

## **All In Campus 2024 Action Plan Eastern Illinois University**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Eastern Illinois University is a primarily undergraduate teaching institution located in east-central Illinois. EIU has 50 undergraduate degree programs and over 150 major and minor options, 36 graduate programs of study, and both face-to-face and online learning opportunities. Our campus strives to maintain an inclusive community that is welcoming to our significant number of underrepresented groups, as first-generation college students, as non-traditionally aged students, or as students with disabilities.

Although EIU voting rates have increased in each of the Presidential election cycles since 2012 the Office of Leadership and Engagement (OLE), formally the Civic Engagement and Volunteerism Office (through Dec. 2022), had done little to help with this voter engagement increase or to educate our students around candidates or issues prior to the 2020 election. Upon learning that, since the 2020 election the staff of OLE has made a concerted effort to positively impact the engagement and education around voting on our campus. The Associate Director of OLE, along with support of a graduate assistant, oversees all voter registration and educational programming for our university and develops the action plan for our campus. These two positions are responsible for overseeing all civic engagement and volunteering programming for EIU, that includes the Operation EIU Votes programming.

Going into 2020 we had two specific, and data driven goals. The first was to increase the registration percentage to 80% of our students. And secondly of those who are registered we wanted to increase the voting rate to 60% of those students. We met our first goal and ended up with 82.3% of our eligible students registered to vote, and 63.9% of them actually casting a ballot. To say we were pleased with those results is an understatement.

What these results showed us as the staff members of OLE was that our efforts and programming had a tangible impact. We can't assume that it was solely due to the educational opportunities we provided, as leading up to the 2020 Presidential Election voter engagement was up across the country for a myriad of reasons. But when it came to our students here on the campus of EIU, our programming was a part of that push to help our community understand the power and the impact their voice, and their vote has.

For the 2022 election, the OLE office planned to continue offering intentional educational programming not only around current election issues, but to provide students with a clearer understanding of the registration and voting process regardless of what town or state they are from. We wanted to make it easy for the students to complete their civic responsibility and do so equipped with as much honest information as possible. Ultimately, we wanted to make it easy for the students to understand their personal power that comes with civic responsibility and be excited to cast their vote. Our goal will be to maintain the voter registration and turnout numbers we saw in November 2020 on the campus of Eastern Illinois University for the November 2022 election cycle. While we hosted programming called Civic Action Hour and hosted voter

registration tabling events, our efforts were challenged in Fall 2022 due to the unexpected departure of the Civic Engagement and Volunteerism Director in early August 2022.

As we move forward and look at the next Presidential election for 2024, we are excited to renew our efforts to engage all EIU students in the voting process and learning about the candidate's platforms. More importantly, we will be back to a full staff, with the addition of a new entry-level full-time staff member in July 2024 and are looking forward to expanding our programs with several new student groups and departments that want to get more involved during fall 2024.

For the spring 2024 semester we focused mainly on hosting multiple voter registration tabling events and providing information about how to register to vote, where to vote, and where to find information on the candidates running for the March primaries. We were fortunate to have a couple students groups express interest in helping run these tabling events.

Looking forward to the fall 2024 semester, we will continue our voter registration tabling events, but will also be adding educational workshops around the candidate platforms and the debate nights, as well as rides to the polls on Election Day. Additionally, we will continue our partnership for the National Voter Registration Day, Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day. We already have commitments from new groups who want to co-sponsor events with us. We intend to at least double the amount of voter registration tabling's we sponsor and hold each one at a different location on campus. We each tabling event, we hope to have a different student group co-sponsor and help staff the event with us. This will allow for us to target new populations of students across campus. We are also excited to add the debate screening and educational workshops (some of which will be sponsored by student groups) to our programming line up for fall 2024. This is something we didn't have for the 2020 or 2022 election.

With the renewed energy within the OLE staff and our EIU students, we are excited to significantly expand our outreach wider for Fall 2024. Compared to previous election semesters, where we did about 20 class presentations, this fall we already have over 35 class presentations lined up. Additionally, we have added the option to come speak to student organizations at their meetings and about 8 have taken that offer. Several of those groups afterwards are then asking how they can partner with the OLE office on programs and tabling events. Finally, for the first time ever, we are proud to say that we have formed a relationship with our athletic coaches and teams beginning to get them on board via group presentations and voter registration drives within the team and at their games.

