voters before the 2010 elections. The work was led by student organizers from the College Democrats and Republicans. This work continued in the following years, and by 2015 the Dickinson Votes Committee was established and began operating, with institutional support from the Student Leadership and Campus Engagement (SLCE) office. The group included students from many student organizations, faculty from several academic departments, and staff from the Student Life, Library and Information Services, and Academic Program divisions. During the 2021-2022 year Dickinson Votes built on this foundation to develop a stronger relationship with the relatively new Center for Civic Learning & Action (CCLA) at Dickinson and the college's renewed commitment to civic engagement as a pillar of the Dickinson experience.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Increase the number of faculty, staff, and students who are active participants in the direction and implementation of Dickinson Votes programs through targeted recruitment efforts, training initiatives, and visible events.
  - Grow the number of relationships with campus administrative units and programs in Academic Affairs and Student Life.
  - Increase student participation by issuing invitations to student organization leaders encouraging them to promote participation by their members.
- b. Affiliated with Dickinson’s Center for Civic Learning & Action to establish [a permanent web presence](#) and fund a part-time student Voter Engagement Coordinator position to organize the Dickinson Votes Committee, lead event planning, recruit and train volunteers, and staff campus and community registration efforts.

In 2019, the Center for Civic Learning and Action (CCLA) was established at Dickinson College. Among its many initiatives, this new center provides leadership and resources with Dickinson Votes for voter education and participation. In 2020, CCLA supported the design and launch of the Dickinson Votes webpage to include a variety of resources for Dickinson voters. This webpage became even more vital immediately after launching, as the COVID-19 pandemic led most Dickinson students to leave campus before they could cast ballots in the 2020 Primary Elections. The webpage became a central hub for information and resources enabling Dickinson voters to participate in the election by mail.

In 2021, CCLA supported the creation of a paid student Voter Engagement Coordinator for Dickinson Votes. The position works closely with a faculty advisor from the Dickinson Votes committee and the associate provost at CCLA. The Dickinson Voter Engagement Coordinator is charged with developing and leading campaigns and events to increase voter engagement at Dickinson College. In coordination with Dickinson Votes, the coordinator serves the campus by enhancing nonpartisan efforts related to voter education, voter registration, and voter turnout. The coordinator serves as a primary point of contact for community, regional, state, and national voter engagement networks and initiatives. This position was established to provide stable student leadership throughout the school year and to further establish the student-directed efforts of Dickinson Votes.

In 2021-2022, the coordinator designed and planned events to engage campus constituents in all aspects of voting, primarily focusing on voter registration and voting engagement. The coordinator also worked with campus leadership and community partners to participate in regional and national voter registration and education events, competitions, and campaigns. The coordinator successfully disseminated accurate and timely information about local, state, and national elections, registration deadlines, and voting procedures on social media and at in-person events.

Due to the coordinated effort between CCLA and Dickinson Votes student coordinator, we were able to successfully register 200 Dickinson students from different class years and disciplines throughout the academic year.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Update and enhance the Dickinson Votes website content and create social media posts, in-person events, and other opportunities to drive traffic to the site.

- Seek opportunities for co-programming with CCLA and Dickinson Votes (e.g., Activities Fair, Britton Plaza tabling, community-based voter registration drives)
  - Continue to refine the Voter Engagement Coordinator position description and reporting structure to maximize impact.
  - Create a pipeline of Dickinson Votes volunteers who are prepared to take on the responsibilities of the Voter Engagement Coordinator.
- c. Partnered with local, county, and state agencies to expand opportunities for voter education and participation.

Dickinson College has longstanding relationships with many local, county, and state government agencies and offices related to civic engagement, participation, and voting. These include partnerships with the Borough of Carlisle administration and borough council, the Cumberland County Commissioners and Cumberland County Bureau of Elections, the Pennsylvania Office of the Governor, and the Pennsylvania Secretary of State. In recent years, the Dickinson Votes Committee has undertaken a series of initiatives in partnership with these agencies and public offices aimed at improving access to voting for members of the Dickinson community.

