# BTVC Action Plan

2022

Indiana University Bloomington

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Indiana University Bloomington 2022 action plan for increasing student voter engagement combines elements of the [All In Campus Democracy Challenge](#) and the [Big Ten Voting Challenge (BTVC)](#), both of which contributed to increased voter registration and turnout in 2020. The plan was developed by key Indiana University Bloomington leaders to ensure expansive reach throughout the university community and student participation. Kickoff began in January 2022 and the plan will continue through December 2022 to support the primary and general election.

This year, our campus goal is to increase democratic electoral engagement and voter turnout. The BTVC Steering Committee creates and amplifies electoral engagement through campuswide education and activities while providing opportunities for student-centered discussions about public issues impacting democracy. We do this work in a rigorously nonpartisan manner aiming for an aspirational goal of 100% voter registration and voter turnout. The action plan is flexible and adaptable to allow for shifts in the pandemic and evolving campus policies that continue to affect the ways we register, educate, and turn out student voters. Our approach builds on our 2020 efforts, when we saw a 21.7% increase in voter turnout compared with 2016. This year marks a reintegration of in person events and outreach and we are revitalizing outreach approaches.

The strategic framework for our coalition-driven, equity-centered campus-engagement efforts will allow for individual tactics and messages to evolve over the plan's duration. Our primary strategic aims are to:

- Empower student leaders to engage peers on issues, candidates, and voting options.
- Activate our coalition of campus and community stakeholders to nourish a culture of civic engagement in Bloomington and beyond.
- Use positive messaging strategies to promote democratic engagement as an act of social solidarity in challenging times.

These goals are supported by and will continue to be implemented at all levels of campus: upper-level administration, faculty, staff, and both domestic and international undergraduate and graduate students.

**LEADERSHIP**

Our campuswide BTVC steering committee builds networks, offers resources, and plans activities and campaigns to increase student civic engagement. Members include leadership from the Political and Civic Engagement (PACE) program, the Office of the Provost & Executive Vice President, the Division of Student Affairs, and representation from others including, but not limited to faculty, staff, and students from the following areas: New Student Orientation, Office of First Year Experiences, IU Libraries, IU Athletics, Department of Political Science, O'Neill Civic Leaders, College Republicans, College Democrats, Black Student Union, and IU Student Government, as well as community representation from the League of Women Voters, and the County Election Office. Student volunteer and student leader involvement will increase in August at the start of the fall 2022 semester. The BTVC group seeks to continue strengthening a campus culture of democratic electoral engagement through voter advocacy, education, and action.

In the 2020 election cycle, our BTVC committee successfully made use of the core competencies and resources of individuals and organizations across campus. Examples include:

- Video message from the provost emphasizing the importance of voting and the ease of registering through TurboVote.
- Regular office hours at IU libraries where students, faculty, and staff could drop in to learn more about candidates, voting, and absentee ballots, talk through pandemic concerns, and more.
- The Office of First Year Experience promoted voter registration and shared civic engagement opportunities on its app.
- IU Athletics achieved 100% voter registration among student athletes.
- PACE students launched an equity-centered approach to voter registration for traditionally underrepresented students and worked to empower these students as leaders in voter engagement efforts.
- Student representatives tapped into their peer networks for maximum turnout at in-person events and provided crucial input on how best to reach students.

We are grateful for the ongoing support from upper-level administration and are confident of continued support for BTVC efforts. We will continue and expand collaborative efforts with students and student groups at all levels of the university, empowering student leaders to engage their peers on voter registration, education, and turnout.

**STEERING COMMITTEE**

*Lisa-Marie Napoli*, BTVC Founding Chair/Co-Chair, and Director, Political and Civic Engagement (PACE) Program

*Jennifer Piurek*, BTVC Co-Chair, and Director, Communications and Special Projects, Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President

*Mark Fraley*, BTVC Co-Chair, Associate Director, PACE

*Mara Dahlgren*, Director, Student Involvement and Leadership Center, Division of Student Affairs

*Margorie Hershey*, Professor, Department of Political Science

*Sarah Nagy*, Senior Associate Director, Office of First Year Experience Program

*Paul Helmke*, Director, Civic Leaders Center, O'Neill School of Public & Environmental Affairs

*Steph Slone*, Strategic Communications Specialist, Office of the Provost

*Ethan Gill*, Multimedia Specialist, Office of the Provost

*Ronda Stogsdill*, Executive Assistant, Office of the VP for Diversity and Inclusion

*Janae Cummings*, Director of Communications and Marketing, School of Global and International Studies

*Lisa Winters*, Director for Leadership and Life Skills, Excellence Academy, IU Athletics

*Emily Alford*, Head of Government Information and Assistant Librarian, IU Libraries

