



Ready. Set. VOTE.

2024 Democratic Engagement Action Plan



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I. Executive Summary

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan, Ready. Set. VOTE., was developed by Dr. Shauna Reilly, Assistant Provost for Experiential Learning, with input from Northern Kentucky University's Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement staff.

Northern Kentucky University and the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement (hereinafter "the Scripps Howard Center") were invested in creating Ready. Set. VOTE. to prepare for the 2024 election. However, Northern Kentucky University and the Scripps Howard Center understand that state and local elections hold the same importance as national elections, with a much lower voter turnout rate. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 presidential, congressional, state, and local elections.

The goals for Northern Kentucky University for the 2024 General Election are:

- Increase voter registration and participation among the student population for the 2024 Presidential Election, surpassing the results of registration and participation in the 2020 Presidential Election.
- Provide students with opportunities to learn about and discuss public issues that will affect the election, leading up to Election Day.
- Provide students with opportunities to interact with leaders in our community.
- Provide students with access to information surrounding ballot initiatives and candidates for the congressional, state, and local elections.

The action plan begins on January 2, 2024, and continues through December 31, 2025. Changes will be made to this plan as needed.

The action plan will be implemented on the Northern Kentucky University campus, in Highland Heights, Kentucky, and in the greater Northern Kentucky community. Implementation will be primarily coordinated by the Scripps Howard Center staff. However, the staff will partner with students, other Northern Kentucky University faculty and staff members, as well as community partners to achieve specific goals.

II. Leadership

Leadership Team

Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement

- Shauna Reilly, Assistant Provost for Experiential Learning
- Brittany McCubbin, Administrative Secretary
- Melanie Hartzel, Program Coordinator, Community Connections
- Devan Murphy, Program Coordinator, Community Engagement
- Gavin Bergman, Experiential Learning Student Worker
- Asha Chekanao, Voting Intern

The Scripps Howard Center staff has identified a succession plan for the onboarding of future staff members in the voter engagement role. The previous coordinator recorded the important information, such as contacts at partner organizations and upcoming event information, in a document in the shared drive. As well, the staff has downloaded a copy of the Students Learn Students Vote Campus Transition Guide to ensure that the transition materials are detailed and all-encompassing of the position.

On-Campus Partners

This initiative has the support of and actively collaborates with the faculty and staff of Northern Kentucky University, including the University President. Almost every department at Northern Kentucky University is represented in democratic engagement efforts on campus. The Scripps Howard Center is continuously looking for faculty and staff on campus that are interested in leading a discussion or hosting a lecture on voting and the election.

The following departments on campus have staff or faculty that have demonstrated commitment to the action plan. This commitment includes hosting classes specific to voting and the election, attending Scripps Howard Center or Northern Kentucky Forum programs, or hosting independent lectures surrounding voter education and engagement.

- School of Media and Communication
 - Political Communication course
- Department of Mathematics and Statistics
 - First-Year Explorations: Elections and Mathematics course
 - Sehnert Lecture Series on Math and Elections
- Department of Accounting, Economics and Finance
 - Collaboration on "Victor Talks and Issues" discussion series

- School of Computing and Analytics
- Department of History
 - Collaboration on “Victor Talks and Issues” discussion series
- College of Education
 - Collaboration on “Victor Talks and Issues” discussion series
- W. Frank Steely Library
 - Saving Democracy: A Reading and Book Signing with David Pepper
 - “Informed and Ready to Vote” workshop

The following organizations, both staff and student-run, have expressed commitment to democratic engagement, voter education, and increasing voter mobilization. It is important to the Scripps Howard Center staff to partner with on-campus organizations that reach diverse groups of students across campus.

- The Center for Student Engagement
- Student Government Association
- University Orientation
- First -Year Experience and Programs
- Center for Student Inclusiveness
- The Black Alumni Council
- The Athletics Department
- Greek Life

Community Partners

The Scripps Howard Center utilizes off-campus partners to enhance messaging and host events. Many of these partners are non-partisan, and the Scripps Howard Center works to ensure that all sides are represented when inviting non-partisan organizations. Among them are:

- Northern Kentucky Forum
- LINK nky
- American Democracy Project
- Engage KY (formerly Kentucky Campus Compact)
- Boone County Library
- Campbell County Library

- Kenton County Library
- Kids Voting Northern Kentucky
- The Associated Press
- The Office of the Kentucky Secretary of State
- The League of Women Voters of Kentucky
- The Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Kentuckians for the Commonwealth

III. Commitment

Northern Kentucky University's commitment to civic engagement is strategic and organizational. The university's strategic framework includes a commitment to educating students to contribute to the "civic prosperity of the region." Structurally, the university has an office devoted to this work, the Scripps Howard Center for Civic Engagement.

