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About The EMU Voter Registration Team

Eastern Michigan University was founded in 1849, and is one of the oldest colleges in the state. EMU has a student body of about 14,000 students, and is an accredited R3 research institution. Eastern Michigan has a diverse student body and is located in a low income area, meaning that students would benefit greatly from being represented in elections and census polls.

For this initiative, Engage EMU, a department responsible for creating an entryway to enhance, navigate and cultivate collaboration and partnerships between the University and business and community entities will be working to enhance civic engagement on campus and in the EMU community.

Engage at EMU will be partnering with EMU Student Government and EMU Athletics. Student Government is a student run organization responsible for making the voice of the students heard and represented to campus staff, faculty and administration in professional settings. The team will expand their reach by partnering with NextGen America; NextGen America's mission is to empower young voters to engage in the political process and ensure our government is responsive to the largest and most diverse generation in American history. Lastly, we have been working with the Ypsilanti City Clerk's office to train students to register voters, and teach students the importance of civic engagement at a local level.

Executive Summary

This action plan, created by leaders in Student Government, in collaboration with Engage EMU and Eastern Athletics, aims to increase civic engagement, focusing on voter registration and census participation on campus and in the local community.

In 2018, EMU's voting rate was 45.3%, significantly higher than the national average of 39.1%. This plan seeks to further increase this number, emphasizing the importance of civic participation, especially in light of the upcoming 2024 presidential election. The action plan will be implemented starting in the Winter Semester of 2024, continuing through the presidential election in November, with a particular focus on the primaries and the general election.

Leadership

Efforts to enhance student voter registration and engagement through non-partisan events and workshops will be co-managed by EMU Student Government members Jason Folk and Naomi Barbour, the Department of Engage at EMU's GA Lamarr Mitchell, and Athletics representative Sara Tisdale. The leadership team will meet monthly to coordinate events, while the Voter Taskforce will meet bi-weekly. Student Government will spearhead recruitment, marketing, and student engagement, while Engage EMU will manage event planning and facilitate speaker series featuring local officials and organizations.

Commitment

EMU has a dedicated team of student, faculty, staff and administration that work tirelessly to make the university a supportive, intellectually dynamic and diverse community. EMU has five core principles; excellence, respect, inclusiveness, responsibility and integrity. Administration is devoted to helping students learn not only in the classroom but outside of the classroom too, bettering and learning from our community as we expand our knowledge through courses.

One way EMU strives to do this is with Learning Beyond the Classroom requirements for graduation. EMU students have a variety of options to complete these requirements that allow them hands-on experiences in addition to their classroom experiences. Studies have shown that students involved in activities outside of the classroom have higher retention rates and more positive education experiences. One group of LBC credit that students may obtain is called “Community service, citizenship, and leadership”. Students who wish to participate in the voter registration task force will be awarded with fulfillment of this LBC credit requirement, contingent on them completing 15 hours of community and campus voter registration. At EMU, we are dedicated to developing productive, engaged members of society, through classroom and hands-on experiences.

EMU offers over 200 undergraduate majors, most if not all of which stress the importance of civic engagement in one way or another. By knowing the importance of increasing civic engagement in all students, each faculty and staff members make this a theme in their teaching and make a conscious effort to apply it to their classrooms. Students have seen firsthand the importance of civic engagement, through field trips, professional presentations, or classwork assigned by professors in all fields. Many EMU professors offer their students unofficial days off on Election Day, and the Student Government is beginning work to encourage administration to close campus on election day.

Along with faculty, we also have dedicated administrators who want to see higher rates of civic engagement in students, because it is beneficial to all involved in university operations. The Provost's office sets goals of academic quality, institutional accreditation and accountability, to ensure a positive learning environment. The Provost's office examines curriculum before it becomes available to students, this ensures the inclusion of civic learning and democratic engagement as part of all curriculums. EMU will use their devoted student, staff, faculty and administration to continue increasing civic engagement in the community and on campus. The goal is to get students involved and interested now, and to keep them involved in the future to create a generation of civically minded citizens.

Landscape

EMU's general education requirements include effective communication, quantitative reasoning, global awareness, U.S. diversity, and knowledge of various disciplines. The university also emphasizes learning beyond the classroom, which includes community service, citizenship, and leadership.

