



**SUNY  
BROCKPORT**

Democratic  
Engagement Action  
Plan

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## **Executive Summary**

The Democratic Engagement Action Plan that follows was created by Betty García-Mathewson, Interim Associate Director Community Development, Shane Walters, Graduate Assistant for Democratic Engagement, and Alyssa Farruggia, Intern for Democratic Engagement. It represents a compilation of efforts from across the institution for the 2022 – 2023 Academic Year to promote civic and democratic engagement. This action plan is intended to be a living document that is amended as appropriate through feedback from campus and community partners.

Founded in 1835, SUNY Brockport is a nationally recognized comprehensive public college in the State University of New York system focused on student success. Its main campus is located just 20 minutes west of Rochester, NY, and has two satellite campuses, Rochester Equal Opportunity Center (REOC) and Visual Arts Workshop, located in the city proper. The 464-acre campus has 68 buildings occupying about one-quarter of the campus, with rolling grassy fields and wooded land. Annual enrollment is approximately 7000 undergraduate and 1000 graduate students, with a majority of students residing on-campus or within the surrounding village.

Each year, SUNY Brockport awards approximately 25% of all bachelor's degrees in the Rochester area, with many alumni staying in Rochester to work or attend graduate school. Alumni serve in leadership roles in business, government, public safety, health care, the arts, sciences, and education.

Civic engagement initiatives occur throughout campus under many different departments. Primary responsibility for voter engagement falls within Student Union, Leadership, & Activities (SULA; merge of former Student Union and Activities with Community Development), in the Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs. SULA oversees the national award-winning Leadership Development Program, community service initiatives, and democratic engagement. The office is also a consulting member of the NASPA LEAD Initiative. The American Democracy Project is a college-wide committee, co-chaired by representatives from the Political Science Department and SULA. This group meets throughout the year to implement programs that promote an informed and engaged citizenry.

For the upcoming year, our primary goals are:

- To establish an institutional definition of Civic Engagement including outcomes and appropriate assessment measures
- To increase voter registration and turnout for the midterm elections by strengthening campus-wide efforts including classroom visits, student leader trainings, and voter registration events
- To enhance voter education by hosting Deliberative Dialogues, “Meet the Candidates” events, and providing visual materials that present multiple perspectives and emphasize the importance of informed voting
- To engage with the new Joey Jackson Intercultural Center to establish voter engagement opportunities supporting disenfranchised and minoritized student populations on campus.
- To enhance existing voter engagement opportunities that provide ballot access and encourage students to get out to vote, including recruiting student poll workers, reminders about absentee voting, and shuttles to polling sites.

## Leadership

Primarily, leadership for these initiatives will fall to the Leadership and Democratic engagement pillar of Student Union, Leadership & Activities. A college-wide committee of faculty, staff, and students will be re-established that guides campus efforts related to civic engagement. Members will be individuals from across campus who have an expressed interest in promoting this work on campus. Intentional efforts will be made to ensure diverse representation. Two positions have been identified as key roles necessitating development of a succession plan; these are the Associate Director for Leadership and Democratic Engagement as well as the Graduate Assistant for Democratic Engagement.

Additionally, work is completed throughout campus including many intentional partnerships that support the day-to-day work. These include:

**Student Union, Leadership & Activities (SULA):** The Student Union, Leadership & Activities, in the Division of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, has primary responsibility for civic engagement initiatives at the college. In this capacity, the office oversees the nationally recognized Leadership Development Program, Democratic Engagement, Clubs and Organizations, Fraternity and Sorority Life, and the Joey Jackson Intercultural Center.

**Department of Political Science:** The department of Political Science and International Studies seeks to help students develop the skills and knowledge to critically evaluate political issues and analyze the role of the citizen in the political system.

**Brockport Student Government (BSG):** Student government at Brockport is a vibrant community. The organization seeks to develop students for roles as leaders in diverse and interdependent communities. The director of advocacy position was created to enhance student engagement and activism within their communities. Additionally, several student groups, under the auspice of BSG, are engaged in civic engagement efforts, including:

- BSG Advocacy Department
- 89.1 The Point
- African Student Union
- Association of Latinx American Students
- Environmentally Conscious Organization of Students
- Eurosims
- Gender Equity Movement
- Political Science/Pre-Law
- The Stylus Student Newspaper
- Talon Television

**Residential Life/Learning Communities (RLLC):** Serving more than a third of the campus population, Residential Life represents a major stakeholder in efforts to civically engage students. The thriving Living Learning Community program offers a unique opportunity to connect with students on a variety of related topics including service, sustainability, law and civility and others.

