



ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN
Center for Community Engagement
2020

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Otterbein’s Action Plan was developed by a team of colleagues at the Center for Community Engagement, students, and other campus stakeholders. The CCE recognizes that civic engagement is vital to amplifying all the voices of our community. We seek to engage our campus in efforts to define civic engagement both in and outside the classroom, increase student voter registration and participation, integrate civic engagement into the curriculum, and engage students in the civic work of our

communities. In 2020, our work will be focused on a new partnership with the local Board of Elections, the development of new civic opportunities in the local community, and innovative strategies for both voter registration and awareness.

II. LEADERSHIP

The Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement team at Otterbein is responsible for implementing the action plan. The team includes multiple stakeholders from across the campus, including students, faculty, and staff. They will meet bi-monthly to clarify goals, determine implementation plans, develop community, and network with community constituencies. Dr. Melissa Kesler Gilbert, Associate Dean of Experiential Learning and advisor to the bi-partisan student group, **Raise Your Voice** will co-chair the team. Other stakeholders will include: 1) The Otterbein Library, with key personnel developing programming and educational materials for the library, 2) Members of N2N (Neighbor 2 Neighbor, a local community alliance committed to bipartisan collaborations, and 3) Collaborators from the Divisions of Academic and Student Affairs, The Center for Student Success.



III. COMMITMENT



Otterbein University is committed to enhancing civic learning on our campus and the democratic engagement of our students. Our commitment is evident through our guiding documents, curriculum, and infrastructure. Since the founding of our institution, in 1847, the university has engaged students in the civic work of the temperance movement, the abolitionist movement, and more contemporary movements for social change. Civic engagement is part of the historical framework of the institution and is manifested today in the contemporary fabric of our work.

A. *Our commitment is evident throughout our **guiding documents** which will serve as both the motivation and the scaffolding for our work:*

- **Vision**

Otterbein University will be nationally recognized as a model community of educators, leaders, and learners who set the pace for higher education and

- **Mission**

Otterbein is an inclusive community dedicated to educating the whole person in the context of humane values. Our mission is to prepare graduates to think deeply and broadly, to **engage locally and globally**, and to **advance** their professions and **communities**. An Otterbein education is distinguished by the intentional blending of the liberal arts and professional studies,

- **Core Value: Service**

We are committed to **fostering a culture of social responsibility, civic engagement, and meaningful service** to our communities.

B. *Our commitment is also evident in our **intentional and integrated curriculum**.*

- Our **general education** instruction, known at Otterbein as “Integrated Studies” (INST) emphasizes civic engagement. One of the primary goals of INST is:

GOAL: To encourage purposeful public engagement and social responsibility.

Outcomes:

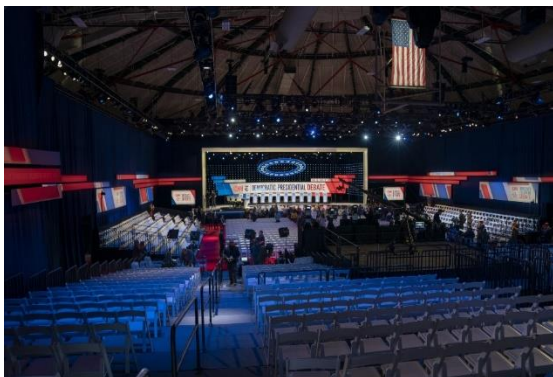
- 1) Students demonstrate the intellectual and practical skills necessary for meaningful work and active participation in the local community and the larger world.
- 2) Students investigate multiple and evolving forms of **civic identification** and belonging, with attention to the **practice of citizenship** in local, national and global contexts.
- 3) Students explore the value of purposeful action in the face of the pressing problems of the 21st century.
- 4) Students come to see themselves as responsible, engaged and informed persons, capable and **willing to act in ways that will improve or reshape the world.**

- Our commitment to experiential learning promotes the high impact practice of **service-learning**, offering over 60 service-learning courses and fellowship opportunities for community-based research.

C. *Our commitment is also evident in the **institutionalization of two offices** on campus who are responsible for civic engagement and social justice initiatives: The Center for Community Engagement and The Office of Social Justice.*

IV. LANDSCAPE

Otterbein's landscape of civic learning and engagement is robust, with curricular and co-curricular efforts that have shown to be effective in meeting agreed upon campus learning objectives. Several of our signature experiences at Otterbein are grounded in civic experiences for our students and provide both training and skill inventories to measure success. Below are some of the highlights of our current democratic engagement efforts:



The 2019 Democratic Debate: Otterbein hosted CNN's national democratic presidential debate in October of 2019. This event played a pivotal role in situating our university on the national stage for political engagement and mobilized hundreds of students to become more aware of the contested issues on the national landscape. Over one hundred students volunteered for the debate, spoke on panels, and served as college media spokespeople.

The Five Cardinal Experiences: Given the university's emphasis on experiential learning through our Five Cards initiative, our campus climate also encourages, supports financially, and rewards students who participate in "community engagement" – one of the Five Cards. Community Engagement is one of the most accessible pathways students take to deepen their civic understanding.



Civic Partnerships: The Center has developed new partnerships to enhance opportunities for both student civic engagement and voter education. We have partnered with an alliance of local non-profit stakeholders to engage our students in building the capacities of our community to thrive. Examples of these partnerships include our local Chamber of Commerce, the City Council, and a new alliance, Neighbor 2 Neighbor. The university has also engaged The League of Women Voters to assist with voter education efforts. The League has co-hosted events on campus with local candidates, voter registration drives, and voter awareness events during Constitution Day and with new voting machines at our Library.

