



ALL-IN Campus Democracy Challenge
2024 Action Plan
Drake University

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Overview

Drake University has been a local, state, and national leader in student civic engagement. Located in Des Moines, IA, Drake is ideally situated as an institution that integrates civic engagement into every facet of our student experience. Over the past decade, Drake has intentionally institutionalized policies and practices to grow student participation in community and political affairs, including the ongoing work of the Political Visitor Team that organizes and coordinates implementation for dozens of candidate, party, and media events; expansion of the Office of Community Engaged Learning (CEL) within the Academic Affairs division of the Provost's office; the appointing of a Civic Engagement Senator as a representative of Student Senate; the creation of a Civic Engagement Committee to support the work of the Civic Engagement Senator; the permanent relocation of the national headquarters of Vote Smart to the Drake University campus; collaborative meetings of students, faculty, and administrative staff to identify and solve institutional challenges to student voter registration and voting; and regular collaborative communication with the Iowa Secretary of State's office, the Polk County Auditor, and Campus Compact. In 2020, Drake's NSLVE Report indicated that 91.6% of students were registered to vote and 80.4% of Drake students voted. These are significant increases from 2016's presidential election and earned us the "Platinum seal" for a second consecutive election cycle. More recently, Drake University was recognized as a 2022 ALL IN Most Engaged Campuses for College Student Voting for our intentional efforts to increase student voter participation, as outlined in our All In Action Plans.

Various individuals and offices at Drake have reflected upon our previous voting cycle successes and the extraordinary campus environment that led into the 2020 general election and 2022 midterm election to evaluate best practices and to continue our efforts to fully institutionalize and integrate student initiatives, administrative practices, curricular and co-curricular events, and

routine collaborative conversations as we prepare for the 2024 general election. Drake will engage in expanded efforts to reach student populations that have lower voter turnout; will intentionally integrate voter registration, voter education and turnout efforts into existing curricular and co-curricular initiatives; and will continue to institutionalize these efforts through a student position within the Office of Community Engaged Learning. The leadership – which is composed of faculty, staff, student, and community organization representatives – represents a wide variety of ideological perspectives, will assess progress on a regular basis. This plan was drafted by members of the leadership team, namely Dr. Rachel Paine Caufield and the Office of Community Engaged Learning, with support from remaining members of the collaborative working group (see below).

Leadership

Civic and citizen engagement is a vital part of several initiatives at Drake, including the Office of Community Engaged Learning, the Donald V. Adams Leadership Institute, The Robert D. and Billy Ray Center, The Harkin Institute for Public Policy and Citizen Engagement, the Department of Political Science, the Engaged Citizen Area of Inquiry (part of the University's general education requirements), the Civic Engagement Senator (appointed within Drake Student Senate), the Civic Engagement Committee (volunteer student representatives), and numerous others. In the past, this has led to some fragmentation, as each institutional entity has different goals, policies, resources, connections, and habits of practice. Put simply, citizen engagement efforts can become so pervasive that the endeavor lacks coherence.

Reflecting on the high rates of voter engagement with respect to both registration and turnout, several individuals have come together to form a collaborative working group to further advance voter engagement, to share ideas and resources, and to enhance the student experience over the long-term. These individuals include:

- Dr. Jerry Parker, Chief Student Affairs Officer
 - Dr. Hannah Clayborne, Dean of Students
 - Dr. Rachel Paine Caufield, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Iowa Caucus Project
 - *Ruwayda Egal*, Student Body President
 - *Chloe Lepak*, Civic Engagement Senator
 - Amanda Martin, Assistant Director of Community Engaged Learning (a division of the Provost's office)
 - *Stephanie Kiel*, Community Engagement Peer – Voter Engagement Coordinator in the Office of Community Engaged Learning
 - *Dylan Engelbrecht*, Drake College Republicans Chair and *Paige Jansen*, Drake Democrats Chair
 - Aline Alves da Costa, National Director of Vote Smart
- (names in italics are current Drake students)

This team communicates regularly to share information, identify challenges, and develop ongoing priorities that reflect the progress of shared goals. A variation of this group (accounting for changes in leadership) has been meeting since 2017, which has helped to solidify a sense of shared purpose and comradery.

Each individual brings established relationships and institutional memory to the table. For example, the Office of Community Engaged Learning has a long relationship with Campus Compact and the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP). Professor Caufield, as advisor to Drake Democrats and College Republicans, has worked with the Iowa Secretary of State's office and the Polk County Auditor to organize satellite voting on campus for the past seven general election cycles. Jerry Parker worked with the Office of Residence Life to ensure students had the necessary lease documents under a new voter ID law in 2018.

The group has also grown to allow for more cohesive integration of civic engagement across multiple dimensions of the student experience. The addition of the student position in the Office of Community Engaged Learning has allowed for greater organizational communication and focused student outreach. Professor Caufield's First Year Seminar (titled "Vote Smart!") includes a student internship with Vote Smart and has been restructured to allow students to develop a campus voter guide. Drake University's Student Senate has reorganized the Civic Engagement Senator position to facilitate regular work on voter registration, education, and turnout efforts, including candidate forums, debate watch parties, and student outreach. The Division of Student Affairs works closely with the Crew Scholars program, which provides a community of academic and social support for students of color, and the Office of Community Engaged Learning specifically implements strategic education and voter registration efforts for the Crew Scholars.

Years of strong leadership and clear, targeted work have cultivated a campus-wide culture of civic engagement that extends beyond any one individual. In the event of leadership changes, the cooperative efforts of this team ensure that multiple members connect with key individuals, groups, and organizations both internally and externally so that collaborations may continue. Each position has its respective transition procedures, but the long-standing nature of the working group and the sharing of responsibilities eases transitional periods.

Commitment

Taken as a whole, we are confident in our ability to continue the efforts undertaken thus far, realizing the promise of the Drake University mission statement: "Drake's mission is to provide an exceptional learning environment that prepares students for meaningful personal lives, professional accomplishments, and *responsible global citizenship*" (emphasis added).

Several inter-related programs and initiatives specifically highlight this commitment:

- The Drake curriculum, which must be completed by all Drake undergraduate students, includes the “Engaged Citizen” Area of Inquiry. All Drake students must complete at least one course that focuses attention on effective participation in democratic processes and “challenges students to critically reflect upon the social, economic or political institutions and issues that shape the choices they will face as citizens.”
- Drake University established the Ron and Jane Olson Center for Public Democracy, which prioritizes collaborative, innovative, and novel approaches to the project of sustaining multi-dimensional public participation and civic leadership. Faculty, staff, and students engage in work to strengthen local, state, national, and global communities.
 - The Public Democracy Scholars program is a signature initiative of the Ron and Jane Olson Center for Public Democracy. The four-year program recruits five students per year, enabling them to be civic leaders through dedicated coursework, immersive engagement, and selective programming opportunities while receiving a scholarship.
- A new American Politics major in the Department of Political Science is designed to specifically integrate experiential opportunities for internships, volunteer activities, advocacy, and practical political skills-based and problem-based learning.
- The Political Visitor Team coordinates logistics and facilitates events on campus, allowing students to meet and question elected officials and political candidates, attend and intern for national media events (like the CNN 2020 Democratic presidential debate and the CNN 2024 Republican presidential debate), and works with student groups to organize speakers and events related to elections and issues of national prominence.
- The Iowa Caucus Project seeks to provide experiential opportunities for students to directly engage with candidates, political parties, activists, and media organizations during an Iowa caucus year as well as throughout the electoral cycle. This group also organized a mock caucus event in Fall 2023.
- The Office of Community Engaged Learning works with faculty to design and implement service learning and community engagement activities within the classroom. The Office also coordinates the Changemaker Scholars program (a selective four-year program to help students build skills and knowledge to address society’s most pressing issues through direct service, business as a force for good, systems change, and more), the Sprout Garden (a learning garden for urban youth), the Food Recovery Network, the Little Free Pantry Project, and IRIS (where students read the news for those who are visually impaired).
- Vote Smart, a national organization that collects and disseminates reliable information about candidates and elected officials, relocated its national headquarters to Drake in 2016 and hires nearly 40 students as interns each semester.
- The Harkin Institute for Public Policy and Citizen Engagement hires students each semester to engage in public policy research. The Institute organizes three high profile public lectures each year and offers opportunities to learn about a variety of

policy issues, including labor, health and wellness, retirement security, and disability rights, through symposia, speakers, and other programming.

