

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics

#CyclonesVote

2024 Iowa State Student Voter Engagement Action Plan

Submitted to:
ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge,
The Andrew Goodman Foundation, and
The Voter Friendly Campus Initiative

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CYCLONES VOTE



CY voted, have you?

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Section 1: Executive Summary

Welcome to the Iowa State University (ISU) 2024 #CyclonesVote Student Voter Engagement Action Plan, titled #CyclonesVote! This plan was developed by Dr. Karen M. Kedrowski, Director of the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics (hereafter “Catt Center”), with input from ISU’s Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF) Ambassadors and Catt Center Staff.

The #CyclonesVote action plan uses the framework described in *Strengthening American Democracy*, fourth edition.¹ The plan enumerates Iowa State’s student voter engagement strategies for the 2024 Presidential election. Specifically, it seeks to Ask Every Student to vote and to make progress toward the University’s full participation goals.

This action plan was developed to implement the University’s and the Board of Regents’ stated goals to educate students to be engaged citizens. This action plan also serves as a road map with specific strategies and evaluation targets to measure the team’s success and progress toward its long- and short-term goals, as articulated in Section 5.

This action plan begins on January 2, 2024, and continues through December 31, 2024. The action plan will be updated as needed and as circumstances arise. The action plan will be available on the Catt Center website and distributed to stakeholders on and off campus.

The action plan will be implemented on the Iowa State University campus, in Ames, Iowa and in the greater Ames community. Implementation will be coordinated primarily by the Catt Center staff and the student leadership. However, these leaders will partner with faculty, staff, students, and off-campus partners to implement specific strategies.

This action plan uses NSLVE data to identify low-turnout groups, and the Catt Center will work with appropriate student affairs offices, Student Government, STEM colleges and departments, and the League of Women Voters. Targeted populations include commuter and STEM students.

¹ Black, Chuck, Grace Wilder, Cathy Copeland, Jennifer Domagal-Goldman, Stephanie King, Sithara Menon, Amy Moscovitz, Bianca Rosales, Caroline Smith, and Dan Xie. 2023. *Strengthening American Democracy: A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voter Participation Among College Students*. 4th edition. <https://allinchallenge.org/wp-content/uploads/StrengtheningAmericanDemocracyGuideVOL4.pdf>.

Section 2: Leadership

Guiding Question 1: Working Group Members and Involvement

#CyclonesVote is led by the staff of the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics and its Director, Dr. Karen Kedrowski. Student leaders are the AGF Ambassadors and interns who will complete internships with the Carrie Chapman Catt Center. The interns will be either enrolled for academic credit and/or paid a stipend. Stipends will be provided by the Andrew Goodman Foundation (for two students), the University, or through donations or grants.

One Andrew Goodman Foundation student will be enrolled in AY 2023-24 and a second will be hired in January 2024. In addition, the Catt Center will advertise for five additional voter engagement interns to work in the Catt Center during Fall 2024. These opportunities will be advertised through the University's student employment portal, "CyHire," and promoted across campus.

Senior Leaders: This initiative has the support of the Office of the President and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and the cooperation of several individuals in the Office of the Provost. For more details see response to Guiding Question 6 (below).

#Cyclones Vote Working Group Composition: Dr. Kedrowski first recruited a working group of faculty and staff members from across campus to work on student voting engagement in 2020. Kedrowski continues to engage with offices across campus for specific strategies. Campus contacts include:

President and Provost

- Sophia Magill, Director of Federal Relations, Office of the President
- Brian Meyer, Strategic Communications, Office of the President
- Amanda Knief, University Lectures Program
- Sarah Ingram, Communications Specialist, Graduate College

Student Affairs

- Sharron Evans, Dean of Students
- Michelle Talbott, Sorority and Fraternity Engagement
- Virginia Speight, Director of Residence Life and Conference Services
- Sue Harper, Center for LGBTQ+ Student Success
- Rita Case, Veterans' Center

Athletics

- Shamaree Brown, Senior Associate Athletics Director for Student Services
- Sammie Hildreth, Student-Athlete Engagement Specialist

Academic Contacts

- Matt Wetstein, Associate Professor of Physics
- Alex Tuckness, Professor and Chair of Political Science

- Brady Talley, Ivy College of Business
- Deans' Offices Communications teams

Catt Center Staff

- Sue Cloud, Communications Specialist
- Carrie-Ann Johnson, Interim Director of Research and Outreach
- Ashley Marsh, Administrative Specialist
- Paola Martinez, Andrew Goodman Foundation Ambassador
- Will Walker, Graduate Assistant

For student organization partners, please see the response to Guiding Question 4 (below).

Off-Campus Partners: The principal off-campus partner is the League of Women Voters of Ames/Story County. In both 2020 and 2022, the League took responsibility for reaching out to private apartment complexes to distribute voter registration information, while the Catt Center targeted on-campus housing and Greek Town. The League also hosts numerous voter engagement activities that discuss current issues. The Catt Center promotes these activities through social media and its student newsletters.

#CyclonesVote is also involved with the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, the Big XII Votes Challenge, the Iowa Votes Challenge, the Voter Friendly Campus Initiative, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, the Students Learn Students Vote coalition, and FacNet, the Faculty Network for Student Voting Rights.

Coordination with Local Election Administrator: In Iowa, County Auditors are responsible for election administration. The Story County Auditor, Lucy Martin, is an important partner in the #CyclonesVote initiative. The Iowa State campus houses several polling places for precincts including residence halls and nearby neighborhoods. Several more polling places are within a short walking distance of campus or on the local CyRide bus routes. In addition, the Story County Auditor also cooperates with requests for satellite (early) voting locations on campus and willingly provides pre-printed voter registration and absentee ballot request forms.

