

Ohio Northern University's Voter Friendly Campus Plan

Executive Summary:

The following is the action plan that was developed for Ohio Northern University in the efforts to make ONU a voter friendly campus. This action plan was developed by Ohio Northern's democracy fellows for Campus Vote Project, these being Nicholas Maccani and Shea Johnson. This plan outlines the steps and plans that the fellows workshopped during the 2022 Fall Semester at Ohio Northern University, spanning from July to November following the conclusion of the 2022 Midterm Elections. All steps taken in part of this action plan will be implemented on Ohio Northern's campus in Ada, Ohio. By working with various parts of the campus community, and representing a diverse amount of groups, we believe that this action plan will help to break down the barriers and misconceptions of voting. It will also help to get students excited about voting and inspire more and more people to register and take part in the democratic process. In the roughly five month span that this plan headlines, we plan on holding various registration drives, seminars, events, and pushing out emails and other forms of communication to help spread the word and motivate people to register and get out to vote. Through these methods, we hope that over time it will allow for more and more students to get involved as time progresses, and then lead to big turnouts and improvement in Ohio Northern's NSLVE numbers following the midterms.

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I. OVERVIEW

Why your school is interested in the designation and the top three goals for democratic engagement during the fall semester.

Ohio Northern has continued to grow in recent years civic participation around campus. This has been done through the implementation of the Institute for Civics and Public Policy (ICAAP). Through ICAAP, there has been a wide variety of things that have been done to facilitate voter education and accessibility. By dedicating efforts to engage students through the activities of the ICAPP, we are hopeful we can create a more structured, purposeful, and effective means to promote voter engagement on our campus.

Ohio Northern in recent years has worked to help increase civic engagement and participation on campus and help get students interested in civic engagement as well. Recently, through the work of ICAAP, they were able to put on the “Polar Bears and Public Affairs” public speaking series. This series consisted of various alumni of Ohio Northern coming back to speak with students about their work which dealt with public service, advocacy, and the like. As the series progressed, more and more students would come to these events, and culminated with current Ohio Speaker of the House Bob Cupp coming to speak with students, and generated the largest turnout of engagement from the entire series. These events also allowed for networking opportunities for students interested in going into lines of work that deal with civic engagement and get them interested in it.

Our top three goals during the fall 2022 semester are:

1. Help to greatly improve and maximize the voter registration and turnout among students at ONU
2. Help to eliminate the barriers and misconceptions regarding voting, as well as to help generate greater enthusiasm and interest in being able to vote and having your voice heard in the democratic process
3. Increase the visibility of our coalition on ONU’s campus, which in turn can help lead to better and easier recognition among students and faculty and allow for increased engagement and strengthening of the coalition.

NSLVE Data shows voter registration at ONU at about 85% as of 2020, which is above the median registration of all institutions, and is a solid starting point. Our overall voting rate, however, is at 65%. We’d like to help this number increase, both by helping students to register, and providing already registered students with the resources they need to cast their votes. The number of students who registered to vote increased by 51 between 2016 and 2020, and the number of students who voted increased by 267 between 2016 and 2020, and we’d like to continue these positive trends and help aid in the increases of registered and voting students.

II. COALITION

Who is on your coalition and why they are key to your democratic engagement work (a well rounded coalition will include students, faculty, administrators, and election partners).

Student Life Offices:

- Office of Student Affairs
- Residence Life
- Good News Bears
- Orientation Leaders

Student Organizations:

The organizations selected were intentional and deliberate. By having a wide variety of different groups that represent a diverse amount of students, we can ensure that everyone is on board and can help to eliminate the barriers some of these groups may face when it comes to registering and casting a ballot to vote in an election.

- African Students Association
- Amnesty international
- Asian American Student Union
- Black Student Union
- Indian Student Association
- Japanese Student Organization
- Jewish Union
- Latino Student Union
- Mock Trial/Model UN
- Ohio Northern Veterans Organization (ONVO)
- ONU Brother 2 Brother
- ONU College Democrats/Student Senate
- ONU College Republicans
- ONU Healthcare Business Association (HBA)
- Open Doors
- Pi Sigma Alpha
- Public Health Organization
- Public Relations Student Society of America
- Sister to Sister

Administrative/Academic Affairs:

- Institute for Civics and Public Policy
- Political Science Department

Nicholas Maccani and Shea Johnson are the Democracy Fellows that are representing Ohio Northern University. They have, and will continue to, engage with students, staff, and faculty regarding voter registration and voter engagement. They will create and organize events in

collaboration with ICAAP to promote voter engagement and registration, and will report their results and findings to ICAAP.

