

# ALL IN Democracy Action Plan

## Drew University

**DRAFT: December 2019**

### *Section I: Executive Summary*

Drew University's All IN Democracy Action Plan was developed by a working group consisting of students, faculty and staff representing a variety of constituencies within the university. This Action Plan has been developed for several purposes:

1. To increase knowledge and communication about civic learning and democratic engagement programs, groups, and activities across campus in order to increase their effectiveness through collaboration and shared resources
2. To provide an organizational structure that will help the university build on the momentum of recent efforts, including but not limited to the Drew Student Voter Project
3. To clarify the goals and commitments of the university to civic learning and democratic engagement within its signature initiatives, such as the Launch Center for Immersive Learning and Career Design and the development of Transferable Skills

This Action Plan is intended to guide a 2-3 year planning and implementation process overseen by a Taskforce endorsed and appointed by university leadership. Its implementation will depend on the establishment of this Taskforce in the spring 2020 semester, and will be guided by the goals and strategies outlined in this planning document.

### *Section II: Leadership*

The Democratic Engagement Action Planning process at Drew University is being led by the Center for Civic Engagement. The Working Group, chaired by the Director of the Center for Civic Engagement, serves as the ad hoc university body tasked with developing Drew's first Democratic Engagement Action Plan. Members have been selected to achieve a cross-institutionally representative array of perspectives, expertise, and institutional knowledge relevant to the goals of the action planning process. The responsibilities of the Working Group members in the short term are to contribute to the development of the Action Plan, attend scheduled meetings of the Working Group to provide input and feedback on drafts of the Action Plan, and ensure that a diverse and inclusive range of voices and stakeholders are integrated into Drew's Action Plan. This group will meet as needed until the final draft of the Action Plan is complete. We anticipate that a formal university committee will be appointed to oversee the implementation and future revisions of the Action Plan beginning in fall 2020.

### Democratic Engagement Action Plan Working Group

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Jess Barrett, Graduate Student, Theological School

Timothy Carter, Assistant Professor, Political Science

Alexa Fitzgerald, Undergraduate Student, Data Manager for Drew Student Voter Project

Amy Koritz, Director, Center for Civic Engagement and Professor, English

Patrick McGuinn, Professor, Political Science and Education

Susan Rosenbloom, Associate Professor, Sociology

Gregory Townsend, Director, Center for Internships and Career Development

### *Section III: Commitment*

Drew's mission focuses on producing graduates that are engaged beyond the classroom, connecting their education to local communities, the nation, and the world. The institution demonstrates this commitment through its support for academic programs such as Community-Based Learning classes that connect academic learning with action for the common good and semester-long programs focused on the United Nations and Social Entrepreneurship. Institutionally, Drew's commitment is expressed through memberships in Project Pericles and Campus Compact and through recruiting students committed to civic engagement by offering the Civic Engagement Scholarship, a unique scholarship program that is being expanded and transformed into the Drew Action Scholars this year. In addition, the Center for Civic Engagement is a member of the New Jersey Students Vote Coalition, a group of higher education institutions committed to increasing college student participation in democratic processes. In partnership with Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute's Center for Youth Political Participation, we have joined the RU Ready program, which, under the leadership of Professor Patrick McGuinn, will bring civics education to area high school students. Finally, in addition to student clubs associated with political parties and ideologies, Drew students have spearheaded the creation of the Drew Student Voter Project. Advised by Professor Timothy Carter, this group has significantly increased student registration and voting, particularly among undergraduates, and just this year was responsible for Drew winning the annual Ballot Bowl competition sponsored by the New Jersey Secretary of State.

This type of learning and civic involvement is pervasive and consistent. However, initiatives like those above, while providing great value and indicative of the ways Drew already endorses civic learning and engagement, have traditionally existed and operated in silos throughout the institution. The new Launch Center for Immersive Learning and Career Design, and more specifically the Launch Career and Identity/Affinity Communities (especially Social Impact—covering Law, Government, Education, and Not-for-Profit careers) will help to create the institutional collaboration and culture needed to sustain these efforts at the broadest level. Faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members can collaborate within the Launch structure,

leading to greater coordination and shared goals. At a minimum, Launch will ensure institutional awareness of all of the possible engagement opportunities on and off campus.