Other highlights:

- Northern Kentucky University has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2020 and has signed it again for 2024.
- We have partnered with our First Year Experience Program and woven voter registration into the course for all 29 University 101 courses.
- Northern Kentucky University joined the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement in 2012, and we continue to participate through each election cycle in order to monitor and benchmark our students' voter registration rates and voting rates.
- Northern Kentucky University has over 50 service-learning classes each year, and those classes include a civic learning component.
- Civic education is part of the general education program at NKU with two key competencies supporting communication and personal responsibility and community.

IV. Landscape

Northern Kentucky University is a public 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2016. There is a full-time staff, based out of the Scripps Howard Center, that is dedicated to lead the work on Northern Kentucky University's campus.

There are two courses being offered in Fall 2024 that are connected to the 2024 Election. The first is Political Communication, from the Communications Department. This course will be co-taught by Dr. Cady Short-Thompson, President of Northern Kentucky University. The second is First-Year Explorations: Elections and Mathematics, which is from the Mathematics Department.

As well, there is one course offered, as a general education requirement, University 101, that includes civic learning and democratic engagement. The University 101 courses (UNV101) are required for all first-gen students. This course has been designed to include a section about voter registration and absentee voting. Staff from the Scripps Howard Center, as well as student interns, visit the UNV101 courses to promote voter registration.

Campus demographic data:

Northern Kentucky University has 15,827 students:

- 16% are non-white
- At least 40% are first gen students
- About 65% are in-state
- 3% are international students

Campus voting data:

According to NSLVE, our institution had a 2022:

- Campus voting rate of 35.2%, down from 65.7% in 2020.
- Voter registration rate of 78.3%, up from 88.2% in 2020.

The changes in this voting data can be attributed to the lack of a national election. Presidential elections draw the most voters, which reflects the high registration and voting rates of 2020. As well, the Kentucky Gubernatorial Election happens on an off year, and occurred just after the 2022 NSLVE data was collected. With a major election in an off year, that directly affects voting data.

Northern Kentucky University is largely a commuter school. Approximately 83% of students live off-campus. Of the students that live in on-campus housing, most are from out-of-state or are international students. These students typically do not change their

permanent address while attending the university. This makes voting more challenging for students and renders local polling locations unusable. As a result, the university does not act as a polling place on Election Day. Many students rely on absentee ballots for voting, which has influenced the resources the Scripps Howard Center staff provides for students.

There have recently been changes proposed to voting laws in the state of Kentucky. There is currently a bill that has been passed in the Kentucky State Senate and has stalled in the House of Representatives that would ban voting with a student photo ID. This comes after SB 2, a 2020 law that requires all voters to have a photo ID to vote, banning forms of identification without a photo and restricting voting access. However, there has been a strong commitment from the governor to restore voting rights. Governor Beshear signed an executive order on December 12, 2019, that restored the right to vote to anyone convicted of a Kentucky state felony who has 1) completed their sentence including probation and parole, 2) has not been convicted of treason, bribery, or a violent crime, and 3) does not have any felony charges or arrests pending. The Scripps Howard Center staff is aware of these voting law changes and propositions, and ensures that all students are given the correct information during class presentations, tabling, etc.

Our institution has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals: 2018 Gold, 2020 Silver, 2022 Silver.

V. Goals

Northern Kentucky University and the Scripps Howard Center aims to create a culture on campus that fosters democratic engagement and voter mobilization.

There have been several short-term and long-term goals identified for these student voter engagement efforts:

