

**ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY PROJECT –  
DRAFT CIVIC ACTION PLAN (2020 ELECTION)**  
Indiana University South Bend

**ELECTION 2020 CIVIC ACTION PLAN ONE-PAGE SUMMARY:**

In preparation for our 2020 Election Engagement Series, we will begin talking with students about the American Democracy Project and encouraging students to vote during Welcome Week and at Move-In Day. Our event series will officially kick off with a Constitution Day celebration on September 17th and will continue with a steady stream of events between September 17, 2020, and November 13, 2020. **The series includes six key components:** (1) a sustained campus-wide voter registration campaign, (2) dialogue and deliberation about democracy in the United States, (3) live (in-person or online) local candidate debates, (4) live or virtual debate watch parties for gubernatorial and presidential debates (5) an online voter guide, and (6) a student-focused, non-partisan get-out-the-vote campaign. Key events in this series will include **Constitution Day, National Voter Registration Day, and Early Voting Day**. The Constitution Day launch of our voter registration, education, and engagement series will not only mark the start of our voter registration campaign, but also provide an opportunity for students to think and talk about voting and elections. We will participate in a **Constitution Week** Deliberative Dialogue using the **National Issue Forums** forthcoming (September 2020) issue guide on voting. We will use CGA and Zoom during these online deliberative dialogues. We will also host a **Democracy Plaza** (complete with masks and hand sanitizer for workers) where we will offer free copies of the Constitution, safe constitution-themed activities, and voter registration opportunities, in addition to providing constitution-themed information and activities for instructors to use in their online courses. To register voters, we will host **registration drives** in hallways and classrooms, while following social distancing and sanitation guidelines, posting voter registration appeals to the daily campus e-newsletter, providing voter registration materials for instructors to post on Canvas, and coordinating with central administration to include voter registration prompts on the Canvas landing page. In an effort to **Ask Every Student**, we will target **first-year seminars** and required **general education courses**. If housing opens for incoming students, we will work with the RAs to register students to vote on **move-in day** and using **dorm storms** throughout the registration season right where they live. To educate voters, we will host live candidate debates and/or debate watch parties for county, state, and national races (as social distancing measures allow). In addition to the **live, televised studio, and Zoom candidate debates**, we will offer students and other community members an **online voter guide**. We will partner with local League of Women Voters chapters to use the Vote411 platform. This online guide collects verbatim candidate responses to a variety of policy questions – including issues of special interest to students (e.g. legislators’ thoughts on how to make college more affordable). We will solicit feedback from members of the First Year Experience classes for questions to include in the guide. In addition, our staff and unstaffed voter registration and information tables provide information about the races and questions on local ballots. Finally, we will host voter information tables and electronic announcements and will work with housing to host a **Parade to the Polls** event on Early Voting Day; following social distancing/CDC guidelines while making our presence known with signs, t-shirts, buttons, and social media hashtags. We will also encourage students post and share photographs of themselves at the polls using the hashtag **#IUSBVotes**. Measurable outcomes of these efforts will include the increased voter registration and turnout rates (compared to 2016 as tracked by the NSLVE).

## **MARKETING AND OUTREACH**

The American Democracy Project utilizes a website and Facebook page to keep people on campus and in the community up to date on all events. We also use posters, press releases, and posts to the all-campus electronic bulletin board (the Daily Titan) to market our events. On campus, student volunteers use sidewalk chalk to advertise upcoming events. This approach has been very successful, generating strong attendance and solid media coverage of ADP events, especially our Constitution Day activities and candidate forums which generate dozens of media stories each semester. We also reach out to people by email, using a list we have compiled through sign-up sheets at past events. The success of this approach to marketing and outreach is illustrated by the robust attendance at previous candidate debates (e.g., 450 people at a congressional candidate debate on our South Bend campus, 380 people at a congressional candidate debate in Elkhart, and 320 people at a Meet the Candidates forum we hosted at the local library). We look forward to including the ICC and CCEP logos on all printed posters, brochures, and other marketing materials and encourage the ICC to “like” us on Facebook to see post-event photos of all of our grant-funded events. We will also coordinate with our new Director of Communications and campus deans in order to enlist their help in advertising our events on the main IU South Bend social media sites and in emails to faculty in every unit who can be encouraged to post pre-designed announcements to their course management systems. Most importantly, using our Election Engagement Grant funds, we will be able to include innovative, high visibility approaches to marketing through student t-shirts and buttons designed to raise student awareness as students, themselves become human bulletin board on campus and online using the hashtags #IUSBVotes and hashtags associated with our organizational partners/funders.

