

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 help ONU retain a voter friendly campus designation. This action plan was created and assisted from Ohio Northern's outgoing, current, and incoming Democracy Fellow for Campus Vote Project. The outgoing Democracy Fellows consist of Nicholas Maccani and Matthew Petrella, who assisted with the development of this action plan in an effort to facilitate a smooth transition to their replacements. The current Democracy Fellow who will still be part of the team in the Fall of 2024 is Juliana McClure, who has helped facilitate various changes and improvements with civic engagement on campus. The incoming Democracy Fellows consist of Alexa Clampitt and Lydia Falke, both of whom bring a wealth of experience with civic engagement and have previously assisted with Institute for Civics and Public Policy and Campus Vote Project activities. This plan outlines the steps and plans that the Fellows have discussed for the 2024 Fall Semester at Ohio Northern University, spanning from July to November following the conclusion of the 2024 General Election. 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 barriers and misconceptions of voting. It will also help to get students excited about voting and inspire more people to register and take part in the democratic process. In the roughly five month span that this plan outlines, 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 general election.

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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 been committed to civic participation in the past few years. This has primarily occurred through the establishment 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 has worked to help increase civic engagement and participation on campus and help get students interested in civic engagement as well. Recently, Ohio Northern developed a one stop-shop for all sorts of various voting resources entitled [ONU Votes!](#) This page has been a useful source in working with our voter engagement efforts. In addition, ONU's President, Dr. Melissa Baumann has indicated her commitment to ensuring we have backing and assistance from the university to help with our events. Additionally, having ONU's mascot, Klondike the Polar Bear, coming to events has also been greatly beneficial in helping to improve engagement on campus. One of his appearances at our voter registration event was even highlighted on the local television station!

Outside of voter engagement and education work done in collaboration with Campus Vote Project, Ohio Northern has worked immensely to provide further opportunities to enhance and further engage the campus and the campus community with civic engagement. In the leadup to the 2023 Elections, ICAPP hosted the mayoral debate that was taking place in Ada, Ohio, where Ohio Northern's campus is located. Both candidates, incumbent mayor Dave Retterer and

challenger Howard Fenton both agreed to discuss their plans and promises on how they would help to continue improving the village of Ada. The event was well-attended and informative. It was also covered in various news outlets. ICAPP also hosted a “Politics in the Professional Life” panel, bringing about three Ohio Northern alumni with various different backgrounds. The alumni talked about their experiences during and after their time at Ohio Northern and also explained how politics and civic engagement are encompassed in their day-to-day duties on the job. Other recent civic engagement activities that ICAPP and our CVP Fellows hosted includes the Girls Increasing Representation in Leadership Summit (GIRLS). This event brought together middle school girls from the surrounding local schools where they spent time working in groups on trying to identify problems and work through possible solutions for issues in their schools. In addition, the event also featured a panel in which Kenton Mayor Lynn Jones Webb and Ada Village Council Member Sheila Coressel spoke about their experiences as women in leadership and politics.

Our top three goals during the fall 2024 semester are:

1. Help to further improve and maximize the voter registration and turnout among students at ONU during an election year
2. Help to eliminate the barriers and misconceptions regarding voting, as well as to help garner greater enthusiasm and interest in being able to vote and having your voice heard in the democratic process
3. Further increase and enhance 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. In addition, increased participation and visibility for events will be a further plus to enhance events and participation.

According to the most up to date data, 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. While we have certainly registered many more students since 2020, we have not yet received data for the 2022 Midterm elections. We are hopeful that updated NSLVE data will showcase that ONU has made great strides and improvements in getting students registered and getting out to vote in elections.

II. COALITION

Who is in 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 Athletic Teams
- 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
- Heterick Library

With Nicholas Maccani and Matthew Petrella graduating, the new team of Democracy Fellows that will be working together and representing Ohio Northern University consists of Juliana McClure, Alexa Clampitt, and Lydia Falke. They have, and will continue to, engage with students, staff, faculty, and administration 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 student organizations, sports teams, Greek life, and student government among others. We have placed QR codes and posters across campus and taken part in the National Voter Registration Day and other election holiday 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. Over the past few years, we believe these efforts yielded several hundred registered students (either through a change of registration or new registrations). In addition, we have improved student communication of these events and important election details well in advance of them happening, and made sure to promote them properly through the various other connections and means throughout campus.

Voter Education

With the advent of new civic holidays such as National Voter Education Week, we have continued to make sure our campus community is being well informed about voting and trying to clear up misconceptions they may have by supplying and promoting the appropriate literature, as well as hosting Voter Education drives on campus, which run in very similar vein to our traditional voter registration events. In addition, the ONU Votes! webpage also provides various important voting resources for students to learn more about voting and how it impacts them, as well as being able to check their registration and how to go about registering or obtaining an absentee ballot. 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. This will be done by continuing to host various registration and education events, as well as partnering with various other organizations throughout the campus community to help educate and motivate certain groups to assist with our efforts while making sure everyone is well informed and on the same page when it comes to everything voting.

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 send out 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.