Poll Worker Recruitment: The Catt Center, the League, the Story County Auditor, and the Secretary of State regularly publicize poll worker requirement opportunities to members of the campus community. Some students do participate as poll workers. However, since classes are held on Election Day, few students can take advantage of this opportunity.

Guiding Question 2: Leadership Compensation and Reporting

Dr. Kedrowski reports to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences and other working group members report to various supervisors and vice presidents. All faculty and staff engage in voter engagement tasks as part of their regular responsibilities and without additional compensation. Student interns are compensated by the Catt Center, through funds from AGF, the Catt Center, or external grants. League members are volunteers, and the Story County Auditor is a full-time, compensated, elected official. Election administration is one of her legislated responsibilities.

Guiding Question 3: Working Group Members' Strength and Responsibilities

Several working group members have access to either large numbers of students (i.e. Residence Life), members of low-turnout populations (Multicultural Student Life and the Graduate College), or athletes. Others have access to communication channels for dispersing voter engagement messages. Brian Meyer in the President's Office, for instance, edits the weekly employee newsletter, *Inside Iowa State*, and can contact all the communications specialists employed on campus. Others provide administrative support that communicates that student voter engagement is a campus priority.

Guiding Question 4: Bringing Others into #CyclonesVote

Additional Working Group members who have not yet been invited but will include:

- Student Voting Interns: These students will comprise the student leadership team.
- Student and Post-Doc Governance Bodies: This includes the Student Government Civic Engagement Committee, the Graduate and Professional Student Association, and the ISU Post-Doctoral Association. These are a means to distribute information.
- The *Iowa State Daily*, the student newspaper, which also provides coverage of current events in the greater Ames community.
- Student Clubs and Organizations. Forty-three (43) student organizations are listed under the "Political and Activism" category of student organizations. All will be invited to join, with special efforts to engage across the ideological spectrum. In addition, we will reach out to identity-based student organizations, such as the Black Student Alliance, the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science, and the Pride Alliance, to make sure these organizations receive information about voting.
- Commuter Students, through their student organization, United Residents Off-Campus (UROC).
- Destination Iowa State (new student fall welcome program)
- Multicultural Student Life and Margaret Sloss Center for Women and Gender Equity
- ROTC Leadership: This academic program is housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences yet reaches students in majors across campus. Like athletes, these students have considerable demands on their time which might pose challenges to voting.

These potential partners have not been contacted yet because, as student organizations, they will have new leadership in place in Fall 2024. Similarly, other offices in student life are undergoing transitions that make outreach at this point premature.

Guiding Question 5: Inclusivity

#CyclonesVote includes faculty and staff who have different points of access to students from various fields of study, social networks, and communities. Therefore, the working group will be able to deliver both targeted and general messages to diverse student audiences, including minoritized communities, STEM majors, graduate students, and post-docs, etc.

Guiding Question 6: Support from Upper Administration

President Wendy Wintersteen signed the ALL IN Presidential Commitment in 2020 and successfully recruited the other Big XII Presidents and Chancellors to join. President Wintersteen remains very committed to student voting engagement, and two Presidential staff members serve as important conduits to communicate with the entire campus. The Provost's Office provides support through the University Lectures Program, which is an important source of civic education on campus. The Registrar's office also cooperates with ensuring that students' local street addresses are available through AccessPlus, the student portal. Dr. Toyia Younger, Vice President of Student Affairs, is also a staunch supporter and directs the offices in her division to engage with the Catt Center as requested.

Guiding Question 7: Who Else Needs to Be Involved?

With the addition of Multicultural Student Life, this working group will reach all students through various channels. In addition, we will work with the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) to distribute a Canvas module and to promote appropriate faculty engagement in student voter mobilization.

Guiding Question 8: Meetings and Communication

It's unlikely that the entire coalition will meet as a group. Rather, Dr. Kedrowski will meet with smaller groups (i.e. Athletics, Student Government, or Greek Life) to plan and execute specific events or activities. Otherwise, updates will be distributed via email with individual follow-ups as needed. If individuals need to step away or leave their positions, Dr. Kedrowski will reach out to determine whether someone else in the office or a student can assume their tasks.

Guiding Question 9: Keeping the Working Group Engaged

Student interns will be supervised and need to complete specific tasks related to their internship to remain on the team. Working group members who are dispersed across campus will be engaged by judiciously using their time – such as with simple tasks and infrequent requests – and effusive thanks to them and their supervisors.

Guiding Question 10: Turn Over in the Working Group

If an individual from the working group transitions out of their role at the University, Dr. Kedrowski will seek a replacement from the division's leadership. If someone stops doing the work, the Catt Center staff will backfill as much as possible until another working group member is identified.

Guiding Question 11: Leadership Succession Plan

The Catt Center has integrated student voter engagement into its ongoing initiatives, and its many badges and recognitions are a point of pride. The Catt Center is documenting its work and building a repository of documents, such as all student email texts and social media slides, that can be used with minor adjustments for many years. If Dr. Kedrowski leaves the University, other members of the Catt Center staff will be able to divide up the tasks to maintain the current momentum.

SECTION 3: COMMITMENT

Elements of Iowa State University's commitments to civic learning and engagement are present in its mission, strategic plan, general education program, and other key documents.

Mission and Vision

First, Iowa State is one of three "Regents' Universities," public four-year institutions that are governed by a common board. The Board of Regents' Mission Statement calls upon the member institutions to "prepare students to make positive contributions to society." The Board's Core Values include "diverse and inclusive experiences" and "exercise[ing] free speech through civil discourse."² These commitments are communicated to the public through its website.