**Institutional Student Learning Outcome Assessment Committee:** A newly formed committee, this group will be looking at how we assess our Institutional Student Learning Outcomes, established Fall 2017. One of the five Institutional Student Learning Outcomes is Civic Engagement. Over the next year, the committee will be working to assess civic engagement campus-wide.

## **Commitment**

SUNY Brockport values involvement with its community. As a result, efforts have been made over the last few years to include this aspect of our work in guiding documents for the institution. The college's strategic mission, vision, values, and strategic plan have been shared broadly and emphasized among faculty, staff, students, and other community members. The institutional student learning outcomes were passed by the college senate in Fall 2017 and have not yet become widely known in all areas of the college.

## **College Mission**

SUNY Brockport is an inclusive learning community that inspires excellence through growth, engagement, and transformation.

## **College Vision**

Building meaningful lives and vibrant communities

## **College Values**

Community. Engagement. Excellence. Transformation.

## **Strategic Plan: Building a Better Brockport**

Most relevant to this Action Plan is Goal Two: To be a College engaged with its Community

Community engagement offers the opportunity to contribute to the public good by combining the resources of the college with those of public and private sectors. To be a college engaged with its community, it is required that we promote, support, recognize, and celebrate the service and engagement of faculty, staff, students, and alumni in local, regional, national, and international communities, demonstrating our commitment to leadership, civic engagement, and global awareness.

Goal Two: Relevant Measures of Success

- a. Growth in the number and extent of engagement partnerships with the Village of Brockport, City of Rochester, Monroe County, and local rural communities, through active participation in some or all of the following: community advisory boards and volunteer efforts; Town/Gown meetings and initiatives; collaborative events; community internships and partnerships. This will allow us to explore and assess strong community partnerships around areas of critical need, e.g., the development of a community clinic.
- b. Develop stronger working relationships with bodies with influence, including: the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council (FLREDC), the Greater Rochester Chamber of the Commerce, the Greater Rochester Enterprise (GRE), the Rochester Monroe County Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI), and state and national bodies of relevance to the College.
- c. Expand campus-based Lifelong Learning opportunities for community members.
- d. Ensure increased opportunities to link all students, including international students, with community support.

- e. Building on our history and genesis as an institution of higher learning, promote increased collaboration with P-12 schools in Brockport, the Rochester City School District, and other local schools (in and out of Monroe County), including private and charter schools, as well as our affiliated REOC, and our local community colleges.
- f. See increased interdivisional and interdepartmental communication around scholarship, curricular and co-curricular events and achievements.
- g. Ensure enhanced alumni and external engagement, providing for social and networking activities, and inclusive of meaningful opportunities to contribute time, talent, and funding to the College.

## **Institutional Student Learning Outcomes**

Written and Oral Communication: Brockport graduates will be able to express ideas in a coherent, logical, and compelling way, in both written and oral forms appropriate to their disciplines.

Quantitative Reasoning: Brockport graduates will be able to analyze, interpret and communicate quantitative information in a variety of formats, and solve relevant quantitative problems using appropriate methods.

Intercultural Competence: Brockport graduates will be able to demonstrate an understanding of multiple worldviews and experiences as well as of relationships between diversity, inequality, and social, economic, and political power, both within the United States and globally.

Critical Thinking and Information Literacy: Brockport graduates will be able to identify issues clearly, synthesize and contextualize relevant sources to achieve specific purposes, and make connections across experiences and disciplinary perspectives to generate well-reasoned and imaginative approaches to historical and contemporary issues, problems, and challenges.

Civic Engagement: Brockport graduates will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of civic engagement and civic responsibility through knowledge and experience gained in their academic field(s) of study and co-curricular explorations.

## **Landscape**

### **Curricular efforts**

#### **General Education**

Within the General Education requirements and structure, several course tags may connect with civil learning and democratic engagement, however, it is difficult to discern to what extent a specific course connects to this work. All students must take a course that fulfils one of these tags, with a wide variety of options from which to choose. These course tags include:

- Perspectives on Gender (one course, “W” tag): Demonstrates knowledge of scholarship on women within a relevant knowledge area. Scholarship on women is broadly defined as a critical awareness of gender issues.
- Diversity (one course, “D” tag): Demonstrate an ability to analyze social conflicts, prejudices, and/or intolerance relevant to a contemporary setting and arising from such issues as racism, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, class, etc.
- Contemporary Issues (one course, “I” tag): demonstrates and ability to analyze a major issue with contemporary and enduring human significance, bringing perspectives that have an important bearing on the issue(s) from more than one of the Knowledge Areas.

