

Lake Superior State University
Office of Student Government & Political Action and University Development

Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan

I. Executive Summary

Lake Superior State University (LSSU) is a regional state university that provides affordable education in various areas of study. The University goes beyond the traditional classroom by offering real-world, hands-on, engaged learning within a unique campus setting. LSSU's Voter Friendly Coalition consists of members of the Student Government Association (SGA), faculty and students from the political science department, and leaders of Campus Life. LSSU's SGA is affiliated with the Campus Vote Project to provide students with assistance and guidance as they establish their participation in electoral processes beyond the college experience.

The Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan aims to foster a culture of informed and active citizenship among LSSU students. It seeks to address challenges related to transparent communication and student engagement by promoting civic participation on campus and within the Sault Ste. Marie community. The plan will be implemented across the LSSU campus, integrating voter education initiatives into academic programming, student activities, and community outreach efforts.

This plan aims to achieve 60% student engagement during the upcoming election cycle through voter registration drives, educational sessions, and campus events focused on civic education. In the long term, it will serve to establish a sustainable framework for civic engagement that integrates voter education into the university's campus life department and fosters ongoing dialogue about democratic participation. The plan is designed for ongoing implementation, with continuous evaluation and adaptation to meet evolving student needs and community dynamics.

The Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan will be implemented through a series of strategic initiatives. These initiatives include collaborative events with the University Activities Board to host non-partisan educational events and voter registration drives. Additionally, utilizing social media for outreach, event promotion, and dissemination of voter information will be crucial in reaching the majority of the student population.

The success of the plan will be evaluated using Presence.io (recently renamed Involve) by Modern Campus to track attendance, participation rates, and feedback from students. Regular surveys and feedback sessions will gather input to refine and enhance future initiatives. Bi-weekly meetings will be held to review outcomes, discuss key takeaways, and make adjustments as needed to improve effectiveness.

Overall, the Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan at LSSU represents a commitment to enhancing student engagement in civic life, promoting transparency, and empowering students to become active participants in shaping their university and community through democratic processes.

II. Coalition Overview (Institutional Leadership)

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LSSU embraces civic participation as an integral part of its mission and a core component of a comprehensive education. Through the SGA, particularly the Political Action and University Development (PAUD) branch, students actively promote civic engagement on campus and within the Sault Ste. Marie community. This organization serves as a consistent resource for non-partisan voter engagement programming, fostering a culture of informed and active citizenship.

Given that many coalition members have recently graduated, this year marks a strong rebuilding phase. The SGA plans to host frequent events to engage new students and identify individuals passionate about voter engagement and education. These efforts aim to create a vibrant community where students can apply their critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills to promote democratic participation and address broader societal challenges.

Recognizing the importance of democratic engagement, LSSU is committed to helping students understand their responsibility to others and develop practical strategies for crafting a better world. This commitment to civic involvement not only enhances the university experience but also prepares students to contribute meaningfully to society.

III. University Landscape

As Michigan's smallest public university, located in Sault Ste. Marie, Lake Superior State University is a unique and important educational institution for the Eastern Upper Peninsula region. With a total enrollment of 1,651 students as of Fall 2022, LSSU offers a more intimate learning environment than the average university. However, LSSU has faced significant

enrollment challenges in recent years, with a 23.5% decrease in total headcount from 2018 to 2022.

LSSU serves a diverse student body, with approximately 25% first-generation college students and more than 40% from low-income backgrounds. The student population is primarily full-time students (1,292 out of 1,651 in Fall 2022), with a significant number of commuters given the university's location and regional demographics. The student body is predominantly White/Non-Hispanic (66.75%), reflecting the demographics of the Eastern Upper Peninsula, with Native American students forming the second-largest ethnic group (8.57%). The university offers a range of popular programs, including Business, Nursing, Engineering, Criminal Justice, and Education, which collectively account for nearly 60% of total enrollment. LSSU takes pride in its low student-to-faculty ratio of 16:1, allowing for personalized attention and support.

In the past two years, LSSU has experienced significant leadership changes, with three different individuals occupying the University President's position. This turnover has created challenges in maintaining consistent communication and strategic direction. Despite these difficulties, the university community, including students, faculty, and staff, has shown resilience and a commitment to improving the institution. LSSU students have expressed a growing desire for increased involvement in university decision-making processes and civic engagement. This interest stems from a recognition of the impact their voices can have on shaping both their educational experience and the broader community. Students are seeking more transparent communication channels and opportunities to participate in governance structures that affect their daily lives on campus.

To address these aspirations, student leaders, including those in the Student Government Association, have been proactive in seeking ways to enhance student engagement. They have initiated discussions with university administration and external partners, such as the Deputy Secretary of State, to explore avenues for increased student participation in university affairs and civic activities. The Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan is a key initiative aimed at fostering a culture of active student involvement and civic responsibility. This plan seeks to empower students by demonstrating the significance of their participation in both campus and broader electoral processes. Through targeted voter education and engagement programs, the initiative aims to cultivate a more informed and participatory student body.

