

Idaho State University Democratic Engagement Plan 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document serves as Idaho State University's Democratic Engagement Plan for 2023-2024 academic year. Idaho State University (ISU) started the program in spring 2022. This action plan is an update to the initial framework for ISU with the goal to expand and implement its participation in ALL IN Democracy. ISU's goals, strategies and evaluative measures are outlined within this plan and will serve as the primary planning tool for work to be done on campus in the coming year. At this time, efforts are primarily focused on the Pocatello campus, but the intention is to develop goals and strategies that will incorporate the Idaho Falls, Meridian, and Twin Falls campuses as interest and capacity allows. Most ideas at this time include in person activities, but there has been some discussion as to what kinds of online options can be included in the plan as well.

Idaho State University is committed to democratic ideals. The mission of Idaho State University reads: "We engage students through learning and research opportunities that improve the intellectual vigor, cultural vitality, and health of our communities." [President Satterlee has stated](#), "As a society, we can do better than we are doing now regarding civil political discourse. We all have a role to play in preserving the people's right to self-governance and it is critical to the stability of our democracy." The ALL IN Democracy project allows ISU to fulfill part of its vital mission in helping students see the importance of their role in a representative democracy.

In the spring and summer of 2022 Professor Mark McBeth, Chair and Professor in the Political Science Department, and Bobby Arteaga, Assistant Director of University Housing,

took the lead in developing Idaho State University's original action plan. It was launched the fall of 2022, with initial short-term goals of developing a guiding and ad hoc campus team, implementing a few starter projects, and developing ideas for future exploration. The long-term goal is to develop ISU into a model of civic engagement among its students when it comes to voter registration, voting, and student involvement.

On November 1, 2022, The Dean of Students Office took over lead on this initiative. Associate Dean of Students, Felice B. Otero is the main facilitator of the ALL IN relationship for Idaho State University moving forward. In Spring of 2023 Felice approached a number of people on campus to gauge their interest in serving on a campus committee to work on civic efforts. The first official meeting of this group occurred on October 16, 2023. Not all interested parties were able to make the meeting, so a committee listserve has been developed to keep everyone looped into the group's progress. The individuals who are participating in this initiative are included in the grid under the next section. During this meeting, the group discussed ideas for the group to champion and plan for in the coming year, as well as the numerous challenges we have seen on our campus as it relates to civic engagement.

LEADERSHIP

The group invited to the first meeting for 2023 is listed in the grid below. We are working through the challenge of engaging as many different students, staff and faculty in the group, but also knowing that the larger the group, the less likely everyone will be able to make a single meeting. It seems like there will be a core group that attends all meetings and other subgroups who may only be able to participate through email communication. The group will continue to invite additional participants as we grow, while simultaneously looking for ways to create tiered partnership opportunities that meet the needs and capacity of any group that would like to be

involved. At some point it will also be necessary to gauge the overall interest of participants to “own” the goals of this group and the associated work.

As the facilitator of this work, Felice will continue to invite and gather diverse representation of the community to meet and establish plans. Her work will include administrative tasks like setting meetings, providing data and relevant information, coordinating minutes, and maintaining the relationship with All In. Committee members will need to engage in gathering additional participants, communicating the importance of efforts throughout their networks, plan and implement programs/events, and other sustaining tasks necessary for the initiative to strengthen and grow. As a group, we need to establish some standard operating procedures to create some sustainable processes such as: a mechanism to recruit new members, an on-boarding that allows new members to understand quickly the work of the group and how they can contribute, methods for off-boarding members in a way that recognizes their efforts, documents their historical knowledge of and work for the committee, and create an overall sustainable initiative that does not depend on any one person to keep the effort going.

All participation is currently on a volunteer basis (excluding Felice Otero, the Associate Dean of Students) and does not include any compensation. Idaho State University is currently experiencing a budget crunch and a Budget Optimization Initiative that has resulted in a hiring pause, and other financial restrictions. It is unlikely that our financial status will change in the next few years, which means there won't be any funding available for this initiative for the foreseeable future. As the initiative facilitator, Felice will continue to reach out to those offices and organizations that either did not respond to the initial invitation or who were unable to attend to engage them in our work. The people who were invited to the first meeting represent a wide variety of interests and areas of expertise that most closely fit with the goals of this work.