Second, Iowa State University's Mission Statement is "Iowa State University will create, share, and apply knowledge to make our students, Iowa, and the world better." This broad statement certainly includes producing citizens who think critically and participate actively in the democratic process. The Strategic Plan's Statements of Aspiration include "To be the most student-centric leading research university."³ This aspiration is certainly consistent with fostering and enabling student voter engagement. These documents are available on the Office of the President's page on the ISU website.

Third, the University adopted its Principles of Community in 2005 at the instigation of a graduate student, Phil Hernandez.⁴ University leaders refer to them frequently, and posters listing them appear across campus. The six principles include "respect," "freedom from discrimination," and "richness of diversity."⁵

Leadership Commitment

President Wintersteen signed the Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation in 2020 and was instrumental in encouraging all the Big XII presidents to sign. This led to the expansion of the Big XII Voting Challenge and the conference's permission to use the Big XII logo in its publicity.

In 2020, the Faculty Senate, the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, and the Student Government passed identical resolutions expressing support for student voting and asking faculty members to be flexible with their attendance policies and to refrain from holding exams or major assignments on Election Day.

² Iowa Board of Regents. *2022-27 Strategic Plan*, p. 3.

https://www.iowaregents.edu/media/cms/202227_Strategic_Plan_Document_7C869BF3AB5AD.pdf

³ Iowa State University. *2022-2031 Strategic Plan*. pp. 3-4. <https://strategicplan.iastate.edu/wp-content/themes/strategic-plan/pdfs/StrategicPlan.pdf>.

⁴ David Roepke. July 1, 2021. "Where the Principles of Community Come From." *Inside Iowa State*. <https://www.inside.iastate.edu/article/2021/07/01/principles>.

⁵ Iowa State University Principles of Community. <https://www.diversity.iastate.edu/connect/principles>.

In addition, Iowa State participates in the Voter Friendly Campus Initiative, the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, the Big XII Voting Challenge, the Iowa Voting Challenge, and National Voter Registration Day. These affiliations are noted on the Catt Center's web page. Iowa State was the first, and to date only, higher education institution in Iowa to earn Voter Friendly Campus designation, a fact that President Wintersteen likes to point out to her in-state colleagues.

Student Learning Outcomes and Curriculum

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences assesses the undergraduate general education program. Neither its learning goals nor assessment measures include any measures of civic education or engagement.⁶

Civic engagement programs are primarily assessed through the Campus Climate survey, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). Other evaluation metrics are included in the "Goals" section below.

⁶ ISU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Student Outcomes Assessment Report for HLC. nd.
[file:///C:/Users/karenmk1/Downloads/HLC%20College%20of%20Liberal%20Arts%20and%20Sciences%20SOA%20fin%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/karenmk1/Downloads/HLC%20College%20of%20Liberal%20Arts%20and%20Sciences%20SOA%20fin%20(1).pdf)

SECTION 4: LANDSCAPE

Iowa State’s campus climate has several notable strengths and some potential barriers to success.

University-wide Student Learning Outcomes.

In February 2020, the Iowa State University Faculty Senate approved four university-wide student learning outcomes. They are Communication, Information Literacy, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, and Diversity and Global Citizenship. The latter certainly includes civic education and engagement work. Assessment of these outcomes is conducted by individual departments through their program delivery.

Assessment

NSLVE. The primary assessment tool for student voting engagement is Iowa State’s participation in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement. According to its NSLVE report (and as reflected in Table 1), 72.9% of ISU students voted in 2020, compared to 66% nationally, earning ISU a Gold Shield from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge.⁷ In 2018, 43.4% of ISU students voted, somewhat higher than the national average of 38.5%. This was a 19-point improvement over 2014 and the largest improvement of any Iowa college or university in the Iowa Voting Challenge. These results earned ISU a Gold Shield from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and an award from Iowa Campus Compact.⁸ (As of this writing, the 2022 NSLVE reports have not been released.)

Table 1: Iowa State Student Voter Registration and Turnout Rates Compared to Nation and Region.

	2012		2014		2016		2018		2020		2022	
	% Reg.	% Voted	% Reg.	% Voted	% Reg.	% Voted	% Reg.	% Voted	% Reg.	% Voted	% Reg.	% Voted
ISU	79.3	60.9	70.9	24.4	86.4	62.0	82.7	43.4	89.3	72.9	NA	NA
NSLVE	70.9	49.1	63.8	18.2	77.5	52.9	75.6	38.5	83.0	66.0	NA	NA
18-24 WNC	59.8	46.6	43.0	17.9	58.0	46.3	55.5	38.3	66.6	58.0	54.9	28.3
18-24 Nation	53.6	41.2	42.2	17.1	56.8	43.6	48.4	33.3	59.8	51.4	51.8	30.1

Sources: Iowa State University NSLVE reports; Institute for Democracy in Higher Education NSLVE reports; and United States Census Bureau. NSLVE refers to all colleges and universities participating in NSLVE, “WNC” refers to the West North Central division of the Census Bureau’s Midwest region. It includes Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Table 2 compares Iowa State’s 2020 student voter turnout rate to ISU’s peer institutions, Big XII institutions, the other two Iowa Regents’ Universities, and the nation. Acknowledging that these institutions’ legal environments and student body demographics differ, Iowa State University’s student voter turnout compares favorably to most institutions included here. However, with a few exceptions, the differences between Iowa State’s voter turnout rate and those of its peers and in-state and conference rivals are very small.

⁷ Iowa State 2020 NSLVE Report.

⁸ Iowa State 2014 & 2018 NSLVE Report (revised).