## **LEADERSHIP**

One of the first things we did in 2019-2020 election cycle was to build the **Operation EIU Votes Coalition**, made up of key stakeholders comprising of staff and students from across campus. This group came together to help ensure that our message and our call to action was being heard by everyone. The group met monthly to ensure that we have one message to share with the students we each interact with, and to ensure that all programming (regardless of who is heading it up) was given the same amount of energy and publicity. Over the past couple years, this group

has disbanded, but with a new staff member joining our department this summer and renewed interest across campus, we plan to revitalize this group going into the fall 2024 semester.

New Student and Family Programs (Taylor Comer, Assistant Director)  
Fraternity and Sorority Life (Natasha Koenig, Specialist)  
EIU College Democrats (Student Representative which changes annually)  
EIU College Republicans (Student Representative which changes annually)  
Academic Excellence and Inclusion (Luis Paniagua, Graduate Assistant)  
Disability Services: (April Jackson, Director)  
Academic Advising: (Danny Gourley Fischer, Director)  
Political Science Department (Melinda Mueller, Chair and Faculty)  
History Department (Sace Elder, Chair and Faculty)  
Women's Studies Department (Jeannie Ludlow, Faculty)  
Kinesiology and Sport Sciences Department (Kristin Brown, Faculty)  
Residence Hall Council (Catie Witt Danner, Professional Staff)  
Athletics (Kayla Baird, Professional Staff)  
Library (Amy Odwarka, Staff)  
Financial Aid (Laura Shute, Coordinator)  
Student Government (Student Representation which changes annually)  
Black Student Union (Student Representation which changes annually)  
Latin American Student Organization (Student Representation which changes annually)  
PRIDE (Student Representation which changes annually)

From a succession planning perspective, we don't anticipate this being an issue. In departments where we have professional staff representation, we don't typically have departments of one person, so there should be someone else who could step in to help should someone have to remove themselves from the group. From a Registered Student Organization, each organization must have a minimum of 5 members, and there are 4 leadership roles per organization. Additionally, we will strive so that this is a brainstorming group, with small amounts of homework. Our department will take on the bulk of the work that comes from these meetings. If we keep them efficient and effective meetings, hopefully people will understand the value of their voice being a part of the mix.

Externally, we will also partner with our local County Clerk (Lisa Standerfer) to ensure that we are following all local and state rules to ensure that the people who are registering to vote on

campus are then aware of where they can vote. Additionally, with the County Clerk's office and their online resources, we will work to create marketing material about how to vote by mail, or how to vote in the county of the permanent residence.

We have also partnered with the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, Campus Takeover and the Civic Holidays, the SLSV Coalition through their Ask Every Student grant, and the Civic Nation voter registration portal. Finally, we are working with our Athletic teams (coordinated through Jenn King) to ensure the NCAA Civic Engagement Day legislation is fully enforced.

## **COMMITMENT**

EIU is committed to helping ALL of our students understand they have the power and the responsibility to vote from the President, to the Vice President of Students Affairs, and down. The University administration has and continues to be committed to supporting students exercising their rights to vote in big and small ways from sharing our voter registration drives across all social media platforms to offering free transportation to the polls on election days. Through our programming and the administration's support, EIU was recognized in 2022 as an ALL IN Most Engaged Campus. Although, EIU received a new President in July 2023, (EIU's own former Provost), he is fully committed to our Operation EIU Votes program as well as community service and service learning as a whole. President Gattrell immediately signed the Higher Education's President's commitment to full student voter participation. Under his new leadership, we now have our inaugural Diversity Officer (John Blue) who started in January 2024 and is excited to help students be more engaged in DEI initiatives and to support civic programming on campus. In just Dr. Blue's second week, he spoke at our annual Dr. MLK Jr. service day program about the importance of being an active citizen and making our voices heard by voting. Our campus has also recently created a committee to ready us to apply for the Carnegie Engagement classification for the first time in 2025.

Generally speaking, our institution has been supportive in other ways as well. Seeing a gap during previous election cycles, during summer 2024, we worked with our IT department and Marketing/Communications office to accomplish a couple new initiatives. First, creating an email that will be sent out to all students during fall semester reminding them of the voter registration deadline, early voting opportunity right here on our campus, and Election Day itself. Secondly, we created marketing to share with all new faculty in August during the new faculty training. Finally, IT is now willing to include short messages at integral times during the fall semester on our academic D2L platform that all students use for classes to share reminders about NVRD, Early Vote, and Election Day rides to the polls.