This initiative has the support of central administration. President Satterlee has committed his support to this project. In October 2022, he signed the President’s Pledge and in March 2023, he signed off on the authorization for Idaho State University to participate with the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE).

The grid below outlines the working roster of committee members for the ISU ALL IN Committee, including their affiliation and ability to participate with meetings held thus far. This roster is up to date as of December 15, 2023.

Student Group	Contact Role	Contact Person	Committee Involvement
Ambassadors			Looking for a Rep
ASISU Representative	Student	Natalie Mortensen	Couldn't Attend
College Democrats			Reinstating Group
College Republicans	Advisor	Ryan Sargent	Couldn't Attend
First Gen Student Association	Advisor	Reinalyn Echon	No Response
Law Club	Advisor	Edward Kammerer	No Response
Panhellenic Council	Advisor	Val Davids	No Response
Poledad	Student	Jennifer Vidales	Couldn't Attend
Political Science Club	Advisor	Colin Johnson	Couldn't Attend
Political Science Club	Student President	Cameron Dey	No Response
Student Athletic Advisory Committee (SAAC)			Looking for a Rep
University Honors Program Club (UHP Student Cl	Advisor	Jacob Andrysiak	Attended
University Departments			
Academic Affairs	Vice Provost for Faculty Success & Instructio	Karen Appleby	Couldn't Attend
Athletics	Senior Associate Athletic Director	Robyn Sharp	No Response
College of Business	Endowed Professor of Management	Alex Bolinger	Couldn't Attend
Dean of Students Office	Associate Dean of Students	Felice B. Otero	Attended
Dean of Students Office	Management Assistant	Destiny Lynch	Couldn't Attend
Honors Program	Director	Shannon Kobs Nawotniak	Attended
Housing	Assistant Director	Bobby Arteaga	Attended
Library	Student Success Librarian	Laura Gleason	Couldn't Attend-Sent Student Worker
Library	Student Employee	Brady Cooke	Attended
MARCOM	Interim Associate VP of MARCOM	Emily Fransden	Couldn't Attend
Political Science Department	Director of MPA Program	Mark McBeth	Couldn't Attend
President's Office	Chief of Staff	Jenn Forshee	No Response
External Clubs/Organizations/Supporters			
Idaho House of Representatives District #29A	Representative	Dustin Manwaring	Attended
Idaho House of Representatives District #29B	Representative	Nate Roberts	Attended
	Wife	Kirsten Roberts	Attended
Idaho State Senate District #29	Senator	James Ruchti	Attended
League of Women Voters of Idaho (Pocatello)	President	Pam Ward	Attended
League of Women Voters of Idaho (Pocatello)	Member	E.J. Zita	Attended
Pocatello City Council Member	Seat #5	Linda Leeuwrik	Attended
Bannock County Elections Office	Elections Administrator	Julie Hancock	Couldn't Attend

COMMITMENT

At an institutional level, ISU supports civil learning and democratic engagement in a few ways. Part of the updated [strategic plan](#) includes five core goals intended to support our mission, vision, and values. Two of these goals have components which are connected to civic engagement, even though they are not specifically worded that way.

- Goal 3: Cultivate External Partnerships- We contribute to the betterment of all communities through strong collaborations and partnerships. The University will continue to **foster existing beneficial partnerships and build new associations that advance Idaho State’s mission.**
- Goal 5: Energize the Bengal Community- We engage and build strong relationships with all members of the Bengal Community to achieve academic success and innovation, advance learning, and research, and **enhance lives.** The Bengal Community includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, community members, friends, and partners who engage with the University and support its success.

Additionally, all students earning a bachelor’s degree must complete [General Education Program](#) requirements which includes nine objectives. *Objective 6, Social and Behavioral Ways of Knowing* includes the following competencies which support civic engagement:

- i. Demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of a particular Social Science discipline.
- ii. **Describe self and the world by examining the dynamic interaction of individuals, groups, and societies as they shape and are shaped by history, culture, institutions, and ideas.**
- iii. Utilize Social Science approaches, such as research methods, inquiry, or problem-solving, to examine the variety of perspectives about human experiences.

iv. Evaluate how reasoning, history, or culture informs and guides individual, civic, or global decisions.

v. Identify the impact of the similarities and differences among and between individuals, cultures, or societies across space and time.

Students must complete six credits (or two classes) that are designated courses for this objective.