Additionally, all first-year students take the Academic Planning Seminar (APS). This course is taught by many different instructors from all over campus and has an overarching curriculum with room for individualization. During the summer of 2019, members of SULA created a lesson outline for APS instructors who would like to facilitate a class on civic engagement. This workshop, entitled “Reading Between the Lines,” teaches students to understand the biases and assumptions found in academic sources as well as the media. As of yet, this lesson outline is underutilized by APS instructors. This workshop will also be offered as a standalone event and advertised for students of all years to attend.

#### **Co-Curricular Efforts**

##### **Brock the Vote Campaign**

Throughout the year, SULA implements the following initiatives to promote voter registration, education, and turnout. These efforts are laid out in more detail in the “Strategy” section.

#### **Barriers**

##### **Internal Barriers**

Human capital remains one of the most significant barriers. Democratic Engagement is not the dedicated responsibility of a full-time faculty or staff member. A graduate assistant focuses on this work, and sometimes with the support of an intern present for a semester, but without full time attention, it is difficult to move the bar. Additionally, there may be a perception that the efforts are geared to promote a certain party or agenda. The impression on campus is that the majority support liberal values, making an environment in which many conservative students may struggle to discuss their political beliefs.

##### **External Barriers**

Several significant barriers exist in New York State. The state does not have an effective or efficient way to register to vote online. An individual may only register online if they possess identification from the Department of Motor Vehicles and are choosing to register to vote using the address listed on that ID. Monroe County also has a significant geographic barrier due to its size and population density. Early voting has alleviated some of this concern, but it is still a new process that people are learning about. Recent referendum on no-excuse absentee voting failed to pass, and it is unclear at this point if COVID-related absentee voting will continue to be available for the 2022 primaries and midterms. As many campuses across the nation are also experiencing, there has been a significant decline in student participation and engagement with any type of programming, so educational efforts are an ongoing struggle as well.

### **Available Resources**

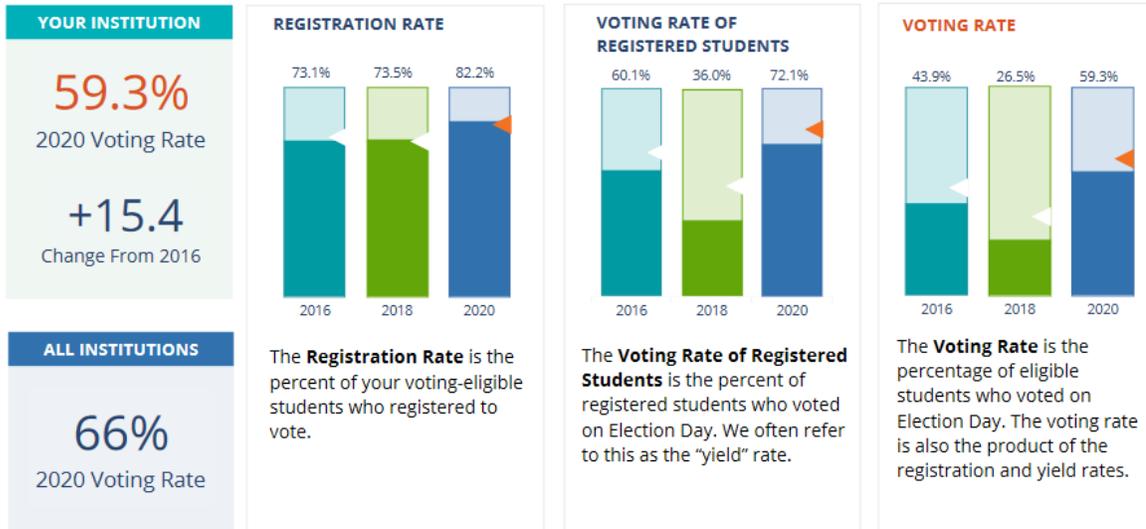
- The American Democracy Project
- Graduate Assistantship for Democratic Engagement
- Intern for Democratic Engagement
- Five (5) Community Ambassador student employees
- Funds for speakers, events, and promotional materials for SULA, American Democracy Project, and collaborating partners

### **Additional Resources Needed**

- Additional funds for large scale events and speakers
- Reserved parking space for guest speakers
- Mechanisms to allow for student transportation to polling sites
- Funding for additional Community Ambassador student employees
- Funding for a full-time staff member to focus on Democratic Engagement
- Funding for a full-time staff member to focus on Community Service and recruit volunteers for large hallmark events

### **NSLVE 2020 Midterm Data At-A-Glance**

## Voting, Registration and Yield Rates



While we experienced improvement in all three categories depicted above between presidential election years, our overall voting rate and voting rate of registered students lags national averages. Voter mobilization should be a major priority for the fall 2022 midterms as a result.

