



Husson University  
Democratic Engagement  
Action Plan: 2022-23  
Academic Year

## **I. Executive Summary**

This action plan was developed by Troy Morehouse, Associate Dean of Student Life, to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at Husson University. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2022-23 Academic Year, on and around our campus in Bangor, Maine.

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

- Student Clubs and Student Government
- Student Life Staff

## **II. Leadership**

Troy Morehouse, Associate Dean of Student Life will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. He will be supported in this work by:

- The Maine People's Alliance
- Husson University College Republicans
- Student Government

This coalition is diverse and inclusive of:

- Representation from different parts of campus, including student leadership, representation from different perspectives and areas of expertise, trusted leaders and organizations who support communities that are historically underrepresented in democracy.

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

- League of Women Voters
- Maine Campus Compact

## **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. The University Vision states: "Husson is a University of choice for premier professional programs where students succeed, experiential learning is championed and global engagement is emphasized." The University Mission states, "Husson University inspires and prepares students for professional careers in current and emerging fields within the context of an education informed by the sciences and humanities."

In addition, our campus has mentioned civic learning and democratic engagement in their strategic plan. Specifically within the Enhancing the Student Experience section where it states, "In line with Husson's core values of character and humility, Husson cultivates a supportive campus community that advances diversity, equity and student success." Within this, there are three themes:

- Community- Foster communities beyond the classroom, where students learn to develop their voice, expand cultural awareness, be inclusive, and establish professional presence.

- Leadership- Expand opportunities for students to enhance their leadership abilities through experiential learning and community service.
- Wellness- Broaden access to resources that address the safety, health, and wellness of the campus community.

On campus, we have seen:

- Voter education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
- Campus leaders promoting voting
- Voter registration tables

On campus, we have experienced:

- Voting in student body elections
- Political speakers
- Registering to vote
- Deliberative dialogues

#### IV. Landscape

The following tables provide a brief overview of the landscape of our campus. This information is based on data collected from 2021 when our total student enrollment was 3311.

**Enrollment Data:**

Undergraduate	Graduate	Full Time		Part Time
81.30%	18.70%	15.00%		85.00%
In-State	Out-of-State	International Students	On-Campus Residents	Commuter
70.00%	30.00%	0.00%	33.33%	66.66%

**Gender Demographics:**

Men	Women
40.00%	60.00%

**Racial Demographics:**

Asian	American Indian / Alaska Native	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	2 or More Races
1.00%	0.00%	5.00%	1.00%	0.00%	83.00%	4.00%

Our institution has also utilized National Survey of Student Engagement, which helps assess the level of engagement amongst students on our campus.

## V. Goals

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

- We do not have someone whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- The voter engagement work on our campus is siloed within one office.
- Civic learning and democratic engagement is ingrained into many academic programs, but there is not a good mechanism for capturing this.

We also know our campus faces the following challenges externally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters, specifically our large number of out of state students, so voter registration is difficult.

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

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan mention 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 for the leadership of our initiative.
- We have a working relationship with our local election office.

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

1. With one new club (Maine People's Alliance) and one reinvigorated club (College Republicans) focused on voting we would like to leverage this excitement from students to move the discussion of democratic engagement on the forefront for more students.
2. Develop a Student Leadership Society.
3. Continue working with the All In Challenge and NSLVE.

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

1. Host a debate between local political candidates.
2. Develop a mechanism to track democratic and civic engagement within the classroom.

## VI. Strategy

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

We **are already doing** these tactics in the **short term** (within the next year):

- Launch a training day/series for students to develop their leadership skills. This program will aid in students' understanding of the importance of lifelong learning and civic engagement.
- Work with the City of Bangor to host voter registration events on campus prior to the November 2022 election to minimize confusion over the registration process.
- As an institution, continue to participate in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE).
- Create a mechanism to track community service hours from students.
- Advertise community engagement opportunities to students.

We **hope to do** these tactics in the **short term**:

- Host town hall events- It is important for students to recognize that voting and democratic engagement has a real effect. To help increase this recognition Husson will annually host a town hall with a local, state, or federal legislator.
- Identify focus areas for civic learning- Civic learning and civic engagement can take many forms, and it is recognized the forms focused on must be valued by Husson students. Because of this, the implementation team will identify a small number of areas to focus energies on that will gain strong student interest, and thus civic impact.

We **are already doing** these tactics for the **long term** (beyond the next year):

- Assess current democratic and civic engagement on the Husson campus in order to develop a formalized long-term set of goals and plans.

We **want to do** these tactics in the **long term**:

- Develop voting education for out of state students. Currently, it is very difficult for out of state students to navigate how to register to vote in their home state and to vote via mail in ballot.

## 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 78.3. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased. In 2020, our voting rate was 64.5 and our voting rate among registered students was 82.4. During this year, our voting rate was higher than the national average.

## VIII. Reporting & Evaluation

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

- Email to campus administration
- Email to the President

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

- Post on the campus website
- Via social media channels

We will collect feedback on this plan by:

- Regrouping with campus coalition to debrief and reflect.
- Integrating feedback collection into individual campus efforts.

We plan to evaluate our success by:

- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year.
- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly.