



Voter Friendly Campus Designation 2022-2023
KSU Institutional Plan

About Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw State University is a comprehensive university recognized for its entrepreneurial spirit, global engagement, and sense of community. As Georgia’s third-largest university and one of the fifty largest public universities in the country, Kennesaw State offers more than 100 undergraduate and graduate degrees, including an increasing number of doctoral programs. Kennesaw State is a Carnegie-designated doctoral research institution (R2), placing it among an elite group of only 6 percent of U.S. colleges and universities with an R1 or R2 status.

In January 2015, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia approved the consolidation of KSU with nearby Southern Polytechnic State University. The new consolidated university now serves over 35,000 students on two primary campuses located in Kennesaw and Marietta, both within Cobb County. Cobb County has been one of the fastest-growing counties within the Atlanta metropolitan area. The university has additional smaller educational sites around the metro area and one international education site in Montepulciano, Italy. In addition to degree-seeking students, KSU serves over 17,000 students through continuing and professional education courses.

Overview:

KSU’s former president, Dr. Daniel Papp, shared a reflection and concern during a State of the University address noting how the term “academic” has become synonymous with “irrelevant” resulting in the perceived diminished value of academic pursuits and the contributions higher education makes to society. The reflection became a charge and led to the creation of Engage KSU. Through the consolidation process, and even stronger commitment emerged with the creation of the Division of Economic Development and Community Engagement. However, we continue to face the challenge of fully engaging our broad, diverse, and growing student body. This sparked our application to join NASPA’s Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement lead initiative project and connected that work to our long-standing American Democracy Project work with AASCU. This created an exceptional opportunity for collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. KSU is proud of the good work we have already been doing but used this process as a vehicle to enhance the democratic engagement of our students, particularly related to voting and participation in the civic life of their communities.

The 2022 election year will be an opportunity to engage first-time voters and re-engage students who are registered to vote as the state of Georgia and many others hold local elections. The Department of Student Leadership is leading the charge in planning initiatives and educational programming to prepare the KSU campuses for the 2022 election season. Our 2022 goals focus

on preparedness, education, and engagement through voter registration, efforts to educate the campus community, mock debate simulations, civic engagement workshops, building civic engagement partnerships with the community at large, and various campus community forums.

Our NSLVE data indicates a 78.5% registration rate for 2012 and 53.6% registration rate for 2016. The voting rates were 51.6% in 2012 and 53.6% in 2014.

Moving into 2022, voter registration efforts will continue as outlined in the previous plan, and KSU is excited to continue our partnership with TurboVote. The 2022 enhancement goals focus on voter education and engagement through:

Ease of Access to Voting: Through our partnership with TurboVote, there is an easy mechanism to request absentee ballots at no cost to students. This is promoted as a key advantage of signing up for TurboVote and is particularly marketed to on-campus residential students who preferred not to register using their local on-campus address but would not be able to return home to vote at their designated polling location.

We also utilize the Georgia Secretary of State's My Voter Page. Through this site, it is easy to verify voter registration status, poll location, early voting locations, current elected officials, update registration information, request an absentee or provisional ballot, verify ballot status, and review a sample ballot for the upcoming election.

In the past, we have invited the Cobb County Board of Elections and Registration to bring their sample ballot machine but with the update in technology in Georgia, we will be updating what this will look like so students are prepared to complete their ballot appropriately.

Commitment to Civility: Assess and enhance the institutional climate and culture. KSU has experienced a significant change in leadership coupled with a variety of high-profile conflicts, in many ways mirroring the national climate. In late 2016 we achieved a long-standing dream and created permanent Democracy Walls on both campuses. The experience and level of engagement have increased as student groups such as CEEP Fellows and now the Andrew Goodman Foundation Ambassadors have created conversation opportunities through tabling efforts around the Democracy Wall. Creed Week has expanded awareness and commitment to the university's Owl Creed and the institution's aspirational values.

Our three top goals for democratic engagement during the Fall 2022 semester are:

- Raise the Kennesaw State University voting rate 4% from 53.6% based on our 2016 Presidential Election NSLVE data.
- Increase student participation in civic engagement initiatives and actions by providing accessible means to information via social media, email marketing, and campus/virtual programming.

- Track student participation through our democratic engagement platforms such as Issue Voter, TurboVote, and my.VoteEverywhere and 10% of all KSU students have created an account or have utilized the platform program by May 2022.

Leadership/Coalition:

Building on the small American Democracy Project team that had served as primary coordinators of our annual Constitution Week activities, the Office of the Dean of Students assembled a multidisciplinary team of institutional partners who committed to supporting this effort and our ALL IN Challenge pursuits. The KSU coalition includes:

1. Student Groups
 - a. Student Government Association
 - i. Promotion of voter registration drives and educational programming
 - ii. The host of Letter writing campaigns and Constitution Trivia nights
 - b. Civic Engagement Team
 - i. Recruited on campus and selected by the Department of Student Leadership and Service
 - ii. Plan and implement voter registration and engagement initiatives
 - c. National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)
 - i. Volunteers for voter registration and education initiatives
 - d. SISTUHS, Incorporated at KSU
 - i. volunteer for voter education programming and initiatives
2. Faculty
 - a. Marshal Chaifetz-CHSS Grants and Contracts Coordinator and Clinical Associate Professor of Public Administration and Law
 - i. Student Mock Senatorial Debate Collaborator for recruitment of student and faculty engagement
 - b. Kerwin Swint-Director of the School of Government and International Affairs
 - i. Director of Owls in Washington Internship program
 - c. Carl Snook-Senior Lecturer of Political Science
 - i. American Democracy Project, Georgia Coalition Partner
 - d. Laurie Aycock- Director of Collection Development and Librarian Assistant Professor of Library Science
 - i. Library Programming including Constitution Con
3. Staff
 - a. Shameka Wells- Executive Director of Cultural and Community Centers and Student Leadership
 - i. Manage CLDE and ADP activity
 - b. Karen Boetler- Assistant Director of Student Leadership
 - i. Planning and implementation of CLDE and ADP activity

- c. Nicole Phillips- Director of Student Advocacy
 - i. Program Sponsor- Speak-up series hosted during Constitution Week
- d. Christina Ujj- Associate Director of Residence Education
 - i. Resident programming and cosponsor of Speak-Up Series
- e. Sharon Brownlow- Director of Parent and Family Programs
 - i. Parent programming for voter education
- f. Jennifer Wilson- Director, Office of Sustainability
 - i. Policy programming focused on sustainability and environmental protection

We strategically engage the diversity of students, faculty, staff, and administrators, along with external partners from the League of Women Voters, and Cobb County Board of Elections and Registration to ensure comprehensive buy-in and multi-layered support. Internal partnerships across multiple Student Affairs and Academic Affairs units are critical for infusing our marketing efforts in the classroom, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. We also partner with Alumni Affairs and Parent & Family Programs to reach broad audiences that both contribute to civic engagement but also have an influence on our students.

Fall 2022 Plan

2019 Analysis

Due to staff transition and a departmental restructure, data from 2019 was utilized to continue the development and implementation of core programs focused on voter engagement and education. A highlight of Kennesaw State each year is our Constitution Week which spans from Constitution and Citizenship Day (September 17th) to National Voter Registration Day (September 24th). We utilize this week to conduct voter registration and education activities, host civil discourse programs, policy-focused education sessions, and interactive experiences to engage students. During the 2019 Constitution Week, we were able to continue a new initiative called Field Trip Friday which hosts a trip to the Georgia State Capitol during the week of programming. As a new addition, we hosted an individual from the Cobb Board of Elections to educate students on employment and volunteer opportunities. An additional new element of this week was the Census 2020 Information sessions. These were prepared as a workshop available for instructors to request to provide an overview of the Census coming in 2020.

Voter Registration

Kennesaw will continue to utilize our partnership with TurboVote to provide easy access to registration. The campus mailing system was updated during 2019 to centralize all mailing per

respective campus. With this, each of our two campuses has *one single mailing address on-campus students will use to register. This adjustment will also influence the polling location for students which in turn makes providing transportation to the polls much easier. These addresses are preloaded in TurboVote to make it easier and increase accuracy and provided these details to the County Registrar to ensure there were no accidental rejections due to address match errors. The Office of the Dean of Students hosts a dedicated Voter Registration and Education website with links to both TurboVote and the Georgia My Voter Page and uses that page as a landing site to then direct visitors to other related activities. The direct link to that site is <http://deanofstudents.kennesaw.edu/resources/voter-registration.php> but given the length of the URL we created an easier “mask” site to auto-direct users, so for marketing purposes, we promoted the site as vote.kennesaw.edu.*

There was significant marketing of voter registration options, deadlines, and programming. In addition to the multiple dedicated blast emails sent by the Dean of Students to all students, employees, parents and alumni, multiple forms of social media were employed, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. There is also an automated message that populates when students visit the Owl Life Student Organization portal. Each message is tailored based on the time of distribution, with some promoting initial voter registration options, some reminding of upcoming deadlines, and some encouraging verification of registration, proper address, polling location, and/or how to request absentee ballots.

The CET group we plan to develop will help in establishing a schedule of Voter Registration and Education tables and will also provide more personnel to continue hosting roaming registrars throughout campus. This team will play a key role in marketing and dispersing voter registration initiatives.

Voter Education:

For 2022, we will continue our traditional efforts such as e-blasts and social media postings to guide students to TurboVote but will also increase our efforts in Voter Education programming earlier than our normal timeframe of September when Constitution Week occurs. Through the CET Team, we plan to continue hosting and host:

- What’s the Tea on Democracy?: Student hosted conversation hours hosted by our campus Democracy Walls.
- Action Planning for Presidential Elections
- Student Government Policy Poster and Letter Writing Campaigns: Posters that highlight specific policies of interest to students as well as templates for writing letters to local representatives.
- Constitution Con 2020: Hosted by the Sturgis Library, this event includes a panel discussion reviewing the important influence of the Constitution on our current systems, voter registration information, and pocket constitution booklets.
- Public Policy focused information sessions. In the past these have included

examples such as the Deep Dive into the Public Service Commission.