- Each spring, the Office of the Provost organizes the “Global Citizen Conference” focused on a single theme that reflects course themes; related co-curricular programming allows for continued student engagement with the theme.
- Jerry Parker, Chief Student Affairs Officer, sends campus-wide emails with information on elections and deadlines
- President Marty Martin joined the Higher Education Presidents’ Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation, and Drake joined the “Ask Every Student” effort.

Other programs also commit to a wide variety of student-based learning about political, social, and economic decision-making and citizenship skills. These programs will continue to offer a unique, vibrant, and diverse array of opportunities. Students regularly engage with the above opportunities inside and outside of the classroom. Press releases, campus-wide emails, internal and external media, events, and programming further highlight the work being done to elevate Drake University’s commitment to advancing civic engagement. The leadership team will enhance these offerings through targeted attention to voter participation.

Landscape

Drake has a unique environment that can be harnessed for the purposes of civic and citizen engagement activities. Drake is home to approximately 4,504 students, including 2,702 undergraduate students from 49 states and 43 countries. Racial/ethnic diversity in the student body has grown from 14% to 22% since 2015 and continues to increase. In 2023 there were 110 transfer students.

Located in a state capital that hosts the Iowa precinct caucuses, institutional efforts to embrace strategic opportunities have yielded considerable success (some of these successes are noted above). Among students, a fair proportion are introduced to Drake’s reputation for vibrant political participation prior to arriving on campus, and the Politics major (an existing major that will continue alongside the new American Politics major) currently has a very large number of admitted new students for the 2024-2025 academic year. Additionally, at the last count:

- Drake students committed 230,000 hours of service to the local community.
- 68% of Drake employees are involved in service activities, including membership on nonprofit boards, in local schools, and community organizations.
- Drake has received recognition from Iowa and Minnesota Campus Compact for civic leadership and innovation .
- Drake is responsible for \$413 million impact on central Iowa.

The University routinely administers a student survey that provides information about the campus climate. In 2021, 63% of undergraduate students reported having discussions with people from various groups “often” or “very often.” Among graduate students, the response was

57%. This same year, 71% of undergraduate students reported “very strong” or “strong” skills in evaluating the values and interests that influence democratic decision-making.

Like most campuses, the survey results did demonstrate that Drake continues to grapple with concerns about ideological and viewpoint diversity, with several conservative students indicating that they wanted a more robust presence on campus. Since that time, there has been considerable attention to this issue. Most recently, Drake University hosted 2024 presidential candidates Governor Doug Burgum and former Governor Asa Hutchinson on campus. As we approach the 2024 general election cycle, we remain mindful that some student populations have more interaction and interest in community and civic affairs, and we have built a leadership structure that intentionally spans the ideological spectrum.

Strategy and Goals

Before forming new goals for the 2024 election cycle, the leadership team evaluated the progress of the goals set in 2022:

- ☒ Ensure that every first-year student is exposed to voter registration information at least three times during the first three weeks of the fall semester.
 - Three voter registration drives were held on campus during the first three weeks of the semester.
- ☐ Create special outreach efforts for graduate and online students.
 - Specific outreach efforts were not implemented in 2022, so this will remain a goal in 2024, although specific Law Student groups organized voter registration tabling
- ☒ Organize at least 5 campus-wide voter registration events through the Community Engagement Peer in the Office of Community Engaged Learning.
- ☐ Maintain voter registration at over 80%.
 - NSLVE data was not released at the time of submission.
- ☐ Increase voter turnout in a midterm election year to at least 55% among all students.
 - NSLVE data was not released at the time of submission.
- ☒ Host on-campus satellite voting with the Polk County Auditor’s Office.
 - Drake University hosted on-campus satellite voting in the Knapp Center.
- ☒ Organize at least 3 Student Senate events aimed to educate students about the campaign, local candidates, and current events, to be led by the Civic Engagement Senator.
 - The Civic Engagement Senator collaborated with the Office of Community Engaged Learning to host two voter registration drives and three distinct voter education events in collaboration with Vote Smart and the League of Women Voters.
 - On Election Day, the Civic Engagement Senator coordinated a “Walk to the Polls” event and walked Drake students to the local polling location to cast their ballot.
- ☒ Students in FYS 040: Vote Smart! will compile and distribute a Drake student voter guide.
- ☒ Hire a student to serve as Community Engagement Peer (a current Drake student) in the Office of Community Engaged Learning.
- ☒ Build voter registration efforts into Welcome Weekend

