



Georgia College & State University Democratic Engagement Action Plan: 2022-2023 academic year

This plan was created using the Votes & Ballots Action Planning Form. We highly recommend editing and expanding upon this draft before submitting for review.

Throughout this document, we mention the Strengthening American Democracy Guide as a resource for your review. We encourage you to turn to that resource for guidance and support as you complete your action plan!

I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by Janet Hoffmann, Professor of Rhetoric and Campus Coordinator for the American Democracy Project to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at Georgia College & State University. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2022-2023 academic year, on and around our campus in Milledgeville, Georgia.

The following groups will be leading this work at Georgia College & State University in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections:

- Faculty
- Civic/Political/Community Engagement Center

The mission of our initiative is:

- As an active local network partner of the national AASCU American Democracy Project since 2003 we share their mission to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to be informed and engaged, and ready to tackle current and future issues to ensure a thriving and equitable democracy.

Georgia College is the state's designated Liberal Arts University enrolling approximately 6,800 students, located about 98 miles southeast of Atlanta in a county of 45,000 and a city of 18,000.

Our campus had a student registration rate above 94% in 2020. Our voting rate for 2020 was 80.3%. While our registration rate in 2018 was also well above the national average at 85.9%, the voting rate of registered students in the 2018 midterm election was 48%, below the national average. In 2018 68% of GC students voted by mail, while in 2020 53% of GC students voted early.

Our top three goals for democratic engagement at Georgia College for 2022-23 are the following

- To increase our voting rate to reach or exceed 50% in the 2022 midterm election
- To increase the likelihood that students will take advantage of early voting in Georgia as well as the two designated Saturday early voting opportunities
- To convince our University President to sign the President's Pledge and to achieve a 100% student registration rate by 2023

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Executive Summary* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

II. Leadership

Janet Hoffmann, Professor of Rhetoric and Campus Coordinator GC ADP will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. They will be supported in this work by:

- The Dean of Students and I have been the designated point-persons for voter education on campus since 2003. I have been leading the grassroots efforts since 2003. We had a short-lived Center for Engaged Learning as a Quality Enhancement Plan for three years which took over the ADP and was delegated to students before it was dismantled for another initiative. I consistently reach out to fellow faculty in Political Science and other disciplines and invite them to be involved but no one seems to want to do the ground level work. Student interest waxes and wanes and has not been sustainable. I plan to reach out to our Leadership Certificate Program Coordinator and our Director of First Year Experience to join me and the Dean of Students as an advisory committee for our campus ADP and voter education work because their programs involve so many potentially interested students. I would very much like to convince our new president to get behind a 100% registration initiative.

This coalition is diverse and inclusive of:

- Representation from different perspectives and areas of expertise, Leaders who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus in to our work

Our group plans to meet monthly at TBA

We are also partnering with the following organizations from the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition to support our efforts on campus:

- ADP, ALL IN, Turbovote

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your Leadership Section includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

III. Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrates commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values. They state, ""We collaborate with community partners to address mutually identified needs while advancing students' academic and civic learning, in crafting informed, global citizens ready to serve the public good"

<https://www.gcsu.edu/about/vision-values-mission#:~:text=The%20pursuit%20of%20knowledge%20and,in%20and%20beyond%20the%20classroom>"

On campus, we've seen:

- Voter education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
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- Voter registration tables
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- Signage promoting Election Day
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On campus, we've experienced:

- Voting in student body elections
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- Registering to vote
- Civic Holiday events (such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day)
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The emphasis on civic learning and democratic engagement could be increased.

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Commitment Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

IV. Landscape

We do not have access to comprehensive demographic information about our student body at this time.

Our institution has also utilized the following data gathering tools:

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- National Survey of Student Engagement
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They help to inform our institution's civic learning and democratic engagement efforts by

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Landscape Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

V. Goals

Before setting our civic learning and democratic engagement goals on campus, we took the following information into consideration.

We know our campus faces following challenges internally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan do not mention civic learning and democratic engagement.
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- We don't have a coalition of people who are positioned to implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We don't have processes in place for registering large percentages of our students.
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- The voter engagement work on our campus is very siloed within one office.
- We don't have sustainable or consistent funding.
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We also know our campus faces the following challenges externally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

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- Our state laws make it challenging to support student voter registration efforts.
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With that said, we know our campus has the following strengths when we approach our voter engagement work:

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- We have ways in which we communicate voting information to our students.
- We use the resources readily available to develop and implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
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- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan.
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- We have a working relationship with our local election office.
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With this in mind, we have set the three goals that we would like to achieve over the next academic year:

- To increase our voting rate to reach or exceed 50% in the 2022 midterm election
- To increase the likelihood that students will take advantage of early voting in Georgia as well as the two designated Saturday early voting opportunities
- To convince our University President to sign the President's Pledge

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

To have our just developing strategic plan institutionalize a long term commitment to promoting civic learning and democratic engagement
to maintain a 100% student voter registration rate
To have civic learning and democratic engagement infused throughout or curricular and co-curricular programming

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Goals Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

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):

- tabling, advertising, classroom presentations, using Turbovote

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

- tie registering to vote with registering for classes

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

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These are tactics that we **are already doing** for the **long term** (beyond the next year):

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

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

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How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your Strategy Section includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

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 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020. In 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 our registration rate was 94.7%. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased.

In 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, our voting rate was 76.1% and our voting rate among registered students was 80.3%. During this year, our voting rate was higher than the national average.

In our NSLVE report, we had racial data for the following groups:

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- Black
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- White
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For the racial groups that have recent voter turnout data, we saw the following groups increase in voter turnout compared to four years ago.

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- Black
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- White
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How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your NSLVE section includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

VIII. Reporting & Evaluation

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

- Email to members of our campus coalition
- Email to campus administration
- Email to the President
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We plan to share this Action Plan externally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

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- Release in a public statement
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We will collect feedback on this plan by:

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- Regrouping with campus coalition to debrief and reflect
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We plan to evaluate our success by:

- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year
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- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly
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How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Reporting & Evaluation Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.