

Miami University 2023-2024 Campus Action Plan

Executive Summary:

Miami University's campus action plan to promote civic engagement was created by the civic engagement fellows in Miami's Harry T. Wilks Institute for Leadership and Service, now referred to as Miami University's Center for Student Engagement, Activities, and Leadership (SEAL) Ambassadors. The SEAL Ambassadors for Civic Engagement: Valeri Hernandez Godinez, Megan Romano, Maddie Hayden, Daniela Morales, and Olive Abram along with the Andrew Goodman Foundation Vote Everywhere Ambassador Maggie Sampson and Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow Benny Carruso. We are committed to increasing our enthusiasm for the electorate and making positive, impactful change for the generations to come.

This action plan is designed to combine and consolidate our thoughts on civic engagement for our campus. We want to formulate a more direct action plan for increasing our voter registration, turnout, education, engagement, and enthusiasm. By identifying gaps in our current approach and targeting student groups that are not involved, we can make the ease of voting a reality on our campus.

This action plan starts November 1, 2023 and will last until December 30, 2024. The goal is to implement this plan through a multi-faceted approach by engaging our team of SEAL Ambassadors and external partnership ambassadors to reach the student body where they are; we cannot rely on them to find us and ask for help but rather need to attend their student organization meetings and department events. We should make ourselves available as resources, not just during election seasons. Our tactics should be targeted and more focused on the demographics of need as highlighted in our 2020 and 2022 NSLVE reports, specifically with our low-performing majors of Mathematics, Business, and Engineering. With these groups of students in mind, we will work diligently to engage them and prioritize their place in the electoral process.

Leadership:

The Wilks Institute for Leadership and Service's civic engagement team at Miami University will assist in coordinating and overseeing this action plan. This team includes the SEAL Ambassadors for Civic Engagement along with those representing our outside partnerships such as the Andrew Goodman Foundation and Campus Vote Project. We are leading this initiative to ensure voting on campus is as accessible and convenient as possible and integrated with our other projects to advance voter registration and engagement on campus. SEAL



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Ambassadors were hired to the office with the intention of advancing our civic engagement efforts on campus in whichever ways we deem necessary and innovative. We are working together to ensure we take a multi-faceted approach to achieve these goals.

The Center for Student Engagement, Activities, and Leadership (C-SEAL) is involved in carrying out this action plan, with the support of other student organizations on campus. Going forward, we need the support of student organizations with a specific interest in business, math, and engineering majors as these students are underrepresented in our voter registration and turnout percentages. We have collaborated with the League of Women Voters to educate our community and ensure their registration and will continue to collaborate with campus partners in our civic engagement coalition (detailed below).

We have worked to continue a coalition of departments, student organizations, and civic engagement Wilks fellows that meet on a semi-regular basis to solidify our civic goals, to improve communication between groups, and bolster support of events. The coalition contains representatives from SEAL-Ambassadors, Associated Student Government Governmental Relations Secretary, Dean of Students, Menards Center of Democracy, and Student Life. We continue to meet when necessary with the various coalition representatives to ensure that various departments and bodies have a vested interest in our approach to civic engagement on campus. These campus partners are vital in helping to collaborate on how to best reach students when it comes to various civic engagement initiatives on campus. In particular, the Dean of Students office has created a Voting Navigator that helps students understand the voting options specific to their circumstances and preferences.

Leadership Outline:

- a. Center for Student Engagement, Activities, and Leadership (C-SEAL)
 - i. Wilks Institute for Leadership and Service
 - ii. Student Activities
 1. Julia Moore, Head C-SEAL Ambassador
 2. Kimberly Vance, Director
 3. JS Bragg, Assistant Director
 - iii. Panhellenic Association
 1. Alyssa Ciango, Associate Director
 2. Claire Ogden, Panhellenic President
 - iv. Interfraternity Council
 1. Colton Johnson, Associate Director
 2. Ben Kawaja, Interfraternity Council President
 3. Tyreke Farquharson, Interfraternity Council Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
 - v. National Pan-Hellenic Council
 1. Jasmine Hardy, Assistant Director
 2. Ashley Wilson, National Pan-Hellenic Council President



3. Giade Ensley, National Pan-Hellenic Council Vice President
- vi. Multicultural Greek Council
 1. Jasmine Hardy, Assistant Director
 2. Kylee Matthews, Multicultural Greek Council President
 3. Lina Miesse, Multicultural Greek Council Executive Vice President
- b. John Forren, Menard Center of Democracy
- c. Student Life Central Staff
 - i. Jayne Brownell, Vice President for Student Life
 - ii. BaShaun Smith, Associate Vice President for Student Life, Dean of Students
 - iii. Gwen Fears, Assistant Vice President for Student Life
 - iv. Scott Walter, Assistant Vice President for Student Life
- d. Associated Student Government
 - i. Will Brinley, Student Body President
 - ii. Babs Dwyer, Student Body Vice President,
 - iii. Shelby Alford, Speaker of Student Senate
 - iv. Patrick Houlihan, Secretary of Government Relations
- e. Miami University Ohio Student Activist Alliance (OSAA)
 - i. President: Olivia Gallo
- f. League of Women Voters
 - i. Liz Wardle, Co-Chair of League of Women Voters and staff at the Miami Library's Howe Writing Center
- g. Athletics
 - i. Jennifer Gilbert, Associate Athletic Director