Academically, we have faculty support through the EIU Votes Coalition and other class invitations or serving as experts for our workshops. These faculty assist in sharing resources on how to get registered, how to apply for absentee ballots, and poll location and times across campus. Each election season the Provost shares this information with all faculty, which was then shared with students across programs. Faculty are also very receptive to our office coming in and giving class presentations on the importance of voting, how to register, etc. Historically, we have presented to over 20 classes each fall semester. In fall 2024, we have over 35 classes, 8

student organizations, and 3 athletic teams that have reached out for presentations and asking to partner on voter registration drives. We will also be working closer with our Athletics department for the first time to share information with all coaches and athletes to get them engaged in our programs and registered to vote.

From an external lens, EIU is committed as we serve as local polling location for our city on campus for early voting. Fall 2024 we have developed a closer partnership with the County Election Office. This has been helpful in sharing our program efforts, what's working or needs added, and ensuring we are assisting them in educating the students on voter registration rules that they typically see.

All of these pieces from the university administration, to faculty, student organizations, and the County Election Office work together to support the various mission statements within EIU. University mission statement includes "...to become responsible citizens and leaders". Student Affairs mission statement includes "...active citizenship, experiential learning, ...preparation for a diverse, global society...cultivating a sense of community on both our campus and beyond".

## **LANDSCAPE**

Eastern Illinois University is a mid-size public institution with a Fall 2023 enrollment of 4,402 degree-seeking undergraduates and 1,955 graduate students. Of those students 55% identify as women, and 31.6% identify as men. EIU offers its students 61 majors, and 95 minors, with an average class size of 15. We had a 73% retention rate from 2019 to 2020. EIU also has an 88% successful placement rate post-graduation.

Our student body is nearly 53.9% white, 14.2% Black/African American, 13.8% International, 8.3% Hispanic, 1.4% Asian, and 5.3% unknow/not reported. While our student body continues to become more racially diverse, we are a primarily white institution, with a majority white faculty/staff. One of the institution's Higher Learning Commission goals is to diversify the faculty and staff so it is more representative of our student body.

A couple barriers we face with our student population include how students take classes and our first-generation population. In Fall 2023, 48.3% of undergraduates were enrolled fully in face-to-face classes, however that means that 15.6% were fully online, and 36.1% enrolled in a combination of the two. Among our graduate students, only 36.7% were enrolled fully face-to-face. Nearly 31% of our overall student population reports being a First-Generation College Student. While this is an obviously amazing accomplishment, being a First-Generation student comes with its own set of challenges to overcome and situations to navigate. While the institution is putting programs into place to better support these students, we know there is still a gap between what we are doing and what students need to be successful.

What we are most proud of is the fact that we actively worked to help our students understand that their voice and their vote matter. When we heard that just over 50% of our country voted for President in the 2016 election we promised ourselves that we would not sit on the sidelines again. We created a plan, rolled with the learning moments and were able to be a part of the solution to get more students involved and actively voting. And while we can be proud of what

we achieved, we know it is just the beginning of what we need to do. For 2024 we are utilizing our data from the NSLVE 2022 and 2020 along with university demographic data to see how we can continue to do better and reach more students. With this information, we have determined that we need to expand our reach across campus more and ensure we are hitting various groups of students from athletes, to different majors, to freshmen, and upper classmen that may not have voted previously. We know that many of our students are from Illinois, which while that makes voter registration easier, many of our students are from lower incomes and inner city and aren't aware of the process to get registered to vote. Therefore, we need to not just encourage the act of voter registration, but ensure we are explaining the process and options that students have to choose where to vote, what documents they need to register, where to register, etc. Additionally, our NSLVE data has been vague, so the Associate Director of OLE is working Fall 2024 with the Institutional Research Office to figure out how to and what data that EIU needs to provide to the clearinghouse in order for EIU to receive a more detailed NSLVE report moving forward.

While there haven't been major local or state election law changes, we have realized the importance of deepening the relationship between EIU and the County Election Office. By working closer together, we can ensure that students are better aware of the laws, get registered easily, and be able to vote this fall. On the other hand, the Election Office staff won't have as many frustrated and confused students to answer the same questions for over and over.

