

Metro State University 2024 Democratic Engagement Action Plan
Developed by: Ashley Lopez, Metro State Community Engagement Coordinator

Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Metro State University in Minnesota for the 2024 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 presidential election. Because so much of this year's plan includes digital tools, events and outreach, we will be using this plan for the main campus, as well as all satellite campuses of Metro State University. The goals for Metro State University for the 2024 election are:

- provide regular, timely information to students and the entire university community about voting processes and deadlines in Minnesota across a variety of channels, both digitally and in-person;
- promote voter engagement and register 50 or more new voters through direct outreach, classroom visits, and social media campaigns;
- offer tools and information to enable at least 250 students to cast a more informed vote.

Leadership Team:

Our leadership team is comprised of Metro State University staff, faculty and students, as well as community partners.

Per feedback received on our 2022 ALL IN plan, we have also created a leadership succession plan. Over the past year, we have created a Metro State Votes program planning and implementation manual that can be accessed by anyone directly involved with the planning process. It is introduced to all students who interface with the Community Engagement office (including student workers), and is regularly updated as changes are made. Incoming professional staff/faculty are also trained on the program using this manual. This allows the program to continue existing even when changes in staffing, budget or departmental structure occur. The responsibility for recruiting students, faculty and community partners for each year will fall with the Community Engagement Coordinator, supported by the Community Engagement Office Manager, the Director of Student Life and Leadership Development, and faculty that have consistently supported our campaign over the years.

Metro State Staff:

Ashley Lopez – Community Engagement Coordinator
Brian Higbee – Office Manager, Community Engagement & Library Services Office Manager
Philip Fuehrer – Director, Student Life and Leadership Development
Ginny Arthur – Metro State University President
Laura Lindahl – Marketing Director (web content and employee newsletter)
Steve Reed – Chief Information Officer (re: Rock The Vote technology)
Jo Woodward – Gateway Student Services Director (for all-student messages)

Metro State Faculty:

Adrienne Falcon – Professor and Program Director, Masters of Advocacy & Political Leadership
Matthew Filner–Professor of Political Science, Social Science Department
Megan Brown–Associate Professor, Masters of Advocacy and Political Leadership (MAPL)
Susan Hilal–Professor, Criminal Justice Studies

Metro State Student Representation:

Emma Gabbert – President, Metro State University Student Association (MSUSA)
Kameel Asha - Vice President, MSUSA

Community Partners:

Joan Ellis & Pamela Mercier –Voter Engagement Co-Chairs, League of Women Voters -St. Paul
Bridget Ritzer - LeadMN

Our campus works with the following nonprofit partners: American Democracy Project, Ask Every Student, Campus Compact, LEAD-MN, ALL IN Challenge, Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, MinnState Civic Engagement Practitioners Network, League of Women Voters-Saint Paul, MN Secretary of State’s Office.

Commitment:

Metro State University’s vision includes “an unwavering commitment to civic engagement.” In addition, the President’s work plan identifies community engagement as one of 7 strategic university priorities. This commitment is woven into the culture of the institution at all levels: Presidential communiqués, annual small grants and awards to faculty for community-engaged scholarship (often involving students), election- and civic-related curricular projects in multiple courses including course-based academic internships (Spring “Capitol Pathways” program, summer campaigns, etc.), student advocacy, civic learning events sponsored by student clubs, academic departments and student affairs personnel, and a biannual voter registration campaign called Metro State Votes (including course-based projects, tabling at prime campus locations, class visits, events, campus-wide communication, high-visibility skyway banners and social media.) The university’s Institute for Community Engagement and Scholarship, composed of five seasoned staff members, enables significant cross-campus collaboration on these activities. Metro State University has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2020.

Landscape:

Metro State University is a public 4-year institution—a commuter campus with 4 primary locations in Minnesota’s Twin Cities metropolitan region. We have approximately 10,500 students (7500 FY equivalents), the vast majority of whom live and work in the metro area. Ages range from 17 to 72 years old. About $\frac{2}{3}$ are Pell grant-eligible, and a similar number are first-generation college students. We estimate that more than $\frac{1}{2}$ are student parents. Among them, 52% are Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian-heritage and/or mixed-heritage. Our institution is designated as a Minority Serving Institution.

Metropolitan State University joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2016 and has

authorized NSLVE, which reports the following.

Our institution had a 2020 campus voting rate of 71.3%.

Our institution had a 2020 voter registration rate of 83.4%.

Our institution had a 2018 voter turnout rate of 58.6%.

Our institution had a 2018 voter registration rate of 80.6%

2022 date is not yet available.

Our institution has been recognized in the past by ALL IN for these awards:

2018 Highest Undergraduate Voting Rate at a Medium Public 4-year, Highest Undergraduate Voting Rate at a Medium Public 4-year

Our institution has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals: 2016 Silver, 2018 Platinum, 2020 Gold

We know that our University is one of the most civically engaged, both at the state level and nationally. Because of our location, and our historical relationships with the surrounding community of East Saint Paul, we have been able to influence and engage those who live and work around the University and help register them to vote as well. As enrollment changes, and as the needs and desires of students continue to morph in our post-COVID reality, we have learned that our approach in 2024 will need to be heavily focused on leveraging digital tools. More and more students are choosing hybrid or fully-online courses, and in order to effectively reach them, our digital approach must be as strong (or stronger) than our traditional on-campus efforts have been. This information has greatly influenced our events schedule for the Metro State Votes campaign, as well as how we developed our communications plan for election season.

