

**2019-20 DRAFT Campus Democratic Engagement Plan**  
**Grand Valley State University**

**GVSU Overview and Current CLDE work**

Grand Valley State University (GVSU) is a four-year, Master's large public university established in 1960. With 25,000 plus students, 2 main campuses (one rural and one urban) and 3 satellite campuses, GVSU is an institution which holds civic learning and democratic engagement as core to our institutional mission and values. We recognize the central role of a public university in our democracy as a bastion for the free exchange of ideas, a place where students learn to think critically, are exposed to opposing viewpoints, and hone their skills of inquiry, dialogue and democratic engagement— all skills essential for the healthy functioning of a robust democracy.

During the Fall 2016 election season, our efforts to create a campus-wide civic ethos were enhanced by intentional cross-institutional partnerships and programming that aimed to prepare our students to be informed, engaged and empathetic citizens who understand and exercise their civic rights and responsibilities. We focused on efforts on creating a campus culture wherein students recognize the importance of civil discourse, the power student organizing and of their own voices, the legacy of student leadership in social change and the importance of actively engaging in the public sphere. This initiative, GVSU Votes!, was enhanced by our 2016-17 Campus Democratic Engagement Plan, which has served as a guide for civic learning and democratic engagement efforts at GVSU.

According to the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE), in 2016 GVSU had a total overall student voting rate of 44.9%, a 0.7% increase from the 2012 Presidential election. The 2016 voting rate for all institutions was 50.4%. Please see table below for more detail.

Overall Measures	2012	2014	2016	2018
Registration Rate	66.3%	57.3%	65.1%	67.2%
Voting Rate of Registered Students	66.6%	25.5%	68.9%	53.1%
Overall Student Voting Rate	44.1%	14.6%	44.9%	35.7%

Civic Learning and Democratic work at GVSU has continued to evolve, based on our 2016 Campus Democratic Engagement Plan, the GVSU Civic Action Plan and in response to national, state, local and institutional issues. With that said, we have a lot of work still to do! In 2016, we did not achieve the level of voter engagement that we aimed for. The lack of substantial progress against our Student Voting Rate goal is a continued motivator to do this work. Moving forward, we have continued to build our partnerships with the Divisions of Inclusion and Equity and Student Services, along with our

partnerships with student organizations, to include marginalized and underrepresented students as area of emphasis, as one strategy to address the stagnation of voting rates.

The fruit of our efforts was evident from our 2018 NSLVE Campus Report. In 2018, GVSU had a total overall student voting rate of 35.7%, a 21.1 point increase from the 2014 Midterm Election. The 2018 voting rate for all institutions was 39.1%. Details can be seen in the table above.

For a brief update regarding CLDE work at GVSU, below are the goals identified by GVSU in our 2016 Campus Democratic Engagement Plan, along with a brief explanation of our progress against those goals:

**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.**

- *2018: Recognizing that we set a very lofty goal for 2016, we now have the opportunity and responsibility to continue working to meet that goal for 2020. During the 2018-2019 school year, we registered 1,350 students to vote. On 2018 National Voter Registration Day, we registered 362 students, the most of any college campus in the state. In addition, more than 200 students were provided with transportation to local polling places on Election Day through GVSU Voter Vans.*
- *2019: This work has continued into 2019. During our fall semester, we registered 589 new student voters through our National Voter Registration Day efforts and through partnerships with various student organizations, Ottawa County Elections Officials, and the Michigan Secretary of State's office. This work has been made easier by the implementation of Proposal 3, which-- among other things-- changed the register-to-vote by mail deadline from 30 days to 15 days before Election Day and extended the in person deadline to Election Day, as well as enacting automatic voter registration and no-excuse absentee voting. Our work has additionally been impacted by the recent implementation of online voter registration in Michigan.*
- *2020: As we attempt to reach our lofty goal of 75% student voter participation, we will review our NSLVE data for both 2016 and 2018 with a coalition of campus partners and develop a coordinated strategy for reaching more students with our efforts. We will additionally continue to work with GV campus partners and Ottawa County elections officials to create an on-campus polling location ahead of the 2020 election, as well as coordinating with the Michigan Secretary of State's office Collegiate Voting Task Force to participate in the SOS's new "Michigan Collegiate Voting Challenge" initiative.*

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

- *2018-19: Students have continued to be provided multiple, diverse opportunities for education and dialogue around public issues. Through collaboratively organizing Democracy 101: A Series of Critical Conversations, the Community Service Learning Center podcast "Be the Change," continued dialogue around media literacy and Elect Her, our campus community has had ample opportunity to explore and engage in dialogue around public issues.*

- 2020: Moving forward, we will continue to grow our civic learning opportunities. 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, head on, the reasons why students have a right to be dismayed and disenfranchised. We see this is a way to attend to the issues that create apathy and move beyond just “voter registration” on our campus. Additionally, the “Be the Change” podcast allows for students to discuss the work they are doing around our campus to create change in our community, and our focus on media literacy empowers students to think critically about how media and democracy interact in their day-to-day lives.

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

- *2018-19: 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 2019 NASPA Gold Excellence Award and the 2019 Silver Seal Award from the All-In Challenge. Additionally, our campus coordinated and hosted the 2018 Michigan Student Voter Summit with campuses across the state, and has previously been awarded 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.*
- *2020: Moving forward, we look forward to formally reconvening and growing our coalition in early January of 2020. We have a number of campus partners who have indicated an interest in serving as a part of this team and we will be convening to review our 2016 and 2018 NSLVE data and to begin planning for 2020. In addition, we are gratefully partnering with Campus Vote Project and Campus Elections Engagement Project to select host three student Democracy Fellows to assist in the growth of our Campus Democratic Engagement Plan and its implementation.*