



# Furman University Democratic Engagement Action Plan: 2023-2024 Academic Year

## I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by the Dins Vote Student Organization. This Democratic Engagement Plan serves to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at Furman University. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2023-2024 Academic Year, on and around our campus in Greenville, South Carolina.

The following groups have been leading this work at Furman University in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections:

- Undergraduate members of Dinsvote
- Undergraduate members of Furman's chapter of the NAACP
- The Greenville Chapter of the league of women voters

This year we have worked on building partnerships with other student organizations and groups outside of Campus. Working with groups with similar goals of promoting civic learning and democratic engagement has been helpful for our organization and we hope to continue these partnerships. The area that we believe to be most lacking is institutional support from the university for our efforts

The mission of Dins Vote is to gather Furman students together in order to provide all relevant information, facilitate meaningful discussion, and consider all opportunities that would allow their fellow peers to be informed voters in American society. This includes providing students resources on voter registration, absentee ballots, deadlines, candidate information, and through group events such as voter registration events, voter information events, CLPs with experts, posting QR codes around campus, and more. We hope to continue this momentum in 2024.

## II. Leadership

Advisor Dr. David Fleming and student leaders in Dins Vote will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus.

Student leaders in Dinsvote include a president, a vice president, a secretary, a treasurer, and a social media chair. These positions are all filled by students who are elected each year. Elections are

held between the fall and spring semesters. The intention behind this is to give the leadership team a semester where they can plan and prepare before the important fall semester.

Dins Vote has led Furman University's initiative to vote since students sued the City of Greenville in 2016 to allow students to get voting rights. Since then, Dins Vote students and Dins Vote Advisor, Dr. David Fleming, have organized student programming and events to increase student registration and voter participation. In the future, Dins Vote hopes to make these initiatives priorities of Furman University staff, especially those who are heavily involved in freshman orientation.

There is representation from different parts of campus, including student leadership and organizations that support communities that are historically underrepresented in democracy.

### III. Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrate commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement.

On-campus, we've seen:

- Voter education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
- Campus leaders promoting voting
- Voter registration tables
- Protests / rallies / walkouts
- Signage promoting Election Day

On-campus, we've experienced:

- Voting in student body elections
- Town halls
- Events encouraging voter registration
- Civic Holiday events (such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day)
- Deliberative dialogues

### IV. Landscape

We do not have access to comprehensive demographic information about our student body currently. While we do use the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) and rely on those numbers, we don't have comprehensive demographic information on our campus. This is something we want to change.

We believe that we should have access to some demographic information so that we are better able to measure change and target our efforts.

### V. Goals

We know our campus faces the following challenges *internally* when it comes to GOTV efforts and registering voters:

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan do not mention civic learning and democratic engagement
- We don't have someone whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus
  - While we have students who are committed to this work, students have limited time. Having these goals be expressly part of someone's job responsibility (such as an employee in student life) would be very helpful
- We don't use the resources readily available to develop and implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus
- We don't have sustainable or consistent funding
  - We receive funding from our student government, but that funding is limited and is not always consistent from year to year

We also know our campus faces the following challenges *externally* when it comes to GOTV efforts and registering voters:

- We don't have a working relationship with our local election office

With that said, we know our campus has the following strengths when we approach our voter engagement work:

- We have working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement
- We have ways in which we communicate voting information to our students
- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan
- We are able to engage student leaders from a diversity of perspectives into the leadership of our initiative

With this in mind, we have set the three goals that we would like to achieve over the next academic year:

- The continuation of a Dinsvote fellowship where student can receive funding over the summer
- FDOC Voter Registration Event
- Inclusion of voting and civic engagement in the curriculum for pathways

We have also set two goals that we would like to achieve over the next five years:

- Precinct on Campus
- Election Day- No Class

## VI. Strategy

Below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months and years.

These are tactics that we are already doing in the short term (within the next year):

- Voter Registration Drives (Tabling Events)
- Tabling in the Dining Halls on campus
- Tabling at large events on campus (such as public lectures)
- Providing hard-copy Voter Registration Forms and instructions across campus
- Post flyers throughout campus with information on how to register
- Using social media to promote events and registration
- Distributing Dins Vote stickers
- Participating in a National Voter Registration Day Event with other student groups
- Partnering with other campus organizations including College Republicans, College Democrats, the Riley Institute, and the NAACP student group

These are tactics that we plan to do in the short term:

- Coordinate Election Day shuttling with the Student Government
- FDOC (First Day of Class) Registration Event
- Include registration and voting information to all students via an email from President Davis
- Conduct registration drives with Greek Life, the Athletics Department, and other organizations on campus to encourage their members to participate
- Again hire a Dins Vote Fellow who can work with University contacts over the summer to prepare for fall efforts
- Create a more accessible precinct for Furman students (Daniel Chapel, PAC, Younts)

These are tactics that we want to do in the long term:

- A lecture series with collaboration between civic engagement groups
- The addition of a class on voting and civic engagement into our freshman/sophomore year pathways class

These are tactics that we hope to do in the long term:

- Getting a campus wide day off for election day

## VII. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

Our campus has access to our National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data for 2020. In 2020 our registration rate was 41%. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased.

In 2020, our voting rate was 33.5% and our voting rate among registered students was 83%.

We hope to get this number in 2024 to be closer to the national average of 66%

## VIII. Reporting & Evaluation

We plan to share this Action Plan internally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Sharing with Dinsvote leadership

We plan to share this Action Plan externally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Share with University Administration
- Post on SyncDin (our student organization webpage)

We will collect feedback on this plan by:

- Regrouping with campus coalition to debrief and reflect
- Discussing with administration

We plan to evaluate our success by:

- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year
- Seeking out feedback throughout the action planning process from people outside of our action planning team
- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly