

# SHSU - American Democracy Project

## 2020 Action Plan

Democratic engagement is a fairly broad topic- ranging from community engagement/outreach to voting initiatives. At Sam Houston State University (SHSU), community engagement (largely tied to academic instruction) is managed, promoted, and celebrated by the SHSU Center for Community Engagement (CCE). Additionally, SHSU students, staff, and faculty are very involved with community outreach, service, and volunteerism. SHSU has continued to earn, since 2010, the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification for this work. Campus work tied to discourse, democratic governance, and political involvement lies with the SHSU American Democracy Project (ADP). The SHSU ADP lies within the CCE. Past engagement has been sporadic or episodic. As the CCE and its endeavors are highly successful, the SHSU action plan will predominantly focus on ADP initiatives and goals.

The ADP action plan is already in progress and derives from a 2019 campus climate assessment of political learning and engagement (led by AASCU and IDHE-Tufts University) and campus stakeholder recommendations (2020 Deliberative Dialogue). The plan is divided into short and long-term goals. Minor revisions to the goals will occur every academic year, with larger assessments, analyses, and a resultant/newly created action plan occurring every 4-5 years. The action plan and assessments will be created, accomplished, and updated by the SHSU ADP committee with support by the SHSU CCE.

### **Campus political learning and engagement 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. An emphasis on reflections regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion will be encouraged. *Proposed Evaluation: Document the number of visits (and potentially participant numbers)*

2) Build a website to advertise ADP initiatives, to improve transparency and communication with SHSU and surrounding communities. *Proposed Evaluation: Completion*

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. This move will engage the SHSU community with national political learning and engagement endeavors. *Proposed Evaluation: Document of participant numbers*

4) Maintain, organize, and grow voter registration and voting initiatives. This will grow our local, regional, and national political engagement. *Proposed Evaluation: Document changes, number of events/initiatives, numbers of registered and voting students (NSLVE)*

- a) Work with the Student Government Association, student organizations, student activities to aid in the organization of voter initiatives
- b) Work with campus stakeholders to conduct registration drives much earlier, to ensure students have ample time to check their registration status (and re-register if needed)

### **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 growth areas found in the campus climate report on political learning and engagement. The connections to political learning and engagement challenges would be varied and numerous. *Proposed Evaluation: Document the number of visits (and participant numbers – if possible), maintain records of action plans*

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 DD 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. Work in this area will address the campus and regional culture of conflict avoidance and improve communication skills for participants. These endeavors could easily address other challenges, depending on topic, collaboration, and focus. *Proposed Evaluation: Document the number, type, and scope of events (and participant numbers – if possible)*

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. *Proposed Evaluation: Completion*

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.) *Proposed Evaluation: Document the number of visits (and participant numbers - if possible)*

5) Implement campus wide programming on media/political/information literacy. *Proposed Evaluation: Document the number, type, and scope of events (and participant numbers – if possible)*

6) Plan for the 5 year assessment of political learning and engagement on campus. *Proposed Evaluation: Notes and completion*

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)