



**ECSU Vikings Vote Action**

**Plan 2023-2024**

## Executive Summary

Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) and constituent institution of the University of North Carolina System located in northeastern North Carolina (Pasquotank County), is roughly one hour from the Outer Banks and the Hampton Roads region of Virginia. The institution services approximately 2,166 students with 27 undergraduate and 3 graduate programs of study (as of Fall 2023 institutional data). ECSU offers degrees in aviation and natural sciences, business and economics, teaching and administration, visual and performing arts, mathematics and computer science, social and behavioral sciences and other select professional and pre-professional areas.

ECSU is the most affordable academic success university in North Carolina. Our intimate class sizes afford our student body a small, yet challenging learning environment. We teach, train and mold our students into an environment representative of today's global economy. ECSU continues to be a leading partner in enhancing educational and cultural opportunities and improving the economic strength in the region. A diverse and highly qualified faculty educates and leads our students to become productive members of an increasingly interdependent society. With a vision to develop leaders who will make a positive difference now and, in the future, ECSU will aim to increase student participation in the democratic process through voter education, registration, and mobilization efforts.

Members of the university community united to create a civic engagement work group that would institutionalize civic engagement at ECSU through an action plan. Lead by university leaders, to include faculty, staff, students, and community leaders, the civic engagement work group created *Vikings Vote*, a campus-wide plan dedicated to promoting democracy as cultural pride and civic responsibility. The *Vikings Vote* Civic Engagement plan aims to incorporate cross-campus collaboration and community partnerships to raise awareness, educate and empower the ECSU community to enact positive change through social engagement and citizenship.

The Vikings Vote Engagement Plan aligns with the university's Strategic Plan (2020-2025) to grow community-based experiences and develop opportunities for community involvement (Goal 2) and to prepare students for life through robust co-curricular and extra-curricular campus activities and cultivate and promote our unique Viking culture and pride (Goal 6

This action plan will be implemented primarily by the Vikings Vote Leadership Team to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize a commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and students' participation in elections.

## **Vikings Vote Leadership Team**

The Viking Vote Leadership Team consists of a diverse working group of students, faculty, staff, and community partners who connect throughout the academic year to set strategic goals, share information and resources, address challenges, brainstorm ideas, plan and implement events and programs related to civic engagement.

These members are committed to nonpartisan democracy efforts:

**Student Ambassador - Civic Influencer Fellow**

**Student Ambassador - Civic Influencer Fellow**

**Student Ambassador - NC Black Alliance Fellow**

**Student Ambassador - NC Black Alliance Fellow**

**Student Ambassador - Common Cause Fellow**

**Student Ambassador – Common Cause Fellow**

**Student Government – External Relations Representative**

**Staff – Dr. Tiffany Hinton (Student Affairs)**

**Staff -- Bria Vaughan (Student Engagement)**

**Staff – Mr. Tony Coley (Student Success)**

**Faculty- Dr. Tarsha Rogers (Academic Affairs)**

**Faculty – Dr. Charles Reed (Interdisciplinary Studies)**

**Faculty – Dr. Kim Scott (Business, Accounting and Sports Management)**

**Community Resource – Destiny Jordan (Common Cause)**

**Community Resource – Emma Tate (Pasquotank County Board of Elections)**

**Community Resource-- Kate Fellman (You Can Vote)**

**Community Resource- Richard Smith (National HBCU Alumni Association Foundation)**

These names are the primary individuals responsible for organizing and supporting campus-wide civic learning and democratic engagement opportunities for students. The student members work closely with the remaining members to coordinate voter engagement collaborations and events.

\*\*Team membership will be reviewed on an annual basis before the end of the Spring semester. Transitions for all members will be filled based on recommendations from the transitioning member and/or current members of the Leadership team.

Campus members of the working group help to execute key civic holidays, like National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Day, and voter registration drives, in classroom and virtual presentations, Social Media promotion, and Watch Parties.

## Commitment

### ECSU Mission Statement

As a constituent institution of [The University of North Carolina System](#), Elizabeth City State University offers baccalaureate, professional, and master's degrees for a diverse student body.

