



**CAMPUS
DEMOCRACY
CHALLENGE**

Sam Houston State University 2020 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

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Executive Summary:

Overall, democratic engagement is a fairly broad topic- ranging from community outreach to voting initiatives. At Sam Houston State University (SHSU), community involvement (largely tied to academic instruction) is managed and celebrated by the SHSU Center for Community Engagement (CCE). The SHSU community is very involved with community outreach, service, and volunteerism. SHSU has received Carnegie Community Engagement Classification for this work. Campus work tied to discourse and political involvement lies with the SHSU American Democracy Project (ADP). The SHSU ADP technically lies within the CCE - but is nascent in its endeavors. As the CCE and it's endeavors are highly successful, the SHSU action plan will predominantly focus on ADP initiatives and goals.

The action plan is already in progress and derives from a 2019 campus assessment of political learning and engagement (lead by AACSU and IDHE-Tufts University). The plan is to engage in minor updates/revisions every academic year, with larger assessments, analyses, and resultant/newly created action plans occurring every 5 years. The action plan and assessments will be created, accomplished, and updated by the SHSU ADP committee.

Identified strengths and challenges are as follows:

Strengths

Campus-Wide Commitment to Service

Open to New Teaching Methods/Practices

Strong Desire to Increase Campus-Wide Engagement from All Groups

Challenges

Culture of Conflict Avoidance

Lack of Political Learning/Engagement

Lack of Institutional Transparency, Communication, and/or Collaboration

Lack of Mechanisms for Discussion/Deliberation

Slow to Institutionalize Inclusivity

Short-term Goals:

1) Work with campus stakeholders (from administration to students), various campus committees, and change makers to disseminate and process the campus climate report on political learning and engagement.

2) Build a website to advertise ADP initiatives

3) Increase SHSU community involvement in larger ASSCU-ADP conferences and events. The move to digital platforms (with cheaper admittance) has opened the door for greater involvement.

4) Maintain, organize, and grow voter registration and voting initiatives

Long-term Goals:

1) Work with campus stakeholders (from administration to students), various campus committees, and change makers to identify goals and create plans for addressing the campus climate report on political learning and engagement.

2) Grow and implement more ADP deliberative dialogues (DD) across the university at various levels, in various venues, and in various contexts. We currently have one to two events per semester. The ADP would like to work with admin, faculty, staff, and students to integrate the deliberative dialogue process into our culture - rather than as one-time celebratory events.

- a) create regular/sustained/institutionalized moderator training
- b) create and implement instructor training for incorporation of DD in the classroom and/or into student activity initiatives
- c) pair with other campus entities (i.e. Office of Diversity & Inclusion) to lead more focused DD events, ultimately supporting areas of need with collective goal setting and resource allocation.

3) Create, promote, and implement an award to celebrate campus educators (faculty/staff) for the promotion of political learning and engagement on campus.

4) Work with the Democracy Day Committee (or various other entities) to institutionalize greater campus wide awareness of democratic processes, issues, and events on campus (i.e. debate watches, pizza and politics, etc.)

5) Plan for the 5 year assessment of political learning and engagement on campus.

- a) Plan for a greater emphasis on research and publications based on this study (to encourage faculty involvement and appreciation of results)
- b) Maintain/improve qualitative inquiry. Incorporate better quantitative inquiry (to improve appreciation of results from admin and faculty senate)

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following:

ADP Chair - Steven Koether, CCE Executive Director - Joyce McCauley, CCE Director & Faculty Senate Chair - Lee Miller, plus a much larger/diverse group that is called in depending on the decision or project

Commitment:

Our campus has not yet signed the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

Our campus has used the following methods to communicate with students about the election:

By email, By posting on institutional social media channels, Signs, door hangers, messaging in classes

Landscape:

Our campus demographic and voting data:

2012 - 39%, 2014 - 12.3%, 2016 - 42.8%, 2018 - 36.1% : We have approximately 20,000 students on campus : We are very diverse (51.3% white, 22.6% Hisp/Latino, 17.4% Black/AA, 2.9% 2 or more, 1.85% Asian, 0.5% AI or Alaska Native, 0.134% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander/Other

Goals:

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

2020: Voter registration information drives and information campaigns, checklists for preparing initiatives, getting to the polls initiatives, debate watches

2022: The same, with greater emphasis on debate watches and sustained (off year) education, voter pledge drives

Strategy:

Our campus has used the following strategies and organized the following events:

In-person voter registration drives, In-person voter education events (e.g. film screenings, debates, lecture series, etc.), Virtual voter registration drives (e.g. Couch Party text banking events)

2020: Voter registration information drives and information campaigns, checklists for preparing initiatives, getting to the polls initiatives, debate watches

NSLVE:

Sam Houston State University has authorized NSLVE.

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

Most can be documented as being completed or not. We can always look at NSLVE data as well.

Reporting:

We will report our campus action plan and NSLVE reports in the following ways:

Our action plan will be posted on our campus website and shared with the campus community.

Our campus NSLVE reports will be posted on our campus website and shared with the campus community.