Drew recently updated its general education requirements to place a greater emphasis on immersive learning and the development of transferable skills that will be of value to students after graduation. Skills like ethical thinking and engaging difference, how they are being developed, and where improvement is needed, will be reflected upon during each of the students' two required immersive experiences and in courses like Drew 110, a required course which introduces the central tenets of Launch, the values associated with being a global citizen, and how they can be applied on and off campus.

In the co-curriculum, Launch is providing a collaborative and shared environment in which students, faculty, staff, and alumni can work together to build upon existing and develop new meaningful civic learning opportunities. Each Launch Community has a student advisory group which helps determine its needs. It is here where the various activities and initiatives on campus will be coordinated. The Social Impact, Education, Law & Government Community provides a hub for all of these groups and activities. In addition, educating for civic learning and democratic engagement informs our vibrant Model U.N club and is the core mission of the Drew Student Voter Project (DSVP). For example, DSVP created a presentation describing the efforts of the organization, including statistics for the Drew community's electoral participation, explaining the process of registering to vote, and providing information on what offices are on the ballot in the particular election cycle. These presentations have been given during the fall semester to classes in Drew undergraduate college, most specifically the first-year seminars to engage the first year student population.

#### *Section IV: Landscape*

As described above, civic learning and democratic engagement is currently present in Drew's academic offerings through CBL classes, semester-long programs (called NYC TRECs) focused on the United Nations and Social Entrepreneurship. In addition, regularly offered classes from the political science/international relations department as well as topic specific first-year seminar classes engage in civic learning and encourage democratic engagement. The new Action Scholars program and General Education Immersive Experience requirements lend themselves to these learning outcomes as well. Drew's Theological School has long supported a prison education program (PREP) and has recently established a Social Justice track in its Masters of Divinity curriculum.

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In the co-curriculum, DSVP frequently hosts tabling events in common areas across the university to engage with students, focused particularly on National Voter Registration Day and Election Day activities. In previous years, DSVP has also been able to canvas the residence halls and engage students when volunteers were available. Residence Life requires all complexes to host at least one community service event that focuses on empowering students to feel connected to the greater community and contribute to its

success. Student organizations such as Volunteers without Borders support students interacting with communities nationally and internationally, helping them see the power of their actions to support thriving communities. The university also sponsors three political identity groups: College Republicans, College Democrats, and Democratic Socialists. These groups sponsor events together and hold debates to introduce students to different political ideologies. Feminist Intersection and Planned Parenthood clubs have also supported educating students around laws and policies focusing on gender and sexuality. Furthermore, the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. plays a significant role in the identity of Drew University due to his physical presence and speech during this lifetime. Through celebrations, service events, and speakers, Drew University continues the Rev. Dr. King's legacy of social justice and democratic engagement for positive change.

Despite these successes, Drew does face significant internal barriers to increasing civic learning and democratic engagement. One long-standing and deeply ingrained barrier is a culture of siloed programming and communication that makes collaboration across units difficult. Several of the institutional initiatives currently underway, however, make this a propitious moment to undertake this planning process precisely because of the renewed commitment of university leadership to further effective integration. The Launch Center and Drew 110 class, the new general education Immersive Experience requirement, the recent addition of a Social Justice track to the Master's of Divinity curriculum, and the transformation of the Civic Scholars program into the Drew Action Scholars, all provide opportunities to establish and institutionalize shared efforts that meet this university goal.

Student organizations face the barrier of a cap on funding for events available across all organizations each semester. This means that funding for civic engagement organizations may be limited. The university is moving towards supporting student organizations in planning events better through education around fundraising and also promoting partnerships and creative programming, an approach that may also help address the first internal barrier mentioned above. Another barrier for students has been the uneven volunteer base in organizations such as DSVP. Student interest in organizations shifts every year. With students playing a critical role in voter registration and participation, an insufficient number of student volunteers limits the impact such groups can have on civic engagement.

For faculty, the major barriers to increased engagement in civic learning and democratic engagement are competing priorities for their time. Departmentally determined curricula, a 6-course annual teaching load, and expectations for committee service leave faculty members with little available time to devote to these efforts. As a result they become marginalized.