- Speak Up Series: Partnership with Resident Life, Student Advocacy, and Cultural Community Centers. This program hosts a relevant topic for students to practice civil discourse.
- Voter Planning Cards: Business cards that students complete to develop their “voting action plan.”

All programming offered directly through the coalition and/or the Student Government Association was specifically designed to be nonpartisan. Other politically and socially affiliated registered student organizations were free to choose whatever programmatic approaches and/or content they wished, though most opted for nonpartisan approaches to engage a broader audience.

Ballot Access:

Through our partnership with TurboVote, there is an easy mechanism to request absentee ballots at no cost to students. This is promoted as a key advantage of signing up for TurboVote and is particularly marketed to on-campus residential students who preferred not to register using their local on-campus address but would not be able to return home to vote at their designated polling location.

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Voter Turnout:

The Dean of Students facilitates an email blast and social media postings to promote all of the voter registration, education, and awareness activities that ultimately reinforced the desired end goal: actually voting! Each election cycle there is at least one email blast with appropriate details and reminders. Knowing students do not always check their emails in a timely manner, all activities were also promoted through OwlLife, KSU’s online student activities portal and other traditional promotion mechanisms are used (distributing flyers around the campuses, asking faculty to make announcements to their classes, encouraging student leaders to use peer-to-peer communication channels).

We also educate students about the ease and availability of absentee ballots but more importantly ensure they understand how polling locations are designated. A challenge we have faced in years past is students not realizing on election day they can only vote at their designated polling location and end up unable to vote because they went to the wrong location. To proactively address this issue we focused on an early voting campaign to encourage students who were not

choosing an absentee ballot option to go to the advance voting locations designated for the county. Unlike on election day, the only restriction when choosing a location for advance voting is that the voters must choose a location within the county in which they are registered. Since the majority of our students are from the local area, mostly within the county in which the two campuses are located, this provided easily accessible locations with convenient hours across multiple days. The state also provided Saturday voting options. To further support early voting, we offer shuttles to the polling locations. Utilizing the new CET team we will be able to provide more vans to more locations as needed.

Increased Participation:

Our third goal for the 2022 year will be to increase the number of students we see participating in our programs focused on civic learning and democratic engagement. Participation in the past has been low but we believe by leveraging our resources, including our newly formed CET, we will be able to create more student-to-student connections to drive engagement. This CET will also provide additional avenues and energy to our marketing and promotion of the events we host throughout the year. Overall, we aim to expand programming and engagement beyond Constitution Week so students are engaged much earlier in the year.

Evaluation/Measurement of Success/Commitment:

The Coalition at KSU has sustained a member of our assessment team to provide guidance in evaluating student and program outcomes. We've received reasonable responses to our programming that shows students are being influenced to become more engaged in the democratic process but we hope to increase the response rate we receive and begin to dive into deeper conversations with students. A noted trend is a loss of efficacy to influence change which can be linked to students involved in civic learning and democratic engagement. We hope to measure the rate at which our efforts increase student efficacy in the democratic process.

To ensure a successful assessment of our efforts and integration with larger institutional assessment efforts, we invited the Coordinator of Assessment and Strategic Planning to join our coalition. We are seeking a 4% increase in registration and voting rates in 2022 compared to the NSLVE results from 2016. We also want to begin efforts immediately to instill a sense of moral obligation for democratic engagement and participation in every election, whether national, state or local. One tool for achieving this goal will be our Student Creed. Currently, the creed is being redeveloped by a student focus group to reflect the current student population and will be promoted throughout the university. Given the link to civic engagement, we are seeking ways to bring the code to life, engaging a crowdsourcing philosophy to allow the creed to evolve organically to reflect our evolving student body. Simply bringing together such a diverse group of partners from across the institution and community has intrinsic value, and through the coalition, we seek to strengthen not only this work but future collaborations in service to our students and community.

Kennesaw State University and the Department of Student Leadership and Service has fostered an institutional commitment to advancing civic and democratic engagement at KSU. A Civic

Engagement Coordinator position was established within the Department of Student Leadership and Service to specifically develop a culture of awareness and engagement around civic learning and democratic engagement. For instance, Field Trip Fridays were created to have students learn about civic engagement in metro Atlanta and connect the learning back to campus. Also, our Mock debates create collaborations with university constituents to keep students interested in the policies and laws on our ballots. We have an awesome opportunity this year to have our Executive Director, Shameka Wells will teach a Civic Engagement course in the Fall.

Assessment results from NSLVE have been made publicly available through the website below:
<http://deanofstudents.kennesaw.edu/resources/clde.php>

The KSU student newspaper, The Sentinel, OwlLife News Page, and Student/Faculty Informs are possible ways to promote and share the NSLVE reports with university constituents.

In Conclusion:

We plan to continue the existing momentum at Kennesaw State University. We will be expanding our efforts beyond Constitution Week which will bring additional opportunities to engage students and create a more consistent programming throughout the academic year. We also hope the Civic Engagement Team will provide an outlet to increase student-led initiatives around civic engagement.