**Our mission is to promote economic, social, and environmental progress for the people of northeastern North Carolina, the state, and the nation.**

We achieve our commitment to the highest quality education by maintaining a rigorous focus on academic excellence through liberal arts programs and using innovative and flexible technology-based instruction models to enhance our signature areas: integrating technology with education, improving human health and wellness, and advancing the natural and aviation sciences.

**Through teaching, research, and community engagement, the institution's rich heritage and its current multicultural student-centered focus provide a firm foundation for its endeavors. It serves the needs and aspirations of individuals and society; producing graduates for leadership roles and life-long learning.**

### ECSU Vision Statement

Elizabeth City State University will be a premier public institution and **a leading partner for economic, social, and environmental progress. We will be a destination institution that develops leaders who will make a positive difference now and in the future.**

### ECSU Core Values

ECSU is guided by a commitment to excellence, which is personified in the subsequent group of core values the university strives to demonstrate and maintain.

- Accountability – Administration, faculty, staff, and students will be responsible and transparent in their actions
- Commitment – Dedication to our students, community, and advancing the university will be our priority
- Excellence – Unparalleled teaching, learning, and service to the university and community will be our measure for success
- Collaboration – Teamwork and partnerships with our stakeholders will be utilized to achieve common goals
- Inclusion – Diverse viewpoints, experiences, and backgrounds will be respected and welcomed

The campus demonstrates its commitment to civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation through its hand-on approach in aiding the execution of the university's [strategic plan](#) (2020-2025) which emphasizes the importance of community-based experiences, the development of opportunities for community involvement, and prioritizes prepare student development for life (civic) activities.

While there is no standalone office that does this work, Civic Engagement is a priority of all faculty and staff. The Division of Student Affairs and University Advancement, through the work of the Vikings Vote Leadership Team, continues to develop strong community partnerships, strengthen cross-campus collaborations and magnify programmatic impact.

Institutional members of the Vikings Vote Leadership Team also strategically partnered with community organizations, like the Pasquotank County NAACP and League of Women Voters of Northeastern North Carolina to increase capacity for civic efforts like voter registration, education and mobilization. Other non-partisan, community stakeholders include North Carolina Campus Engagement (formerly known as NC Campus Compact), Campus Vote Project, Common Cause, North Carolina Black Alliance, and You Can Vote. These commitments aid in our efforts to increase student participation in democracy and provide more resources to support faculty, staff, and students who work to implement civic engagement.

Additionally, Chancellor Karrie G. Dixon values the importance of the student voice in all elections and commits her leadership and support to ensuring students are prepared and engaged, and active citizens. In 2019, she joined more than 600 other college and university chancellors and presidents in signing the ALL IN Challenge Presidential Commitment and she is the recipient of ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge's 2023 President/Chancellor Award.

## Landscape



NSLVE is a signature initiative of the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. IDHE is an applied

research center focused on college and university student political learning and participation in democracy. IDHE researchers study voting, campus conditions for political learning and discussion, closing equity gaps in participation, and increasing student agency and participation. We accomplish our goals through research, resource development, assisting institutions and the higher education community, and advocacy. ECSU participated in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement for the first time during the Fall 2018 semester which coincided with the 2018 midterm election.

According to the NSLVE campus report for ECSU, the number of students registered took a decline from 2014 to 2018, going from 1,365 students to 1,322 students but they increased in 2020 to 1,754. We saw a similar spike in the voting rate of registered students by percentage, 27% to 45% to 73% (2014, 2018, 2020 respectively). However, the registration and voting rates increased each election year.

The NSLVE report issued September 2022 indicated that the voting rate increased by 16.7% in the 2020 Midterm Elections (compared to 2014). The registration and voting rates increased but we still have work to do with getting certain populations registered, as in 2018, our student enrollment decreased along with the total registered students. We also would like to continue to increase our early voting numbers and improve on the election day turnout. Another target approach to increasing student participation is to reach out to our graduate students to push them to register and vote. Per NSLVE, this population's participation has decreased from 2014 to 2018.

We also looked at the data by major in hopes that we can narrow our efforts and become more strategic with voter registration and mobilization. From the data chart, we found that Business, Communication and English faculty partners to join our Leadership Team. As you'll note, two faculty from those areas agreed to serve in the capacity to assist with civic inclusion outreach and education efforts.