Dickinson Votes expanded outreach to the Cumberland County Election Bureau, ensuring access for Dickinson student voters in part by coordinating a shift in voter registration procedures to enable Dickinson student voters to cast ballots in a polling place significantly closer to campus beginning with the 2019 General Election. In 2019, Dickinson Votes coordinated moving the polling place for Dickinson students registered on campus through contacts and logistical coordination with the Cumberland County Bureau of Elections. This enabled moving the polling place from Grace Baptist Church (777 W North St, about 1 mile from the center of campus) to Bosler Public Library, just across the street from campus and within easy walking distance for students. This new location greatly improved access on Election Day, because the distance to the prior location represented an impediment to voting. In the past, Dickinson Votes provided shuttle service using vans, requiring a team of volunteer drivers and budgeting for the use of the vehicles. Beginning in 2019, most Dickinson students were able to vote simply by walking across the street from the main academic quad.

In 2018, Dickinson Votes contacted the Pennsylvania Governor's Office and Secretary of State to set up a public demonstration site on the Dickinson College campus. That year, Dickinson provided the space for one of the Commonwealth's open sessions for educating the public on the options for new voting machines planned for use beginning in 2019.

In 2021-2022, Dickinson Votes attended multiple community events in order to reach expand our reach on campus and in the community. In February, Dickinson Votes partnered with the Upsilon Delta Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority to host a voter registration table at the Black Cultural Festival that was hosted by a local nonprofit, Hope Station. Dickinson Votes and CCLA also partnered with Hope Station in April to host a voter registration table at a well-attended annual community biking event, the Northside Ride. These events moved forward our goals of equity and inclusion on campus and in the community.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Increase awareness among students of the proximity of the voting location.
  - Offer educational programs and campaigns designed to demystify the voting process for new voters.
  - Increase the number of on-campus events focused on general voter awareness, education, and engagement.
  - Collaborate with CCLA and key community partners to increase voter registration and turnout in Carlisle and the region, especially in areas with historically lower voting rates.
- d. Joined with local, regional, and national campaigns to share resources, coordinate efforts around student voting, and [increase visibility of Dickinson Votes initiatives and outcomes](#).

Dickinson partners with several national and regional organizations and campaigns to improve access to elections and voting. Examples include the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, and partnerships with liberal arts colleges and universities in and around our region. These partnerships and collaborations have enabled Dickinson to develop new resources, strategies, and set ambitious goals for improving student voting.

For the 2020 election, Dickinson earned two awards from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge: a Platinum Award (80-90% Voting Rate) and secondly, for Dickinson's nonpartisan student voter participation efforts in the 2020 Election, we earned the Highest Voter Registration - 4-year & the Highest Voter Turnout - 4-year Awards for the State Challenges Awards Ceremony.

Dickinson College is a national leader in study abroad, and a large proportion of our students are studying away from the Carlisle campus each semester. Dickinson has several campuses around the world, and it partners with even more universities, colleges, and study abroad partners in the U.S. and beyond.

One of Dickinson's unique challenges in expanding student voting involves ensuring that students studying abroad have the resources and education they need to cast ballots while away from their Carlisle home. In 2018, Dickinson Votes began a new partnership with Dickinson's Center for Global Study and Engagement. Through this partnership, new resources have been made available to directors of Dickinson's overseas campuses, and new pre-departure orientation materials have been given directly to students. Work is continuing to expand these resources and practices to additional campuses and programs. The goal is to ensure that every Dickinson student studying abroad knows where, when, how, and why to vote.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Coordinate efforts to draw attention to Dickinson's commitment to voter through marketing and communications and application to the Campus Vote Project & NASPA Voter-Friendly Campus designation program.
- Encourage broader student participation in state and national webinars and conferences focused on voter engagement.
- Design campaigns to highlight faculty and staff role models.

- e. Developed materials and marshaled resources specific to Dickinson’s unique challenges, especially around engagement of international students and students studying overseas.

Beginning early in the 2010s, Dickinson began providing incoming students with voter registration forms during summer orientation. From those early efforts, a campus-wide set of programs for voter registration, education, and participation has emerged. Since 2019, Dickinson Votes volunteers and the Voter Engagement Coordinator have organized faculty and student volunteers from across the college to host in-class voter education and registration drives. These fifteen-minute sessions, which include a faculty-developed presentation incorporating NSLVE data, provides Dickinson students—including international and non-traditional students—with educational materials about civics, focused on the history and current shape of elections in the U.S. and Pennsylvania. Those students who choose to register to vote can do so during that in-class session. This initiative followed peer-reviewed research suggesting that in-class voter registration sessions at the college level are effective at improving voter participation.

