



OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY

VOTER FRIENDLY CAMPUS ACTION PLAN

Center for Community Engagement

2022

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Otterbein's Action Plan was developed by the **OtterbeinVOTES** team of colleagues at the Center for Community Engagement, that includes students, faculty members, and other campus and community stakeholders. The plan provides a thoughtful campus compass for the team grounded in data and goal setting. 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 2022, our work will be focused on a new **OtterbeinVOTES Kiosk** in our coffee shop at the library where students can check on their pathways to vote, learn about candidates, and connect with our civic network. We will also focus on the development of new civic opportunities in the local community for students to engage more fully in both their democratic education and action.

II. LEADERSHIP: OUR COALITION

The Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement team at Otterbein, **OtterbeinVOTES**, is responsible for implementing the action plan. The team includes multiple stakeholders from across the campus, including students, faculty, and staff. The team will meet 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 with student Democracy Fellows, **Hannah Sturgeon** (Senior, Student Trustee) and **Lindsey Payton** (Senior, CardinalCorps President).

Campus & Community Stakeholders will include:

- 1) The Otterbein Library, with key personnel developing programming and educational materials for the library. **Kirsten Peninger** (Program Coordinator, Courtright Memorial Library) will serve as the Library Liaison to the team.
- 2) Members of N2N (Neighbor 2 Neighbor), a local community alliance committed to bipartisan collaborations that includes the **Mayor of Westerville** and chair of the city council, **Diane Conley**.
- 3) Collaborators from the Divisions of Academic Affairs, including faculty from the departments of Sociology, Communication, Political Science, English, Education, and others. Key faculty stakeholders include: **Dr. Carla Corroto** (Sociology), **Dr. Kerry Strayer** (Communication), and **Dr. Tammy Birk** (English & Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies).
- 4) Partners in Student Affairs who collaborate with student organizations and residence life programming
- 5) Representation from Integrated Studies (our General Education program) to help with communication in courses.
- 6) Collaborators from First Year Experience courses where peer mentors will help raise awareness about voting
- 7) Representation from the Franklin County Board of Elections
- 8) Partners at *The League of Women Voters* (key contact: **Elizabeth Grieser**, Operations Manager)
- 9) Friends at All IN, Campus Votes, AAC&U, and NASPA's Civic Learning and Democracy Education Knowledge Community.

III. OTTERBEIN'S COMMITMENT TO CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



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 **contribute to the common good.**

- **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, combined with a unique approach to **integrating direct experience** into all learning.

- **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 and Activism.*

D. The university also supports national civic initiatives, for example, Dr. Melissa Gilbert serves as the Research Coordinator for the **NASPA Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement’s** Knowledge Community Executive team.

- E. The university participates in the national **ALL IN** Challenge and has competed in the Ohio Athletic Conference challenge!

IV. LANDSCAPE

Otterbein's landscape of civic learning and engagement is robust, with curricular and curricular efforts that have shown to be effective in meeting agreed upon campus learning objectives. We have received the Friendly Campus designation and in 2021, Otterbein was named to Washington Monthly's **Best Colleges for Student Voting Honor Roll!**

Several of our signature experiences at Otterbein are grounded in civic experiences our students and provide both training and inventories to measure success. Below are some of the highlights of our current democratic engagement efforts:



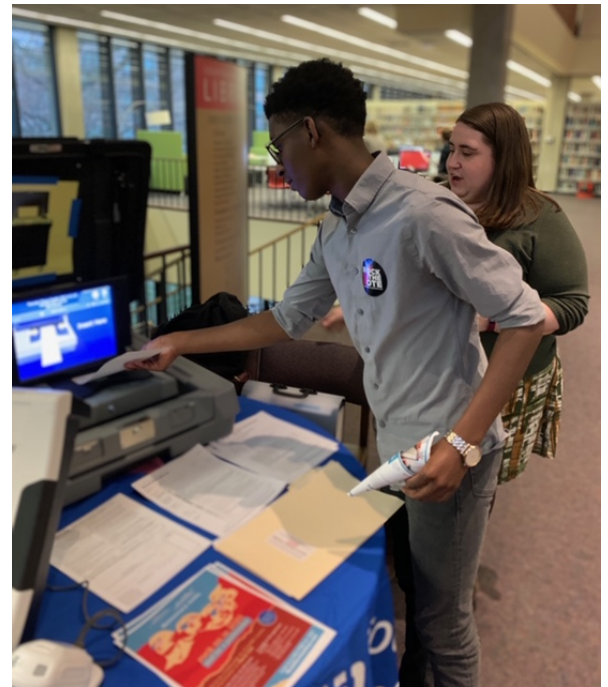
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Fall Community Service Plunge: Each fall, 350 First Year students engage in community service for the City of Westerville as part of their introduction to the civic workings of their new local community. The Mayor of Westerville welcomes the students to the community, noting their new civic role as members of a thriving local democracy. The students gather on the steps of the city's "civic green" to learn about both the beauty and the growing needs of their new home. After the speeches, students disperse into civic teams to serve with local non-profits, learning about the specific needs of youth, adults with disabilities, the environment, and other key issues, followed by two hours of volunteer service to address those needs.

