

## **All In Campus 2022 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 had increased in the past two Presidential election cycles 2012 to 2016, the Civic Engagement and Volunteerism department had done little to help with this voter engagement increase or to educate our students around candidates or issues. As the leadership team of Civic Engagement and Volunteerism we decided to make a concerted effort to positively impact the engagement around voting on our campus. Our programming around the election and issues we as American's face on a daily basis shifted over the past four years. We started off with the Chasing the American Dream series which focused on what did it mean to be an American. Then it evolved into the Social Justice Series after the murder of George Floyd. And as we look forward we are planning for the Civic Engagement Hour events. Ultimately, we want to make it easy for the students to understand their personal power that comes with civic responsibility and be excited to cast their ballot.

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 leadership of the Office of Civic Engagement and Volunteerism 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.

Moving into 2022, will provide us with new challenges and new opportunities to engage with our campus community and Civic Engagement and Volunteerism will be leading up the efforts and using our department staff and dollars to make the events a reality. What will be different in this cycle is that it will be a midterm election cycle and typically voter registration and turn out numbers are less than in a Presidential election. 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. Our Voter Friendly Action Plan will cover our programming efforts from January 2022-November 2022.

For the Spring 2022 semester our focus was on offering monthly programming called the Civic Action Hour. The Civic Action Hour will be comprised of two parts, the first an educational component, where students will have to actively choose to participate. And the second will be passive events where students can register to vote. Each month had a theme and we partnered with other departments to help advertise and promote our Civic Engagement Hour events.

- January 17, 2022: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Service and Engagement Event
- February 2022: In conjunction with Black History Month, Civic Engagement Hour that will focus on the history of suppressing the Black Vote in America
- March 27, 2022: Women Up Conference, which will include a session about the history of the women's suffrage movement and current issues facing women voting in 2022.
- April 2022: In conjunction with our Sustainable Energy department and Earth Day efforts we will host a Civic Engagement Hour on how Climate Change became a political issue.
- May 2022: Social Media campaigns across all platforms on getting registered to vote
- June 2022: Social Media pushes to get students to participate in the Illinois Primary Elections
- August 2022: Voter Registration and Civic Action Hour events
- September 2022: Partnership with Athletics and Freshman Foundations Presentations
- October 2022: Greek out the Vote Program
- November 2022: (ELECTION, RIDES TO THE POLLS)

## **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 will meet 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. Moving into 2022 we will be extending offers to be a part of the team to the following groups with the intent to meet monthly starting in January of 2022.

New Student and Family Programs (Beth Dunahee, Assistant Director)

Fraternity and Sorority Programs (Nathan Wehr, Director)

EIU College Democrats (Student Representative which changes annually)

EIU College Republicans (Student Representative which changes annually)

Academic Excellence and Inclusion (Mona Davenport, Executive Direction)

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 (Beccah Maley, Professional Staff)  
EIU Campus Ministries (Danah Himes, Professional Staff)  
Athletics (Kirsten Alt-Keck, Professional Staff)  
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.

We will also partner with our local County Clerk 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. We also are partnering with the County Clerk's office to create marketing material about how to vote by mail, or how to vote in the county of the permanent residence.

## **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 is 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.

We also had faculty support in sharing resources on how to get registered, how to apply for absentee ballots, and poll location and times across campus. The provost shared this information with all faculty, which was then shared with students across programs.

Finally, our President, Dr. David Glassman, has signed the Higher Education President's Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation for the past two years.

## **LANDSCAPE**

Eastern Illinois University is a mid-size public institution with 8,626 undergraduate and graduate students. Of those students 60% identify as women, and 40% 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 61% white, 13% LatinX, 13% Black/African American and 3% Asian. 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.

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.

One of the biggest take a ways 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. We have increased the number of Registered Student Organizations we will be inviting to participate in our Operation EIU Votes Coalition. Having their voices and ideas, and their support, will be critical to our efforts in 2022. The other big learning moment for me was around what we can and what we can't do as an institution to promote voter registration and voting efforts. We learned a great deal from our planning cycle in 2020 and feel that we are better prepared to put a plan into place that we will be able to execute in 2022.

The climate around political engagement seems to have lessened (in our perspective) since the 2020 Presidential Election. We do not think that the divide between parties and Americans has lessened but do think that the daily drive to action and using ones voice to in act change has

lessened on both sides. This coupled with the pandemic exhaustion has shifted the daily focus of many Americans. We think this will likely to impact the voter registration and voting efforts for the mid term elections.

The biggest local change that has happened that will impact our ability to engage students to get to the polls is that our Primary Elections were moved from March 2022 to June of 2022. If the Primary Elections were to still be held in March we could work to help students get to the polls and cast their ballots. While this will provide a challenge, we can spend the spring semester helping to educate the campus community on the importance of the Primaries, and the local impact of roles like Judges, Governors, and how that impacts our students daily lives. And if we do that well, our students will be excited to vote regardless of where they are physically living in June.

## **GOALS**

### **Short Term Goals (now-Nov 2022)**

- Civic Action Hour events with a voter history focus for the spring 2022 (host 4 events over the duration of the spring 2022 semester)
- Host events focused on voter registration (2 events in the spring 2022 semester, and host 4 events in the fall 2022 semester)
- 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
- Partner with Student Government to create and host programs around voter education and registration (2 events over the duration of the fall 2022 semester)
- Voter Registration events hosted by Registered Student Organizations for the fall 2022 semester (2 events over the duration of the fall 2022 semester)
- Partner with Fraternity and Sorority Programs for “Greek Out the Vote” for the fall 2022 and register 50 Greek students
- Partnership with EIU Athletics for the fall 2022 focused on registering 50 new student athletes
- Transportation to the Polls in November 2022 on election day (managed by the Civic Engagement and Volunteerism office)

### **Long Term (now-Nov 2024)**

- Maintain the voter registration and voter engagement levels we hit in 2022 for the 2022 Mid Term elections
- Increase the voter registration and voter engagement levels by 5% for the 2024 Presidential Election cycle
- Explore the possibility of having a voter educational component with the Freshman Foundations class on campus via presentations

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**

One major piece missing from our NSLVE data is a breakdown of who is (or isn't) voting by race/ethnicity, gender, student type (freshman vs senior. We will figure out how to update the NSLVE data that EIU reports so that we can accurately understand what students we are engaging with, and who we need to help bring to the table.

Without this specific and measurable data, we can't fully understand where the gaps are and what work needs to be done.

## **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 strategy for 2022 will be to host a minimum of one educational event and one voter registration event each month. 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 and the EIU Athletes. Details around those two programs/efforts will be flushed out this summer. The main resources for all of this possible programming will be the staff of the Civic Engagement and Volunteerism office (Director, Assistant Director, and 2 Graduate Assistants as well as the Operation EIU Votes Committee.)

Our strategy for 2022-2024 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. If we can be successful with creating and managing a partnership with programs like the Freshman and Transfer Foundations classes we will be able to reach more students year over year. If we successfully do the above that will obviously positively impact our NSLVE data and our community in both big and small ways!

## **REPORTING**

The final action plan and the NSLVE reports will be shared with EIU's Administrative Team, the Operation EIU Votes Coalition, and across the campus. 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 June and November of 2022 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. We will also link the NSLVE data through out Civic Engagement and Volunteerism website.

## **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 and delivered to the Court House, 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.