## Voting, Registration and Yield Rates

### YOUR INSTITUTION

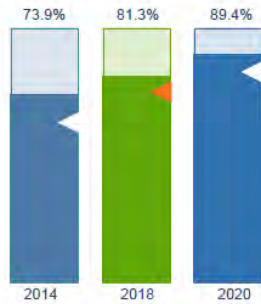
**36.7%**  
2018 Voting Rate

**+16.7**  
Change From 2014

### ALL INSTITUTIONS

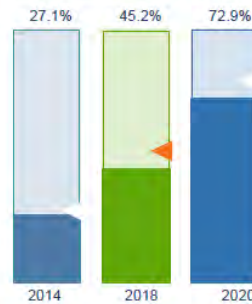
**39.1%**  
2018 Voting Rate

### REGISTRATION RATE



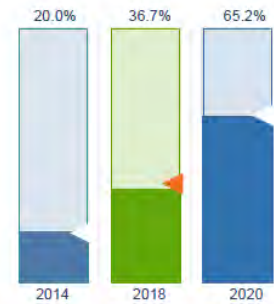
The **Registration Rate** is the percent of your voting-eligible students who registered to vote.

### VOTING RATE OF REGISTERED STUDENTS



The **Voting Rate of Registered Students** is the percent of registered students who voted on Election Day. We often refer to this as the "yield" rate.

### VOTING RATE



The **Voting Rate** is the percentage of eligible students who voted on Election Day. The voting rate is also the product of the registration and yield rates.

## Looking Closer

### Voting and Registration Rates

	2014	2018	2020	2014-2018 Change
Total student enrollment per NSC	1,928	1,687	2,021	↓ -241
(Age under 18/Unknown)	28	57	46	↑ 29
(Non-resident aliens)	—	—	13	—
Non-resident aliens data source	IPEDS	IPEDS	IPEDS	
(FERPA records blocked)	—	—	—	—
(Non-degree seeking students)	45	—	—	—
Total eligible voters	1,848	1,625	1,961	↓ -223
Number of students who registered	1,365	1,322	1,754	↓ -43
Number of students who voted	370	597	1,279	↑ 227
Registration Rate %	74	81	89	↑ 7
Voting Rate of Registered Students %	27	45	73	↑ 18
Voting Rate %	20	37	65	↑ 17

## By Field of Study

FIELDS	2014			2018			2020			2014-2018 Rate Change
	Enrolled	Voted	Rate(%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate(%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate(%)	
Biological and Biomedical Sciences	151	32	21	206	69	33	191	129	68	↑ 12
Business, Management, and Marketing	261	44	17	230	84	37	269	165	61	↑ 20
Communication and Journalism	64	–	–	40	14	35	–	–	–	–
Computer and Information Sciences	64	–	–	54	20	37	56	31	55	–
Education	304	73	24	158	71	45	205	159	78	↑ 21
Engineering and Engineering Technologies	70	–	–	56	14	25	54	31	57	–
English Language and Literature	54	–	–	24	–	–	30	18	60	–

These are estimated voting rates by field of study, and the numbers we used to calculate the field of study rates. For an explanation of CIP codes, please see our FAQ.\* There are roughly 8,000 fields of study among U.S. colleges and universities, so we provide rates for condensed categories.

\*<https://tufts.app.box.com/v/idhe-nslve-report-faq>



## **Challenges/Opportunities**

**NSLVE:** We have not received a copy of the NSLVE report yet but from the last report, we used the data to identify gaps in the various populations across campus that the institution can do a better job reaching, demographically and programmatically. Those identified challenges pose significant opportunities to not only increase voter registration and voter turnout, but institutionalizing democratic engagement at ECSU.

**VOTER LEGISLATION:** This year, the election law regarding voter IDs changed. There was confusion related to the campus application approval process. We relied heavily on the North Carolina State and Pasquotank County Board of Elections to provide current information to be relied to the student body in a timely and efficient manner. Additionally, the Leadership Team worked collaboratively to submit appropriate paperwork to the NC Board of Elections and Pasquotank County Board Elections. Additionally, the Office of the Chancellor hired a staff person to lead the University's advocacy and legislative outreach efforts. This person will advise the Leadership Team of legislative decisions affecting the political climate on campus.