The "EVERY STUDENT WILL" Initiative: New for the incoming 2022 class, is an initiative to ensure that every student will have an immersive experience to gain professional skills and build a strong network. Given the university's emphasis on experiential learning our campus climate also encourages, supports financially, and rewards students who participate in "community engagement" – one of immersive experiences that will count toward this new graduation requirement. At Otterbein, Community Engagement is one of the most accessible pathways students take to deepen their civic understanding.

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.



Civic Partnerships: The Center has developed extensive 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 our city alliance, Neighbor2Neighbor (N2N).

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 with sample voting machines from the Board of Elections at our Library.

Student Government: The university supports a student-led governance system to expand the democratic participation of students. Students 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. We are currently analyzing the data from the past three years to determine the civic impact of these service and leadership programs.

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.

NSLVE Data has Revealed:

MEASURE	2014	2016	2018	2020
Total Eligible Voters	--	2817	2336	2664
Overall Voting Rate	16.9%	61.7%	44.9%	74%
Registration Rate	68.7%	82.8%	79.8%	86.0%
Voting Rate of Registered Students	24.5%	74.5%	56.9%	86.1%
% of Registered Undergraduates who Voted	--	57%	40.9%	73%
% of Registered Graduate Students who Voted	--	80%	61.1%	80%



Differentiated Results: There were no significant differences in the voting behavior of males and females; however, we did note that students of color (especially Asian, Hispanic, and Black) voted at lower rates than their White peers. We are working with the Office of Social Justice & Activism to navigate barriers to voting access for these students.

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 two primary focus areas in 2022, with several short-term objectives scaffolding our work.

2020 Short-term Goals and Objectives:

1. Increase voter turnout to 85% in the 2022 general election.

- Increase awareness about our new **OtterbeinVOTES Kiosk** in the Otterbean Coffee shop at the library. This student-friendly station will host voter materials, both on paper and on our

new Ipad “Civic Gateway.” The kiosk will share the following resources and more:

- i. Ballotready.org
 - ii. Vote411.org
 - iii. Otterbein Voting Roadmap (see image)
 - iv. Links to all registration, absentee voter, change of address forms
 - v. Mail center with stamps and envelopes
- Increase the number of students engaged in voter registration with new strategies provided by the student Raise Your Voice
 - 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, students of color)

2. Enhance civic landscapes for democratic participation

- Engage current community partners in dialogues about the civic competencies students could gain at their sites
- Enhance the quality of community engagement sites to create additional opportunities for students across the disciplines.
- Increase the number of academic courses engaging student in civic participation by 50%

Long-term Goals:

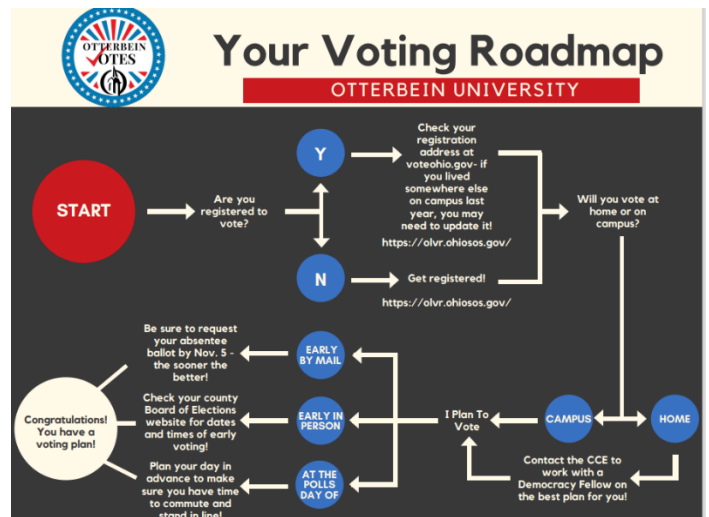
- Increase voter turnout at all future elections
- Strengthen community partnerships to increase opportunities for student experiences
- Develop an intentional set of civic engagement courses grounded in our historic service-learning work