- The Office of Community Engaged Learning hosted one presentation and a voter registration drive.
- ☒ Continue outreach to every First Year Seminar and “BLUEPrint for Success” course offering, as well as professional seminars in Business and Health Sciences, athletics teams, Greek Life organizations, and the Crew Scholars program.
 - The Office of Community Engaged Learning and the Iowa Caucus Project engaged with all identified groups to provide voter registration materials and education ahead of elections and the 2024 Iowa precinct caucuses.
- ☐ Work with Student Senate’s Equity and Inclusion Senators and Unity Roundtable to organize meaningful outreach to students of color.
 - The Civic Engagement Senator worked with the entire Student Senate to execute events and to provide resources to all students, but concerted engagement efforts toward students of colors will remain a goal for 2024.
- ☒ Design and implement a centralized source for information about voter registration and voter participation for students, faculty, and staff.
 - The Office of Community Engaged Learning launched an internal website with voter and civic engagement information geared specifically toward Drake University students, faculty, and staff. This information is easily accessible from the Drake University portal.
- ☒ Establish a habit of regular communications to point Drake students, faculty, and staff to information about the 2022 elections.
 - Jerry Parker, Chief Student Affairs Officer, sent out regular campus-wide email communication to students ahead of the 2022 elections.

Goals for 2024

In the context of our ongoing efforts to institutionalize a vibrant atmosphere of civic engagement on Drake’s campus, our goals for the 2024 cycle should represent another step in the evolutionary track – put simply, our goals for this cycle build upon what has come before and will provide a framework for what is to come. Our strategies reflect attention to those subsets of the Drake community that have the lowest rates of voting. Specifically:

- Identify one graduate student and faculty member to serve on the leadership team. These individuals will be responsible for targeted graduate voter registration efforts and education.
- Work with Student Senate’s Equity and Inclusion Senators and Unity Roundtable to organize meaningful outreach to students of color.
 - Tangibly, this will involve at least one meeting with leadership from on-campus multicultural organizations to determine what meaningful outreach looks like for 2024.
 - Unity Roundtable is a group of multicultural student organizations led by the Equity and Inclusion Student Senators. Better collaboration will, we hope, yield innovative outreach efforts to students of color across campus.

- Ensure that every first-year student is exposed to voter registration information at least three times during the first three weeks of the fall semester.
 - This is specifically designed to ensure that all first-year students are familiar with and have access to the process of voter registration. At least one exposure point will take place during Welcome Weekend. Additional exposure points will utilize First Year Seminar cohorts and the first-year residence halls.
- Continue outreach to every First Year Seminar and “BLUEPrint for Success” course offering, as well as professional seminars in Business and Health Sciences, athletics teams, Greek Life organizations, and the Crew Scholars program.
 - Every first-year student is required to (a) enroll in a First Year Seminar (FYS); and (b) enroll in a one-credit section of “BLUEPrint for Success;” and encouraged to (c) participate in Welcome Weekend. Including information about registration and voting within these curricular and co-curricular points of contact will guarantee contact with first-year students.
 - Later in their college careers, these first-year students have the opportunity to become Orientation Leaders and Peer Mentor and Academic Consultants (PMACs), who assist with leading these three contact points. In the long run, early targeted touchpoints will yield informed students with the ability to effectively mobilize new cohorts of first-year students.
 - The Crew Scholars program creates institutionalized support networks for students of color, with regularized interaction between students, faculty mentors, administrative staff, and peers. Disseminating information through these networks will allow for focused outreach to these students.
- Coordinate three campus-wide communications related to voter registration and elections, specifically noting Drake University’s commitment to civic participation, important voter registration deadlines, and election day information.
- Organize at least five campus-wide voter registration events through the Community Engagement Peer in the Office of Community Engaged Learning and the Civic Engagement Senator.

Many efforts are targeted toward students early in their college careers so they have the knowledge, information, and skills to effectively mobilize peers and incoming cohorts of students. Through these short-term goals, we hope to continue to foster a campus culture of civic engagement in the long term, supported by students with adequate knowledge and resources to engage themselves and others

NSLVE

At the time of submission, the 2022 NSLVE data was not available to analyze. As such, goals were created utilizing the data from 2020 and the metrics, feedback, and observations for the leadership team.

