



# **GVSU** **VOTES!**



## Campus Democratic Engagement Plan



Submitted by  
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Office of Student Life  
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## Executive Summary

The mission of Grand Valley State University (GVSU) is to “*educate students to shape their lives, their professions and their societies.*” GVSU is committed to fulfilling this mission through excellent teaching, research and service. GVSU has embedded this commitment in to the life of our campus through the inclusion of civic engagement outcomes and objectives in the 2016-21 GVSU Strategic Plan and the GVSU Civic Action Plan.

Increased voter engagement is one form of civic and democratic engagement. Outcome 3.1 in the GVSU Civic Action Plan states, “Students at GVSU have increased levels of civic learning, democratic engagement and civic literacy.” This outcome aligns with and supports the following University Strategic Plan Objectives:

- GVSU SP Objective 1.A.1: At least 90% of undergraduate students participate in two or more other high-impact learning experiences prior to graduation, in addition to supplemental writing skills and capstone courses.
- GVSU SP Objective 4.C.3: At least 80% of faculty, staff and students believe GVSU is committed to community engagement.

To this end, the GVSU Office of Student Life and Community Service Learning Center, along with a broad coalition of campus partners, has led in the implementation of a robust voter engagement initiative, beginning in Winter 2016. As a result of this collaborative effort, in 2017 GVSU was named one of three Campus Vote Project (CVP) Voter Friendly Campuses in Michigan. Currently, GVSU hosts 2 CVP Democracy Fellows who assist in leading planning and implementation efforts of the Campus Democratic Engagement Coalition (CDEC) and CDEC Core Team.

The CDEC has determined four outcome areas which support increased “civic learning, democratic engagement and civic literacy”. Those outcome areas include: (1) voter registration, (2) voter education, (3) voter turnout and (4) civility and dialogue.

# Leadership

**The GVSU Campus Democratic Engagement Coalition (CDEC)** is composed of faculty, staff and passionate student leaders and is led by Melissa Baker- Boosamra, Associate Director of Student Life for Civic Engagement and Assessment. As a member of the GVSU Civic Action Plan Core Team, housed in the Provost's Office and led by the Director of Civic and Community Engagement, Melissa serves as the liaison between the CDEC and broader institutional civic engagement efforts.

**The CDEC organizes our work around four outcome areas; (1) Voter Education, (2) Voter Registration, (3) Voter Turnout, and (4) Civility and Dialogue.** Every team member is responsible for meeting regularly, updating a shared project list, and continuing to move our planning and shared work forward. Team members chose which outcome they would like to work on, based on their interest and what they can contribute, and created outcome-specific teams. Coalition members were both self-selected (a campus-wide invitation to participate in the CDEC went out in early winter 2018) and have also been strategically invited.

The CDEC has experienced some attrition since the early stages of our coalition meetings in W18. With that in mind, we current have two approaches in mind: 1. We recognize that coalition members who continue to participate are our most dedicated, passionate and committed advocates. These are the people who, together, have developed and will continue to implement our Campus Democratic Engagement Plan. We acknowledge and appreciate the importance of shared ownership and buy-in of this democratic work. In order to sustain the participation of core team members, we aim to thank and reward those them with public accolades, through sharing opportunities to present our work and through encouraging shared leadership. The CDEC Core Team is currently planning to pull the CDEC back together in early Fall 2018, in order to unveil and celebrate our GVSU Campus Democratic Engagement Plan. At that time, we aim to energize and mobilize the CDEC in preparation for a lively, engaged and celebratory fall election season, and beyond. The CDEC Core Team will continue to assess CDEC membership and identify any gaps or strategic opportunities to reach out and include additional CDEC members.

- **The GVSU Campus Democratic Engagement Core Team (CDECT)** meets bi-weekly during the academic year and throughout the summer months. This team serves as the backbone for the CDEC and is tasked with leading, planning and implementing the GVSU Campus Democratic Engagement Plan. The Core Team functions as the “boots on the ground” team. This team regularly communicates with one another, creates materials, volunteers to host events, recruits additional participants and volunteers, facilitates presentations, etc.
  - The CDEC Core Team is comprised of partners from across the institution, including representatives from the following units:
    - Academic Success Center (Academic Advisor)
    - Alternative Breaks student leader
    - Campus Elections Engagement Project Ambassador (1)
    - Campus Vote Project Democracy Ambassadors (2)