VI. 2022 STRATEGIES



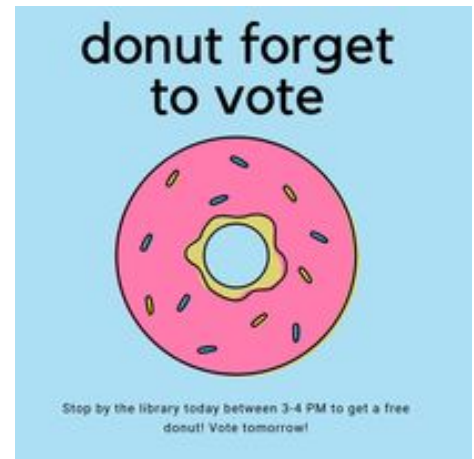
To meet both our long- and short-term goals, the **OtterbeinVOTES** team will work together to engage the Otterbein community in the following planned activities for the 2022-23 academic year.

These strategies follow the timeline of both local and national events, as well as campus collaborations.



GET OUT THE VOTE

- ✓ **Move-In & New Student Week** (at First Friday)
 - Include a postcard in move-in packets with information about absentee ballot requests (partner with Res. Life)
 - Host a virtual “**Registration Station**” to answer questions on Blackboard
 - Follow-email from Student Affairs with current voter information
- ✓ **OtterbeinVOTES** will host our new KIOSK at the library with live “**Ask me how to VOTE**” events to introduce students to all of the materials to help them vote successfully.
 - Link to a new **OZONE channel** that houses all the voting links, forms, and websites
 - Provide voting roadmaps
 - Mount candidate information
- ✓ **Course Visits:** The **OtterbeinVOTES** faculty team will **visit classes/make virtual visits** to encourage voting; target FYS classes and INST classes
- ✓ **Partnership with the Mail Room** will provide a special MAIL BOX for student absentee ballot requests and absentee ballots (secure funding for STAMPS)
- ✓ **Constitution Day** (September 17th): We will host our annual voter awareness campaign with the Otterbein Library
- ✓ **National Voter Registration Day** (4th Tuesday of September): **OtterbeinVOTES** will host a party at our Kiosk with voter registration information. The Franklin County **Board of Elections** will join us for this *National Voter Registration Day* and provide a “ballot talk” to introduce students to what they will see on their ballot and will visit with the **voting machine**
- ✓ The **League of Women Voters** will host a local **candidate debate** in October with *Raise Your Voice*
- ✓ We will host **Debate Watch Parties** in Riley Auditorium to raise awareness about candidates and offer opportunities for civic dialog.
- ✓ **Women’s and Gender Studies Program**, *Raise Your Voice*, and URGE will host Women’s Reproductive Health tables at the Library to raise awareness about local elections that directly affect issues facing women.
- ✓ *Raise Your Voice* will host:
 - “**Coffee Talks**” in the library for civil discourse about local and national issues directly affecting students
 - Other events co-facilitated by two **Democracy Fellows**
- ✓ Student **TOWN HALLS** will engage students in voter engagement activities (partnership with Otterbein Undergraduate Student Government)
- ✓ All Otterbein students will receive information on digital access to **voter registration** through the **VOTE411.com** site.



CIVIC LANDSCAPES FOR ENGAGEMENT

- ✓ Community partners will join the campus in a **Democratic Engagement Alliance** to build new opportunities for student civic engagement in the community
- ✓ CCE will work with INST to match community needs to INST3000-level “public good” courses
- ✓ CCE will host a series of workshops for faculty members to learn about civic education strategies

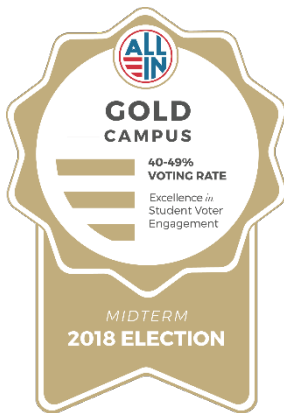
TIMELINE: We are currently working on our timeline with partners, but will not have it confirmed until al

students, faculty, and other stakeholders return to campus on August 21st.

The current schedule is based on the programs listed above, national signature events, and announcements by local candidates for debates and candidate nights.

We expect that fall COVID requirements may again impact our in-person events with masking and other potential social distancing protocols.

VII. REPORTING



We will convene the **OtterbeinVOTES** 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 on both Facebook (for staff, faculty, and alumni, and on Instagram for students and new alumni.
- ✓ A report to the Otterbein Board of Trustees
- ✓ Infographics posted to our website and Ozone pages
- ✓ Presentations to local organizations and community partners
- ✓ Press releases to local, regional, and national news outlets
- ✓ A voter engagement wrap-up factsheet to disseminate to all stakeholders and host on websites.

VIII. EVALUATION

The CCE and the **OtterbeinVOTES** 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 2022 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