Student Government: The university has developed a new initiative to expand the democratic participation of students through their own student government. Students now engage in a campus-wide electoral process, they vote as Senators in all campus governance questions, and they serve on governance committees across campus. In March of 2020, the student government issued a proclamation to engage the Franklin County Board of Elections to change the voting precincts in the city to decrease confusion about student addresses and eligibility.

Measures of Civic Learning and Engagement: We have developed several standardized instruments on our campus to measure knowledge of community, civic competencies, civic awareness, social responsibility, and levels of civic engagement. For example, the **CardinalCorps Community Engagement Survey** is given to all students who engage in community service each semester and the **Van Sant Leadership Survey** is given to all students who participate in civic engagement as part of their leadership journey. Both instruments have an inventory of civic competencies to measure the impact of their experiences on their ability to engage successfully in civic work.

National Surveys: We also participate in several national surveys that provide information on civic engagement, including: NSLVE, NSSE, CIRP, and the Campus

Compact Annual Survey. Part of our action plan for this year is to explore existing data as it relates to civic outcomes.

Our most recent NSLVE Data Revealed:

MEASURE	2014	2018
Overall Voting Rate (increased by 28.3%)	16.9%	45.2%
Registration Rate	68.7%	79.4%
Voting Rate of Registered Students	24.5%	56.9%
% of Registered Undergraduates who Voted	Unknown	40.9%
% of Registered Graduate Students who Voted	Unknown	61.1%

Internal Barriers: For students who feel politically connected to their hometown, they often want to vote locally and register with their home address; however, they do not request an absentee ballot, and then do not get home to vote. Also, given both the breadth and the scope of community work on our campus, our staff is limited in the amount of time we can devote specifically to voting campaigns for our students.

External Barriers: For our voter registration drives, we often have external agencies come to campus and register students incorrectly. Our campus is divided by a geographic boundary that separates two polling locations, which also adds to the confusion. Students also need help understanding the appropriate ID and other materials they might need to vote (proof of residency/utility bill).

Learning Outcomes: The campus has identified campus-wide learning outcomes for our students: Knowledgeable, Multiliterate, Engaged, Responsible, and Inquisitive, known on our campus as KMERI. In each of these areas, there is an emphasis on several learning outcomes that directly align with civic work.

V. GOALS:

Otterbein University’s challenge will focus on three primary focus areas in 2020, with several short-term objectives scaffolding our work.

2020 Short-term Goals and Objectives:

1. Increase voter turnout to 60% in the 2020 general election.
 - Collaborate with the Library to develop enhanced voter education opportunities, including new KIOSKS for voter registration
 - Increase the number of students engaged in voter registration with new strategies provided by CEEP interns and Raise Your Voice students
 - Increase our social media presence and on-line voter education
 - Implement targeted strategies for students whose turn out rates are traditionally lower (e.g., environmental studies, sports recreation, social sciences)

2. Partner with the Board of Elections
 - Redefine the voting precincts to allow all students to vote at one location.
 - Establish new campus addresses and utility bill processes to reduce voter confusion.
3. Redefine civic landscapes for democratic participation.
 - Engage current community partners in dialogues about the civic competencies students could gain at their sites
 - Increase the quality of community engagement sites to create additional opportunities for students across the disciplines.

Long-term Goals:

- Increase voter turnout at all future elections
- Strengthen community partnerships to increase opportunities for student experiences
- Develop an intentional set of service-learning courses

VI. STRATEGIES

To meet both our long- and short-term goals, the CLDE team will work together to engage the Otterbein community in the following planned activities for the 2020-21 academic year:

- ✓ Orientations, New Student Week, and First Year Experience Courses will engage students in civic engagement education and voter awareness
- ✓ The Board of Elections will host voter awareness activities on campus to decrease voter issues
- ✓ The League of Women voters will host voter registration campaigns and virtual candidate debates with Raise Your Voice
- ✓ Student TOWN HALLS will engage students in voter engagement activities
- ✓ All Otterbein students will receive digital access to voter registration KIOSKS on-line
- ✓ Community partners will join the campus in a Democratic Engagement Alliance to build new opportunities for student civic engagement

TIMELINE: With the impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, we are currently adjusting our Get Out the VOTE timeline to reflect new campus infrastructure, policies, and programming.

VII. REPORTING

We will convene the CLDE team to develop a communications plan to share the data used to inform the plan, the action plan itself, and the outcomes of the civic work, to include:

- A social media campaign to illuminate our work

- A report to the Otterbein Board of Trustees
- Infographics posted to our website
- Presentations to local organizations and community partners

VIII. EVALUATION

The CCE and the CLDE team will work collaboratively to evaluate progress toward goals. Both formative and summative evaluations will be implemented over the course of the academic year for the purpose of improving our plan and engaging our students. We will use both our tested standardized instruments that measure civic awareness, civic competencies, and social responsibility as well as new instruments designed specifically for this project.

We will also implement the following:

- Participate in the NSLVE to determine 2020 voter engagement
- Track participation and impact of voter engagement efforts
- Assess learning outcomes from INST and service-learning courses
- Collaborate with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to triangulate data from other national standardized instruments