- College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Faculty from Department of the Classics)
  - College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Faculty from Department of Cell and Molecular Biology)
  - Office of Student Life (Associate Director for Civic Engagement and Assessment) Chairperson\*
  - Provost's Office (Director of Civic and Community Engagement)
  - Student Senate (Vice President for External Relations)
- **The Campus Democratic Engagement Coalition (CDEC)** met throughout winter 2018 and will continue to meet during the 2018-19 academic year. This coalition serves as an informal advisory board, providing ideas, feedback and support to the CDECT. Additionally, the CDEC functions as a means to reach out strategically, across the university. We ask CDEC members to serve as liaisons and ambassadors to their home unit / organization, by promoting participation in and attendance at CDEC events and programs.
    - The CDEC includes the list of Core Team members from above, as well as representatives from the following campus areas / organizations:
      - Allendale Township Clerk
      - Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies (faculty from Liberal Studies Department)
      - Campus Democrats
      - College of Education (Faculty)
      - College Republicans
      - Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies
      - Office of Multicultural Affairs
      - Ottawa Co. Bureau of Elections
      - Student leaders from Debate Club and the Honors College

# Institutional Commitment and Landscape

- Civic engagement outcomes are embedded throughout the 2016-21 GVSU Strategic Plan.
- GVSU is a signatory on the 2017 Campus Compact 30th Anniversary Action Statement of Presidents and Chancellors. Through becoming a signatory on this statement, GVSU indicated our commitment to living out the values of community, inclusion and civic engagement. The GVSU Civic Action Plan provides a framework for how our institution will live in to and enact that commitment. The Civic Action Plan was developed in partnership with GVSU campus and community partners, and includes a outcomes specific to preparing students for community engagement and increasing student civic learning and democratic participation (Outcome 3.1 and 3.2)
- CLDE is supported through a newly created position in the GVSU Office of the Provost, the Director of Civic Learning and Community Engagement. There are also several other positions which are resourced throughout the institution, which support civic and community engagement work at GVSU, including the 2 full time positions, one graduate assistant and four student employees in the Office of Student Life Community Service Learning Center; a full time position in the Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies and positions throughout the colleges which have a portion of their time dedicated to civic engagement.
- The GVSU Pew Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, in collaboration with faculty, staff and students, has developed a number of Student Learning Outcomes, based on the AAC&U LEAP Goals and VALUE Rubric for civic engagement. Those Student Learning Outcomes can be found here.
- What does assessment data show about the political climate / democratic engagement on campus? How does this data compare with other institutions?
  - Institutional-level assessment data regarding the political climate / democratic engagement on campus currently includes the (1) National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement, (2) NSSE Civic Engagement Module. Student learning outcomes around civic learning and democratic engagement are utilized in various courses and co-curricular programs throughout the institution, but are not currently compiled in a systematic way.

Notable findings from NSLVE include:

<b>GVSU / All Institutions</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2016</b>
<b>Voter Registration Rate</b>	66.3% / 72.1%	57.3% / 64.9%	65.1% / 74.6%
<b>Voting Rate</b>	44.1% / 46.9%	14.6% / 19.1%	44.9% / 50.4%

Source: Tufts University Institute for Democracy in Higher Education

Overall, NSSE Civic Engagement Module data from 2016 indicates low to moderate levels of civic engagement at GVSU and amongst peer institutions, with little difference between first year students and seniors. In other words, we have work to do and lots of room for improvement!

