

Kalamazoo College Action Plan

June 2024

Executive Summary:

Kalamazoo College is invested in civic learning and democratic engagement efforts; such efforts align with the College's mission to "prepare our graduates to better understand, live successfully within, and provide enlightened leadership to a richly diverse and increasingly complex world." Civic learning and democratic engagement are central to this mission and the College's Institutional Learning Outcomes (communicate effectively, address complex problems, collaborate successfully, and demonstrate intercultural competency).

The Kalamazoo College Voter Engagement Campus Action Plan was written by Allie VanHeest, Interim Director, Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) at Kalamazoo College. The goals and strategies outlined in this plan were developed in close partnership with the Civic Engagement Scholars for the K Votes student-led program; these student leaders are Nikolas Krupka, Lyrica Gee, and Ipsa Wagle. Additional support was provided by Patrick Jarvis and Seth Hyman, campus organizers with For Michigan.

This plan will be implemented at Kalamazoo College, in Kalamazoo, Michigan, a liberal arts college in a small Midwestern city, where classes are taught in-person at one campus location. These plans will be implemented from June 2024 through June 2025, covering fall, winter, and spring trimesters, and will be updated annually in the spring. K Votes student leadership and volunteer participants, along with Campus Voter Engagement Coalition members and CCE staff will be responsible for implementing strategies laid out in this plan and evaluating progress towards short- and long-term goals. CCE staff are ultimately responsible for implementing this plan and will facilitate and resource collaborative efforts.

Leadership:

Kalamazoo College's Campus Voter Engagement Coalition includes:

- Allie VanHeest, Interim Director, Center for Civic Engagement
- Felicia Ford, Operations Manager, Center for Civic Engagement
- Riley Gabriel, Program Associate, Center for Civic Engagement
- Mindy Donovan, Guest Experience Coordinator, Admissions
- Peter Zillman, Director of Cybersecurity, Information Services
- Ryan Patterson, Area Coordinator, Residential Life
- Jane Hoinville, Prospect Research Analyst, Advancement
- Colin Johnson, Hornet Hub Coordinator, Center for International Programs
- Ipsa Wagle, Democracy Fellow, Civic Engagement Scholar

- Nikolas Krupka, Civic Engagement Scholar
- Lyrica Gee, Civic Engagement Scholar
- Roberta Gatti, Student
- Dylan Bonnett, Student
- Isabelle Mason, Student
- Jair Delgado, Student
- Tanis Grenier, Student
- Patrick Jarvis, Organizer, For Michigan
- Seth Hyman, Organizer, For Michigan

In recent years, Kalamazoo College has not had a campus-wide coalition focused on voter engagement; introduced in spring of 2024, this new coalition extends opportunities for campus stakeholders to guide voter engagement work and expands possibilities for institutionalization of voter engagement. The CCE is committed to leading this coalition in the long-term, with voter engagement responsibilities outlined in multiple staff members' position descriptions. The coalition has been convened and will be facilitated by the CCE, and CCE staff will consistently communicate with coalition members, schedule meetings, and manage logistics. Communication and workflow between meetings will be managed via email and Microsoft Office Teams.

Diversity of identities and experiences are critical to the success of the coalition and voter engagement work more broadly. While the college has not had a Campus Voter Engagement Coalition in recent years, NSLVE data demonstrates that Kalamazoo College's students of color have historically voted at lower rates than white students. Centering the voices of students of color is critical to understanding the unique barriers faced by BIPOC students as it pertains to voting. This will be a primary focus of the coalition.

Coalition members have self-selected into coalition participation and will meet bi-weekly, in-person, during the academic year to plan and implement strategies outlined in this plan. Additional invitations to join the coalition will be sent to all campus stakeholders at the beginning of the fall trimester. Targeted outreach to identity-focused student groups and staff and faculty of color has been ongoing and will continue in the fall. At this time, coalition members will not be compensated, though Civic Engagement Scholars hold paid positions within the CCE and are paid for their work.

Efforts are underway for the fall to include staff from the Intercultural Student Center, the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership, the Registrar's Office, College Marketing and Communications, and the Office of Student Activities. At present, there are no faculty members on the coalition. Efforts are ongoing to recruit faculty members, with focus on the Political Science, Anthropology and Sociology, Critical Ethnic Studies, and Women, Gender and Sexuality departments. At present, there are no senior administrative team members in

the Coalition; efforts to recruit senior administrators are ongoing. The Director of the CCE reports to the provost, who is supportive of the coalition's work.