Goals:

Our campus's short-term democratic engagement goals are:

- Increase student voter turnout rate to 75% in 2024.
- Increase student voter registration rate to 86% in 2024.

Our long-term goals are to bring the voter registration rate to 100% over the next two election cycles (ideally by the 2028 presidential election). In order to achieve this, we seek to enter every class held by Metro State University at least once during the fall semester, and to deliver voter registration information. This will require faculty partnerships, and enough students who will be willing to take on the work. Our plan for achieving this goal is as follows:

- Professor Matt Filner will require students in all sections of his Politics 101 course to volunteer to give voter registration information to a Metro State fall course. In total, this will be around 75 students committing to visit one class each.
- Students from the Masters of Advocacy and Political Leadership, as well as student workers from the Community Engagement office, will provide voter engagement information by visiting the classes the are not visited by Politics 101 students.

- During this visits, students will use the MN Secretary of State's voter registration QR code, and encourage students to register in that moment.

Strategy:

Metro State University will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

Short-Term Strategy (for 2024 election season):

- Provide regular, direct communication to all students through Gateway Students Services, the Metro Moment newsletter, and social media pages about voter registration and voting:
 - Late August – Early October: how to register
 - Late September/*National Voter Registration Day*: early voting by mail or in-person
 - Late October/*Vote Early Day*: early voting in-person and same-day registration
- Post and share out resources provided by the Minnesota Secretary of State's Office (including a scannable QR code that leads to voter registration pages);
 - This includes securing an agreement with IT and Marketing departments to feature voter registration information prominently on the university website and the landing page of the D2L course platform, as well as on the Community Engagement website
 - We also commit to updating content as early voting opens and pre-registration/mail-in ballot deadlines pass
- Host voter registration/info tables at least once a week in the University library;
- Staff a table at Fall Fest in early September for Voter Registration, as well as a Constitution Day trivia game & Constitution booklet distribution;
- Support and help promote MSUSA's *National Voter Registration Day* voter engagement activities;
- Visit at every fall semester course with voter education and registration info (to be presented by students in the Political Science department);
- Focus on classes that tend to attract our youngest students (Sciences, METR 101, etc.);
- Engage 3-5 faculty in developing course-based voter education projects;
- Provide training for students in conducting deliberative dialogues and making class presentations on voting, and engage those students in other Metro State Votes 2024 activities and events;

- Host a forum/panel discussion related to election security and how to manage potential violence during and after Election Day;
- Social media guides to reinforce GOTV messaging as much as possible on campus and in students' own networks;
- Create a buzz and visibility using:
 - Skyway banners
 - Signage with QR codes to the Secretary of State's Elections page at strategic locations: Library, College of Science, Parking Ramp, public bulletin boards
 - Social media posts
 - Employee newsletter

Long-Term Goals:

- Write and implement a survey for faculty and staff that indicates their level of willingness to participate in the Metro State Votes campaign, allowing us to maintain a consistent database of those faculty/staff who are willing to support us and in what capacity;
- Continue to develop and improve our digital voter engagement tools, and hone our social media presence to make sure that it is effective and easily recognizable (branding, etc.);
- Make it a regular goal to visit every single class offered during the semester at every election cycle, allowing us to interface with every Metro State student at least once

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

- Table leaders will tally the number of new paper voter registration forms completed or those they directly observe being completed electronically via the Secretary of State's website;
- Students who do classroom visits will report on the number of voter registrations they were able to facilitate during their visits;
- Table volunteers will tally the number of voter education conversations held;
- Faculty will share qualitative feedback of learning based on student feedback and course Evaluations;
- Leaders of events and activities will report attendance/participation and share qualitative reflections;
- Leadership team will monitor social media engagement and report on how analytics regularly;

-At each weekly team meeting in the Community Engagement office, the Coordinator, Office Manager and student workers will discuss all data gathered during the previous week and discuss how adjustments might be made during the upcoming weeks' events;

Ashley Lopez and Brian Higbee will gather the data and convene core members of the planning group to analyze that data and share their own qualitative feedback on what worked best, what they've learned and how programming could be improved in the future. As each event on the calendar occurs,

Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/metropolitan-state-university/>.

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our NSLVE reports which are posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website. We will also work to publish the results on the main Metro State University page, as well as the MN Secretary of State's office and the MinnState system of colleges and universities.

Our NSLVE reports will be shared with the President's office and the director of the Institute for Community Engagement and Scholarship. Institute staff review the report with its Faculty Advisory Group (and those representatives, in turn, with colleagues in their college) and to all Metro State employees through the weekly *Metro Moment* employee newsletter and/or the department's *Bulletin: Resources for Community Engagement*, both of which contains links to online posts of the full report.