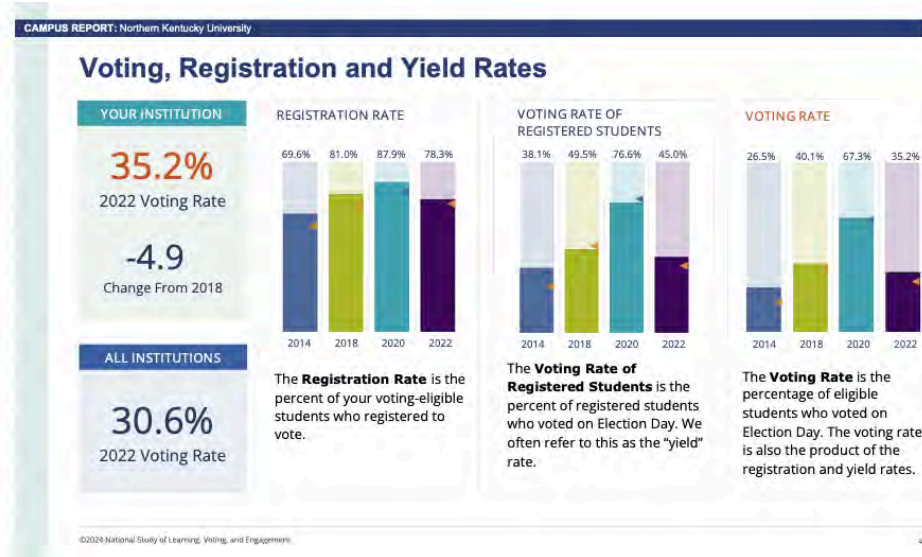
Short Term

- By the 2024 election, student voter registration at Northern Kentucky University will increase to 91%.
- By the end of 2024, Northern Kentucky University will host or sponsor at least 45 events open to students to boost awareness of public issues.
- By Fall 2024, the Scripps Howard Center staff will complete an assessment of democracy education at Northern Kentucky University and develop an implementation plan for its recommendations.
- During the Fall semester, Scripps Howard Center staff will utilize student workers and interns to support all sponsored voter engagement efforts.
- Leading up to the election, the Scripps Howard Center staff will facilitate Town Halls and "Victor Talks and Issues," as well as encourage participation.
- By Fall 2024, the Scripps Howard Center will review NSLVE Report data to identify gaps and to update and improve programs and activities.
- During the fall semester, the Scripps Howard Staff will reach a larger number of students by maintaining a social media presence and having the Center's voting intern make videos and interview students for TikTok that focus on the election.

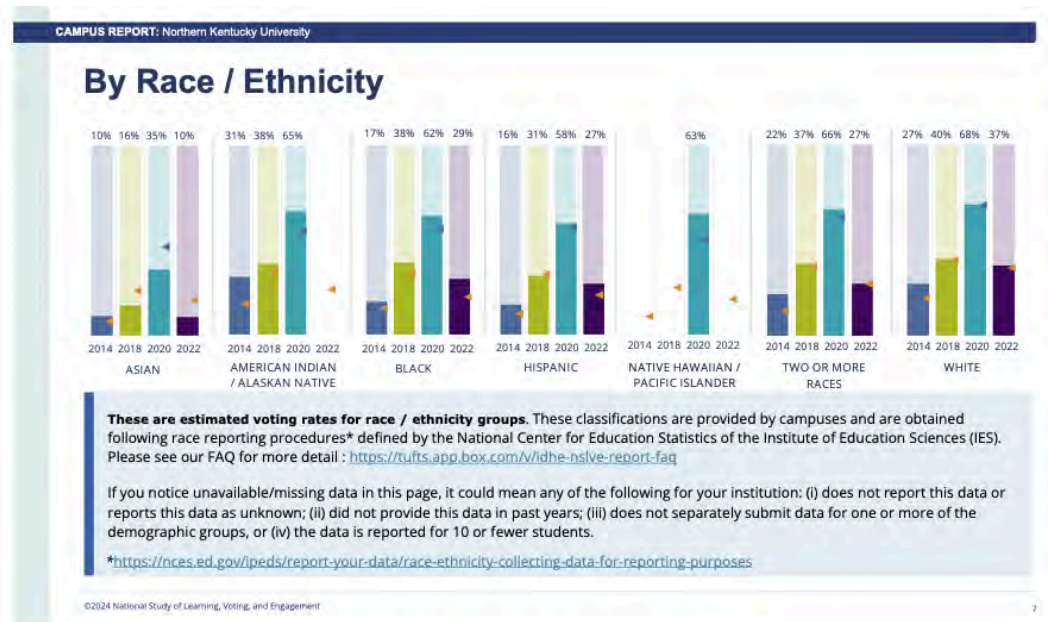
Long Term

- The level of voter registration and participation met during the 2024 Presidential Election cycle will be sustained through the next two election cycles.
- Promote the state, local, and congressional elections happening in non-presidential election years to increase levels of voter participation rates from those outlined in the 2022 NSLVE Report.
- Maintain a strong relationship with the Student Government Association and utilize their support for all future events.
- Sustain the social media presence after the voting intern graduates and use it to continually inform the student population of upcoming elections.
- Sustain partnerships with Student Engagement and community partners to provide civic education and opportunities for engagement around election issues.