One of the biggest takeaways from our efforts in 2020 was that we wanted to move into the next election cycle with more student voices and ideas at the table. As we work to bring back the Operation EIU Votes Coalition, we will work hard to increase the number of student voices at that table and as co-sponsors for our events. Having their voices and ideas, and their support, will be critical to our efforts in 2024.

## **GOALS**

### **Short Term Goals**

- o Host events focused on voter registration (7 events in the spring 2024 semester, and host 8 events in the fall 2024 semester)
- o Reactivate and recruit new members (students and staff) for the Operation EIU Votes Committee to ensure that the members of our committee reflect all populations represented on campus
- o Partner with Student Government to create and host programs around voter education and registration (2 events over the duration of the fall 2024 semester)
- o Voter Registration events hosted by Registered Student Organizations for the fall 2024 semester (2 events over the duration of the fall 2022 semester)
- o Partner with Fraternity and Sorority Programs for "Greek Out the Vote" for the fall 2024 and register 50 Greek students
- o Partnership with EIU Athletics for the fall 2024 focused on registering 50 new student athletes
- o Transportation to the Polls in November 2024 on election day

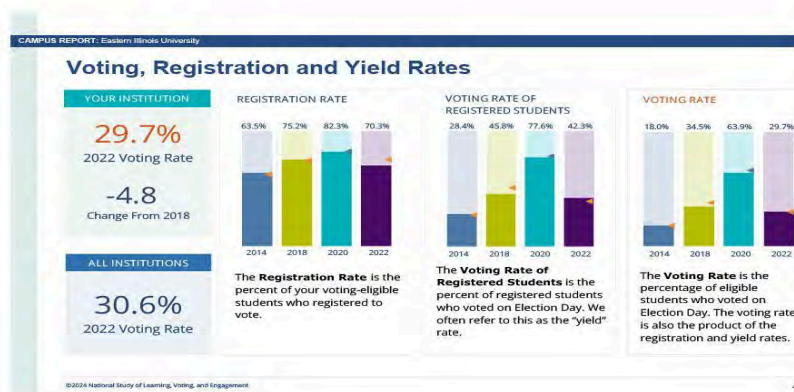
## Long Term

- o Increase the voter registration and voter engagement levels by 5% for the 2024 Presidential Election cycle
- o Have a voter educational component with the Freshman Foundations class on campus via presentations each fall semester when this course is offered
- o Partner with Athletics teams to present to all teams and engage them in our programming as a part of their Civic Engagement Day NCAA requirement (Summer/Fall 2024 and maintain this relationship yearly)
- o Add new partnerships with areas including: Latin American Heritage Month programming, NPHC chapters, new student organizations, Library, etc. for voter registration tabling events and educational workshops Fall 2024 and beyond
- o Hire 2 federal work student students to assist with our voting programming and tabling efforts
- o Institutionalize the Civic holidays across campus each election season and focus our programming around those dates

While having 100% of eligible students registered to vote and casting their ballots for all local, state and federal elections would be an amazing goal to strive for, it is not the only definition of success. Each program we offer, every student we engage with who is curious enough to ask questions, every student who gets registered to vote, and every single ballot cast pushes our campus and our community a bit closer. Democracy only works when EVERYONE shows up and participates. So every action taken to get even just *one* more person participating- that is success.

## NSLVE

While our NSLVE data is not complete, we are excited to have received the 2022 report. This report can be viewed here, <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/eastern-illinois-university/>. Before getting into why or what now conversation, below are a few key pieces of data from the 2022 report for us to be aware of as we create our goals and action plan for 2024.



## By Institution Types



These are estimated voting rates of your institution compared to the average voting rates of similar institutions in NSLVE. For Associate institutions, we only share public associate institutional averages due to sample size. \*Your Institution\* chart is presented at a different scale.