President Kevin Satterlee is committed to civic engagement and the role of universities in educating citizens to participate in a democracy. He signed the President's Commitment in October 2022 and has given his support to this initiative at the highest levels. While we are proud of these efforts so far, we acknowledge there are additional places where we can shore up our commitment on an institutional level. Some examples could include statements of our commitment in every course syllabus, increase classes that specifically address civic engagement efforts in their curriculum, building in language and objectives into our co-curricular opportunities, etc. These are just a few places where we hope to tackle in future years, as our efforts grow.

LANDSCAPE

ISU is committed to civic engagement. In the past, there have been some uncoordinated efforts to register students to vote but this is the first formal and coordinated effort to do so. In 2022, President Satterlee asked faculty and staff at ISU to get involved in this project and he continues to support all our efforts. We have had a number of voter registration events in fall 2022 with more planned for spring 2024. A variety of student groups, The League of Women Voters, the Young Republicans, the Young Democrats (who are rebuilding their group) and others have been hosting these registration tabling events. In the spring we hope to build a schedule for registration that brings these groups together for a greater impact and a more consistent schedule. In addition, ISU plans for educational activities that will help students understand the importance

of voting and the importance of democratic participation in a representative democracy. Our general education objectives include courses in Objective 6 which includes coursework options in American Government taught by the Department of Political Science and US History taught by the Department of History. The Department of Political Science offers other courses on US politics and US democratic government as well as courses focusing on civic engagement and political participation. In general, the College of Arts & Letters offers core liberal arts degrees to students. A liberal arts degree focuses on critical thinking and such critical thinking is essential to a functioning representative democracy. Nearly all departments in the College of Arts and Letters would have some focus on a citizen's role in society. Part of this project will be better working to coordinate academic efforts on campus to find and advertise courses and curriculum dedicated to civic engagement.

GOALS

Many of our current short-term goals include pre-work that needs to happen before we can set more specific long-term goals. There is also a need for more data and feedback before the committee will feel comfortable setting longer term goals and strategies to assess student culture, engagement interests, and capacity.

Short Term Goals (STGs)

STG #1: Reassess ISU's senior leadership's commitment to this work in spring or summer 2024. ISU will be naming a new President and their official start date within the next few weeks. These dates are not yet solidified so we cannot set a specific timeframe to get on the new President's schedule, but it will remain a priority *when the timing is appropriate*.

STG #2: Set up a spring 2024 meeting for all interested parties. Meeting to be scheduled on calendars by December 22, 2023, and to occur by *March 1, 2024*, at the latest.

STG #3: Reach out individually to committee invitees who could not attend the October 2023 meeting and new names identified to see what it will take to get them to attend the spring 2024 committee meeting. To be completed by *January 5, 2024*.

STG #4: Create a schedule to consolidate efforts that are currently overlapping between groups (specifically voter registration) in a more concerted way, serving as a small win, create efficiency, increase communication across groups with similar interests, expanding our overall capacity and reach by *March 15, 2024*.

STG #5: Gain understanding of the barriers and questions current ISU students have about voter registration, voting process, and general civic engagement opportunities. *Complete by May 1, 2024*.

STG #6: Develop a schedule of events, activities, and projects to be supported and/or hosted by the members of the committee for the 2024 calendar year. *To be completed by April 1, 2024*.

STG #7: Create a resource that outlines the State of Idaho Voter Registration Laws and how it impacts campus efforts aimed at increasing student voter registration. Include new changes created through the 2024 Legislative Session. To be completed *within a month of the Idaho State Legislature sine die date* (varies from year to year).

STG #8: Work with the Provost's Office to develop a guiding document for faculty to use as a resource to help them promote civic engagement in their classes. A new Provost will be hired after a new University President is onboarded in spring/summer of 2024. *This goal will be developed when the timing is appropriate given new leadership*.

STG #9: Read through, evaluate, and bring NSLVE data back to the committee to determine how/if the results impact the committee's work or goals. *To be completed within 2 months of receiving NSLVE data* (currently no final date is established to get the data).

STG #10: Update the strategic plan for 2025 by *December 1, 2024*, with new goals, committee direction, leadership changes, etc.