*Cassidy McCammon*, Representative, PACE Student Events and Volunteer Coordinator

*Tateana Cutter*, Black Student Union

*Joshua Pack*, Black Student Union

*Karen Wheeler*, Supervisor, Monroe County Election Board

*Brett Abbott,* IU College Republicans

*Jacob Schwartz,* IU College Democrats

*Mark Keck,* Communications Manager, IU News

*Kyra Mahoney,* Bloomington League of Women Voters

*Lana Spendl,* Speechwriter and Communications Specialist, Office of the Provost

*Jake Brillhart,* MPA candidate, O'Neill School of Public Affairs

*Kirk Johannesen,* Communications Consultant, IU Studios

*Matthew Bagetta,* Associate Professor, O'Neill School of Public Affairs

*Steven Webster,* Associate Professor, Department of Political Science

Because student involvement on the Steering Committee will evolve, we will work with the student organization to find a replacement and ensure successive representation.

**COMMITMENT**

IU administration maintains a steadfast commitment to nonpartisan civic engagement and supports students to engage in volunteerism and advocacy. The IU president has joined fellow Big Ten Conference presidents and chancellors to pledge material support for the Big Ten Voting Challenge and has signed the "commitment to full student voter participation" as initiated by the All in Campus Democracy Challenge.

The Office of the Provost is directly engaged with the work of the BTVC. Several provost staff members sit on the larger BTVC committee, and one is a co-chair on the steering committee. This support has helped enhance our media and communications infrastructure and spread opportunities for democratic engagement across wider channels.

IU administration supports BTVC efforts to overcome challenges to reaching our campus civic engagement goals. A recent example of this support is the addition of student affairs to the steering committee (Student Involvement & Leadership Center), which will generate a greater student volunteer base and enhance our outreach capacity.

IU administration supports our programmatic activities and related student safety and student wellness initiatives. Several offices came together to ensure voters' rights were protected during the 2020 general election, with the necessary personnel standing by to any respond to threats of violence or intimidation on Election Day. In addition to the Office of the Provost, co-collaborators on these efforts were the Offices of Diversity Education and Cross-Cultural Engagement, the Indiana University Police Department, and IU Communications.

PACE also works quickly to create programming in response to world events to support students' mental wellness and offer opportunities for democratic practices that strengthen civic engagement. In collaboration with the Division of Student Affairs, the Office of First Year Experiences, and the Arts and Humanities Council, PACE designed and created "Cocoa and Convo," an opportunity for students to congregate in person—outdoors and socially distanced—and process the then-uncertain outcome of the 2020 presidential election. Over

steaming mugs of hot chocolate, student moderators served as facilitators for informal discussions. The event served a valuable role in bringing people together during a particularly isolated portion of the pandemic to share their thoughts about the election and world events.

**LANDSCAPE**

Civic engagement work at Indiana University is both helped and hindered by the surrounding political environment. We acknowledge the limitations and build on opportunities that we envision at this significant time. IU has a steadfast commitment to democratic civic engagement, and strong support from community stakeholders has been key to our successes.

While local election officials work to safeguard voting rights and ensure a secure ballot, the state of Indiana maintains a law requiring a federal- or state-issued photo ID with an expiration date. Indiana voters need an excuse to vote absentee—a requirement that remained in place during the 2020 general election, when many states moved to remove such laws due to the threat of COVID-19.

In addition to structural obstacles, Indiana faces its own geographic hurdles. Because Indiana is not regarded as a swing state, students experience few high-profile competitive races and the accompanying volume of political ads, yard signs, and candidate visits seen in other states. As voter outreach coordinators, we must create election visibility where little exists.

Fortunately, we can leverage our campus and community relationships to overcome some of these hurdles. In the 2020 election, we were deeply concerned that Indiana's prohibition on no-excuse absentee ballots would prevent students living in quarantine and isolation facilities from voting. We mounted a communications effort to encourage early voting and worked with the local election office and IU administration officials to allow traveling board visits to quarantined units, ensuring that all students would have the ability to vote in the election.

Despite these limitations, IU performed well in 2020. According to NSLVE results, IU's campus showed a 21.7% increase in voter turnout over the 2016 election. This follows a 2018 election in which we showed similarly large gains from 2014. The commitment from the university and an influx of student interest is fueling a surge in civic engagement that we hope to see manifest in similar increases in 2022.


**GOALS**

As IU Bloomington's BTVC group gears up for an active, engaging semester to educate all students on the importance of voting and accessing reliable, well-rounded candidate information, we will also support students in overcoming barriers to voting and share guidelines on how to successfully cast a ballot. We will reach out across campus and increase electoral participation, especially to under-represented populations. We aim to create a more informed, engaged, and active pool of student-citizens who engage in democratic deliberation, understand the nuances of the voting process more fully, and who are more skillful at educating themselves about candidates and issues.