## By Field of Study

FIELDS	2014			2018			2020			2022			2018-2022 Change
	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	
Computer and Information Sciences	-	-	-	112	31	27	161	73	45	186	35	18	↓ -8
Education	-	-	-	997	412	41	1,204	857	71	1,026	416	40	↔ 0
Engineering and Engineering Technologies	-	-	-	181	25	13	160	39	24	571	13	2	↓ -11
English Language and Literature	-	-	-	151	74	49	183	134	73	191	73	38	↓ -10
Family and Consumer/Human Sciences	-	-	-	261	72	27	152	92	60	129	32	24	↓ -2
Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics	-	-	-	25	-	-	23	-	-	18	-	-	-
Health Professions	-	-	-	339	112	33	383	241	62	421	134	31	↓ -1
History	-	-	-	124	66	53	148	114	77	140	63	45	↓ -8
Law Enforcement, Firefighting, and Protective Services	-	-	-	100	25	25	178	105	58	241	26	10	↓ -14
Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies	-	-	-	416	65	15	430	230	53	398	60	15	↔ 0



## By Field of Study

FIELDS	2014			2018			2020			2022			2018-2022 Change
	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	
Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Humanities	-	-	-	1,215	445	36	967	601	62	836	223	26	↓ -9
Mathematics and Statistics	-	-	-	35	14	40	40	25	62	33	-	-	-
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	-	-	-	130	60	46	106	73	68	136	56	41	↓ -4
Philosophy and Religious Studies	-	-	-	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Sciences	-	-	-	309	112	36	249	161	64	193	77	39	↑ 3
Visual and Performing Arts	-	-	-	376	170	45	437	300	68	394	146	37	↓ -8
Unknown	-	-	-	14	-	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-

There are a couple major pieces missing from our NSLVE data including a breakdown of who is (or isn't) voting by race/ethnicity, gender, and class year. Each of these would be very helpful when planning our outreach programs. We have reached out to the Research office to ask that they allow this information to also be shared on future NSLVE reports so that we can accurately understand what students we are engaging with, and who we need to help bring to the table. We are hopeful that this will happen for the next NSLVE report to come out. Although we don't have this data, we are working harder to ensure we are reaching various pockets within each of these areas. Then hopefully with the 2024 NSLVE we will receive this data and be able to more intentionally define our work moving forward.

Going back to some of the data shown above, while our institution voting rate is slightly down, we are still just under the national average and are reaching students across campus in various fields of study. However, we have found a few fields of study that we are missing for one reason or another. For fall 2024 we will reach out to the faculty of those departments and see how we can work together to encourage voting among their students.

We are happy to see that since the Office of Leadership and Engagement created the Operation EIU Votes Coalition and began voter registration and educational programming in 2020, our student voting rates have increased compared to 2014. For 2024, now that campus is fully back to a "normal" after COVID, we are excited to ramp up our programming compared to the previous years of 2020 and 2022. We will be more successful with this election due to having the NSLVE data to utilize as we target various groups of students and student populations intentionally for the first time with our voter registration drives and educational programs that will partner with various faculty and student groups across campus.

## STRATEGY

All of our events and programs will fall into one of three areas of focus: education, registration, and turnout. While there will be overlap, all programs and partnerships will be to increase engagement across those three areas.

Our short-term strategy for 2024 will be to host a minimum of one educational event and one voter registration event each month through our office, with the hopes that through partnerships with student groups, academics, and other departments there will be additional programming happening as well. By having an educational and a passive event each month we can engage with students who are thinking about the upcoming election and those who aren't in an easy way.

We also want to partner with specific pockets of campus for the fall semester so we can better engage the Greek Community, new freshmen, and the EIU Athletes. In order to make this effort successful for this election season, we spent the summer making detailed plan for our fall programming. As soon as August hit, we got busy reaching out to faculty, staff, student organizations, athletic coaches, Greek leaders, etc. to begin explaining the importance of wanting to partner with them and ask these groups to make it a priority during the fall. The main resources for all of this possible programming will be the staff of the Office of Leadership and Engagement (Director, Associate Director, Specialist and 3 Graduate Assistants as well as the Operation EIU Votes Committee.)

Our long-term strategy for 2024 will be both on monthly programs and long-term collaborations. We will identify ways that voter engagement can be woven into the framework of classes and programs that will widen our reach. It is our goal for 2024 to speak in at least 30 classes, up from 20 in previous years. Then if this is successful, we hope to continue reaching out to additional and new faculty to expand this to at least 40 classes for 2026. With this we currently have partnerships with about 3-4 majors, we would like to double that and speak in classes of at least 6-8 majors for 2024 and again double that for 2026. If we can be successful with creating and managing a partnership with programs like the Freshman Foundations classes, athletic teams, fraternity/sorority chapters then we will be able to reach more students year over year. While we have been successful in reaching the Freshman Foundations classes, we have not had luck in the past with the athletic teams and Greeks. Our goal for 2024 is to partner with and speak to at least 3 athletic teams and 3 Greek chapters, with the hope to double that for 2026. If we successfully do the above that will obviously positively impact our NSLVE data, our voter registration numbers, and our community in both big and small ways!