**VOTER EDUCATION:** Students struggled with the voting structure, specifically the election location, dates for early voting, methods of voting (absentee, by mail, in person), and the polling location. The Leadership Team worked with nonpartisan groups like You Can Vote and Common Cause to provide voting guides for students. Additionally, campus notifications were sent to students with correct voting date, location and ID information. We also worked with Pasquotank County Board of Elections to provide updated campus living information so that residential students were afforded the right to vote with ease. Additionally, we continue efforts to develop a "culture of voting" across campus.

**VOTER MOBILIZATION:** During election season, students marched to the polls together. This increased the student voter participation rate but students experienced long waiting times, as they stood in long lines to vote. The Pasquotank Board of Elections were not prepared to receive students, but members of the campus Leadership team was able to develop a plan to inform the local board of elections of planned marches in the future so this can amended.

## Goals

Vikings Vote aims to cultivate a campus culture where students take pride in being civically informed and engaged members of the Elizabeth City community. We have identified several short-term and long-term goals that are necessary to achieving this outcome:

- Increase ECSU's voter registration rate by at least 3% in the 2024 Presidential Election
- Increase ECSU's voting rate (among eligible students) by at least 3% in the 2024 Presidential Election
- Host at least one monthly civic engagement program on campus (ie. teach ins: what's on the ballot, candidate/office duties, how to fill out a ballot, voter issues, etc.) by the end of the semester
- Develop a voter engagement tool to serve as a sustainable resource tool for civic engagement opportunities and information by September 2024
- Increase social media presence for the ECSU Votes initiative by posting twice a month
- Include a voter registration drive and civic engagement informational workshop as a part of New Student Orientation by Fall 2024
- Develop democratic engagement branding that increases a sense of pride and responsibility

## Strategy

With a more dedicated collaboration between campus and community partners, *Vikings Vote* will thrive through a coordinated strategy:

Implementation of infrastructure: We will work collaboratively with campus and community partners to foster a sense of pride and civic responsibility. Partnering with Residential Life, Student Engagement, Student Success (Freshmen and Transfer Experience) to focus our efforts on Voter Registration during the first two months of the semester. The next semesters will focus on Voter Education and Excitement; utilizing student ambassadors as a blueprint, the fellows of the Leadership Team will organize and implement student centered events and activities to engage students on voter issues connected to students. Fellows will work with the staff, faculty and community resource members of the Leadership Team as they finalize plans and look to implement activities.

- Voter Registration Drives on Tuesdays (During 3:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m. breaks)
- Classroom Raps (class presentations beginning with First Year Seminar)

- Candidate Forum
- Voter Suffrage events (highlights pioneers involved in civic rights movements)
- Pizza & Politics events (highlights social issues in our nation and community)
- Coffee & Conversations events (highlights voter 411 information—how to register, complete a ballot, local political leaders information, etc.)
- End of year cookout with voter registration and education opportunities

### ***Election Cycle Events***

- Rock The Vote Tabling
- Candidates Forum
- Pledge to Vote Campaign
- March to the Polls
- Election Results Party

## **Reporting**

Reporting/sharing the action plan and the results from its implementation will take place on multiple platforms. It will be shared with the workgroup, campus leadership, and national partners requiring the Democratic Engagement Plan. During Division of Student Affairs and University Advancement leadership meetings, updates will be provided to staff on civic engagement programs and related data. Additionally, the NSLVE data will be shared with all stakeholders and partners upon request.

## **Evaluation**

The Leadership Team mentioned earlier in this plan would have the responsibility to review all aspects of campus democratic engagement. The reviews would take place at least twice during the academic semester (at the beginning and end of a term). Annual updates to the action plan will be conducted as a result of these reviews.

The NSLVE report will serve as a main metric to evaluate the success of our democratic participation. While this data is helpful in identifying strengths and areas of improvement in voter registration, turnout rates, and other demographics, it does not track other civic engagement efforts, such as phone bank data, programming and training assessments, and pledges to vote

among the student body. As such, we will track these numbers and survey feedback separately through campus labs and other tracking databases (Vikings Engage).