By focusing on these efforts, LSSU is working to create an environment where students feel their voices are valued and their participation can make a meaningful difference. This approach not only enhances the university experience but also prepares students to be engaged citizens in their future communities. As LSSU navigates its challenges, the commitment to student engagement and civic participation remains a cornerstone of its mission to provide a transformative education for all.

IV. Commitment

In light of recent challenges, the commitment of various stakeholders to fostering a more transparent and engaging environment is evident. The university community is coming together to rebuild trust among students. The SGA has been at the forefront of efforts to promote transparency and open communication within the university. By organizing events, facilitating discussions, and actively seeking student feedback, the SGA is working diligently to address concerns and rebuild trust among the student body.

Additionally, the political science department has shown a strong commitment to the action plan, aiming to raise awareness surrounding voter engagement. Their dedication to promoting informed and active citizenship among students is a crucial element in our efforts to increase voter participation and ensure that every voice is heard. Faculty and administration are also dedicated to creating a more inclusive and communicative environment. Their support for the Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan reflects a shared commitment to increase transparency and student engagement. Regular bi-weekly meetings of the coalition will ensure that key takeaways from events are discussed and that necessary adjustments are made to improve future initiatives.

V. Goals

In this upcoming election cycle, one short-term goal is to reach 60% student engagement. This goal involves actively promoting voter registration, hosting informational sessions, and organizing events that encourage students to participate in the election process. Data from Presence.io/Involve will allow us to determine if we've met our goal by tracking attendance for every event.

Looking toward the long term, our goal is to establish a sustainable framework that integrates voter education into the Department of Campus Life. This ensures that every incoming student receives important information regarding civic engagement and voting rights. It would also provide new students with community resources that support voter engagement, education, and turnout. Regular meetings between the President of SGA and the Executive Director of Campus Life & Engagement will ensure that objectives for this goal are established and met within a reasonable time. The objectives will be shared with the Director of Housing and Dean of Student Affairs, who will both be included in facilitating this integration.

VI. Implementation Strategy

Events will be regularly scheduled to increase voter education and engagement. Our University Activities Board, which hosts trivia events in the Galley of the Cislser Center, will collaborate with SGA to organize multiple events focused on non-partisan education about the candidates and community resources available to voters.

In addition, SGA will enhance voter engagement and education efforts through several initiatives. Regular tabling sessions in high-traffic areas such as the library, academic buildings, and dining halls will provide information on voter registration, upcoming elections, and important deadlines. Volunteers from the student body will assist with registration directly at the tables with multiple computers set up at each table. Hosting watch parties for major political debates in common areas such as the Galley or Arts Center on campus, followed by facilitated discussions with guidelines to avoid argumentative discussions. We will also organize mock elections to provide students with a practical understanding of how elections work and the importance of their vote. Finally, we will utilize social media to send reminders about upcoming events, important deadlines, and educational content to keep students informed.

VII. NSLVE

Lake Superior State University is interested in joining the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement and is actively taking steps to join. LSSU is awaiting approval to join from campus leadership, and then will immediately complete the necessary paperwork. LSSU is looking forward to joining and receiving the data to further guide planning for future elections.

VIII. Reporting Data

LSSU uses Presence.io/Involve which is a web and mobile software platform that assists universities with increasing student engagement, allocating resources, and promoting events. The SGA will post all events and their attendance on this platform along with the resources used, the cost of materials, and the time/location in which it occurred. Volunteers will use the platform to scan students' IDs to check them into the event and will ask if they've registered to vote to ensure we are reaching out to all students and making a note if they state they're registered. Under each student profile, a note will be made to record if they've registered to vote or not. This will allow us to track voter registration and follow up with students who haven't registered.

The Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan will be shared with all students during the first week of the fall semester. This will embrace the need for transparency with students and display the commitment to voter engagement, education, and turnout. The average and total attendance statistics will be sent to the student body at the end of each semester and will be available to view at any time by students or faculty if a request is made to the SGA. LSSU has expressed interest in joining NSLVE and plans to take the appropriate steps to get there this Fall.

IX. Evaluation of Success

To measure the success of the events, LSSU will utilize Presence.io/Involve to track and analyze key metrics. By posting all events and recording data related to the event's attendance, cost, and time/location, we will increase our understanding of the participation rates. This will allow us to discover what's driving students to events and when the best time for an event is.

Success will be measured by event attendance, the level of participation during the event, and the overall reach of our education and engagement efforts.

Feedback will be collected through various channels to ensure we are addressing the needs and concerns of our student body. Volunteers will engage with students after the event to gather information on their experiences and possible improvements for future events. Additionally, we will send out post-event surveys to all attendees using Presence.io/Involve. This feedback will be crucial in identifying areas of improvement and understanding the impact of our initiatives. All feedback will be evaluated biweekly during each PAUD meeting where key takeaways and improvements will be discussed.