VI. NSLVE



The 2022 NSLVE Report illustrated that the students at Northern Kentucky University hit a peak in voting registration and participation in 2020. The 2022 rate was lower than both the 2018 and the 2020 rates. However, the voting rate at Northern Kentucky University in 2022 was higher than in comparable institutions.



The NSLVE Report showed that the student populations all decreased from the 2020 report, regardless of race. As outlined in the Landscape, most students at Northern Kentucky University are white. In 2020, the voting rate of white students increased to over 50%, but decreased to less than 40% in 2022. As well, there are large gaps in the voting rate of non-white students. The Scripps Howard Center staff will work with the Center for Student

Inclusiveness to break down barriers to voting for all students, especially nonwhite students.

The 2022 NSLVE Report can be found at the [link](#) in the Ready. Set. VOTE. section of the Scripps Howard Center page on the Northern Kentucky University page.

VII. Strategy

Northern Kentucky University will implement these short-term and long-term strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation:

Area One: Voter Registration

Short Term

- o Maintain and promote the Ready. Set. VOTE. website for quick access <http://nku.edu/readysavote>
- o Table in the Student Union on National Voter Registration Day and Constitution Day, September 17, 2024, with iPads to encourage on-the-spot voter registration and prizes such as fanny packs, frisbees, and foam footballs for any student who registers to vote or proves their registration.
- o Print the Ready. Set. VOTE. logo on umbrellas and partnered with the NKUmbrella Project, which provides free umbrellas to students.
- o Print the Ready. Set. VOTE. logo on swag to be given out to all incoming freshmen during orientation and Fresh Fusion.
- o Partner with FUEL NKU, the campus food pantry, to print the Ready. Set. VOTE. logo on tote bags that are handed out to any new patron of the campus pantry.
- o Work with Northern Kentucky University's Honors College classes to co-develop marketing and outreach to encourage students to register and vote.
- o Partner with the First-Year Experience Office and visit all 29 introductions to university classes (UNV 101) to discuss voter registration and absentee/early voting options.
 - These visits will occur before October 7, 2024, which is the voter registration deadline for both Kentucky and Ohio.
- o Work with the instructors of other general education courses to visit class and discuss voter registration and education with the students.
- o Partner with the W. Frank Stealy Library to have a table with voter registration information at their Saving Democracy: A Reading and Book Signing with David Pepper event.
- o Partner with the W. Frank Stealy Library to register students to vote at their "Informed and Ready to Vote" event.
- o Include the link to the NBC News "Plan Your Vote" article — that allows students to understand the voting rules in their state — to the Ready. Set. VOTE. page on the Northern Kentucky University website.
- o Create a module that faculty can add to their course pages that contains detailed instructions for students on registering to vote and finding polling locations.
- o Partner with the Student Engagement Office to get Greek Life involved

with voter registration efforts.

Long Term

- o Continue to partner with the First-Year Experience Office and visit the University 101 (UNV101) classes to promote voter registration and civic engagement.
- o Continue to offer a Canvas module with voter registration information for instructors to add to their courses.
- o Host a table in the Student Union on National Voter Registration Day each year, to encourage students to register to vote.

Area Two: Voter Education

Short Term

- o Host “Victor Talks and Issues” events on campus for students, with faculty leading discussions on issues affecting the upcoming Election.
 - Session 1: Political Communication and Civility with University President Cady Short-Thompson and Dr. Zachary Hart
 - Session 2: Race and the Election with Dr. David Childs
 - Session 3: Economics and the Election with Dr. Abdullah Al-Bahrani
 - Session 4: Election Debrief with Dr. Shauna Reilly
- o Partner with the W. Frank Stealy Library to host an “Informed and Ready to Vote” event that focuses on navigating misinformation to find information about candidates.
- o Partner with the Northern Kentucky Forum to provide “town halls” for discussion of public affairs.
 - “Wrap up of the 2024 Kentucky Legislative Session” with Representative Rachel Roberts (D) and Representative Steve Sloan (R)
 - “After the Kentucky Primary, What’s Next?” event with Tami Wilson from the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
 - Amendment 2 School Choice moderated discussion in partnership with LINK nky
- o Partner with Student Government and the Center for Student Engagement to develop programs to encourage students to register and vote.
- o Partner with the Associated Press to provide real-world experiences covering elections.
- o Develop and support service-learning classes with a civic

learning component.