## **Goals**

### **Long Term Goals**

- To increase voter registration rates to 85% by 2024
- To increase voting rate in presidential elections to 60% by 2024 and midterm elections to 30% by 2026
- To adapt the Democratic Engagement Action Plan into a handbook language regarding Civic Engagement and Voter Engagement and ensure that this language is dispersed broadly
- To establish SUNY Brockport campus as a polling site by the 2024 presidential election

### **Short Term Goals**

- To maintain or exceed the voting rate seen in 2018 in the 2022 midterm elections (>29.8%)
- To increase the voter registration rate to 80% for the 2022 midterm elections
- To establish a formal institutional definition of Civic Engagement including outcomes and appropriate assessment measures by Fall 2022.
- To enhance voter education by engaging at least 50 students in virtual and in-person Deliberative Dialogues and civic learning events

## Strategy

Voter Registration (this list is not exhaustive):

- Promotion of voter registration at Summer Orientation “Connecting to your New Community” Session and Information Table\*
- Email sent to on-campus students with housing assignment and voter registration information
- Voter registration information and forms available during move-in\*
- Voter Registration information and forms handed out to off campus students by Good Neighbor Relations Team during Saturday of Service\*
- Voter registration tabling throughout campus, using department staff, student workers, and local partners such as the League of Women Voters
- Presentations and voter registration in Freshman Academic Planning Seminar\*
- Trainings for student leaders (resident assistants, Peer mentors, Community Ambassadors) on how to register to vote so they can educate their peers
- Presence at a local Naturalization Ceremony\*
- Host National Voter Registration Day Events\*
- Remind students of voter registration deadlines through social media and tabling

Voter Education (this list is not exhaustive):

- Naturalization Ceremony\*
- Utilize social media and tabling to promote early voting, absentee voting, and remind students about voting deadlines and what is on the ballot that year
- Host at least ten (10) dialogue opportunities each semester, including Deliberative Dialogues, debates, World Café, etc., allowing students to have a chance to deliberate and discuss polarizing topics with guidance and structure\*
- Advertise virtual Global Literacy Talks and World 101 Summit to students (hosted through the American Democracy Project)
- Host a Constitution Day Education project (September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022)
- “Meet the Candidates” events where students are able to meet with local elected officials and candidates running for office\*
- Our Community, Our Voice social media campaign
- Debate Watch Parties\*
- Bulletin Boards throughout Campus
- Community Ambassador Democratic Topics Tabling and Outreach
- American Democracy Project Speakers\*
- Electing to Lunch Weekly Lunch Discussions

Voter Turnout (note: this list is not exhaustive)

- Monroe County Election Fellows Program – collaborative effort between local colleges and the Monroe County Board of Elections to recruit Elections Inspectors
- Providing Transportation or Ride Shares to polling locations
- Posters and flyers throughout campus reminding students to submit absentee ballots

- Provost email to faculty encouraging support and flexibility for students needing to travel home for election day
- Opportunities to practice casting a vote to eliminate discomfort as a deterrent
- Email from the president encouraging participation in the election
- Flyers and advertising throughout campus promoting election day and building excitement
- Video on website encouraging students to get out and vote on election day
- Election Day Watch Party
- “I Voted” Party

\*These events have been curtailed recently due to COVID-19 restrictions and staffing limitations but are primed to resume when conditions are safer for students to engage.

## **Reporting**

This plan will be the starting point for the new DE GA and Assoc. Dir. to guide their efforts as they rebuild the DE workgroup. It will then be reviewed and finalized at the start of the Spring 2023 semester by this workgroup. Feedback on the report from workgroup members and the All In Campus Democracy Challenge will be implemented.

## **Evaluation**

Assessment of efforts will be an integral part of the process. Throughout the year, data will be gathered in a variety of ways, including:

- Voter Registration Rates through Brock the Vote Initiatives
- Voter Registration Rates (NSLVE)
- Voter Turnout Rates (NSLVE)
- Program and event attendance
- Achievement of student learning outcomes at programs and events
- Number of classroom visits
- Number of faculty, staff and community members involved in efforts
- Students reporting learning in the following areas:
  - Awareness of campus, local, state and federal government structures
  - Knowledge of the electoral process
  - Understanding their own values and viewpoints
  - Considering the viewpoints of others
  - Evaluating the platforms of electoral candidates
  - Engaging with representatives
- Student engagement rates various forms of democratic action

Educational programs will also have learning outcomes that will be assessed. These data will be collected using Qualtrics, which will be new to the campus Summer 2022. At the end of the academic year, we will compile a report that specifies action throughout the year and the results.