## **ACTION PLAN BY ACTIVITY TYPE: REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, MOBILIZATION**

### **Engagement and Collaboration**

Indiana University South Bend (IUSB) has a busy semester planned in preparation for the upcoming election on November 3rd. The goal of our 2020 Election Engagement Series is to provide members of the campus community and citizens of St. Joseph and Elkhart counties with the information they need to become informed and engaged voters. By partnering with local news outlets and utilizing social media our freely available events and publications have the potential to impact approximately 5,100 students, plus students, faculty and staff at IUSB (iusb.edu), plus an estimated 206,766 adult residents in St. Joseph County (stats.indiana.edu).

**Voter Registration:** A prerequisite for participation is registration. We will collaborate with organizations across campus to register as many students as possible on at Constitution Day (9/17/20), on National Voter Registration Day (9/22/20) and throughout the registration season. We will host voter registration in classrooms and at hallway tables on campus and provide language for faculty to use when posting the invitation (and link) to register to Canvas announcements. We will also work with civic leaders on other IU campuses to push IU’s central administrators to make regular registration appeals on the main Canvas landing page and will send reminders about voter registration using The Daily Titan – our daily all-campus electronic newsletter. Our volunteers will wear masks and observe CDC social distancing practices when

registering voters on campus, using the same procedures that poll workers used this November such as wearing masks and gloves and cleaning the registration iPads between each use. We will also set up unstaffed registration information tables at high visibility locations across campus, complete with QR codes and URLs linking students to Rock the Vote and the state's online registration portal. If student housing opens for incoming students, we will work with the RAs to register residents at a series of events in the community building, in addition to using door hangers and adding the registration link to communications from the housing director and RAs.

Key partners in our voter registration efforts will include Titan Productions, the Student Government Association, Housing & Residence Life, the University Bookstore, the Schurz Library, The Gateway, and faculty across campus – who will receive support and training to conduct (or invite trained students to deliver) classroom presentations and registration drives. As part of our effort to Ask Every Student to register to vote, we will partner closely with instructors in our First Year Seminar classes to ensure that voter registration is conducted in both face-to-face and online courses. We will also target required general education courses including English composition and speech communication (including both face-to-face and online section). In addition, various student organizations including the Political Science Club, Latino Student Union, Economic Forum, Black Student Union, Feminist Student Union, Islamic Student Union, and Civil Rights Student Association will help us to reach out to a broad and diverse group of students across campus, as they use posters, chalking, buttons, t-shirts, and their own social networks to remind the IU South Bend community of the impending registration deadline and the importance of registering and casting a ballot.

**Citizen Education and Deliberation:** The Institute for Democracy & Higher Education has argued that voter turnout on college campuses reflects a culture of political discussion and deliberation that takes place across campus and throughout the year. Rather than focusing narrowly on activities designed to register and mobilize voters, IDHE researchers urge campuses to create a campus climate in which deliberation and pervasive political discussions are encouraged. We will undertake at least two efforts in this regard as part of our 2020 event series. First, we will partner with the National Issues Forum to host an online deliberative dialogue about voting. Second, we will partner with student housing to host a screening of the thought-provoking film 13<sup>th</sup>. This film will be especially important this year given the national focus on the Black Lives Matter movement and on issues of racial discrimination and injustice, and inequity. The film's title refers to the 13th amendment abolishing slavery. It explores the history of race and the criminal justice system in the United States and helps students to understand the root causes of many of the problems we are witnessing today. The film will be preceded by some brief introductory comments and followed by discussion. If the community building is not open to group events in student housing, we will adjust our plans accordingly by hosting a Netflix watch party and/or Screen Share Zoom Meeting. We are making plans to adapt all of our fall 2020 programming for online delivery as needed to address public health and safety concerns related to COVID-19. (We will, of course, encourage students to become active in our political system – including, but not limited to, voting – at all of our fall 2020 American Democracy Project events). A donor has also made it possible for us to bring in a speaker who will deliver two lectures and a workshop highlighting the importance of electoral engagement. He has agreed to speak in person or via Zoom. Now we need to supplement his visit with a highly visible

student-led Election Engagement Campaign in order to encourage participation in his talks and campus-wide conversations about voting and the state of our democracy.