Table 2: Iowa State Comparison to Selected Institutions, 2020 Turnout Rate⁹

Institution Name	2020 Voter Turnout (%)	Comp to ISU (%)
Regents' Universities		
Iowa State University	72.9	NA
University of Northern Iowa	73.1	+0.2
University of Iowa	67.4	-5.5
Big XII (in 2020)¹⁰		
Baylor University	64.5	-8.4
Kansas State University	67.3	-5.6
Oklahoma State University	57.1	-15.8
Texas Christian University	67.8	-5.1
Texas Tech University	NA	NA
University of Kansas	71.0	-1.9
University of Oklahoma	63.5	-9.4
University of Texas	75.8	+2.9
University of West Virginia	64.0	-8.9
Peer Institutions¹¹		
Colorado State University	76.4	+3.5
Kansas State University	67.3	-5.6
Michigan State University	76.6	+3.7
University of Missouri	NA	NA
University of Nebraska	74.3	+1.4
North Carolina State University	80.8	+7.9
Oklahoma State University	57.1	-15.8
Oregon State University	73.3	+0.4
Purdue University	67.2	-5.7
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	73.0	+0.1
Nation	66	-6.9

Source: Institutions' NSLVE reports posted on the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge web site.

Disparities in Student Voter Turnout. Iowa State's NSLVE reports show rather typical variations between student groups' voter turnout. For instance, female students have higher voter turnout than male students. Upper-level students (Sophomores, Juniors and Seniors) vote at higher rates than first-year students (70-71% vs 67%). Racial and ethnic minorities vote at lower rates than their white peers (ranging from 58% to 75%); and STEM students have lower turnout rates than students in the Humanities and Social Sciences (ranging from 53% to 95%).¹²

Several of these differences are especially worrisome. First, Iowa State's student body is 54% male, compared to 43% nationally.¹³ Second, STEM majors are the most popular on campus.

¹⁰ Taken from "Big XII Football Standings." <https://big12sports.com/standings.aspx?standings=159>

¹¹ "Board of Regents Peer List." 2023. <https://www.ir.iastate.edu/resources/peer-universities>.

¹² Iowa State 2020 NSLVE Report.

¹³ Iowa State 2023-4 *Fact Book*

https://www.ir.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/factbook/AY2024/EN07_Enrollment_Gender.pdf., and National Center for Education Statistics, *Fast Facts*.

[https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98#:~:text=In%20fall%202021%2C%20female%20students,percent%20\(6.5%20million%20students\)..](https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98#:~:text=In%20fall%202021%2C%20female%20students,percent%20(6.5%20million%20students)..)

Just two academic colleges, Agricultural and Life Sciences and Engineering, enroll a combined 10,000 students, plus another 2,600 are found in STEM fields in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Altogether, STEM students comprise nearly half the student body.¹⁴ Lower voter turnout rates among men and among STEM majors (understanding these two groups are not exclusive of each other) depresses Iowa State’s overall turnout. The lower voter turnout among racial/ethnic minorities is also a cause for concern and will be a focus of student voter engagement efforts.

NSSE. ISU participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which queries college freshmen and seniors on their collegiate experiences. The 2023 NSSE administration found that ISU seniors scored below their peers at similar institutions on questions broadly related to civic engagement (see Table 3). These results imply that many ISU students are not engaged in the types of vigorous debate and exposure to different points of view that train for a lifetime of civic engagement. Many of the gaps are statistically significant.

Table 3: ISU 2023 NSSE Senior Results Related to Civic Education/Engagement¹⁵

NSSE Item	ISU (%)	Peers*
Reflective & Integrative Learning**		
Connected your learning to societal problems or issues.	52	-6
Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments.	44	-8
Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept.	70	-2
Discussions with Diverse Others**		
People of races or ethnicities other than your own.	63	-10
People from economic backgrounds other than your own.	68	-5
People with religious beliefs other than your own.	65	-4
People with political views other than your own.	65	+3
Supportive Environment***		
Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (socioeconomically, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.).	49	-5
Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues.	35	-3

* Peer Institutions are Public, Doctoral/Very High Research Activity institutions.

**Percentage who responded “often” or “very often.”

*** Percentage who responded “very much” or “quite a bit.”

Table 4 provides NSSE results for seniors over time (2016-2023). While there were some declines between 2020 and 2023, which might be due to the students’ pandemic experiences, the most startling changes are for two questions related to political engagement, “[Discussions with] people with political views other than your own,” a seven-point drop, and “Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues,” a nine-point drop. These findings may indicate that students and faculty alike are shying away from discussing politics with their peers or in class, further solidifying people into their partisan echo chambers.

¹⁴ Iowa State 2021-22 *Fact Book*.

¹⁵ National Survey of Student Engagement. “NSSE 2023 Engagement Indicators.”

[https://www.ir.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/PDF's/NSSE23%20Engagement%20Indicators%20\(ISU\).pdf](https://www.ir.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/PDF's/NSSE23%20Engagement%20Indicators%20(ISU).pdf)

Table 4: ISU NSSE Senior Results (in %) Related to Civic Engagement, 2016-2023¹⁶

NSSE Item	2016	2020	2023	% Change, 2016-2023
Reflective & Integrative Learning**				
Connected your learning to societal problems or issues	51	50	52	+2
Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments	41	40	44	+3
Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	64	70	70	+6
Discussions with Diverse Others**				
People of races or ethnicities other than your own	61	67	63	+2
People from economic backgrounds other than your own	70	71	68	-2
People with religious beliefs other than your own	64	68	65	+1
People with political views other than your own	72	70	65	-7
Supportive Environment***				
Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (socioeconomically, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)	44	51	49	+5
Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues	44	42	35	-9

* Peer Institutions are Public, Doctoral/Very High Research Activity institutions.