In 2018, the state of New Jersey addressed one external barrier to voter participation in an updated NJ "Motor Voter" Bill. While making it more difficult to increase new voter registration numbers for students, this law should increase the number of students who arrive on campus already registered to vote. Under the bill, the Motor Vehicle Commission is required to automatically register eligible voters, unless they choose to

opt out. Although it may ensure that students from NJ will already be registered when they enter college, the law will not benefit out-of-state students who chose to retain their family's residency for voting purposes. A lack of knowledge about absentee voting and registration in other states could hamper our ability to facilitate the engagement of such students.

Another external barrier is access to voter information such as finding your polling location and confirming your registration status. Although the polling locations can at times be conveniently placed for voters (e.g. Grace Episcopal Church, right next to campus, for Drew student voters), the complexity in making voters aware of their polling location creates a barrier for effective voting on Election Day. In addition, it can be very difficult to locate information on local candidates and issues, making it more difficult for voters to cast well-informed votes.

The assessment data relied on for this plan focuses on NSLVE, which indicated that Drew's registration and voting rates both improved significantly in the 2018 midterm elections. In the previous 2014 midterm elections, Drew's registration rate was 70.6% and this grew to 93.3% in 2018. Similarly, Drew's voting rate grew from 22.3% in 2014 to 53.9% in 2018. An increase was seen across all NSLVE age groupings, but the largest growth was seen in the 18 to 21 group and the 22 to 24 group. Each of these group's voting rates grew by over thirty percentage points. It will be necessary to our with out Institutional Research office to access additional relevant information.

#### *Section V: Goals*

#### LONG-TERM GOALS

Long term, Drew University would like to meet the following impact goals for civic learning and democratic engagement:

- Measure how current students and graduates engage with the world beyond Drew's campus, including assessing the impact of using the resources of the Launch Center and relevant transferable skills, such as ethical problem solving, collaboration, engaging with difference, and communication to strengthen democratic engagement.
- Unify voter registration and voting initiatives across all departments of CLSA, CLA, and the Theological and Graduate Schools to ensure close to 100% participation in national elections of all students eligible to vote.
- Facilitate access to non-partisan, evidence-based, and up-to-date information resources on local, state, and national issues, candidates, and voting processes.
- Ensure regular opportunities for and widespread participation in training and practice for civic dialogue, dialogue across difference, and engaging constructively around controversial issues in both the curriculum and co-curriculum.

- Amend the university mission statement to include an explicit statement of the importance of understanding the challenges facing the world, and offering an education that empowers graduates with the skills and a sense of efficacy about their own ability—individually and collectively—to enact positive change in our democracy

#### SHORT TERM GOALS

- Establish a formal university-wide Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Taskforce endorsed by university leadership, staffed by a graduate intern or work-study student, and with access to funding to support core activities.
- Cluster and strengthen external partnerships through the Career Center, Launch Center Communities, Center for Civic Engagement, and academic departments and faculty in all three schools in order to increase resources and opportunities for students to develop civic skills and democratic engagement.
- Increase recruitment and retention of student volunteers across all schools and disciplines trained and committed to increasing student democratic engagement
- Integrate a formal class session on democratic processes and participation into the Drew 110 class required of all first-year students
- Establish 2-3 events or activities annually that connect all three schools around the issues of effective and well-informed democratic engagement that will galvanize and unite students in all schools
- Empower and support student-led organizations with a focus on democratic engagement and civic learning through advising networks, mentoring and leadership development.
- Draft an engagement plan of how all CLSA units can support increased voter registration and voting of all Drew students.
- Connect the curricular and co-curricular civic learning and democratic engagement activities on campus through regular collection and communication of planned activities, events, research, and course offerings.

#### *Section VI: Strategy*

Strategy 1: Secure university leadership support for a Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement University Taskforce accountable for establishing and executing concrete actions to address barriers and move the university towards meeting goals.

