

## Emporia State University

### 2020 Voter Friendly Campus Plan:

#### Civic Engagement Partnerships - Voter Registration, Education, and Voting

#### Background

We have been part of the American Democracy Project (ADP) since its inception and our campus audit at the time revealed less than 10 percent of our students registered to vote. Since then we have participated in several ADP initiatives related to elections and our campus culture has changed. Although the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) revealed considerable progress among ESU students between the 2012 and 2016 (presidential) election cycles, and even more progress between the 2014 and 2018 midterms, we realize that our ability to improve depends on finding innovative ways to connect with each cohort of students. The following information from the NSLVE 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 report summaries may provide some historical perspective:

<b>NSLVE ESU Data</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014 <i>Midterms</i></b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2018 <i>Midterms</i></b>
<b>Registration Rate</b>	<b>77.7%</b>	<b>69.1%</b>	<b>77.9%</b>	<b>79.9%</b>
<b>Voting Rate of Registered Voters</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>37.6%</b>	<b>67.8%</b>	<b>61.4%</b>
<b>Voting Rate of the population</b>	<b>46.4%</b>	<b>26.0%</b>	<b>52.8%</b>	<b>49.1%</b>

It is important to understand the NSLVE footnote related to eligible voters because ESU has had a relatively large share of ineligible voters (e.g., international, undocumented, and other students), especially among undergraduates. The footnote reads:

*\*\* Your students' data broken down by age at the time of the election. To provide more accurate voting rates, students ineligible to vote because they were too young, students whose age data was not reported to the Clearinghouse, as well as records that were FERPA blocked are removed from this table.*

*Please note that we are not able to adjust these voting rates by removing non-resident aliens, resident aliens or undocumented students."*

#### Past experiments with voter registration

We were one of the campuses that participated in an experiment/study conducted by Elizabeth Bennion and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts a little more than a decade ago. From that study we learned to be more effective with social media, especially in e-

mail messages; timing, author(s), and complementarities with other messages make a difference. More importantly, we learned that students influence students more than faculty or administrators. Our ADP students are really good at offering ideas and then following through.

Generally, without going into excessive detail, our efforts and experiments have helped us to recognize that partnerships make a significant difference, especially with trust of election officials and to some extent with students. We are committed to these relationships.

### **Looking Forward**

The NSLVE reports allow us to examine where we can improve the most. First-year students are our greatest challenge.

Our kickoff event for the fall semester in August 2020 will be the first week of the fall semester. We will have students, faculty, and partners from the League of Women Voters, the Lyon County Election Commission, and Loud Light working together to register and reregister students at the all-university block party. It is a high-energy event that brings thousands of students. We have done this every year and plan to continue because it is highly effective.

We are planning to augment this with voter registration connected with Hornet Connection (i.e., enrollment of new students) in their residence halls (with a few exceptions such as local students, first-year students are required to live in the residence halls), or both.

We hope to have events that ensure students are energized because voter education is a critical element in our efforts. We plan to invite candidates to campus for candidate forums, debates, and the like.

Voting at polling places has been a mixed bag in the past due to proximity of these places. We have been seeking to have polling places closer to campus for years. Currently, the area adjacent to campus is separated into different polling places; one is the furthest possible distance from campus, which creates special challenges with inclement weather in Kansas. One option is to push for advanced voting

We look forward to working with new partners such as All IN. We have worked with Jen Domagal-Goldman since she began at ADP and we look forward to her creativity and knowledge of our campus and the challenges we face in Kansas with restrictive election laws. In Kansas, we are enthusiastic about our continued partnerships with Loud Light, the League of Women Voters, and our local Lyon County election officers.