**Percentage who responded “often” or “very often.”

*** Percentage who responded “very much” or “quite a bit.”

Mass Student Email Statistics. The Catt Center receives open rate analytics for its voter information email blasts. The open rate for these emails is consistently about 30% (or 9,000 students), and in 2020, reached as high as 50% (15,000 students). This is a very high engagement rate, indicating that students are interested in information about voting.

Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Distribution. The #CyclonesVote team distributes Iowa voter registration and absentee ballot forms campus wide via literature boxes. The #CyclonesVote team distributes over 1000 of these forms in each midterm and in presidential election years. In addition, in 2022, Catt Center staff assisted over 100 out-of-state students to request absentee ballots in states that required paper forms.

Ask Every Student Canvas Module. In 2020 and 2022, the Catt Center adapted Ask Every Student’s Canvas module and publicized it to faculty. It was downloaded nearly 250 times, making it available to students across campus. Unfortunately, we do not know the disciplines or courses where the module was downloaded. Some informal feedback indicated that faculty in some fields hesitated to download it because of the University’s germaneness rule (see below).

Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Curriculum

The Iowa State general education program requires students to study disciplines that ask them to think critically about major questions confronting our society: 12 credit hours in the Arts & Humanities, nine credit hours in the Social Sciences, and one course each in US Diversity and

¹⁶ Iowa State University Institutional Research. “Students. NSSE” <https://www.ir.iastate.edu/surveys/students>. Due to changes in NSSE’s structure and questions, results from the 2013 and earlier administrations are excluded.

International Perspectives.¹⁷ The latter, plus the required Information Literacy course, are considered ISU's civic education curriculum, required of all undergraduates.

In November 2020, the ISU Faculty Senate revised the student learning outcomes for the US Diversity requirement. Starting in AY 2022-23, US Diversity courses must meet at least three of these four learning outcomes:

- Identify the experiences and contributions of underrepresented or marginalized groups and how they have shaped the history and culture of the United States.
- Understand the analytical concepts of culture, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, and/or religion and be able to apply these concepts to an analysis of the United States.
- Analyze systemic oppression and personal prejudice and their impact on marginalized communities and the broader U.S. society.
- Evaluate important aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion so they can live, work, and collaborate with others in the 21st century United States.¹⁸

Over 90 courses have been approved to meet the US Diversity requirement.¹⁹ These courses are in a variety of departments; however, most are offered by the Humanities and Social Science departments housed in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Annual enrollment in these courses is unknown, but probably numbers in the thousands.

While no American History or American Government courses are required *per se*, they are popular offerings, enrolling about 800 students per year (300 in the two-semester American History sequence and 500 in American Government).²⁰

In November 2020, Iowa State adopted a required syllabus statement affirming students' rights to free speech and academic freedom in the classroom.²¹ The Board of Regents has also implemented a required annual free speech training for all university employees and students.²²

In addition, Student Government generously funds a vigorous University Lectures program, which sponsors dozens of speakers who address topical issues, many of which are political in nature. In election years, the Lectures program also sponsors candidate visits and forums. ISU faculty are generous in offering extra credit to students who attend, and the ISU Lectures program has a system in place to "swipe" student ID cards to track attendance.

¹⁷ Iowa State University General Education Program. <https://las.iastate.edu/students/academics/general-education/>.

¹⁸ Iowa State Faculty Senate Docket 20-35. "US Diversity and International Perspectives Guidelines and Procedures." <https://www.facsen.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/20-21%20Docket%20Calendar/20-35%20US%20Diversity%20-%20Approved%2020210723.pdf>

¹⁹ ISU Registrar. "2023-2024 US Diversity Courses." <https://www.registrar.iastate.edu/students/div-ip-guide/usdiversity-courses>.

²⁰ Data calculated by author from enrollment statistics available from Institutional Research.

²¹ "Free Expression and Academic Freedom Syllabus Statement: Frequently Asked Questions. January 2021." <https://www.provost.iastate.edu/policies/syllabus-statement-faq>.

²² Board of Regents, State of Iowa Board Policy Manual. "4.2 Freedom of Expression." <https://www.iowaregents.edu/plans-and-policies/board-policy-manual/42-freedom-of-expression>.

Starting in 2022, Dr. Kedrowski successfully secured permission to publish a guide in *Inside Iowa State* that provided suggestions for how faculty could encourage their students to vote and engage in the election.²³ In addition, Kedrowski adapted and updated the Ask Every Student Canvas Module for download into the course management system.

Civic and Democratic Engagement Co-Curriculum

As noted above, there are dozens of student organizations that focus on civic engagement from partisan, ideological, and/or issue-based perspectives; several dozen more are cultural or identity groups that overlap with the NSLVE demographics. Iowa State also has a ROTC program and active student military and veterans' groups. The NCAA has civic engagement as one of its priorities and all fraternities and sororities are involved in philanthropic and civic caucuses. Taken together, these groups and activities indicate that civic engagement is a key part of the co-curricular program.

Internal and External Barriers to Success

The #CyclonesVote team faces challenges, some of which are significant.

Unfriendly University Policies. Iowa State has several university policies that complicate student voting engagement efforts. For instance, the *ISU Faculty Handbook* requires that classroom discussions be germane, specifically stating, "In order to be germane, the material must be relevant to the scholarly subject matter and must be presented by appropriate means."²⁴ The Provost's current guidance to faculty cautions against "...voter registration drives, discussions of candidates, or other activities that may be perceived as partisan in nature without providing similar opportunities for members of the campus community with other viewpoints."²⁵

Second, in 2021, the Iowa State Legislature passed House File 802, which prohibits including various "specific defined concepts," such as "one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex" in mandatory trainings. The University Counsel has interpreted this legislation to apply to required coursework when there is only one section of a required course or multiple sections of a required course that uses a standardized curriculum.²⁶

Third, many administrators were concerned that any voter engagement activities might be perceived as partisan and, in the past were reluctant to endorse communications to students on the subject.