Landscape:

Our civic engagement approach has overall been successful on campus as reflected in our high voting rate of 70.5% in 2020 compared to the national average of 66%. As of 2020, the major areas in which we can improve include computer science with a voting rate of 64%, Engineering with a voting rate of 66%, Business with a voting rate of 67%, and Math and Statistics with a voting rate of 70%. While our voter registration rate has typically been above the national average, we can always do more to ensure our voter turnout remains strong and does not falter.

Here are a few ways we will go about increasing awareness around civic engagement and overall enthusiasm:

- Creating a brief unit/curriculum on how to register to vote and ensure that vote is counted. This includes instructions on how to request absentee ballots, update your address, and find more information on candidates and issues. This instruction could occur in the University 101 course and similar classes which all Miami first-years must take to inform them of how to become more involved. Work on this area is already underway by one of our AGF Ambassadors in creating a “civic engagement bucket list” for first year students in which students will choose to engage with at least one civic



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engagement activity. Activities include; registering to vote, going through the Miami University Voting Navigator, attending a meeting of a civic engagement focused organization, and creating a voting plan, among others.

- One of our past civic engagement ambassadors has worked to overcome the barrier of students not being able to get to the polls by creating a “Democracy Bus,” which uses grant funding for the 2023 and 2024 general elections and the 2024 primary election to drive students to the Butler County Board of Elections. This allows students to vote early or return their absentee ballot on a Saturday before Election Day.
- Our external barriers include an inability to use our student ID cards to register to vote. As our IDs do not have students’ addresses or a signature, they are not acceptable under Ohio’s election law. This could be an additional hindrance and complication to ensuring we have student voices heard by the electorate for our students who do not have another ID of their own. We will continue investigating how this state-wide problem affects our student body.
- We also have overall confusion as to when students should and can register, update their address, and request absentee ballots. This is an external barrier to not understanding the state and federal election law. We will continue to build opportunities to address this on campus. This confusion is further exacerbated by the change in Ohio’s voter ID requirements in January 2023 which disproportionately impacts our out of state students and those without an unexpired Ohio drivers’ license, state ID, or passport.
- We have a wealth of resources on campus, especially with physical and financial support from the Wilks Institute and C-SEAL. These offices are always willing and able to sponsor, host, and promote the civic engagement events that the ambassadors want to initiate. To be more successful, having the administration prioritize civic participation by canceling classes on general election day or having remote learning would be helpful in alleviating scheduling conflicts that students face trying to get to a polling location.

Commitment:

It appears that Miami’s dedication to civic engagement emanates from the Wilks and C-SEAL offices and several student organizations but is not a priority of the university overall. We do have an extension of TurboVote on our student organization portal, and we have had the help of our Dean of Students in enabling the pop-up reminder to register students to vote, as well as a Voting Navigator. However, on the President’s strategic plan called Miami Rise, there is no mention of civic learning or democratic engagement. There is no instruction of how to register and maintain registration status to vote within the curriculum, to our knowledge. While we typically have a table of information at first-year orientation about registration, this information is not integrated into the actual orientation. We’ve also received pushback from various departments about implementing civic education into the Miami transition classes as they claim it does not fit into the goal of transitioning to college and campus life. With these barriers, it has



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been difficult to reach new audiences of students to overcome our collective lack of knowledge for local, state, and federal election laws and protocols. This is why it has been extremely important for us to create and build a first year curriculum that includes language regarding voting and civic engagement.

We internally measure our successes for civic engagement in the Wilks Office by comparing our NSLVE data across elections for registration and turnout rates. We then target which demographics, majors, and divisions have the lowest voter registration and turnout rates and work to improve these statistics with numeric goals for the next midterm and presidential elections.

Goals:

Our first goal is to instill in our students the importance of being a civic leader with an interest in electing changemakers and improving their communities. This primary goal helps our secondary goals of high voter registration and election turnout percentages amongst eligible voters and a desire to learn more about issues and candidates that are on the ballot. We have identified a large gap both in our voter registration and election turnout percentages, especially in midterm years. These goals are shared across the Wilks civic engagement team and heavily influence what programming we craft for our students.