The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) provides data on EMU's voting rates. In 2018, the student voting rate was 45.3%, up from 22.9% in 2014, with 69% of students registered to vote. The majority of students voted in person, reflecting the impact of having an on-campus polling location.

The NSLVE data highlights areas for improvement, such as educating students on different voting methods and increasing civic engagement across all fields of study, particularly among undergraduates and commuter students.

Athletics

EMU Athletics will play an active role in educating and engaging the general student population and student-athletes while specifically using its events to engage the community and attendees at home events.

At home EMU Athletic events, non-partisan groups will table to assist attendees in checking registration status, registering to vote, and sharing educational materials related to the upcoming 2024 election.

EMU Athletics will host educational sessions for student-athletes beginning in August with the goal of registering 100% of student-athletes. It will be the goal for all coaches, staff, and student-athletes to sign the All-In Pledge to ensure they receive non-partisan and accurate information related to the 2024 election.

EMU student-athletes are from 27 countries. To engage international student-athletes in the United States election process, EMU Athletics will build an information campaign on election systems from home countries of international student-athletes. Facts, details, and first-hand accounts of international elections will be shared with the public at home athletic events and during general campus

outreach. The goal of this campaign is to both educate and find common ground during the months leading up to the 2024 election.

In 2020, The NCAA passed “Civic Engagement Day” legislation that provides a day off from countable athletic activities for all student-athletes to increase voter engagement. EMU student-athletes and coaches will focus their efforts on Civic Engagement Day towards social responsibility through voting and communication engagement through philanthropy and service.

EMU Athletics will offer transportation for student-athletes, students, faculty, and staff to local polling locations on election day. EMU Athletics will also assist in the process of obtaining and mailing in absentee ballots for student-athletes through targeted team meetings and engagement opportunities.

Goals

- **Increase student voter registration to 75%:** Up from 69% in 2018.
- **Increase student voter participation to 55%:** Up from 45.3% in 2018.
- **Educate students on ballot initiatives:** Host educational events on voter registration, absentee ballots, local proposals, and candidate information, aiming for an average attendance of 30 students per event.
- **Targeted voter education for student-athletes:** EMU student-athletes hail from 37 states. To ensure student-athletes are aware of voter registration deadlines specific to their state a representative will meet with each team to review unique deadlines and requirements.

These goals are particularly relevant as we approach the 2024 presidential election, ensuring that students are well-informed and actively participating in the democratic process.

Strategy

To achieve these goals, the team will organize a series of events throughout the Winter and Fall semesters of 2024. These events include:

- **Lobby Tables:** Members of the task force and other volunteers will help students register to vote and keep them informed on upcoming events and important dates
- **Eaglefest:** A beginning-of-semester event to recruit members for the voter registration task force and register voters.
- **EMU Athletics Events:** Table at home athletic events to provide voter registration information and resources

Additional strategies include promoting voter registration in the Student Government office, and offering incentives like stickers and giveaways at events

Reporting

For the leadership team, communications on efforts will come from the Student Government and Engage points of contact. The team will have monthly meetings and will share reports and notes to the relevant members across campus following each meeting.

- Students will receive event announcements and resources through combined marketing efforts of EMU Student Government, and the University marketing department. These notifications will come in forms of university-wide emails, social media posts, flyers, lobby tables, and campus announcement posts.
- While the final external data will come from the NSLVE report, internally, event leads will track how many students are registered and attend educational events. This data will be reported following the 2020 Presidential Election.

All information will be made public through a Webpage on myemich.edu/engage and through the NSLVE report.

Evaluation

The action plan's evaluation will ensure adherence to legal, university, and Campus Democracy Challenge guidelines, aiming to raise voter registration and participation rates. The leadership team will evaluate and plan for future years based on NSLVE data from the 2024 election season.

Evaluation will take place over the summer, with feedback collected through surveys and reported via the student newspaper, social media, and Google forms. Continuous improvement of civic engagement initiatives will be based on this feedback and data.

This revised action plan emphasizes the importance of civic engagement in the context of the 2024 presidential election, aiming to increase student participation and awareness.