²³ Karen M. Kedrowski. "How Can Faculty Encourage Students to Vote?" *Inside Iowa State*. September 22, 2022. <https://www.inside.iastate.edu/article/2022/09/22/vote>.

²⁴ *Iowa State Faculty Handbook*, Section 7.2.1.2 "Scholarly Discourse and Germaneness." <https://www.facsen.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/docket/2005/S05-33FHChap7-8-1.pdf>.

²⁵ Office of the Provost, ND. "Separating Personal and Institutional Advocacy." <https://www.provost.iastate.edu/policies/separating-personal-and-institutional-political-advocacy>.

²⁶ "FAQ: Iowa House File 802—Requirements Related to Racism or Sexism Training at Public Postsecondary Institutions." August 5, 2021. <https://www.provost.iastate.edu/policies/iowa-house-file-802---requirements-related-to-racism-and-sexism-trainings>.

Fourth, the Board of Regents' DEI Recommendations (referenced above) stipulate that Iowa's public universities cannot engage in any DEI activities aside from those that are "necessary for compliance or accreditation" (Recommendation 1).

Taken together, these policies have a dampening effect on efforts to engage faculty in student voter engagement efforts. Some faculty may avoid discussing voting or current affairs altogether rather than risk student complaints, administrative sanctions, or negative publicity from or for the institution. The Board of Regents' recommendation undermines efforts to target voter engagement messaging to students of color.

Consequently, the coalition's leadership avoids associations with voter engagement groups that have an ideological bent, has developed a neutrality statement to use in campus communications, and encourages faculty to download the Canvas module as an optional resource rather than integrate it into the course.

Provisions in Iowa's Voting Law: In March 2021, Iowa enacted a law that includes several provisions that could negatively impact college students' right to vote. First, the law has shortened the pre-registration period and the period to request an absentee ballot. Second, absentee ballots now have an "arrive by" Election Day deadline rather than an Election Day postmark deadline. Third, only the voter or immediate family members can return a completed absentee ballot to the county auditor in person, meaning that students cannot have friends deliver completed ballots on their behalf. Fourth, counties may have only one ballot drop box, a particular challenge for Story County, where the county seat (Nevada, IA) is not the largest city (Ames). By implication, the Story County Auditor cannot place a drop box on campus unless it is the county's only drop box location. Fifth, the hours that polls are open on Election Day was reduced by one hour, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. rather than 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Lastly, and potentially the most significant barrier, county auditors may no longer take the initiative to set up satellite (early) voting locations at their own discretion. Instead, they must receive a resident's petition signed by 100 registered voters to do so. This potentially reduces the number of days and locations for satellite (early) voting on campus.²⁷

Declining Financial Resources. In 2019, Iowa State University dropped its affiliation with the Iowa Campus Compact, which also ended its relationship with the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP). CEEP had provided stipends for a student voting intern. Then in 2021, annual support from the Andrew Goodman Foundation was cut to \$1,000 from \$3,000. Efforts to secure support from donors have not been successful to date. In 2021 and 2023, the Catt Center covered the cost of all student emails (\$26 each for ten emails) for local and school board elections that year. Other costs were paid with grants from Ask Every Student.

Internal and External Factors that Support Success

Other internal and external factors do support success.

²⁷ Stephen Gruber-Miller. "Iowa's voting laws have changed. Here's what you need to know before you vote." *Des Moines Register*. September 8, 2021. <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2021/09/07/iowas-election-laws-changed-year-what-know-before-you-vote-absentee-ballot-early-voting-kim-reynolds/5590731001/>.

Voting FAQs Site. The Catt Center maintains a student voting frequently asked questions (FAQs)²⁸ site that is more comprehensive than what is offered elsewhere. It includes details about Iowa voting law, including specifics for absentee voting and voting in Ames; links to the Campus Vote Project’s student guides for the 50 states and the District of Columbia; and links to the election offices for US territories.

Administrative Actions that Support Student Voting. Furthermore, the University has taken several steps recently to help students exercise their right to vote in 2020 and 2022. These included:

- Distributing voter registration and absentee ballot forms at the University’s ID Office, in residence halls, and Greek houses;
- Hosting satellite (early) voting on campus;
- Adding a screen to the student portal, Access Plus, which lists the student’s local address. This screen or printout is accepted by poll workers as proof of address;
- Adding an expiration date to student IDs so they can be used as proof of identification at the polls;
- Housing election day polling places on campus for several precincts.
- Financial support from the Division of Student Affairs for bus ads (declined once grant was awarded)
- Permission to Use “#CyclonesVote” moniker and trademarked mascot image

Local League. An active local chapter of the League of Women Voters provides assistance with voter registration activities and maintains Vote411, a nonpartisan site with information about candidates. In 2020 and 2022, the League took the lead on outreach to private apartment management companies to distribute information to students living off campus.

Participation in National Organizations. National advocacy groups include the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, Ask Every Student, the Big XII Voting Challenge, the Civic Engagement Section of the American Political Science Association, the Faculty Network for Student Voting Rights, the Iowa Voting Coalition, and the Voter Friendly Campus Initiative. The badges and recognitions help legitimate the #CyclonesVote initiative.

Iowa’s Legal Environment. Iowa’s nonpartisan commission draws its congressional and legislative district lines, which minimizes partisan gerrymandering. Consequently, the state has many competitive districts, including three of the four US House districts. In addition, Iowa’s voting law allows same-day registration and satellite (early) voting.