To promote a general enthusiasm for civic engagement, we want our approach to focus on more than just voting on election day. This can include events like a democracy or election history-themed game nights, documentary watch parties about the evolving electorate, and other creative ways to mix education and fun.

We also want to increase our accessibility to voter engagement on campus. Although we have a polling place conveniently located on campus, only our on-campus students vote here; our off-campus students have to vote at the surrounding public schools, which are not easily accessible by foot from most off-campus housing. We would like to make transportation to the polling place more convenient by offering shuttles on primary and general election days that loop around common off-campus apartment areas and go to the polling places. As mentioned above, we have funding for a Democracy Bus for elections through the 2024 general but would need to secure funding for future elections. We could either fund these shuttles ourselves, through a partnership with our Associated Student Government of Miami's Center for Democracy, or through a partnership with the Butler County Regional Transit Authority (BCRTA), which currently provides transportation around Oxford to students for free.

We want to further boost our connection with and the students' awareness of Freedom Summer. This 1964 Mississippi voter registration drive intended to increase the registration of Black citizens. They had their volunteer orientation sessions for over 800 volunteers in Oxford, OH at



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the Western College for Women, which has since merged with Miami University. Once the drive began, they were met with violence from the KKK. Three men were murdered, including Andrew Goodman, whose parents later created a voting rights foundation in his name. We want to increase awareness of these events and their importance as part of our campus's history and our nation's election history. Incorporating more education about this event into our first-year orientation and Miami transition classes will give students the opportunity to reflect on voting rights and the courage and sacrifice needed to make voting a reality today. One of the ways we honored Andrew Goodman and Freedom Summer was through hosting a celebration of Andy's birthday. The AGF Ambassadors gave a presentation of Andy's life and the role of Freedom summer and guided the students in a conversation about voting rights and promoting civic engagement today. We would love to add Andrew Goodman's birthday to the University calendar.

Furthermore, we are aware of the barriers to voting access that marginalized communities continue to face. We are committed to collaborating with on-campus offices, especially our Center for Student Diversity & Inclusion and student-led Diversity Affairs Council, to narrow the voting gaps these communities face. We are also aware of the struggles disabled students face in exercising their right to vote. We hope to develop targeted programming and resources for our students who identify with these groups to help them fulfill their civic responsibilities and their role in the electorate through collaboration

We want to continue utilizing our student-run civic engagement account through Wilks, called @RedHawksCount. This account shares reminders about election-themed events, voting deadlines, and information about election-related issues like gerrymandering and new laws. On this platform in the spring, we had political science professors record video segments about the history and effects of gerrymandering in Ohio. We'd like to continue this idea to other divisions, namely the statistics department to debrief and discuss our campus voting statistics. We'd also like to use students with influence to share similar messages about why voting is important and meaningful to them. These student leaders can include the presidents of Panhellenic, the National Panhellenic Council, and the International Fraternity Council; captains of our varsity sports teams like football and hockey; the student body president and vice president, Associated Student Government, the GRN; and other well-known leaders.

We will further use our NSLVE data from 2020 in preparing for the 2024 presidential election and to set our metrics. We have not yet received our NSLVE data from 2022 but will update our action plan when we do. In 2020, our percentage of registered voters increased above the national average to 86.3%, our election turnout rate increased to 81.7%, and our voting rate of registered voters increased to 70.5%. As we look ahead to our next presidential election, we must acknowledge that Ohio's voter ID policies have changed since the last presidential election, making it harder for out-of-state students to vote in the state. Our goal is to have 90% of our students registered to vote, election turnout rate of 80%, and a voting rate of 70%. As we delve into the data more, we will also create specific metrics and goals for our low-performing



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majors like math, statistics, business, and computer science, if these majors still have the lowest performance in our 2022 NSLVE report.

Over the next ten years, we want the University to have a greater vested interest in our civic engagement efforts. We can create this by continuing our cross-divisional and departmental coalition to discuss civic engagement and the barriers we face in achieving our goals. We want to further amplify the impact of this coalition by bolstering our teamwork and collaboration with the Oxford community at large, including the Oxford City Council and the Oxford Chapter of the League of Women Voters, of which two of our civic engagement fellows are members.

