

Indiana University Southeast Democratic Engagement *All In Challenge* Action Plan 2024

Developed by Margot Morgan

I. Executive Summary

Indiana University Southeast is a regional campus of Indiana University located across the river from Louisville, Kentucky. The IU Southeast service area is composed of 16 largely rural counties in southeast Indiana and north-central Kentucky but also includes the Louisville metropolitan area. Indiana University Southeast has 4,678 students.

We are the only public comprehensive university in our region, and more than a third of our students are first-generation degree seekers. Our student body is richly diverse as it includes not only traditional students, but a large number of non-traditional students as well: many of our students are parents, military veterans, full-time employees, and public servants.

We at Indiana University Southeast are working hard to provide our students with the best education possible so that they can not only fulfill their personal goals, but can also contribute as active citizens. All of our students are citizens of the global public sphere; now more than ever we seek to give them the tools they need to be productive citizens so their voices may be heard.

This action plan, for the 2024 school year, seeks to provide IU Southeast a blueprint for increasing political and civic engagement on our campus.

II. Leadership

The coordinators of this year's action plan are

- Margot Morgan, Associate Professor of Political Science and the IUS Campus Coordinator for the American Democracy Project
- Seuth Chaleunphonh, Dean of Student Life
- Melissa Fry, Director of the Applied Research and Education Center (AREC), Director of Service-Learning and Community Engagement, and Associate Professor of Sociology

Morgan and Fry are working with the new Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Michelle Williams, to establish a Civic Engagement designation (like the Honors designation) that will appear on diplomas and transcripts of students who participate in specific activities during their career at IU Southeast. Participating in activities like voting registration drives, student forums on the importance of voting, and the creation of student voter guides are examples of actions that would count toward the designation.

Morgan and Williams are meeting this summer to prepare the groundwork for the Civic Engagement designation. Its construction will require input from stakeholders from the campus and the community, including (but not limited to):

- Meghan Kahn, Dean of Social Sciences and Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience
- Nancy Jo Trafton, Director of Marketing and Communications
- The other members of the Service-Learning and Community Engagement Council: John Kendall, Leslie Doyle, Julia Mattingly, Rebekah Dement, and Ericka Voyles
- The Program Coordinators (i.e., Chairs) of every academic program on campus
- A representative from the Student Government Association
- Seuth Chaleunphonh, Dean of Student Life
- Additional members of the staff of Campus Life
- Uric Dufrene, Professor and Sanders Chair in Business
- James J. Wilkerson J.D., Director of Staff Diversity and Equity
- The Academic Advisors on campus
- Ed Clere, Representative of House District 72 in the Indiana General Assembly
- Employers in the community – Dr. Dufrene is in close contact with them.
- Non-profits in the community – Dr. Fry is in close contact with them.

In terms of succession, should Fry or Morgan leave the institution, they have confidence that the new administration will continue to pursue civic engagement as a priority. Our new Chancellor (Ford), our new Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs (Williams), and our new Dean of Social Sciences (Kahn) all share a personal commitment to civic and political engagement. Further, IUS is intent on earning the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement, and our voting work is integral to that goal.

More specifically, either Joe Wert or Rhonda Wrzenski, professors in the Political Science department, could take over for Morgan. Replacing Dr. Fry would be much harder to do; she is currently working closely with Dr. Veronica Medina, a professor in Sociology, to share her knowledge and her skills.

III. Commitment

Indiana University Southeast's commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement is best expressed in the following quotation from the IUS Mission Statement and the Strategic Plan 2016-2021:

“As a public comprehensive university, its mission is to provide high-quality educational programs and services that promote student learning and *prepare students for productive citizenship in a diverse society*, and to contribute to the intellectual, cultural, and economic development of the region” (emphasis mine).

The institution values the key elements of liberal democratic culture including pluralism, open discussion, equality of opportunity, and community engagement. This is reflected in the IUS statement of its core values:

- **Nurturing Environment**
We foster a caring campus community that honors diversity, innovation, loyalty, teamwork, mutual respect, and fair play. We work together to create a culture of inclusion and dignity for all.
- **Connectedness**
We engage with and support the many communities to which we belong and from which we draw our strength and potential. We go to extraordinary lengths to serve our communities efficiently and knowledgeably.

Further, the university's commitment to diversity both on the grounds of equity and community enrichment is illustrated in its diversity statement:

We grow and evolve as a university through seeing equality and representation as a goal and human right for everybody. Indiana University Southeast is committed to recruiting students from diverse populations and to making the climate and curriculum welcoming and equitable. Students will leave the university with a raised level of awareness of the history of equality and difference and attain international awareness, so that their understanding of academic disciplines, society, and the workplace will be enhanced, and they will be receptive to and promote valuing and respecting difference in their lives and in the workplace.

Indiana University Southeast has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2020.

IV. Landscape

Indiana University Southeast joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2016, and it has authorized NSLVE.

Our campus demographic and voting data are as follows:

Our institution had a 2020 campus voting rate of 65.8%.
Our institution had a 2020 voter registration rate of 85.4%.

Our institution had a 2018 voter turnout rate of 43%.
Our institution had a 2018 voter registration rate of 79.2%.

Currently there are many disparate individuals and groups at IU Southeast who are working to promote civic education and political engagement; however, they are not operating in a coordinated fashion. Individual actors are unaware of what the others are doing, and as a result there may exist redundant efforts and/or wasted opportunities. The extent of the civic engagement efforts of actors on this campus is unclear – there is a definite need to gather information on who is doing what and when.