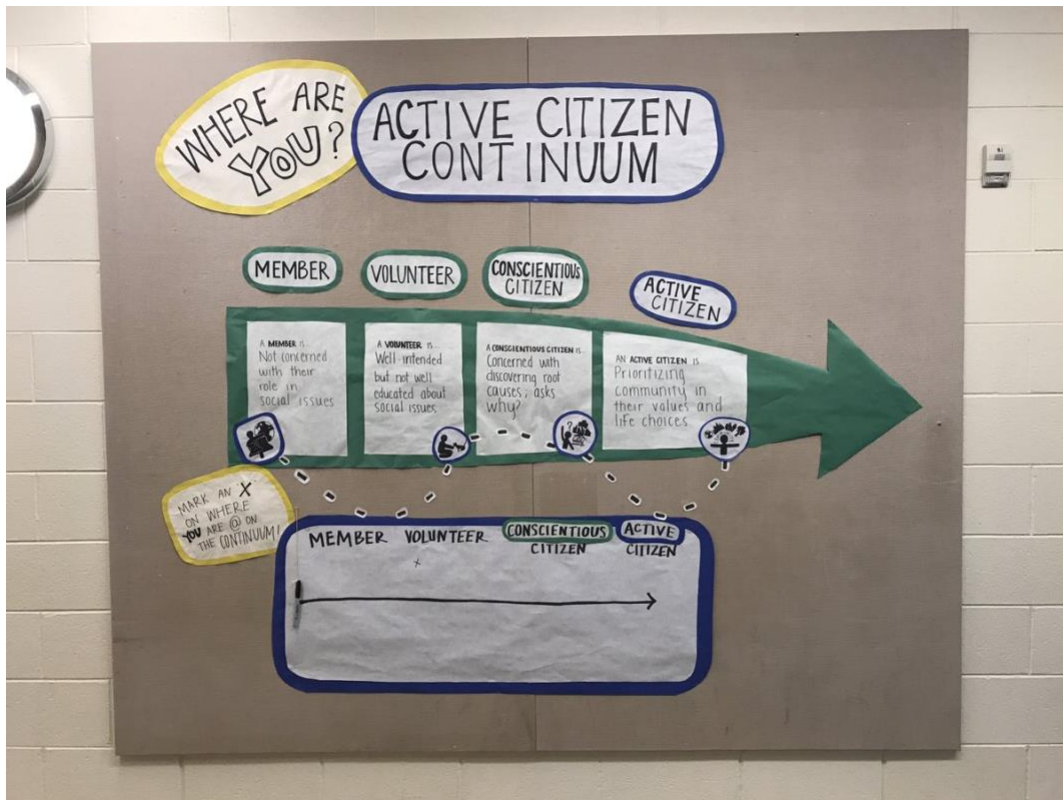
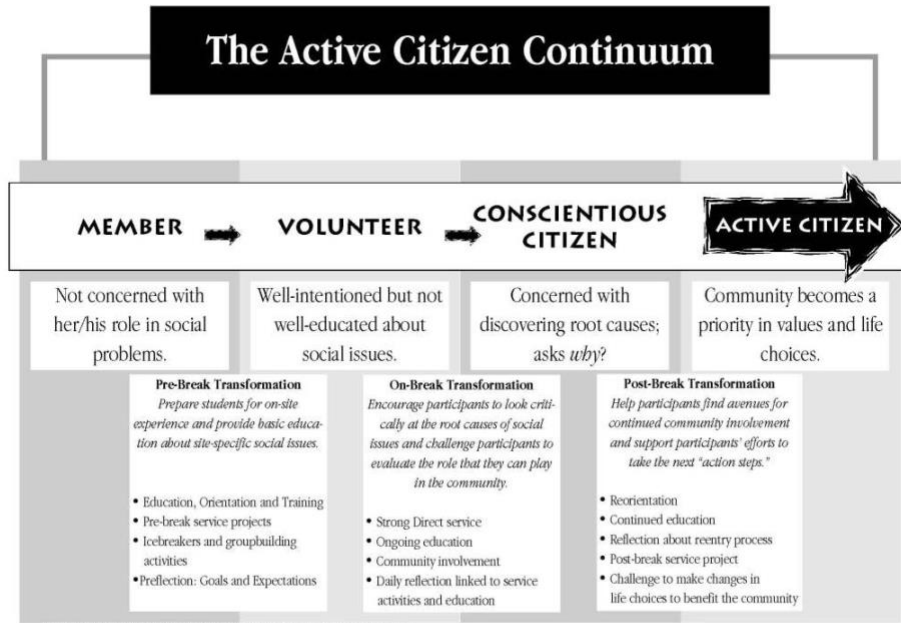
- Questions included on this survey which are pertinent to assessing the political climate and democratic engagement of students on campus include the following:
  - “During the current school year, whether course-related or not, about how often have you done the following?”
    - Scale: 1: Never, 2: Sometimes, 3: Often, 4: Very Often
    - Mean score for all respondents included in table below (**GVSU** and Large Public Institutions)

<b>2016</b>	<b>GVSU First Year (FY) students / Large Public Institutions FY students</b>	<b>GVSU Seniors / Large Public Institutions Seniors</b>
Informed yourself about local or campus issues	<b>2.4 / 2.4</b>	<b>2.4 / 2.5</b>
Informed yourself about state, national or global issues	<b>2.6 / 2.7</b>	<b>2.9 / 2.9</b>
Discussed local or campus issues with others	<b>2.3 / 2.3</b>	<b>2.3 / 2.4</b>
Discussed state, national or global issues with others	<b>2.6 / 2.5</b>	<b>2.7 / 2.7</b>
Raised awareness about local or campus issues	<b>1.6 / 1.7</b>	<b>1.8 / 1.8</b>
Raised awareness about state, national or global	<b>1.7 / 1.9</b>	<b>2.0 / 2.0</b>

issues		
Asked others to address local or campus issues	<b>1.5 / 1.6</b>	<b>1.6 / 1.7</b>
Asked others to address state, national or global issues	<b>1.6 / 1.7</b>	<b>1.8 / 1.7</b>
Organized others to work on local or campus issues	<b>1.3 / 1.5</b>	<b>1.5 / 1.5</b>
Organized others to work on state, national, or global issues	<b>1.3 / 1.4</b>	<b>1.5 / 1.5</b>