**Non-Partisan Campus Debates/Forums:** The IUSB American Democracy Project (ADP) will host a series of candidate forums on campus. To reduce "roll off" and increase voter confidence and participation in "down ballot" races, we will include "meet the candidate" featuring all candidates on St. Joseph and Elkhart county ballots (coroner, surveyor, superior court judge, etc.). We will also hold debates featuring candidates running in contested races for state house, state senate, county council and county commissioner. Our planned debates and forums will take place live on campus or via Zoom, with candidate interviews serving as a back-up option if technology issues interfere with our ability to host formal Zoom debates. One or more debates for our local congressional candidates are also possible, though (based on incumbent preferences) these would likely need to be closed studio debates. Each debate will require candidates to respond to a series of policy-based questions. We will solicit questions from student and community organization, and the public at large. Live events may be followed by an informal reception, allowing voters to follow-up with candidates one-on-one. (But here we will defer to campus and county policies regarding food service and social gatherings). We are also planning five debate watch parties in the community building of our student housing complex. Members of the campus community (whether residential or commuter students) will be invited to enjoy pizza and soda pop while watching the three U.S. presidential debates, one vice presidential debate, and two gubernatorial debates on a large screen television. These watch parties are very informal by design. They are a way to encourage students to engage in civil discourse regarding one of the most closely watched presidential races in the world. If in-person debate watch parties are not possible this fall, we are prepared to aggressively advertise the national American Democracy Project virtual debate watch party, including a nationwide "Tweet Up" and social media hashtags designed to allow students to chat with other students via Twitter and other social media platforms. We will encourage students to use both the national hashtags and @IUSBVotes.

**Non-Partisan Candidate Guides and Voter Information Tables:** In order to ensure that citizens have the information needed to cast their votes on (or before) Election Day, the IUSB American Democracy Project will provide voter information at all of our events this Fall. This information includes a list of websites citizens can visit on their own to learn more about the candidates and the key issues of this election. In addition, the ADP will staff voter information tables on three additional occasions specifically to provide voter information such as how to find your polling place, who is on the ballot, what information you need to bring with you on Election Day. We are also working on an online Vote 411 voter guide featuring candidates' answers to a series of policy questions. The ADP is co-sponsoring this initiative with the League of Women Voters of the South Bend Area, the League of Women Voters of Elkhart County, and the local newspapers *The South Bend Tribune* and *The Elkhart Truth*. The ADP and League stepped in when local newspaper staff was cut, allowing the *Tribune* and *Truth* to publish information about key races without having to conduct their own interviews, thereby benefitting the entire community. The Election Engagement Fellow will take the lead on this voter guide, working under the supervision of ADP Director (and Election Engagement Faculty Advisor) Dr. Elizabeth Bennion. This year we will also increase our efforts to push this information out via

all-campus emails, course announcements, and social media to make sure that students taking online courses get all of the information they need to cast informed votes.

**Non-Partisan Get-Out-the-Vote Campaigns:** After registering and educating students, we are determined to get them out to the polls! These efforts may look different this year due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Our plan is to partner with university housing to host a Party to the Polls event. We will host a party in the Community Building of our student housing complex on the Saturday before Election Day. We will make **#IUSBVOTES buttons**, signs, and **t-shirts** at the party before proceeding to the County-City Building to cast our ballots (as part of our states absentee-in-person/” early voting” program). We will coordinate this with the Vote Early Day efforts (on October 24, 2020) for maximum publicity and impact. Students will be able to vote using their housing address after showing an Indiana driver’s license or their student ID. Other (non-residential) students from across St. Joseph County will be invited to join us, too. We will snap pictures at the polls and encourage all participants to share the photos using the hashtag **#IUSBVotes** (plus other associated hashtags, including those related to the ICC CEEP grant program). Our volunteers will also wear these t-shirts and buttons at other events, and take pictures of themselves wearing them, in advance as a way to generate enthusiasm and interest in the GOTV campaign.