The Student Leadership and Campus Engagement (SLCE) office has provided leadership, support, and resources to enable a continuously expanding voter registration effort. From orientation, the Dickinson Votes Coordinator works with student organizations, campus events, SLCE, CCLA, and various other groups on campus to provide voter education support and events. Since 2019, Dickinson Votes has “chalked the walk” which is an effort to point student voters to the polling place just across the street from the campus.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Collaborate with CCLA to identify a stable source of operating funds for voter engagement programs.
- f. Coordinated expanded voter education and registration programs in classrooms, residence halls, study abroad sites, and new student orientation.

Dickinson Votes has a multipronged approach to supporting voter registration based on several years of campus-based experience. First, a new first-year student orientation (held in the summer) module was created to engage incoming students via the first-year mentor program. Second, monthly voter registration drives were held on the first Tuesday of each month during the academic year, with SLCE providing logistics, leadership, and resources (including postage). Third, a classroom registration drive was established to engage faculty volunteers, across all disciplines, in educating and registering students in their and their peers’ classrooms (by invitation).

Dickinson Votes has committed to providing nonpartisan information about voting and elections for each election held in Carlisle. The information provided includes sample ballots, lists of candidates and issues on the ballot, links to resources from trusted nonpartisan sources (like the League of Women Voters), and more. These materials are distributed during events and on the Dickinson Votes website.

Dickinson’s Waidner-Spahr Library developed a wide range of informational materials which are presented in various formats across the library. The library has maintained a voter information area, prominently displayed near the main entrance. The library’s website also has a variety of links and information customized for Dickinson voters.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Evaluate and update the Dickinson Votes orientation model to ensure relevance and effectiveness for incoming students.
- Increase the frequency of on-campus tabling events, especially in the weeks preceding important deadlines and elections.
- Recruit faculty from unrepresented disciplines to participate in in-class presentations.
- Explore the possibility of opt-in direct messages to Dickinson voters from Dickinson Votes with educational information, deadline reminders, and links to important resources.

g. Hosted a series of events for voter education including candidates' forums, debates, issue-focused discussions, and ballot machine demonstrations.

Every year, Dickinson hosts a wide range of events open to the public that are valuable for voters and non-voters interested in civic engagement. In recent years, these have included candidate forums, debates, panel discussions, lectures, and demonstrations of election technology and more. Many of these events are hosted by student organizations, academic departments, and the Clarke Forum on Contemporary Issues. Beginning in Spring of 2022, the CCLA and Clarke Forum are housed under one roof and share the same director—this will strengthen the connection between the two campus organizations and benefit student education on important voting issues.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Co-sponsor 2-3 events during the academic year to inspire the campus community to participate in voting and elections.



**2) Increase voter registration rate among Dickinson students compared to 2016 and 2018 with particular emphasis on racial and ethnic groups that voted at lower rates than the overall campus in 2018**

Dickinson College has a longstanding goal to improve voter participation. As part of that effort, Dickinson has collected data on student voting in several ways. The college became an early participant in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). NSLVE reports show that in the November 2018 General Election, 83.4% of eligible Dickinson students registered to vote, and 42.2% of those students cast a ballot. In 2020, 93.8% of eligible Dickinson students registered and 85% of eligible students voted. For the 2020 election, Dickinson was recognized for its success in voter registration and voting rates with the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Platinum Award (80-90% Voting Rate) and the Highest Voter Registration rate and the Highest Voter Turnout among 4-year colleges in Pennsylvania.

Following on this success, Dickinson Votes and CCLA successfully registered 200 students from a variety of disciplines and class years during the 2021-2022 academic year. These efforts were especially important for first and second-year students who had not previously been on campus due to the pandemic. Voter registration, of course, is a continuous challenge for colleges, as the student population changes each semester. The Dickinson Votes committee has developed a robust series of activities throughout the calendar year to ensure that all Dickinson students know how and why to register, and to enable all eligible students to register to vote.

Dickinson Votes has created a streamlined process for Dickinson students to register to vote. First, in coordination with the Cumberland County Bureau of Elections, Dickinson students can use a single registration address to ensure that all students (regardless of physical residence location) vote at the same polling place. This significantly improves voter access and turnout by reducing confusion caused by having multiple polling places. Second, the college has paid postage and created a single point of collection for voter registration forms in the Student Life and Campus Engagement Office. This eliminates a barrier to registration (the cost and logistics of postage) and ensures that Dickinson student registration forms are handled securely. It also allows students to register as late as the final deadline, because SLCE can hand-deliver registration forms to the county's elections office. The Voter Engagement Coordinator collects and confirms that registration forms are filled out correctly, and contacts anyone with errors before sending them to the Board of the Elections.