- CLDE is fostered in the curriculum through the use of civic engagement Student Learning Outcomes, referenced above. GVSU has recently developed a process for Community Based Learning course designation. Community Based Learning (CBL) is a pedagogical strategy used in coursework that requires students to engage with community partners as part of their required academic work in a specific course section. Faculty may apply to have their course sections officially designed CBL on the Banner system, allowing course sections to be identified both during registration and on student transcripts.
- CLDE is fundamentally woven throughout co-curricular civic engagement programs and initiatives in the GVSU Community Service Learning Center (CSLC). We utilize the Breakaway Active Citizen Continuum as our model for student civic development. This model outlines the lifelong learning process for student civic development, and in order for students to become an “active citizen”, they must have opportunities to deeply understand public issues; reflect upon their role and responsibility in relationship to those issues; understand the multiple ways that they can engage with those issues; and have the knowledge, skills, values and motivation to engage with public issues and make a positive difference in the life of our communities. The CSLC consistently aims to provide students with opportunities to engage with community and with public issues, across the development continuum, in order to meet every student where they are in their civic identity development. (See figures 1 and 2, below).

Figures 1 & 2, below.





## Goals

- Please see campus goals, as stated in the GVSU Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) Application (2016), VFC Statement of Interest (2018) and updates from 2018 Campus Democratic Engagement Planning process.

**Goal 1: Ensure that every GVSU student has the opportunity to register and to vote in an effort to increase overall voter participation from 44.1% to 75% or above.**

- **2016 Goal 1 update:** Recognizing that we set a very lofty goal for 2016, we now have the opportunity and responsibility to continue working to meet that goal. During 2016, we registered nearly 3,000 students to vote. On 2016 National Voter Registration Day, we registered more than 1 student per minute, in coordination with the Michigan Mobile Secretary of State Unit. In addition, more than 800 students were provided with transportation to local polling places through GVSU Voter Vans.
- **2018 Goal 1 update:** As we attempt to reach our lofty goal of 75% student voter participation, we have reviewed the 2016 NSLVE data with the CDEC and have developed a coordinated strategy for reaching more students with our efforts. See CDEC Project & Event List.

**Goal 2: Provide opportunities for education and dialogue around public issues for the campus community during the 2016 election season and beyond.**

- **2016 Goal 2 update:** Students were provided with multiple and diverse opportunities for education and dialogue around public issues throughout the 2016 election season and beyond. Through collaboratively organizing debate watch parties, Democracy 101: A Series of Critical Conversations, monthly issues fora, intergroup dialogue sessions and the Civil Discourse Symposium, our campus community has had ample opportunity to explore and engage in dialogue around public issues.
- **2018 Goal 2 update:** Democracy 101 has achieved prominence on campus, with regular attendance of 30+ students per session and high achievement of student centered civic learning outcomes. This program is an example of faculty-staff-student collaboration which provides an opportunity for campus dialogue about democratic values, principles and systems – and how we can and should participate therein. Democracy 101 addresses our rights and responsibilities as citizens in a democracy and is a way to attend to issues that create apathy and move beyond “voter registration” to the creation of a more robust civic ethos on our campus. Pre-Midterm 2018 DEM 101 sessions will focus on election education and we will return to our broader exploration of democratic values, systems, philosophy and practice after November 2018.

**Goal 3: Build a coalition of partners from across campus to grow and sustain an ethos of civic learning and democratic engagement at GVSU.**

- **2016 Goal 3 update:** The success of the GVSU Votes! effort has been in large part due to the broad and committed campus support of student voter engagement and civic learning efforts. This commitment is based on our institution's mission and values and has been cultivated through CLDE efforts, beginning in the Fall of 2016. Exemplifying the quality and effectiveness of this coalition building process, is our receipt of the 2017 Outstanding Team / Project Award for GVSU Votes! Our coalition was developed and implemented by a wide representation of students, student organizations, faculty, staff, community partners and election officials.
- **2018 Goal 3 update:** We continue to engage campus partners in democratic engagement planning and implementation through the CDEC planning process. We currently host two student CVP Democracy Fellows to assist in planning and implementation efforts. In Fall 2018, we will be reaching out both broadly and strategically, to colleges and campus units with lower voter engagement rates and to traditionally marginalized groups, with an invitation to become involved in planning, implementation and participation in voter engagement efforts.