That said, it is all the more inspiring that IUS had such a successful year in terms of promoting political engagement. During the 2020-2021 school year, Student Life and the School of Social Sciences worked to promote political engagement on campus through both voter registration and voting day initiatives. IUS was awarded a silver seal by the All In Campus Challenge for achieving a campus-voting rate between 60-69% for the 2020 presidential elections. This effort, spearheaded by Dean of Student Life Seuth Chaleunphonh and campus ADP coordinator Margot Morgan, involved the coordination of numerous campus groups including the Student Government Association, Residence Life, and the Office of Marketing and Communications, the Office of Service Learning and Community Engagement, and The Horizon student newspaper.

As of the fall 2019 semester, we have embedded Turbo Vote into our website: all students who go to grenadiercentral.ius.edu are encouraged to register to vote.

Based on our experiences in 2018 and 2020, we are confident in our abilities to coordinate the efforts of various groups to maximize their effectiveness. For the lead up to the 2024 elections, we plan to go further, increasing our activities on campus related to civic engagement in general and voting in particular.

V. Goals

Our general programmatic ambitions are to

- Strengthen and deepen connections among students and lead to greater dialogue, community, and interaction among diverse groups
- Increase students' ownership of their education leading to higher graduation rates.
- Better prepare students for their post-college lives as workers and citizens in a multi-cultural world.

To meet these ambitions and to be in-line with the mission of IU Southeast, we have developed the following long-term goals:

- Develop a Civic Engagement designation for student diplomas and transcripts and have it in place by 2026
- Increase student voting rates by 5% from 2024-2028
- Earn the Carnegie classification for Community Engagement by 2030
- Increase institutional support for political engagement and civic learning – measured by increased resources (course releases/new hires/money)

Short-Term Goals:

- Utilize the newly established Collaboratory database of all the faculty, administrators, student groups, and support staff who are working to promote civic education and political engagement; specify who is doing what kind of work

- Begin development on the Civic Engagement classification – have working group established by Spring 2025
- Apply for Carnegie Classification in Spring 2025

VI. Strategy

Indiana University Southeast will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

Short term goals and accompanying strategy:

1) Establish regularly scheduled communication meetings between the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (Williams), the ADP Campus Coordinator (Morgan) and the Director of Service-Learning and Community Engagement (Fry) beginning in fall of 2024.

2) Begin the establishment of the Civic Engagement designation in earnest in fall 2024. Morgan and Williams will meet over the summer to discuss it.

3) Hold Deliberative Dialogues for members of the IUS community as well as the public. Morgan will work with select Honors students to teach them how to facilitate Deliberate Dialogues using the National Issues Forum model. They will then train other trainers – other Honors students so that we have enough facilitators to hold dialogues for the public. These dialogues will be held at the Floyd County Public Library to ensure that members of the public are encouraged to attend. Ideally these dialogues will become an annual tradition beginning in spring 2025.

3) Coordinate voting registration efforts with the other IU regional campuses for the 2024 election. Professor Elizabeth Bennion at IU South Bend is leading this effort, which will gather data about the types of interventions used on the regional campuses to determine which are most effective. In addition to creating a set schedule of activities across all campuses, this will help us be more efficient with our voter registration efforts in the future.

3) Utilize the Collaboratory database of all the faculty, administrators, student groups, and support staff who are working to promote civic education and political engagement; specify who is doing what kind of work

- Fry's office will spearhead the effort to document faculty and student community engagement activities, asking them to enter their details into the Collaboratory system

3) Continue to include voter registration information on the university's website

- IUS has recently agreed to be a part of the new Registration Enrollment Study sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Voter registration links will be embedded in the electronic enrollment forms for randomly selected students. This is a first step toward reaching our goal.

- 4) Expand the incorporation of media literacy and civic engagement into curriculum
 - The General Education Committee is working to expand the number and types of courses that will be counted as providing media literacy.
- 5) Register 75% of incoming students to vote during the fall 2024 semester
 - Morgan will coordinate with the Student Government Association to hold two voter registration drives -- in fall 2024. The fall drive will begin during the “Week of Welcome” at the start of the fall semester and continue until October. She will:
 - Attend voter registration training
 - Provide training to volunteers in terms of state laws, dos and don'ts, and FAQs
 - Help with recruitment of volunteers, establishment of shifts, procurement of necessary equipment (tables, chairs, computers, information sheets from Indiana and Kentucky)
 - Oversee the drive to ensure compliance with state laws
 - Create a campus event for Voting Registration Day

VII. Reporting

Once finalized, the action plan will be shared with the working group and relevant administrators. With the administration’s permission, Morgan, Fry, and Chaleunphonh will post the plan on IUS website. Morgan will reach out to Nancy Jo Trafton, Director of Marketing and Communications, asking her to disseminate the results of our work through IUS social media and to the Louisville Metro news media.

VIII. Evaluation

In terms of evaluating voter registration rates on campus, IUS will rely on the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) to provide data.

The Service-Learning and Community Engagement Council is currently developing a global assessment form to be used at all community engagement events to gather data from the participants. We have never had a cohesive plan for assessing the efficacy of individual events, so this will be extremely helpful, especially when it comes to understanding whether or not we are meeting the needs of our community.

Through our partnership with Elizabeth Bennion at IU South Bend, we will be receiving data on each of our voter registration and voting-promotion interventions during the fall of 2024. This will aid us in determining which interventions have the most impact.

To evaluate the progress made towards attaining short-term and long-term goals the working group will write a self-evaluation at the end of each academic year. It will

include notes for future initiatives. This self-evaluation will be used by the Civic Engagement Leaders (Morgan and Fry) to hone their strategies and better attain their goals.