III. DESCRIPTION OF YOUR WORK

What will you be doing in the fall and how will you be doing it. Make sure to try and include all four pillars:

Voter Registration

Numerous attempts are being made to register students across campus. This has included working with affiliated groups such as sports teams, Greek life, and student government. We have placed QR codes across campus and taken part in the National Voter Registration Day activities. These efforts have included setting up tables set outside of our main dining hall, tables at our university's main library, attempts to register students at debate watch parties, and efforts to register students in classes across campus. We also went to our local High School to register students as well. Over the past year, we believe these efforts yielded several hundred registered students (either through a change of registration or new registrations). We were fortunate last year that one of our students was hired as a Civic Engagement Fellow by Campus Compact to help support many events.

Voter Education

In the past, we have held several mock debates where students took on the positions of the presidential candidates. We also held a "down ballot" night where the positions of congressional candidates were discussed as well as several ballot issues. We also held debate watch parties where discussion before and after the debates was encouraged. Lastly, we work with Pi Sigma Alpha (the political science honor society) and the College Democrats and College Republicans to support voter information initiatives.

Voter Turnout

Ensuring increased voter turnout will mostly rely upon making sure that students are knowledgeable about their local polling stations and making sure they are easily accessible. Eventually it would be great to establish a polling station on ONU's campus, but in the meantime, providing thorough information about polling stations in the surrounding area as well as ensuring that out of state students have access to absentee ballots will be integral.

Students as Voter Advocates/Get Out The Vote

When it gets closer to the election, we will include information and sign-ups for students to become poll workers. We want to provide every student with the opportunity to be a voter advocate and be an active member of the political process. Having students as poll workers can help to make the voting booth less intimidating, allowing students to be surrounded by their own peers and be helped by someone they connect with and trust if they are in need of assistance. We would also like to make shareable voter resources that can be spread through

things like social media. By sharing QR codes, links to websites, infographics, etc., students can be voter advocates regardless of how currently involved they are in politics. Social media will be an incredibly fast and effective way of sharing our resources, as it allows viewers to share posts and spread information quickly and easily.

IV. TIMELINE

When will you be carrying this work out on your campus including dates and resources that would be helpful to complete that work (i.e. voting information posters, student voting guides, nonpartisan ballot guides)

- July to Mid-August
 - Begin e-mailing coalitions and other groups in order to begin planning for events
- Late-August
 - Democracy fellows start duties for the year
 - Voter registration drive during Freshmen Orientation
- September
 - Voter registration drive on National Voter Registration Day
- October
 - Hold voter education seminars and continue distributing emails to students containing registration information
- November
 - November 8th: Election Day

V. SUCCESS

What does success look like for your campus? How do we measure our efforts?

Following election day, a meeting will be held to analyze our results. ONU is also a participating campus in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, so we will work with ICAAP and analyze the results and compare them from those in the past and use that as an indicator for our success. Also through various voter registration drives, we can measure how successful we were in getting students registered to vote.

The way success can be measured is by comparing the results from our NSLVE data from the past and see if we made improvements in any areas or not. Particularly in some areas such as students enrolled in the Computer and Information Sciences and in Law Enforcement areas, where the rate of voter participation is rather low, having an increase in those particular areas could be a good indicator of the success CVP had throughout the fall semester, by improving the registration and turnout in the aforementioned areas that have low rates of participation.

Going forward, we can use ONU's data from NSLVE to create better determinations on what areas need improvement and more attention when it comes to voter registration and participation. We can use this data as a basis on how to go about taking action and creating events for CVP, tailoring to the groups who have lower registration and turnout rates. This way, we can see gradual improvement in all areas over time to allow for ONU to become an all-inclusive, voter-friendly campus.

Our success on campus will be measured by comparing past and current NSLVE data and analyzing how certain trends have been affected since we began our work on campus. We will look at registration rates and voting rates and compare them to past numbers, hopefully seeing a significant increase. As mentioned before, ideally, the number of voting students will better match the number of students registered to vote. If the number of voting students more closely matches the number of registered students, that goal will have been fulfilled. Because we already have a solid starting point for registered students, one of our biggest indicators of success will probably be how many students we are able to get out and vote. Our starting point is close to the median for all institutions, but getting ourselves above that median would be a huge success.