## Strategy

Please see [CDEC Project list](#) and [CDEC Events List](#) for more information on strategies for meeting goals in the four outcome areas of (1) voter registration, (2) voter education, (3) voter turnout and (4) civility and dialogue and responses to the questions above.

## Reporting and Assessment

We will assess the impact of our work against the goals identified outlined above. GVSU will submit a 2018-19 report to Campus Vote Project and the All In Campus Challenge in early winter 2019. We will utilize internally tracked data (number of voter registrations processed, participation rates at proposed events and programs, civic learning outcomes achievement and number of students transported to the polls) to report out in early 2019. Once we have access to 2018 Midterm Election NSLVE data, we will share that with Campus Vote Project the All In Challenge and with campus and community stakeholders. Further, this reporting will be submitted to the GVSU Provost's Office for contributions to GVSU Strategic Plan and GVSU Civic Action Plan. Reporting will be available publicly.

## Photo Gallery



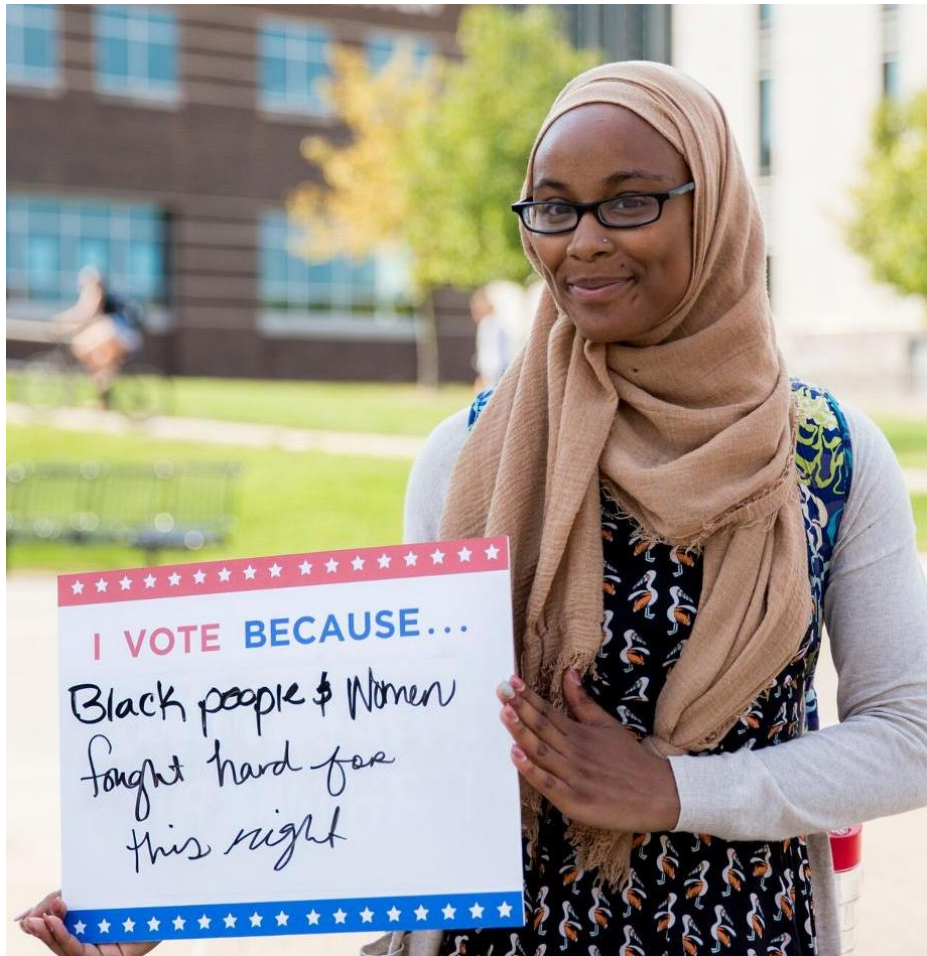
Democracy 101 - "Women in Politics" panel discussion  
Fall 2017



Democracy 101: "How to Influence Local, Regional and State Politics"  
Fall 2017



Democracy 101: "College Tuition and Food: The Maintenance of Inequality"  
Fall 2017



GVSU Votes! Fall 2017



National Voter Registration Day  
2017



GVSU CDEC Core Team  
U of M Campus Voter Summit  
May 2018