Strategy:

April & May 2024

- Survey students
- Collect more detailed information on barriers that make it difficult for them to vote
- Delegate specific projects to each Civic Engagement Ambassador

June - August 2024

- Design promotional materials for Fall semester
 - General Election calendar with registration, early voting, and absentee ballot deadlines
 - Democracy Bus flyers
 - QR code to nonpartisan guide to the November ballot in Oxford
 - Advertise services provided by the SEAL office and Civic Engagement Ambassadors
- Book tables for voter registration
 - Specifically near/in academic buildings that house majors with low voter turnout, such as Pearson, Hughes, Farmer, Shideler, & the new Data Science building
- Tabling during freshman move-in and Welcome Weekend
- Develop bigger social media presence

September 2024

- Hang registration promotional materials
- Schedule Coalition meeting
- Registration events
 - MEGA fair tabling
 - “Touchdown for Democracy” tailgate
 - Academic building registration tabling
 - SEAL registration tabling
- Resend outreach emails to student orgs
 - Offer to attend one of their meetings and present on the general election & civic engagement



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- Prioritize STEM & Business orgs

October 2024

- Educational activities
 - Students submit their polling location and why voting is important to them in a form, giveaway prizes
 - Miami merch, useful items like cooking tools and school supplies
 - Candidate forums
- Hang Democracy Bus and ballot promotional materials

November 2024

- Countdown to Election Day on social medias
- Party at the Polls
- Andrew Goodman birthday celebration

To begin, we want to increase our student outreach to survey and collect information on what barriers they face. Having a better understanding of this information will aid in forming our approach and tactics to overcoming barriers and making voting easier.

We want to continue hosting educational opportunities that reach voters where they are. This includes: speaking directly to student organizations, educational activities that engage students in civic engagement, and promotional materials that get students excited to vote. For instance, in October 2023, we hosted a “Touchdown for Democracy” tailgate before a home football game and were able to register over a dozen people to vote and request absentee ballots for several more, which we plan on implementing every Fall. Our work in creating civic engagement curriculum for incoming students during their transition into college also aims to help meet students where they are at and from the very beginning. Tactics like these help to engage and inform those who may not have had knowledge or sought the resources on their own. We can combine this approach with the promotion of panels, candidate forums, events, and other resources from Miami’s Political Science department, the Menard Center for Democracy, and the local League of Women Voters to better educate students on the issues they vote on. This will help ensure that we can equip those already interested in voting to make more informed choices and inspire other previously civically disengaged students to become involved in the electorate. Our office has and will continue to collaborate with the career center on a Common Good Fair, which provides students the opportunity to meet employers that work in service based organizations.

We also want to combine education about the electorate with fun, interactive activities. For instance, during general elections, we host a “party at the polls” event on election day to inspire students to vote and offer free pizza as an incentive to learn more about voting. Our office provides workshops that discuss the importance of civic engagement and voting for students to attend. We also created a voting 101 flier that discusses Ohio election laws and commonly asked questions about what voting looks like in Ohio for all types of students. If students fill out



part of this form asking them where their polling place is and why voting is important to them, they are entered into a giveaway for various Miami-themed items and other useful things, such as an air fryer.

We are increasingly dedicated to operating through the intersectional lens of the Wilks and C-SEAL offices to combine leadership, service, and interfaith work into our projects. This semester we presented at a Miami University leadership conference, Perlmutter, where we talked about the importance of combining leadership strengths with civic engagement and voting accessibility. This allowed us to reach new populations and create new interest in civic engagement. We have already begun partnering with local nonprofit organizations (such as our local food pantry and shelter) to raise awareness for local service efforts, reminding students of how far the span of civic engagement reaches. We hope to continue to foster these partnerships as well as partner with our local Coalition for a Healthy Community to further educate students on why they should be civically engaged in their own communities.

To address our lack of voting engagement for math, stats, business, and engineering, we want to immerse ourselves more in their programming. We want to work with the student advisory boards in their departments and collaborate with the subject-specific student orgs. We also want to become involved in their departmental meet-and-greets and programming. For instance, we recently learned that the math department has an ice cream social each semester for their students to meet one another. Utilizing this time to further connect with these students and assist them in registering to vote would be beneficial.

The Wilks / C-SEAL civic engagement fellows for AGF, Civic Influencers, and CVP will continue to plan these activities and events for the student body. Our work is largely collaborative and housed out of the Wilks Institute.

Reporting:

Our plan will be shared on the C-SEAL website under the civic engagement tab to share our goals with the public. Students, faculty, staff, and the public-at-large can then access our information and goals to improve our civic engagement processes. In this space, we can also share our NSLVE data to ensure the statistics and information that informed our action plan are affirmed. With this information shared, students can more easily track Miami's progress within civic engagement and learn how to foster our mission on campus.

We also hope to share this on the Miami president's website and incorporate it into the "Rise Miami" strategic campus plan. We don't want civic engagement to be isolated and siloed in our office but rather want it to be integrated into our University overall.



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Evaluation:

The purpose of our evaluation is to have a progress check to identify what areas we've succeeded in and what others still need improvement. By reflecting on this information provided by our NSLVE data, we can craft our next action plan to better fit the needs of our students and overcome their barriers to voting. In reviewing our data and feedback overall, we will assemble our Wilks civic engagement fellows and our coalition of invested civic engagement leaders and organizations to revise our previous plan and craft a new action plan.



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