In order to reach new students who aren't thinking about voting or have never done so in the past, we want them to realize how important it is to make their voices heard and just how easy this process is. We know that not all students will stop by our voter registration tables, however we feel that if each of these tabling events are co-sponsored by a different student group/student population and located in various parts of campus, then we will be able to attract a new audience to check us out. Additionally, for those students who are just unsure, we are making a larger effort to visit not just our normal freshmen introduction courses, but courses from across campus like education, nutrition, communication, foreign languages, etc. to share more details about

voter registration both back in hometowns and in the college town, answer questions students may have about the process, and let them know about all our upcoming events. This strategy for increasing our class presentation efforts and getting more student groups involved is already working!

Finally, our newest strategy for 2024 has been to figure out how to incorporate this into the core curriculum more. We know that at least a few classes are including voting/voter education into the classroom, this knowledge hasn't been shared widely. As we are applying for the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification this year, we plan to extract data like this not just for the Carnegie, but to also be able to use for long term planning for the Operation EIU Votes Programming and partnerships beyond 2024. EIU will also send out announcement within our academic teaching platform for the first time. We are excited to have students see the university's commitment to voting within the academic platform moving forward. Additionally, the university is also sending out an all campus email about voter registration and election day. This email along with class presentations, and other marketing include a QR code for more information at the ALL IN to vote website and online voter registration link. We have also added a more detailed website that now stays up year-round with voting information and links to learn more through the Office of Leadership and Engagement website.

## **REPORTING**

The action plan and the NSLVE reports will be shared with EIU's Administrative Team, the Operation EIU Votes Coalition, and across the campus. Additionally, we will include a link to the report on our Operation EIU Votes webpage. We maintain a year-round voting resource webpage which includes not only information about voter registration, but links to our reports and the County Clerk's Office for local election questions. You can view this page here, <https://www.eiu.edu/volunteer/operationeiuvotes.php> Once the election has passed, we will compile a report of all the outreach we did and data from that and add that to our website as well. This will help in future planning to have this information publicly available and easy to access.

In addition to the inner university being aware and having input for this plan, we will talk about the plan on the local radio station WEIU, and with the campus newspaper, The Daily Eastern News. As we get closer to the elections in November of 2024 we will reach out to the local newspaper, The Times Courier Journal Gazette, to highlight what is happening on campus and to encourage community members to also participate. Finally, we will utilize our social media to share voting education facts, important dates, and results of our efforts.

## **EVALUATION**

The NSLVE data will be a great way to analyze and understand the impact of our programs and work at the very end of the process, but will not be the only way to measure success. We will be tracking the number of events, the number of participants at each event, the number of registration forms that are filled out, the number of presentations and partnerships with campus departments/organizations, and the number of students transported to the polls.

As we evaluate and analyze this data on a semesterly basis we will be able to see what type of programming is resonating the most with students. This will allow us to keep offering programs that are interesting to and relevant for the students so they will continue to show up. If the students are no longer attending a type of event or program then we need to go back to the drawing board, back to the EIU Operation Votes coalition, and try something different.

While the statistics individually won't be able to paint a picture, the combination of all of the above will start to show a clear picture of the impact we are hoping to make. Through our ongoing evaluation of our programs and events, we will continue to make changes to reach more students as needed and update our action plan each year.

The evaluation process will be overseen by the staff of the Office of Leadership and Engagement and shared first within the EIU Operation Votes Coalition for feedback and recommendations for future. Not only will we evaluate the events we hold, but will also review our short- and long-term strategies to see which ones we accomplished or didn't and why. From there, we will work to update these strategies to be prepared for the next election in 2026.

Finally, our campus also participates in the NSSE. Moving forward we will partner with our Assessment Office to figure out how to capitalize on the data found in both our NSLVE and NSSE reports. As you can see below from the NSSE our students are engaged, we just need to education them on the importance of staying engaged and leverage this to encourage the others why they should become an active citizen and vote.