The 2020 NSLVE report indicated substantial gains in voter turnout across every student population at Drake. In 2020, 91.6% of students were registered to vote, and of those students, 87.7% turned out to vote, for an overall voting rate of 80.4%. This is significantly higher than the average voting rate for every type of institution (66%). The report indicated, however, that there is additional work to do.

The voting rate was lowest among undergraduate students ages 18-24, indicating that outreach was best directed at this population. Although our first-year students' voting rate increased 8% over 2016, this is the lowest increase of any age group. Therefore, we remain committed to finding new ways to encourage voting among our entering student population.

We are pleased to see significant increases among the voting registration and participation of students of color compared to 2018. Among Asian students, participation increased from 38% to 55%; among Black students, participation increased from 45% to 70%; among Hispanic students, participation increased from 55% to 74%, and among those who identify as two or more races, participation increased from 48% to 69%. None of these groups of students, however, match the voting rate among White students (82%). Continued outreach to students of color, particularly through the Crew Scholars program (a program at Drake specifically for students of color), as well as consistent attention to student organizations (most notably through Student Senate's Equity and Inclusion Senators and Unity Roundtable) will be prioritized.

Voting has increased for nearly every area of study, with the highest gains made among those studying Math and Computer Science (a whopping increase of 34%!), Business, and English. Given that our prior 2018 report indicated that Business, Health Sciences, and Computer Science had the lowest rates of voting in 2018, these increases are gratifying and demonstrate that focused attention to these areas of study (Computer Science/Math and Business) yielded excellent results. Voting rates decreased among History and Public Administration students (Public Administration is exclusively a graduate program at Drake), which is puzzling and will require some discussion among the working group because there are limited means to target these specific populations, especially as the graduate program recently transitioned to an online format.

Reporting

Drake has always made our NSLVE report publicly available, and we will continue to do so. Upon release, the report is made available to students, faculty, and staff on the Drake University website. Its availability is communicated in a press release and announced in the weekly campus-wide email.

- [Drake University recognized as a 2022 ALL IN Most Engaged Campuses for College Student Voting](#)
- [More than 80% of Drake University Students Voted in 2020 General Election](#)

Additionally, information is shared via social media.

Evaluation

The leadership team will meet every 4-5 weeks from late August through early November to remain apprised of collaborative opportunities and developments. Meetings will review progress toward our established goals and will allow for agile response to any immediate challenges that emerge. Consistent communication and resource sharing between members of the working group will take place between established meeting dates.

- In the weeks following the general election, the leadership team will meet to review all available evidence and evaluate the effectiveness of our campus engagement efforts. The groups will identify areas of success and opportunities for improvement.
 - The outcomes of this discussion will be recorded and translated to SMART goals for the following election cycle.
- Following the release of the 2022 NSLVE Report, the leadership team will assess engagement across different demographic groups, including race/ethnicity, education level, and field of study.
 - The leadership team will coordinate programming – including presentations, resource guides, and registration drives – targeted at groups with low turnout and evaluate the effectiveness of newly established targeted efforts
 - Depending on the outcome of the report, these groups could include multicultural organizations, academic honor societies, colleges and schools, Greek life, etc.
 - The working group will use existing relationships and work to establish new ones to increase voter turnout, specifically within disengaged communities.
 - Furthermore, evaluation of the most popular voting method for Drake University students will guide the efficient allocation of finite time and resources in terms of education and mobilization efforts.
- The Community Engagement Peer for Voter and Civic Engagement will record all outreach efforts as well as the total number of new students registering to vote during events.
 - This student will analyze engagement data and make recommendations for the most effective time, location, and method for registration efforts.
- All programs organized by Student Senate will be livestreamed; the total number of viewers (live and recorded) will be tracked.
- The Civic Engagement Senator will track involvement of the newly established Civic Engagement Committee and the efforts of student volunteers.
 - This student will assess activities and programs with high participation – especially among historically underrepresented groups – and make recommendations for future civic engagement efforts.

- Drake will track, with the Polk County Auditor, the total number of students who vote during on-campus satellite voting.