**Student Involvement:** American Democracy Project interns and volunteers from the IUSB Political Science Club will be the volunteer core for all events in our Election Engagement Series, with the Election Engagement Fellow serving as the lead volunteer coordinator. We rely on students for ideas as to the format and style of these events. We also rely on the dedicated members of the club (and the ADP interns) to staff our events. For our more informal events, such as the watch parties, the students help decorate the venue and actively participate in discussions with their classmates about the election. For the candidate forums and debates, they play a critical role as question runners, while also serving as greeters, timekeepers, ushers, and reception hosts. However, student involvement begins long before each event takes place, with ADP interns working to create event programs, event posters, and other materials critical to the success of each event. Students are at the heart of everything we do! Students also take photos, create photo collages, create video clips, and produce graphics that we can use for our online registration, education, and mobilization outreach.

Student involvement also reaches far beyond the ADP interns and members of the Political Science Club. We partner with a wide variety of student organizations and units across campus. Students from multiple clubs and organizations will work with us to register and educate voters (see Voter Registration above). The Election Engagement Fellow) will determine the requirements of co-sponsorship and will coordinate student involvement using Sign-Up Genius to solicit, schedule, and track student involvement across campus. The program will also be used to send reminders to all student volunteers, as well as a follow-up participant survey at the end of the event series.

Finally, the American Democracy Project encourages students to become involved in local politics in a manner that matches their personal beliefs and values. We not only engage students in a wide variety of non-partisan activities on campus but also encourage them to get engaged in real-world political campaigns. To facilitate this, we will work with local political parties and

campaigns from all affiliations to help them recruit interns into their organizations. The Department of Political Science has arranged for the student to receive academic credit for this work.

### **Campus and Community Benefit**

One goal of higher education is to educate citizens for democracy. Further, this goal is the primary purpose – and benefit – of our Election Engagement Series. The immediate benefits of the program to campus will be higher levels of enthusiasm, interest, registration, education, and mobilization surrounding the 2020 presidential election. In terms of measurable program objectives, we seek an increased registration and turnout rate for students on our campus. We participated in last three rounds of the NSLVE study and will be able to compare our 2020 results to past results, including 2016, using the NSLVE data.

Having informed and engaged citizens is always a benefit to the community. IUSB's American Democracy Project strives to help create informed voters and engaged citizens. Experience and skills gained by the student volunteers will prepare them to be informed and engaged citizens and civic leaders. (Indeed, many local political candidates, campaign managers, party chairs, and civic leaders come from the ranks of the Political Science Club and other American Democracy Project volunteers). Our graduates also serve in key roles in local government including, for example, as the Neighborhood Planner, Communications Director, and Community Development Specialist for the City of Elkhart. Candidates, political parties, media organizations, and local civic groups frequently ask us to host forums and debates; they rely upon us to perform this valuable service. The organization has become a trusted community partner, with the community-at-large relying on the American Democracy Project to provide the information required to stay up to date on important political issues, especially during election seasons. We provide valuable infrastructure and resources (including event space and technology) that local civic groups (such as the League of Women Voters) could not afford on their own. We partner with local media to provide detailed candidate information they would struggle to provide. Our candidate debates, online voter guide, and civic leadership academies are well-known and well-attended by voters across the community. In this way, we provide a valuable service to the community and act as a steward of place. We will continue to serve both the campus and the community in 2020, and are prepared with **contingency plans** if any of our in-person events need to be transitioned online. We have experience conducting closed studio debates, Zoom studio debates, and Zoom candidate interviews, and have been attending workshops as we prepare to move some of our deliberative democracy sessions online. We are aware of the research on what works, and what doesn't work, to mobilize voters online. Our proposed Election Engagement Advisor has conducted original research and written commissioned papers on this topic. We have the knowledge and skills required to expand voter education and engagement efforts on our campus and in the community, but ICC's help, through the Election Engagement Grant, is critical to our future success in getting out the student vote!