

Background

The American Democracy Project has been a part of Fort Hays State University since it was brought onto campus in 2004, and the non-partisan initiative is currently housed inside of the Political Science Department at Fort Hays State University. The ADP has taken steps to engage the future graduates of tomorrow by creating events that are centered around registering students to vote and encouraging them to vote, promoting positive civic discourse, as well as educating students on current topical issues through Times Talks.

Current On-Campus Partnerships

- Student Government Association (SGA)
- Department of Political Science
- Arts for Social Change
- Philosophy Department
- Art Department
- Sociology Department
- Ellis County Bar Association
- Hays Chamber of Commerce
- 23rd Judicial Courts

Past On-Campus Partnerships

- Department of History
- Department of Psychology
- Department of Sociology
- Department of Teacher Education

Contacts

Lawrence Gould (main), Faculty/Advisor for the American Democracy Project
(785) 628-4425

Grace McCord / Madison Albers, Student Coordinators for the American Democracy Project
(785) 628-5399 | adp@fhsu.edu

Goals for 2023

We would like to reach peak voter registration but also see those registered voters turnout at the polls on Election Day. We want ADP to do more than register students, we want to equip them with the tools they need to be educated voters. The methods we will use to accomplish this are:

- Increases in the voting rate

A specific goal we would like to achieve at Fort Hays State University in terms of voter registration is increasing the voting rate among registered students. Our goal is to have 6,750 students vote in future elections. This number is set above the actual number of students that voted in 2020, which was 6,627, according to

our NSLVE report. We hope to establish the voting rate goal for 2024 as 65%, which is also 3% higher than the actual percentage of 62% of students that voted in the 2020 elections. **ASK LARRY HOW MANY STUDENTS ARE ON CAMPUS**

- Utilization of Budget

Our resources help make our goals more attainable, especially specific numerical goals like the ones mentioned above. The funds available to us are spent primarily on events. For instance, we host voter registration drives on campus, in order to draw students in we usually offer food or merchandise (t-shirts or tote bags) that has something to do with the event. We find that this money is well spent because students attend events with incentives at higher rates.

- Utilization of Resources

ADP has institutional, local, and national organizations that help us get closer to reaching our goals. Resources within Fort Hays State University, like the Arts for Social Change club, different academic departments, and Tiger Media Network, help us get our message out on campus and create a wonderful community that supports us. Within the larger community of Hays, there are so many similarly aligned organizations that take time to help us reach our goals. Lately, we have partnered with the Ellis County Bar Association, Hays Chamber of Commerce, and the 23rd Judicial Courts to help get our community civically active. While partnering with local institutions helps us flourish, networking with national organizations that help us, like Loud Light, keeps us connected with national organizations with the same goal as us. This is an excellent resource for us to utilize when we need to generate new ideas to implement on campus.

- Partnerships

Partnerships are crucial in spreading the message of civic engagement on campus. As ADP is a non-partisan organization, we would like to create a path for voter education and registration that yields motivated and potential voters like:

- Greek Life
- Faith-based organizations
- Honor Societies
- Cultural organizations

By letting the involved students know their rights to vote and the laws behind it, we can reach more students on a personal level instead of tabling in the Memorial Union. Not only that, but we can recruit volunteers for future voter registration drives. We feel this will bolster civic engagement and participation in our democracy on campus.

- Events

Most of what ADP does is event planning, our academic year is filled with events to get members of our community civically engaged. While event planning we try to keep the entire community in mind and find events that will reach out and peak the interest of different groups on campus. Some of the events we plan to continue to work on in 2023 are candidate forums, celebrating events like National Constitution Day, hosting Times Talks and voter registration/information campaigns. The goal of each of these activities is to pique the interest of each student on campus. We plan each event to be informational and constructive to create an environment that fosters students with varying interests and levels of understanding of democracy.

- Education

Since college campuses are primarily made up of young voters it is the primary goal of ADP to make students feel empowered and feel a high sense of voter efficacy.

Many students are unaware of the laws that govern the voting process and because of their uncertainty they are daunted by voting. After tabling this year we have noticed that most students are unsure whether they should use their permanent address when registering, since many FHSU students are not originally from Hays. Some are unaware that they can register to vote here if they wish, no matter if they are living on-campus or in the residential halls. Some may not wish to vote here since they are more in tune with their local politics but are not aware of the process to obtain an absentee ballot. By educating students in a concise manner, they are more likely to use the knowledge we provide to vote on a regular basis.

- Social Media

Currently ADP is utilizing Instagram, Facebook, and twitter to engage our community, let them know of events we are hosting, and provide them with information regarding upcoming elections, voter registration and new policy developments that might affect them. We are hoping to gain more support on all of our social media platforms this year so we have a larger reach. We find that it is helpful to connect with other campus organizations through social media so that they can share our information and vice versa.