Board of Regents’ Commitment to Civic Education. In November 2023, the Iowa Board of Regents released ten recommendations related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives at the three Regents’ universities, including Iowa State. Included in this list is Recommendation 9, “To explore a proposal, including cost, to establish a widespread initiative that includes

²⁸ Voting FAQs for College Students. <https://cattcenter.iastate.edu/voting-faqs-for-college-students/>.

opportunities for education and research on free speech and civic education.”²⁹ This recommendation has the potential to increase funding and visibility of civic education at Iowa State.

Student Body Demographics

Nearly three-quarters (71.3%) of the Iowa State student body identifies as non-Hispanic white. Students of color, including Latinx, African American, Asian, Native American, and Native Hawaiian, comprise 16.4% of the student body.³⁰ As mentioned above, a majority of Iowa State students are male. Almost all undergraduates (96%) are under the age 25, although the Graduate and Veterinary School populations are older (27% and 50% under the age of 25, respectively).

A majority of students (54%) are residents of Iowa and three-fourths (75%) are residents of Iowa, Minnesota, or Illinois. Thus, ensuring the #CyVotes team is familiar with the voting laws in these three states is useful.

Additional Internal and External Resources to Support Success

The Catt Center has identified the following resources that will help it succeed in its voter registration and engagement efforts:

Additional Campus Partners (Internal). The Catt Center will continue to cultivate campus partners who share resources and facilitate access to various student populations.

Additional Financial Support (External). The coalition will require financial resources to fund advertisements and student stipends in the fall. The Catt Center will reapply for an Ask Every Student Grant and a “Campus Take Over” grant from National Voter Registration Day, continue to pursue private donations and grants, and seek other funding opportunities.

Using Resources from Off Campus Partners (External). The Catt Center uses various resources provided by off-campus partners to support its voter engagement and education efforts, including the Ask Every Student Canvas Module, the National Civic Holidays Social Media Toolkit for Voter Education Week, Vote 411 from the League of Women Voters, and the my.VoteEverywhere portal provided by AGF.

Greater Exposure for Voter Engagement Efforts (Internal). The Catt Center strives to be the leading office in voter engagement efforts. However, communicating this to the campus community in a large, decentralized institution is a challenge and an ongoing process.

²⁹ Iowa Board of Regents. “DEI Study Group Report and Recommendations.” Adopted November 15, 2023. https://www.iowaregents.edu/media/cms/1123_ITEM_11_DEI_Study_Group_Repor_CBA91840D4213.pdf.

³⁰ 2023-24 Iowa State *Fact Book*. <https://www.ir.iastate.edu/factbook/current>.

SECTION 5: GOALS

The Iowa State team has identified several long-term and short-term goals for its student voter engagement efforts:

Long-Term Goals:

- By 2026, the ISU student voter registration rate will reach full voter registration (90-100% of eligible students).
- By the 2028 presidential election, Iowa State voter turnout will reach 80%.
- By the 2026 midterm election, the Iowa State student voter turnout rate will reach 60%.
- By 2028, turnout gaps between STEM and non-STEM students and between racial and ethnic groups will be eliminated.

Short-Term Goals:

- By January 2024, Iowa State will provide information to students about how to participate in the Iowa Caucuses.
- By 2024, Iowa State's student voter engagement coalition will be institutionalized and self-sustaining.
- By 2024 the ISU voting coalition will have representation from ROTC and Student Government.
- ISU's 2024 voter registration rate will be 85% and its voter turnout rate will be 70%.
- The gap in voter turnout between racial minority groups and white students will be no more than 10 percentage points in 2024.
- The gap in voter turnout between STEM and non-STEM fields will be no more than 10 percentage points in 2024.
- Refine the voter turnout results in STEM majors to control for international students to better identify and target low-turnout populations.
- The Catt Center will raise \$15,000 from grants or donors to support nonpartisan student voter engagement.
- The institution will communicate its commitment to civic and voter engagement through supportive resolutions passed by Student Government, the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, and the Faculty Senate.

SECTION 6: STRATEGY

Short-Term Strategies

The Iowa State team will pursue the following strategies to Ask Every Student to vote in the upcoming election and to maximize student voter engagement in 2024. Planning and early implementation will begin in Spring semester 2024 and continue through the summer. Full implementation will begin in August 2024.

Student Leadership. The Catt Center will offer a student voting internship for academic credit and, if resources are available in Fal 2024, will offer stipends to student voting interns who will lead the student voting engagement efforts. The Catt Center will also specifically encourage Work Study students to apply for these opportunities. Students will be trained, and regularly reminded, that this work is nonpartisan.

Distribution of Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Request Forms. The voting interns will distribute voter registration and absentee ballot request forms campus-wide in September 2024, with literature distributed to residence halls; fraternity and sorority houses; and high-traffic areas such as the Memorial Union, Parks Library, university gyms, food pantry, Athletics department, and music building. Student interns will routinely replenish the forms in the boxes. (Evaluation Measure: Number of forms distributed. Target: 2,000 forms distributed).

Election-Related Campus and Community Programming. Various campus organizations produce programming in election years, including lectures on current issues and candidate appearances and forums. At a minimum, fall 2024 will include a Constitution Day Lecture hosted by the University Lectures Program, the Manatt-Phelps Lecture in Political Science, and candidate forums sponsored by the League of Women Voters. Additional events are likely to be held as well. (Evaluation Measure: attendance statistics from University Lectures card swipes and/or log ins during virtual events)

Ask Every Student Voting Module. Dr. Kedrowski will update in Summer 2024 and advertise the Ask Every Student Voting Module for faculty to download prior to the beginning of fall semester. (Evaluation Measure: Total number of downloads. Target: 150 downloads).

Voter Registration Drives. The student voting interns will host at least three in-person voter registration drives during the fall semester between September 1 and October 15, including on National Voter Registration Day, weather permitting. (Evaluation Measure: Number of days for tabling. Target: Three (3) tabling days).

