

SHSU - Action Plan

I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by Dr. Steven D. Koether, American Democracy Project Coordinator at Sam Houston State University (SHSU). The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over the calendar year 2022-2023.

The purpose of this plan is to outline the civic engagement goals for the SHSU American Democracy Project for the 2022-2023 academic year. The goals include: growing voter engagement, updating ADP communication, begin assessment of political learning and engagement on campus, and grow deliberative dialogue events.

The plan will be implemented on SHSU Campus with community members.

The plan will be implemented through the Center for Community Engagement, more specifically with the American Democracy Project and Student Activities in collaboration with SHSU and Walker County stakeholders.

II. Leadership

At SHSU the Center for Community Engagement (CCE) is committed to promoting community partnerships, initiatives, and research which enhance student learning and meet community needs. The CCE also aims to strengthen the experiential understanding and commitment of our students to civic engagement (i.e. voting and democratic engagement). In so doing, the CCE houses Academic Community Engagement (ACE), the SHSU American Democracy Project (ADP), offers various scholarships, encourages community research/assessment, and offers a minor Community Leadership.

The CCE is guided by a team of [CCE staff](#), [student leaders](#), [ACE faculty Coordinators](#), and a [community advisory board](#).

Team Leadership & Responsibilities

Dr. Steven D. Koether will be coordinating the SHSU ADP work outlined within this plan under the supervision of Dr. Joyce McCauley (CCE Executive Director) and Dr. Lee Miller (CCE Director), with guidance and support from the larger CCE team, SHSU Student Activities, and various campus and community organizations. Should the ADP Coordinator be unable to lead this plan, the CCE Director shall take their place.

Mr. Brandon Cooper (Student Activities Director) will serve as the leadership and liaison between the CCE, Student Activities, and student organizations. Should the Student Activities Director be unable to conduct these duties, we will reach out to the appropriate student activities associate directors.

Strategies throughout 2022 will be supported by the CCE, ADP, Student Activities, student organizations, faculty, staff, and local community efforts. Specific efforts will be made to engage athletic teams, politically affiliated student organizations, cultural and identity-based student organizations, the Center for Diversity and Intercultural Affairs, the Office of Equity and Title IX, the Student Government Association, and Faculty Senate. In addition, the team will reach out to the Associate Deans to seek out departmental focus (see Strategy section).

III. Commitment

SHSU is revising its strategic plan and goals in the coming year. These plans include community engagement throughout. In order to align university practice with strategic plans/goals, the president has created and appointed a new position, Associate Provost for Community Engagement.

SHSU also participates in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. The university is committed to increasing engaged citizenship campus-wide. The ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge requires participating institutions to engage in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). The University will use the results of the NSLVE report to inform campus-wide civic engagement and voter participation outreach.

The CCE Team will meet bi-weekly to further develop the university's commitment to civic engagement.

IV. Landscape

The SHSU motto is, "the measure of a life is its service." At SHSU, community and civic engagement is encouraged on a curricular level through the Center for Community Engagement (CCE). The CCE encourages faculty to incorporate community engagement with academic instruction using Academic Community Engagement (ACE). This pedagogy encourages students to use the skills, knowledge, and dispositions learned in the classroom to collaborate with community partners in making a difference in society. SHSU offers hundreds of ACE courses within an academic year. In addition, the CCE encourages the campus community to engage in deliberative dialogues and registration/voter initiatives.

SHSU is a member of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) American Democracy Project (ADP) and the ALL IN Democracy Challenge.

The Carnegie Foundation has announced that Sam Houston State University is one of the 119 U.S. colleges and universities chosen to receive the 2020 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, an elective designation that indicates institutional commitment to community engagement. This honor marks the second time SHSU has received official designation from the foundation.

While voting rates are at or below national averages, university registration and voting rates continue to rise. SHSU was awarded a silver seal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2020 and 2018.

What's a Bearkat?

- Approximately 45% are the first in their family to attend college

- About 60% are classified as “At Risk”
- Over 75% of students work while pursuing a degree
- 16.05% Black or African American, 26.13% Hispanic, 48.31% white

From Fall 2010 - Fall 2019:

- African American students increased by 37%
- Hispanic students increased by 95%
- Named to top 10 performing institutions in the country for Latino students
- For the past 5 years, over 70% of graduates are working in Texas within 12 months (one of the highest in the state)

V. Goals & Evaluation

Short Term

2022 Goals: The following goals will be completed by members of the 2022 Voter Engagement Task Force, in addition to student, faculty, and staff members in the TU community. Based on our goals and related success in 2020, we set the following aspirational goals:

1. Maintain, organize, and grow voter registration and voting initiatives. *Document changes, number of events/initiatives, numbers of registered and voting students (NSLVE)*

- Increase eligible registered voters to 85% (from 83.3% in 2020, 79.5% in 2018, and 77.3% in 2016).
- Increase the voting rate to 62.5% (from 59.5% in 2020, 35.4% in 2018, and 42.2% in 2016).
- Increase voter turnout rate in the lowest turnout disciplines by 2.5%

2. Update website to advertise ADP initiatives, to improve transparency and communication (i.e. Action Plan) with SHSU and surrounding communities. *Completion*

Long Term

3. 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. *Document the number, type, and scope of events (and participant numbers – if possible)*

- 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.

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

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)

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a) create regular/sustained/institutionalized moderator training

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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.

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

VI. Strategies

In order to accomplish the aforementioned goals, the ADP will implement the following strategies:

1. Coordinate with Student Activities to plan upcoming voter registration and get to the polls events;

2. Coordinate with campus community members to meet with Walker county officials and obtain voter registrar training;

3. Utilize existing departmental and university social media platforms to share information and build momentum;
4. Review NSLVE report to increase registration and voting rates for lower turn-out demographics;
5. Partner with local political and social movement groups to promote voter registration events;
6. IN-PROGRESS. By the end of Summer 2022, improve the CCE website;
7. (Spring 2023) Create larger assessment team for political learning and engagement on campus (using Tuft Model);
8. (Fall 2023) Obtain IRB approval for assessment of political learning and engagement on campus (using Tuft Model).

VII. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

SHSU continually receives data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) housed at the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education at Tufts University. This data enables colleges and universities an opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates. The feedback given allows leadership in the CCE to better understand the campus climate for political learning and engagement.

Our campus has access to NSLVE data for 2020. In 2020 our registration rate was 83.3%. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased.

In 2020, our voting rate was 59.5% and our voting rate among registered students was 71.4%. During this year, our voting rate was below the national average.

Voter turnout increased for all racial/ethnicity groups in 2020, compared to four years ago.

Successes from 2020 based on the NSLVE report:

1. There was a significant increase in early voting at 82% (from 69% in 2016 and 67% in 2018).
2. The greatest increase by age group was with 18-21 year old voters with a 21% increase (from 36% in 2016, 30% in 2018, and 58% in 2020).

VIII. Reporting & Evaluation

We plan to share this Action Plan and the NSLVE data internally, when it is complete, by taking the following actions:

- Presented to members of our CCE Team (staff, students, campus team members, and community guidance)

- Presented to campus administration

The Action Plan will be shared externally with the ALL IN Democracy Challenge and posted on ALL IN SHSU webpage. The NSLVE data will also be shared externally on the ALL IN SHSU webpage as well.