While not currently represented on the coalition, the Center for Civic Engagement partners with the League of Women Voters, the Campus Vote Project, All In, and the Kalamazoo County Clerk's Office on voter engagement initiatives. These partners will be engaged in the strategies outlined in this plan. The CCE has historically partnered with the League of Women Voters and the Kalamazoo County Clerk's Office on educational programming and Get Out the Vote initiatives. These strategies will continue in the 2024-2025 academic year.

Commitment:

As outlined in the Executive Summary, Kalamazoo College's mission is to "prepare our graduates to better understand, live successfully within, and provide enlightened leadership to a richly diverse and increasingly complex world." The college is the home of the K-Plan, a personalized approach to the liberal arts and sciences that combines academics, study abroad, independent scholarship, career development and civic engagement in a flexible curriculum. This emphasis on civic engagement and students' roles as community members aligns closely with the work to increase student voter engagement.

The CCE leads the work of communicating the College's commitment to civic and voter engagement. Social justice, and tenets of diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the work of the CCE and guide the work of all student-led programs, including K Votes. For over 15 years, the CCE has facilitated the K Votes program, which employs student leaders to engage their peers in voter education, outreach, and engagement, with support from staff, faculty, and community partners. The K Votes program facilitates regular campus-facing and occasional community-wide events, and the CCE's website hosts voter education resources. The CCE and K Votes are visible and consistent facets of campus life, with many touchpoints for students across campus. Additionally, the College's President, Dr. Jorge Gonzalez, has signed the All In Presidents' Commitment to Full Voter Participation, and is supportive of campus voter engagement work.

Landscape:

Kalamazoo College has an increasingly diverse student body of nearly 1,400 students from 38 states. 31% of students are BIPOC and 22% are first-generation college students. The College's NSLVE data demonstrates that 66% of Black, 66% of Latinx, and 53% of AAPI students voted in 2020, as compared to 88% of white students. This Action Plan is organized around that data; strategies will consistently prioritize the experiences, needs, and voices of students of color to

address barriers to voting for these demographic groups. The Coalition will continue to use NSLVE data to assess the efficacy of voter engagement work and has a strong working relationship with the College's Institutional Researcher, Dr. Tara Webb, who has offered to provide the Coalition with institutional data as needed.

Michigan has generally favorable voting laws, with voting rights having been expanded in 2022. Mail-in voting and early, in-person voting are available to Michigan voters, and there are no clearly identifiable barriers to voting for students registered in Michigan. However, there is a significant challenge in the structural barriers faced by out-of-state students, particularly those from Texas, many of whom identify as both BIPOC and first-generation college students. Texas imposes significant hurdles to absentee voting, particularly affecting those under age 65. With a consistently growing pipeline of students from this region coming to Kalamazoo College, the need to support them as they seek to exercise their right to vote will only continue to grow.

The CCE has two permanent staff roles with voter engagement work outlined in the position descriptions (Director of the CCE and Program Associate), totaling approximately 0.5 FTE. Other CCE staff roles also support voter engagement work as needed. Additionally, the CCE hires, trains, and supports at least two paid Civic Engagement Scholars (student leaders for K Votes) each school year, totaling 20+ hours of work per week. The CCE is receiving additional capacity support from community partners, particularly For Michigan, and relying heavily on technical assistance resources from the Ask Every Student Toolkit and other national voter engagement partners.

At present, democratic engagement and civic learning are not directly tied to the Institutional Learning Outcomes. In the 2023-24 school year, democratic engagement was not directly taught in classrooms, though it may have been discussed by individual faculty at their own discretion. Moving into the 2024-25 school year, the Coalition will be focused on expanding the incorporation of democratic engagement content and resources into courses. In co-curricular programming, efforts are made in partnership with Student Involvement to incorporate democratic engagement content into the fall trimester required First Year Forum information sessions for freshman. This work will be expanded in the fall to ensure multiple touchpoints with incoming students. Student groups, clubs, and programs may be discussing democratic engagement, but again, not formally and/or publicly, except for the K Votes and Civic Engagement Scholar programs facilitated through the CCE.

Goals:

Kalamazoo College's Institutional Learning Outcomes are communicate effectively, address complex problems, collaborate successfully, and

demonstrate intercultural competency. The CCE team identifies strong connections between all four learning outcomes and the work of civic engagement, including voter engagement work.

Long-Term Goals:

Kalamazoo College's long-term vision is a campus community where voter engagement is institutionalized across multiple departments of campus and aspects of the student experience, so that every student has multiple touchpoints with voter engagement on an annual basis. Long-term (10 year) goals include:

- Reduction in disparities between voting rates of BIPOC and white students; students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds are voting at rates of 85% or higher.
- Classes are cancelled or shortened and/or student absences are excused on local, state, and federal election days.
- Every first-year seminar course has 20 minutes of dedicated time for a presentation on voter registration and the importance of civic engagement.
- System for paying eligible students for voter outreach and engagement work through Federal Work Study has been developed and implemented.
- A strong network of faculty partnerships has been developed such that at least one faculty member in each major department is sharing voter engagement information in the classroom each quarter.