- Provost or President appoints membership, writes or endorses charge, and communicates via a public statement to the university community by the end of the spring 2020 semester
- Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Taskforce completes short-term (2-3 year) action plan endorsed by President's Cabinet, with implementation to begin in the fall 2020 semester

- Membership on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Taskforce recognized as service to university (for faculty) and formal component of assigned work (for staff).
- A paid support role is created for a student to serve as liaison to student groups and as Taskforce meeting and communications manager, supervised by Taskforce Chair

Strategy 2: Create recruitment and training program to ensure a strong student leadership pipeline and to incorporate a wide range of student organizations and university departments

- Student Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Coordinator for training and recruitment (paid position) is established as an Immersive Experience that fulfills a general education requirement and is supervised by the faculty advisor to the DSVP.
- DSVP presentations or civic and social justice engagement information sessions scheduled for new student orientations in all three schools, activities fairs, Drew 110, and selected Theological School and Launch Center activities and events
- Taskforce identifies and invites 2-3 expert facilitators to present 2-3 training workshops in 2020-21 academic year on civic dialogue and democratic processes

Strategy 3: Establish tracking and reporting system to inform planning

- Record number of presentations and programs from DSVP, other student groups, and classes that integrate Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement components
- Work with Institutional Research to create data management and reporting subcommittee in Taskforce to collect relevant institutional data beyond NSLVE to inform planning and prioritize actions of the Taskforce

Strategy 4: Integrate Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement into Launch Center

- Include civic learning in required Launch programs for all four years (undergraduate), starting with Drew 110
- Create joint programming (minimum of one event each semester) with the Launch Center's Social Impact Career Community, relevant student clubs, and academic programs such as the Masters of Divinity Social Justice track, the MAT Social Studies track, and Political Science.
- Establish presence of Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement on Launchpad platform

Strategy 5: Develop Immersive Experiences or other programs that integrate Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement into faculty/staff workload

- Develop and expand RU Ready Drew workshops that connect college and high school civic learning, either as part of a CBL course (immersive experience) or as a co-curricular program

- Identify, develop and strengthen the curricular options within the College and Theological School focused on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement
- Integrate support for Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement into job descriptions for appropriate Launch or CLSA staff

Strategy 6; Develop and strengthen relationships with NJ State government, League of Women Voters, Students Learn Students Vote, and other national, state, and local organizations that provide information and other resources for Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement.

- Taskforce members, DSVP, and/or Civic Engagement participate regularly in NJ Students Vote Coalition, #Vote Together, NJ Ballot Bowl competition, ALL IN Democracy Challenge, and other external initiatives supporting Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement
- Workshops, speakers, or forums are organized and sponsored by a coalition of university groups from all three schools that connect them to outside groups while developing civic skills and knowledge (could overlap or be the same as programming in Strategy 4).
- Identify and communicate internship opportunities, and strategies for making them accessible for students associated with Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement

### *Section VII: Reporting*

The plan can be shared both internally and externally with the advisory committees of the relevant Launch Communities (Social Impact, several Identity/Affinity Communities) on campus. Each community has advisory committees consisting of students and alumni. It will also be shared with the Civic Engagement Faculty Advisory Committee, Student Government, Provost's Council, and President's Cabinet. This will ensure consistency in approach and may help inform programming and community engagement initiatives in the future so they incorporates common goals when applicable.

Once Drew's Action Plan has been approved, it will be posted on the Civic Engagement website. The Working Group will also share the plan with Drew's Communications office and student newspaper. Events organized by the Drew Student Voter Project and the Social Impact Career Community might include summaries of the plan to share with participants.

As data collection and analysis processes are put in place to inform the future of Drew's Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement planning, the information informing that plan will be shared publicly, as long as no confidentiality obligations would be violated by doing so. Such information would be located on the Center for Civic Engagement's website.

*Section VIII: Evaluation*

The evaluation's purpose is to identify which elements of our programming have been most and least impactful on democratic knowledge, attitudes and participation for the Drew community and to adjust our efforts accordingly. The Drew University Democracy Challenge Action Plan will be evaluated with surveys from our campus events and feedback meetings with our student volunteers and faculty partners. We will collect attendance data for all of our events, and we will solicit feedback from associated student groups. After the second election cycle, we will be able to compare our attendance data and feedback surveys to the previous election's information. These comparisons will form two of our evaluation metrics, and they, along with our NSLVE findings, will be shared with the relevant campus organizations. We will use the evaluation process to assess the extent to which we are attaining our short and long term goals (outlined above) and to make strategic corrections as necessary.

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