Our strategic plans consider both short-term goals—preparation for the November 2020 election—and long-term goals on how to further embed sustained civic engagement into the IU Bloomington campus culture moving forward.

**NSLVE**

According to the most recent NSVLE report, 66.9% of students at Indiana University Bloomington voted in the 2020 election. This amounts to a 21.7% increase in voting from the 2016 general election. These increases occur across ethnicity, age, and department.

While increases were consistent across various demographics, we see some gaps in overall voter turnout among some groups. The voter turnout among Asian students (53%), for example, is substantially lower than the university average; we will thus increase outreach to the Asian Cultural Center and other affinity groups in 2022.

NSLVE data also indicates that students are becoming far more comfortable with in person early voting, which takes place over the four weeks leading up to Election Day. In Bloomington, three times as many people voted early and in person, compared with the previous election, and fewer are voting on Election Day. This will inform our decisions on preparation for early voting and for Election Day.

**STRATEGY**

IU Bloomington's BTVC highlights the importance of casting a vote, the meaning behind it, and the impact of voting on political representation and public policymaking. Each vote is a voice heard, with a massive collective impact. Voting is the first step in moving toward healthy and constructive civic engagement.

This action plan highlights opportunities for voting, methods for helping students overcome obstacles to voting, and the benefits participation in the democratic process of elections. Research shows that a person who turns out for an election during young adulthood will continue to vote into their 60s (Plutzer, Eric. "Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood." *American Political Science Review* 96 (2002): 42).

Through strategic marketing and communications, IU Bloomington's BTVC can better convey the importance of a student-citizen, the importance of participating in the democratic process, and how this engagement can create cultural changes to move toward healing democracy. Accessible polling sites, local community involvement, and having a voice regarding federal and international issues all support the model of engaged democratic citizenship. We aim to: better organize and promote inclusion of different cultures in the democratic practice; broadly publicize the significance of having our voices heard by participation in democratic deliberation and voting; and lay the groundwork for a lifetime of democratic electoral participation.

We do this in ever-changing ways based on societal needs to create a healthy democracy through voter registration, non-partisan voter education, conversations on democratic issues, and voter

turnout efforts. We will more widely share details o[...]
part through classes that will use the report to facili[...]
Political Discussions" guide authored by Nancy Th[...]
Democracy and Higher Education and Tufts Unive[...]
connections and creative ideas of student BTVC c[...]
get feedback from peers and student groups.

Support of these key student liaisons will help buil[...]
integration of structures to support and maintain th[...]
steering committee members will ensure a seamles[...]

**VOTER REGISTRATION**

We will:

- Design strategies and activities to integrate, execute, and institutionalize efforts with an aspirational goal of 100% student voter participation.
- Organize and offer voter registration sessions (online and in person), in collaboration with Monroe County Election Supervisor and those trained in voter registration.
- Work with Media School classes to find new approaches for marketing and implementation of BTVC messaging.
- Create lawn signs and digital signage to share QR codes for voter registration and information.
- Enhance social media presence to meet students where they are.
- Table throughout the semester in strategic locations and events with a high volume of student traffic. Examples:
    - o  On campus: Wells Library Atrium, Indiana Memorial Union, First Thursdays, College Expo, Student Involvement Fair
    - o  In community: Pridefest, Farmers' Market, Handmade Market
- Promote voter registration webpages and support development of elections.iu.edu content.
- Provide educational materials online so students understand the value of voter registration and associated deadlines, guidelines, and process.
- Promote BTVC through IU Guides and New Student Orientation (videos and programming).
- Use Canvas course management system reminders and web links for voter registration.
- Send provost message to faculty asking them to share deadlines for voter registration, importance of their vote.
- Send provost and president messages to students emphasizing the importance of voting and democratic practices acknowledging of the challenges to democracy that we can overcome together.

- In collaboration with Student Affairs, use direct mail to engage students living off campus and parents to register and turn out to vote.

**NON-PARTISAN VOTER EDUCATION**
- Assess student needs, especially in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs, to gauge how to best promote the value of democratic engagement. Meeting students "where they are" is a crucial piece for being effective, especially when considering pandemic repercussions.
- Promote PACE's "Talk Democracy" campaign through a series of student-focused, online Zoom conversations and in- person opportunities that create space for students to listen to different perspectives, ask questions, and explore their own thinking about democratic engagement.