Engaging Athletics. Since 2020, #CyclonesVote have regularly engaged with the Athletic Department. In 2024, we look forward to at least one event with Athletics and one Constitution Day activity in conjunction with the Big XII. These will be carried out by Dr. Kedrowski or the student interns in September and early October 2024. (Evaluation Measure: Activities with athletic department. Target: Two (2) activities).

Campus-Wide Messaging. These efforts will be led by Sue Cloud, the Catt Center communications specialist, with assistance from Ashley Marsh and the voting interns. They will occur in September and October 2024.

All-Student Emails. The Catt Center has developed and will send a series of all-student emails that provide information about voter registration, absentee voting, deadline reminders, upcoming early voting opportunities, and information on candidates. These emails comply with, and exceed, the federal mandate to provide such information to all students. The emails will be sent in September and October 2024 and immediately before Election Day in November 2024.

(Evaluation Measure: open and click through statistics provided by IT. Target: 30% open rate).

Other Campus-Wide Messaging: In addition, the Catt Center staff will provide content to the following entities for publication in Fall 2024:

- Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) newsletter
- Graduate and Post-Doc newsletter
- *Iowa State Daily* news stories
- *Inside Iowa State* (employee newsletter)
- Student Announcements web page
- CyRide Bus Tail Ads (10 buses for one month)
- The Catt Center will post election information on social media during National Voter Education Week and other civic holidays.
- *Iowa State Daily* Banner ads (2-3 over the election cycle)

(Evaluation Measure: number of messages and ads. Target: Five (5) campus-wide messages).

Targeted Messaging.

Targeted Messaging to Low-Turnout Groups. In 2022, the #CyclonesVote team developed tailored messages for students in low-turnout majors (i.e., “Engineer your Future: Vote” and “Voting: It’s Your Business”). These messages will be redistributed for use in the academic colleges. Fall 2024. (Evaluation Measure: Number of messages distributed. Target: 10 messages.)

Dinner Announcements. The voting interns will work with sororities and fraternities to include information about voter registration and voting during the evening dinner announcements in September and October 2024. (Evaluation Measure: Number of dinner announcements made. Target: 30 announcements made in various Greek houses).

Outreach to Private Property Management Corporations. Most Iowa State students live off-campus in apartments or rental homes. The League of Women Voters will distribute information in September and October 2024 to apartment property management companies to distribute information about registration and voting via emails to residents, to link to the Story County Auditor site, and/or other means. (Evaluation Measure: Number of companies that agree. Target: Five (5) companies).

Secure On-Campus Satellite (Early) Voting Locations. The League of Women Voters will secure signatures to secure an early voting (absentee in person) location on campus for at least two days in October 2024. (Evaluation Measure: Early voting location secured. Target: Two (2) days).

Budget

An approximate budget for these activities is found in Table 5.

Table 5: Estimated Expenses for 2024 Voting Outreach:

Requested Item	Cost (\$)
Stipends for six voting interns (\$500 each)	3,000
Fringe benefits (at 1.8%)	54
CyRide Tail Ads for two months (\$300 per bus, 10 busses)	6,000
Bus Tail Ads Production and Mounting costs (\$150 per bus, 10 busses)	1,500
Digital ads on Orange Circulator busses (1 month)	1,000
<i>Iowa State Daily</i> ads (Standard Banner \$200 per ad * eight runs + lay out)	1,600
Mass emails (2 to faculty and staff; 8 to students. \$26 each)	260
Supplies and Printing	500
Subtotal	13,014
Indirect costs (33% for “other sponsored activities”)	4,293
Total	17,307

Long-Term Strategy

To achieve its long-term goal of fostering student involvement, ISU will use the opportunity presented by the Board of Regents (Recommendation 9 mentioned above) to bring together departments and programs already working on civic engagement to coordinate messaging and to collaborate on expanding these and other civic education and engagement efforts. As a substitute for a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, which is currently discouraged, the group would focus on low turnout majors and student clubs for minoritized communities. This group is likely to be convened sometime in the 2024 calendar year.

Iowa State can develop a sustained commitment to civic education and engagement through continued curricular offerings, annual voter education programming, and voter engagement efforts—even if on a smaller scale—in odd-numbered years, when Iowa city and school board elections are held.

Student voter engagement efforts will become institutionalized over five years with sustained support from deans, the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Provost, and the Athletic Department.

SECTION 7: NSLVE

NSLVE results are woven throughout this report. As you can see, Iowa State's voter engagement efforts have contributed to steady increases in voter registration and voter turnout in presidential and midterm election years. The demographic breakdowns, specifically between STEM and non-STEM students and within racial and ethnic groups, is at the center of voter engagement messaging and recruitment of student organizations and offices. NSLVE results are shared widely on campus through various communication channels.

SECTION 8: REPORTING

The Action Plan will be posted on the Catt Center website, shared with the ISU team and AGF, and posted on ALL IN and Voter Friendly Campus Initiative websites. Updates about voter engagement are also reported regularly in Catt Center newsletters, social media, and other outlets. This action plan is shared with the Catt Center staff and voting interns as a roadmap for election season activities.

SECTION 9: EVALUATION

#CyclonesVote goes through continuous reevaluation to refine and improve the voter engagement strategies and outcomes. Various assessment measures are used, although the ultimate assessment is the institution's NSLVE reports. Specific metrics for success are listed above and they are designed to be measurable and doable. The Catt Center will continue to lead the campus's voter engagement efforts with assistance from collaborators as needed.

Other evaluation data are available through NSSE and the ISU *Fact Book*. Iowa State does not participate in the Carnegie Community Engagement recognition or Campus Compact.