Since 2020, we have seen an increase in engagement at events when we have free stickers and t-shirts for students to collect while they register to vote. We will continue to use free items as a way to create an upbeat atmosphere that gets students excited to register to vote and to participate in elections.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Concentrate its effort for the next academic year on increasing equity and inclusivity among registrants on-campus.
- Use 2020 NSLVE data to inform Dickinson Votes strategies and events to ensure that efforts are reaching all students.
- Develop relationships with specific student organizations, academic departments, and administrative units to reach students who may not receive Dickinson Votes nonpartisan communications.

- Create innovative and inspiring marketing and communication campaigns that reach audiences through communication channels they already utilize.

**3) Increase the voter participation rate among Dickinson students compared to 2016 with particular emphasis on racial and ethnic groups that voted at lower rates than the overall campus in 2018**

In 2020, a presidential election year hampered by numerous unprecedented challenges due to COVID, Dickinson achieved an 85.0% voting rate. This was an increase of 20.7% from the 2016 presidential election cycle. We acknowledge that we cannot become complacent due to past successes.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Hold voter engagement events in the weeks leading up to the election with the goal of encouraging broad participation (e.g., faculty workshops, videos, social media campaigns).
- Partner or co-sponsor events with student organizations and academic/administrative units to increase awareness of policy issues, candidate positions, and general election procedures.
- Seek out new partnerships with the Popel Shaw Center for Race & Ethnicity, the Center for Spirituality & Social Justice, the departments of Africana Studies; Latin America, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies (LALC), and others to engage students who participated at lower rates in 2020.

**4) Recruit, train, and engage new student, staff, and faculty representatives in Dickinson Votes initiatives.**

The individuals currently engaged with Dickinson Votes are the core of our strength. We have students on our committee who are part of partisan organizations on campus (College Democrats and College Republicans) as well as students who are affiliated with nonpartisan groups. We have sought out students affiliated with Student Senate. In terms of faculty and staff, we have strong representation from faculty in the arts, humanities, social science, and natural and physical sciences. We also have staff members from Student Leadership and Campus Engagement (SLCE), the Center for Civic Learning and Action (CCLA), the Center for Global Student Engagement (CGSE), and the Library. Our plan for next academic year, however, is to increase student engagement with Dickinson Votes and empower student to feel more ownership over the group.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Hold information sessions throughout the academic year to introduce Dickinson Votes and our record of success to a broad range of students, faculty, and staff.
- Offer a workshop to train Dickinson Votes volunteers on voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout law and procedure.
- Hold regular Dickinson Votes meetings to create a sense of volunteer commitment to the organization and its programs.

- Invite new faculty members to take leadership roles in Dickinson Votes planning and programming.

**5) Provide additional resources to enable and encourage voting by mail among the substantial number of students studying off-campus during elections**

Dickinson has a strong tradition of study abroad among its students. The large percentage of students who study abroad often feel disconnected from election cycles and timelines while away from campus. The Center for Global Study and Engagement (CGSE) began coordinating with Dickinson Votes to provide voter education, registration, and access to all students studying abroad at our global sites or in partner programs.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Work with CGSE to integrate voting information in the application and pre-departure processes for all Dickinson students.
- Communicate with Dickinson faculty and staff at global sites to ensure they are aware of U.S. election cycles and deadlines.

**6) Increase our equity and inclusivity efforts by building stronger relationships with Dickinson's Greek Life and Athletics organizations**

Dickinson Votes has already established a connection with the Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) to begin this work, and we are creating a strong partnership with coaches and student athlete ambassadors to encourage all athletes on campus to engage with elections. Dickinson Votes has also previously piloted joint programs with Greek organizations. We believe these partnerships hold great potential in reaching groups of students who have participated in voting at lower rates than the broader campus population. The incoming Dickinson Votes Coordinator is a member of a sorority with ties to Panhellenic organizations and the larger Greek Life presence on campus.

For the 2022-2023 Academic Year, Dickinson Votes will:

- Work with SAAC and the coaching staff during orientation and throughout the school year to register student-athletes.
- Leverage connections to Greek Life to identify opportunities for information sessions and event co-sponsorships to engage fraternity and sorority members.
- Launch a competition between sports teams and student organizations (e.g., sororities) to create friendly competition designed to increase registration and voting among students.