  - The collaborative "Talk Democracy" series brings together on- and off-campus groups,individuals, and government and community organizations, in collaboration to offer other collaborative opportunities for non-partisan voter education, conversations, and special events.
- Update BTVC website with current non-partisan candidate information, the voter registration process, the do's and don'ts of the electoral process, transportation options for get-out-the-vote efforts, and more.
- Continue updating social media content, partnering with IU Studios, IU Athletics, and Office of the Provost.
  - Work with IU Athletics to amplify messaging and workshops for student-athletes on the importance of civic engagement and how to fully develop leadership in this area.

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**
- Enhance electoral participation by using direct mail and alternative student email addresses.
- Continue to collaborate with and highlight support from Monroe County Election Board members and Election Board Supervisor.

- Disseminate nonpartisan materials on candidate platforms and local issues (online and at events).
- Demystify local elections through videos, graphics, and easy to digest materials on "Breaking Down the Ballot." Materials will tie issues of national concern to their role in local elections—for example, concerns about policing as related to local sheriff's election.
- Share "Keys to the Candidates" information from the League of Women Voters.
- Promote streaming Congressional debates and host related discussions.
- Centralize election and post-election event listings for campuswide student access; collaborate with different departments and work on institutionalizing the significance of this work.
- Introduce students to local candidates through zoom forums, classroom activities, and web-based content to ensure students are informed on their choices from the White House to the Court House.
- Take and apply feedback from students, staff, and faculty to evaluate programming; integrate feedback at every stage of the work; reflect on past years as a starting point; use iterative feedback to shape the work, and in the end, debrief to prepare for the next upcoming election.

**VOTER TURNOUT**

- Promote awareness of mail-in voting as a viable option.

- Remind students of revised polling locations, as appropriate; use lawn signs on election day to guide students toward polling sites; include social media tags and website information for more information.
- Encourage IU President to address the significance of democratic citizenship and the importance of voting in her State of the Campus Address in the Fall and in a Written by Whitten column.
- Promote BTVC events on the Office of First Year Experience app.
- Educate students on BTVC and importance of voting during New Student Orientation.
- Produce BTVC promotional giveaway materials (buttons, stickers, flyers).
- Create opportunities/materials to educate students on polling site locations and tips for absentee or mail-in voting procedures.
- Create digital signage for each residence hall with information about its precinct location.
- Provide tips and support for getting to the polls:
    o Use TurboVote to confirm voter information
    o Highlight bus routes
    o Disseminate polling precinct addresses
    o List student ride sharing options
    o Promote shuttle availability, as appropriate
    o Highlight discounted/free rides available for election day (typically offered through Uber, Lyft, and Lime, etc.)
- Provide information about the significance of voting with helpful tips in Parent Newsletter and Student Affairs Newsletter
- Coordinate volunteers for Election Day oversight, either online to answer questions or in-person at the Indiana Memorial Union University Club polling site.
    o Provide snacks, entertainment, and a welcoming environment for students waiting in long lines.
- Collaborate with campuswide units to continue to build the infrastructure needed on campus for real culture change; work closely with these units (including IU Police) to ensure a safe and fair election process.
- Organize "IU Votes Together" event, either online or in-person, where voter education materials are available; create a post-election event where students can engage support as needed.
- Share resources and plans with other campus units to promote civic engagement, such as Residential Programs and Services, IU Corps, Office of Student Affairs, Center on Representative Government, and others to further institutionalize the work.

## REPORTING

We will track and report information on our activities and events, using such details as the number of volunteers involved, number of hours spent in planning and implementation, social engagement, and event turnout. We will keep a journal to log information including comments,

reflections, emails, and other feedback about the event and students' experiences. We will continue to expand the BTVC website media section, which highlights news media stories and features about IU Bloomington's BTVC and student civic engagement.

We will make our plans publicly available. Action plans and NSLVE data are shared with the Big Ten Voting Challenge, Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, and All-In Campus Democracy Challenge. We will make information available through the websites of coalition partners as well as our own and will send press releases to convey NSLVE data to the public.

**EVALUATION**

We will assess our work in accordance with SMARTIE guidelines—those that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable/Ambitious, Relevant/Realistic, Time-Bound, and which focus on Inclusion and Equity. In addition to the tracking and reporting mentioned above, we will reflect upon and evaluate our work by reviewing data, successes, and challenges of programs and volunteer efforts at monthly Steering Committee meetings. We will maintain an equity lens on evaluative efforts to ensure that we are paying attention to and supporting efforts to engage underrepresented student populations.

As we develop and evaluate Action Plan ideas included in this report, these guidelines will be at the forefront of our thinking and planning. We aim to be successful in our work and open to new ideas as appropriate. We value the importance of having concrete, measurable ways to implement activities, to have our plan be as representative and inclusive as possible, and to provide support for the activities to be feasible for others to replicate.