

***“FAMU Rising Voter Engagement Plan: Rattlers Preparing to Strike, Strike & Strike at the Polls”***

COMPLETED BY: GARY RUSS, JR.

**Executive Summary**

Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University is an 1890 land-grant institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, resolution of complex issues, and the empowerment of citizens and communities. As a Historically Black College University, community enrichment and civic engagement are deeply embedded in our mission, vision, and strategic goals. **The FAMU Rising Voter Engagement Plan: Rattlers Preparing to Strike, Strike & Strike at the Polls** will serve to be a foundation for FAMU's Student Engagement Action Plan Model. Over the next few years, FAMU will continue to build upon this plan with the intent of establishing and maintaining a sustainable blueprint that continues to increase student participation and engagement in the democratic process.

In accordance with the University's strategic priority of “Exceptional Student Experience”, this plan employs multidimensional ways to effectively work with administration & faculty to cement the usage of campus as an early voting place and an Election Day polling place to ensure that all student voters have access to the ballot. This plan will serve to increase democratic engagement and maximize the practice of civic duty by increasing new research on student civic activity, expanding the onsite polling options, as well as expanding the mobilization of young voters to return to the polls. With this in mind, the activities that will be used to execute this plan shall involve active voter registration drives, voter education opportunities, and virtual/in-person discussion panels. This plan is set to begin in August 2022 and end in December 2022. Ultimately, the mission of this action plan is to cultivate a politically engaged student body year-round and promote voter registration and education while continuously implementing civic engagement.

**COALITION/LEADERSHIP:**

Florida A&M University's Department of Social Work, College of Social Science, Arts and Humanities will be housing the program extension to help increase the impact of the plan. The program advisor for the department will be Dr. Kenisha Thomas, Adjunct Professor in the Department of Social Work. Dr. Thomas has over a decade of experience in community organizing, political activism, and copious amounts of knowledge in implementing action plans, which will serve to elevate the potential of the project.

In addition to the Department of Social Work/CSSAH, the project will collaborate with FAMU's Student Government Association, Progressive Black Men, Incorporated, as well as the Student Florida Education Association's chapter to help in manifesting the goals outlined, by working to create a Democratic Engagement Coalition. These organizations along with others serve as incubators to campus life, active civic engagement, and meaningful advocacy for the student body. Working to establish a coalition with student campus organizations through Student Services will ensure that all students are adequately informed on the issues on the ballots, as well as get students mobilized to get registered to vote and most of all out to vote on Election Day.

## COMMITMENT:

**FAMU's Vision:** To become the undisputed high-performing center of excellence for talent management, diversity, and stakeholder engagement.

**FAMU's Mission:** To continuously improve and sustain the University's ability to attract, develop and retain excellent and diverse talent in a compliant and inclusive environment.

**FAMU's Core Values:** Diversity & Inclusion, Performance, Respect, Service Excellence, and Teamwork

## LANDSCAPE:

This plan is informed by the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement report. Florida A&M University is one of the 1000s of colleges and universities that participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) study. The NSLVE is an initiative by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life aimed to provide campuses with their institutional data (student voter registration and voting rates). The research is intended to assist institutions in creating strategies that increase student participation in the democratic process.

## GOALS:

Florida A&M University's democratic vision is a campus political climate where students take pride in being civically engaged and responsible citizens. The mission is to foster a culture that results in increased democratic participation by informed and empowered students.

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**SHORT-TERM:** INCREASE TURNOUT IN UPCOMING FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL ELECTIONS WHILE BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK FOR INSTITUTIONALIZING VOTER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES ON CAMPUS. **DEADLINE DECEMBER 10, 2022**

1. Develop a "Rattlers' Vote" voter engagement presentation/video featuring student leaders, organizations, campus royalty, and administration.
2. Incorporate the "Rattlers' Vote" voter engagement informational video for 1<sup>st</sup>-year orientation and Freshman Seminar to include a 10-question poll on voter awareness. (Timeframe: August 16-26, 2022)
3. Host (4) student voter registration events to increase participation in the 2022 Primary & General Elections (local, state, and federal).
4. Partner with the local Supervisor of Elections office to provide 2 trainings for students interested in democratic engagement work on campus, including opportunities for students to serve as poll workers.

5. Enhance capacity for voter education by partnering with 3 campus organizations, as well as the Civic Literacy program to promote voter awareness & education.

6. Establish a campaign to (1) register 200 new voters, (2) identify 200 current voters to update voter registration information, and (3) educate on voter registration card access.

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**LONG-TERM:** INSTITUTIONALIZE VOTER REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, AND ENGAGEMENT ON CAMPUS.