Short-Term Goals:

Kalamazoo College's short-term vision is a campus community where progress has been made towards understanding the needs of BIPOC students in relation to voting, and where all students are consistently being provided with accessible, targeted information and resources to inform their civic participation. Short-term (3 year) goals include:

- Deepen connections between K Votes and Coalition membership and identity-based student organizations and student spaces (i.e. Intercultural Center).
- Demonstrated increase in BIPOC student voting rates; BIPOC students across demographic categories voting at 75% or higher.
- Maintain 85% or higher average voter turnout across campus.
- In partnership with For Michigan, register 200 or more students to vote per school year.
- Strengthened understanding of barriers faced by BIPOC students and out-of-state students in voting access; resources developed/identified to support barrier navigation.

- Expanded connections with faculty partners across academic departments (10 faculty members per year sharing voter engagement information in the classroom).

Strategy:

Short-Term Strategies:

Kalamazoo College's short-term strategies will prioritize asking every eligible student to vote, while centering the voting access needs of BIPOC students on campus. The Coalition is focused on ensuring multiple touchpoints with voter registration and engagement information for every K student, including those on study abroad. Some strategies are very broad, intended to reach students widely, while others are highly specific and targeted towards groups of BIPOC students who may be experiencing unique barriers to voting.

Strategy	Who	When	Audience	Location
Bulletin board in a box for all residence halls	CCE staff, Ryan Patterson	July, August	Students who live on campus	Residence halls
Develop/finalize/implement strategy for tabling/resource sharing at freshman move-in	CCE staff, Ryan Patterson, For Michigan partners	August, September	Incoming freshman	Residence halls
Develop resources for faculty to share in class in the fall	CCE staff	August, September	All students	Classrooms and/or online classroom platforms
Connect with faculty committee(s) and share resource package	CCE staff	September	All students	Classrooms and/or online classroom platforms
Convene training for all Coalition and K Votes members – delivering nonpartisan, culturally competent, accurate voting information	CCE staff, Coalition, K Votes	September	Coalition members, K Votes members	In person, on campus
Connect with Athletics about sharing voter information with fall teams via coaches	CCE staff	June, July	Athletes	In person, on campus
Send voting while abroad reminder emails to departing students	CCE staff, Colin Johnson	July, August	Students on study abroad (primarily juniors)	Email
Develop strategies for incorporating voter engagement information in First Year Forums	CCE staff, Ryan Patterson, Dean of Students	June-August	Incoming freshman	In person, on campus
Get approved for and plan Why We Vote Community Reflection	CCE staff	August - October	All students	Chapel

Facilitate Why We Vote Community Reflection	CCE staff, K Votes, For Michigan partners, Coalition	October	All students	Chapel
Plan and facilitate Halloween themed voter engagement movie night	K Votes, For Michigan partners	September-October	All students	In person, on campus
Identify BIPOC-focused student organizations	CCE staff, OSI/OSA	August	BIPOC students	In person, on campus
Outreach, plan, and facilitate K Votes and identity-based student organization joint meetings	K Votes	September-November	BIPOC students	In person, on campus
Weekly tabling at Hicks Student Center and Upjohn Library Commons	K Votes, For Michigan partners	September-November	All students	Hicks Student Center and Upjohn Library Commons
Develop voter registration resources for Texas, California, Illinois, Minnesota	CCE Staff, K Votes	August-September	Out of state students, many of whom are BIPOC	In person, on campus
Plan and facilitate session with Posse Scholars	CCE Staff, K Votes	September-October	Posse Scholars - primarily BIPOC students from California	In person, on campus
Plan and facilitate session with student group from Rio Grande Valley in Texas	CCE Staff, K Votes, Colin Johnson	September-October	Primarily BIPOC students from Texas	In person, on campus
Create and share voter information to Civic Engagement Scholars and all CCE participants	CCE staff, K Votes	August-September	CCE student participants	Email
Plan and implement voting day shuttles	CCE staff, K Votes, Coalition	October-November	All students	Shuttles to polling locations off campus
Create and post voter engagement posters	K Votes, CCE staff	October-November	All students	In person, on campus
Create and post voter engagement slides for campus screens	K Votes, CCE staff	October-November	All students	Screens are across campus
Ongoing social media posting (weekly)	K Votes, CCE staff, For Michigan partners	September-November	All students	Virtual
Attend and present at first/early Food for the Soul gathering in the student Intercultural Center	K Votes, CCE staff	September-October	BIPOC students	Intercultural Center
Explore and establish a partnership with Dining Services for voting day/week visibility (ideas: special menu, signage, pop-up event, etc.)	CCE Staff	September-November	All students	Cafeteria