- o Invite partner organizations and representatives from local political parties to have a table and interact with students at the Constitution Day event.
- o Partner with the Northern Kentucky University Black Alumni Council to host a virtual “Lunch and Learn” event that connects students with politicians on the national, state, and local levels to speak on the election and the importance of voting.

Long Term

- o Host a Constitution Day event annually where students can learn about lobbying efforts and other public issues from partner organizations.
- o Continue to partner with the NKY Forum to host cafés for students and community members to interact with and ask questions of community leaders.
- o Continue to spotlight local issues and connections with local policymakers through the NKY Forum events.

Area Three: Voter Engagement

Short Term

- o Partner with I Will Vote to allow students to create a voting plan that they can come back to when voting the day of the Election.
- o Partner with the Athletics Department to have coaches, athletic directors, and athletics department staff sign the 2024 All-In Coaches’ Pledge.
- o Partner with Greek Life to encourage voter turnout in chapter members for the 2024 election.
- o Partner with University Housing to hang posters in the dorms with instructions on requesting an absentee ballot.
- o Partner with University Housing and Mailing Services to ensure that absentee ballots are delivered to the dorm buildings efficiently.

Long Term

- o Partner with the W. Frank Stealy Library to host a “Democracy Square” board where new questions are posted bi-weekly, and students are encouraged to write their thoughts on the whiteboard, as well as sign up for IssueVoter.
- o Partner with IssueVoter for students to connect directly with their representatives and receive explanations on pending bills – Northern Kentucky University has a branded sign-in page for the students to use.
- o Encourage students to contact their representatives, as well as track both state and federal legislation, by providing links on the

Ready. Set. VOTE. page of the Northern Kentucky University website.

VIII. Reporting:

Northern Kentucky University's campus action plan, Ready. Set. VOTE., will be shared both internally and externally. Externally, the action plan will be posted on the Northern Kentucky University campus page on ALL IN's website. As well, Northern Kentucky University has given ALL IN Permission to publish the NSLVE reports, which are also posted on the campus page on ALL-IN's website. The campus page can be found here:

<https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/northern-kentucky-university/>.

Internally, the action plan will be available to Scripps Howard Center staff, to ensure it is used to execute student voting work on campus. There are links to the NSLVE data on the Ready. Set. VOTE. section of the Northern Kentucky University website. As well, the campus action plan and NSLVE data will be made available to all community partners upon request. The Ready. Set. VOTE. section of the university website can be found here:

www.nku.edu/ivote

IX. Evaluation

Northern Kentucky University and the Scripps Howard Center plan to evaluate the action plan and its effects on democratic engagement on campus. These evaluations will happen at the beginning and the end of each semester, after which the biannual plan will be updated if needed.

The leadership team will use the 2022 and 2024 NSLVE voting data to monitor student voter registration and turnout. This data will help identify areas of improvement in voter registration and voter turnout, as well as any strengths.

The NSLVE data does not cover all civic engagement efforts, including programming, which is why attendance and inventory will be evaluated at all public events that focus on democratic engagement and voter education. All events will have a QR code posted around the venue that links to a digital survey to receive feedback from students on the event. Survey responses will be evaluated to decide the efficacy of each event and the potentiality for replication. The Democracy Square Board, located in the university library, will be evaluated by the number of physical responses written on the whiteboard for each question or the responses to the same questions, posted on Facebook, from our online students. The board includes a QR code — and the Facebook posts will include a link — to IssueVoter for students to discover more information on the topic posted. The Leadership Team will use IssueVoter to access reports on student sign-up and usage of the database. Finally, we will track the size and participation of our service-learning classes.

Northern Kentucky University, through the Institutional Research department on campus, participates in the NSSE on a 3-year schedule. The most recent NSSE results are from 2022, where Northern Kentucky University participated in the NSSE, FSSE, and BCSSE surveys. The 2022 report had a 3% increase in student response from the 2018 report. The 2022 High Impact Practices report found that over half of first-year students and three quarters of senior students participated in at least one High Impact Practice. Northern Kentucky University will be participating in the 2025 surveys, and the results will be included in the 2026 Northern Kentucky University Action Plan.