**PROGRESS MONITORING: SEPTEMBER 10, 2022 & NOVEMBER 6, 2022**

1. Increase voter turnout rates by 15% from the previous election year data.
2. Engage 300 graduate students to participate in the Campus Vote Project (Voter Education/Information)
3. Establish Election Day Protocol/Schedule at the university
4. Create a Democratic Engagement Coalition: 6 students, 2 Faculty, 2 Faculty Senate Members, 2 University Administrator, 3 alumni (support students interested in democratic and civic engagement)
5. Develop an internal system to review this action plan and the NSLVE report six months prior to elections (local, state, and federal).

#### STRATEGY:

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#### INSTITUTIONALIZATION:

- Systemic integration of voter engagement throughout the institution through a voter education/ registration link in the iRattler student portal such as TurboVote or studentvote.org.
- Engage faculty and academic departments through getting voter information in syllabi, approval for nonpartisan announcements, and ensure administrative follow-through for the provision of voter engagement resources and information.
- Establish consistent branding and messaging publicly on campus with students, faculty, staff, and student organizations.
- Pursue efforts to get 15 min spots of promotion targeting first-year students, transfer, and graduate students, including partnering with student housing to help advance student awareness.
- Develop a QR Code that students can access that will provide pertinent information to prepare for/how to register to vote.

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#### PROGRAMMING:

- Provide opportunities for at least 200 students, 18-22 years old to register to vote.
- Host at least 4 voter education and awareness forums, with at least 75 participants at each.
- Train and enlist at least 30 poll workers to work at campus' early voting site.
- Facilitate a legislative boot camp to equip and mobilize student voters to be civic leaders.
- Participate at "Set Friday", attend Senate/SGA meetings, as well as other campus events that provide engagement opportunities.

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#### CULTURE:

- Commit adequate time to engage students with candidates within the campus district, including state legislators, especially with the campus' proximity to city hall and the state capitol.
- Celebrate and tell the story of civic engagement accomplishments of HBCUs, particularly FAMU's historic cultural legacy in civic engagement.
- Adopt and reinforce culture through engagement by constituents at all levels (students, student organizations, faculty, staff, alumni, community stakeholders, etc.)

#### ACTIVITIES:

- a) Get Out to Vote virtual event: Aug 22, 2022
- b) National Voter Registration Day #How2Vote event: Sep 20, 2022
- c) National Voter Education Week events: October 3-7, 2022
- d) Get Out to Vote virtual event: Oct 3, 2022
- e) Legislative Boot Camp Seminar: Oct 5, 2022
- f) Spread the Word Campaign @ Set Friday: Oct 7, 2022
- g) Homecoming: Are You Ready to VOTE?: Oct 26, 2022
- h) Vote Early Day event: Oct 28, 2022
- i) Election Hero Day event: Nov 7, 2022

#### TIMELINE

Beginning Spring 2022, conversations around coalition building and developing a collaboration with administration and faculty has set the path moving forward. Summer 2022 will be filled with an intensive action planning process to ensure successful implementation of the plan, set for rollout in August. This will include meeting with the university administration to develop paths.

- a) June 2022- Establish relationships with administrators and ask what needs are particular to the campus; develop a comprehensive plan of action for rollout in August; and identify sophomore or junior scholars to take advantage of the democracy fellowship.
- b) July 2022- Ensure necessary resources are available for campaign initiatives; finalize campus implementation team; and follow up with administration on priorities.
- c) August 2022- Attend back-to-school events, including being present at student orientations and engaging students on the first day of class.

## SUCCESS

Civic learning and democratic engagement - 50% of the student population (freshman, transfer, and graduate students) registered to vote

Voter registration - 200 students, ages 18-22 registered to vote

Voter education - 4 successful events with at least 75 attendees

Voter awareness - Engage at least 2500 incoming freshmen, registering at least 300

## EVALUATION

The DEC will evaluate the plan every year to determine if goals are being met or if progression towards the goals is being accomplished. Upon evaluation, adjustments will be made accordingly to ensure the continued development of a working and sustainable democratic engagement model. In addition to internal evaluation, the primary sources of evaluation will be the voter registration report for the local Board of Election and the NSLVE report that tracks voter demographics, voter registration, and voter engagement in the election. Students will be provided a survey to gauge the pulse of political engagement Democratic Action Plan: Rattler Rising Voter Engagement 21 on campus (their attitudes and needs). New evaluation methods will be determined as goals are reached.

## BUDGET: (EXPENSE REPORT)

Training Conferences		\$500
Legislative Boot Camp	1	\$250
Tool Kit Paraphernalia		\$500
Webinar	2	\$250
Volunteers	5-7	\$500
Event Refreshments	4	\$500
Sustainability		\$500
		\$3000

Respectfully submitted,

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