Create table tent signage for cafeteria	CCE Staff, K Votes	September-November	All students	Cafeteria
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Long-Term Strategies:

A Kalamazoo College fully committed to educating for civic learning, political engagement and voter participation would have sustained faculty partnerships, a broad, consistent and engaged Campus Voter Engagement Coalition, and a broad, consistent and engaged K Votes student membership. The work would continue to be facilitated through the CCE, which has designated staff capacity, paid student capacity, and other funding resources allocated towards voter outreach and engagement work.

The CCE and K Votes work on voter outreach and engagement work year-round; the work is not tied to election cycles. This will continue. The intention for the newly formed Campus Voter Engagement Coalition will be to meet year-round, though meetings will likely be much more frequent during election cycles. Kalamazoo College understands that voter outreach and education are consistent priorities, not episodic ones. The CCE will work to deepen understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and impacts on voter outreach and engagement among all Coalition and K Votes members through resource and information sharing, group discussions, and training (minimum of annually).

Ultimately, CCE leadership (Director, Associate Director) are responsible for driving the institutionalization of these longer-term strategies, with partnership from various Coalition members and other campus stakeholders. To achieve broad faculty partnership will require consistent outreach to faculty members, creating and sharing easily actionable resources, connecting one-to-one with faculty members for relationship building purposes, and exploring a broad faculty feedback survey to understand possible barriers or desires related to sharing voter information in the classroom. This work will happen over the next three academic years. Achieving a broad, engaged and consistent Coalition will require relationship building with Coalition members, continued targeted outreach to relevant campus stakeholders, meaningful meetings and clear priorities, and building group cohesion. This work will continue over the next year, and then be assessed and built upon for the future. Lastly, to achieve broad, engaged, and consistent K Votes student membership will require strong training and supervision for K Votes student leadership, the co-creation of actionable recruitment goals and strategies, and consistent relationship building and communication with members. This work will continue over the next year, and then be assessed and built upon for the future.

Voter engagement work is a core priority of the CCE and is reflected in multiple position descriptions within the office staff structure. This ensures that the priority will not be lost in any staff transitions. Clearly documented annual plans support the work continuing through transitions. K Votes Civic Engagement Scholars

generally work a term of one school year. They work closely with CCE staff to identify their replacements each spring, and then CCE staff provide training and supervision to the incoming Civic Engagement Scholars to ensure smooth transition and continuity of the work.

Reporting:

This plan will be shared widely, including with on campus stakeholders (Coalition, K Votes, etc.), posted publicly on the CCE's website, and shared with the College's voter engagement partner organizations. All strategies present in this plan have been informed and generated in collaboration with Coalition members, K Votes student leadership, and community partners. NSLVE report data heavily informed the development of strategies present in this plan. NSLVE data will also be shared publicly on the CCE's website and shared with voter engagement community partners.

This plan will be utilized to shape and inform voter engagement work in the coming year. The strategies and timelines laid out in this plan will inform biweekly Coalition meetings and weekly K Votes meetings to ensure all work is moving forward in a timely manner. The CCE Director will ultimately be responsible for ensuring fidelity to this plan and facilitating campus and community-wide reporting.

Evaluation:

The evaluation will assess the progress Kalamazoo College is making towards short- and long-term goals and support accountability to identified strategies. Increasing voting rates among BIPOC students is the primary focus of this Action Plan; tracking progress towards that goal and gathering feedback from BIPOC students along the way will be critical to ensuring meaningful success in a way that is supportive and culturally competent. Evaluation data will be shared and assessed within the Campus Voter Engagement Coalition and K Votes group and made available publicly to campus stakeholders and community partners; this is a critical component of accountability.

CCE staff will lead all evaluation efforts. Evaluation will occur on an ongoing basis through the November 2024 election, and then annually, during the summer. Michigan will provide monthly voter registration numbers with the CCE staff team; these will be used to track progress towards overall voter registration information. NSLVE data will be used for biannual evaluation of progress on voting rates among BIPOC students. The CCE's partnership with the Institutional Research office will support access to institutional data sets that will inform strategies as the student body demographics continue to evolve.

Annual evaluation outcomes will inform strategy development for the coming academic year and will be used to shape short- and long-term goals. The

Coalition and K Votes teams will review evaluation data collaboratively, celebrate wins, and develop targeted interventions where needed to address gaps between outcomes and goals.