Long Term Goals (LTGs)

LTG #1: Develop a cohesive, sustained ISU committee dedicated to promoting student engagement. Before this can be accomplished, we will need new NSLVE data, ISU student input, and an accurate assessment of the capacity of the group. *Three to five year goal.*

LTG #2: Solidify funding for ALL IN ISU projects and activities through internal budget mechanisms and external grant options. *Five to ten year goal.*

LTG #3: Promote civic engagement and set up registration tables at established large scale campus events such as: New Student Orientation (NSO, Welcome Back Orange and Black, Student Organization/Involvement Fairs, etc. These events are closely scrutinized and it would be ideal to have the new ISU President behind efforts before moving forward. *Five to ten year goal.*

LTG #4: Embed civic engagement efforts into the curriculum of more courses and academic programs throughout all the university colleges. *Ten year and beyond goal.*

LTG #5: 78% Voter Registration Rate across Big Sky Votes an increase from 74.3% in 2018 based on NSLVE reports. *Update when new NSLVE data is available.*

STRATEGY

The strategy has been, and will continue to be, to incrementally develop the committee and sponsored events and activities. Our campus is undergoing several changes in significant leadership positions which we feel can not only support but also help move our efforts forward rapidly. It is going to take at least the first part of 2024 for those new roles to be onboarded and have time to meet and talk about an effort such as ALL IN. Additionally, we are currently experiencing a budget deficit which has implications for programing budgets and staffing among

other things which might impact the level of support that we can expect to see for our committee. Right now, some of this is unknown but we hope as the year progresses, we will have a better idea of what this means to our committee.

In terms of curriculum, the POLS 1101 American National Government course is an important course for students to enroll in to learn about civic education, the voting process, and the electoral system. As new leadership is established in the Provost's Office our committee hopes to work with Academic Affairs to develop a list of courses where students can learn about democratic engagement. This could include POLS 1102 Introduction to Politics and other POLS courses related to democracy, democratic theory, and democratic processes. Other courses that could easily be added include US history courses from HIST and political philosophy courses from PHIL. The committee facilitator Felice B. Otero will be responsible for getting these conversations going as timing and opportunities make themselves available. The committee will be responsible for keeping all efforts moving forward with individuals, departments and organizations taking on smaller parts of the plan to implement. The goal is for this to become a true community wide collaborative effort with full buy-in and responsibility by everyone involved. The feasibility of this vision should become clearer by the end of the coming year.

NSLVE

ISU reauthorized the collection of NSLVE data in spring of 2023 and we are awaiting our final report. Once we receive the data, we will adjust any relevant goals. Up to this point we have not had any data to review.

REPORTING

Associate Dean of Students, Felice Otero, who facilitates the ALL IN ISU initiative, will

share the report with the committee and ISU leadership through established meetings. The goal will be to share the NSLVE report on the [ISU votes webpage](#) with Marketing and Communications conducting media releases if leadership is supportive. As the committee develops additional goals based on the data, that information will also be added to the website.

EVALUATING

Each year, the ALL IN Committee and the facilitator, Associate Dean of Students, Felice Otero will evaluate all committee efforts. Data that will be examined include voter registration numbers, number of events on campus, attendance numbers of events on campus, committee engagement data, and impact of other educational efforts. ISU will compare efforts against internal data (as a collection of data is built over the years) and with other Big Sky schools. The goal of collecting data is to keep expanding campus reach, ensuring willing and excited engagement by students and committee members, and to continue ensuring that civic engagement is a priority to our community.

The specific data collected will include:

- ISU ALL IN Committee surveys to determine how engaged members are, how effective they think the work of the committee is, ideas for the future, etc.
- Voter registration numbers.
- Participation in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE).
- Overall NSLVE data.
- Student participation surveys to determine what activities best encouraged students to vote and engage in activities. Surveys will also include student satisfaction numbers as well as opportunities to receive ideas for future efforts.
- Evaluation of participation at voter registration events.

- Evaluation of success of social media campaigns.
- We hope to also begin receiving National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data.

The last year of NSSE data which ISU has, is from 2016. Discussions are on-going as to whether we will renew our participation.

Felice Otero will lead all evaluative efforts with the goal of involving someone from Institutional Research as their schedules and desire allow. All data collected will be shared with the full committee to aid their understanding of how efforts are progressing and to provide a starting point for making changes and updates to future goals and plans. The committee will determine which data should be used to compile an overall report of civic engagement efforts on campus. The compiled report will be shared with all committee members, campus leadership, and on the ISU Votes website as a starting point.