

# ALL IN Action Plan to Increase Voter Turnout and Engagement at **SIU**e

*DRAFT* May 29, 2018

## Executive Summary

This action plan helps support Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's mission to produce leaders who shape a changing world through bringing together student, staff, and faculty stakeholders on campus and building both campus and community partnerships to foster civic learning and civic and political engagement. It contains both ongoing efforts to promote these values and actions at SIUE and those

## Leadership

### *Permanent members*

Several permanent members of the working group help provide big picture guidance and insure continuity of efforts.

**Sarah Laux** is the Associate Director for the Kimmel Student Involvement Center at SIUE. As part of her responsibilities, she oversees efforts to increase students' community engagement. These include volunteer opportunities with a variety of community organizations, service learning programs, and alternative spring breaks. She also coordinates with the Madison County clerk's office to support campus voter registration efforts and to make SIUE both a polling place and an early voting location. As a permanent member of the working group, she also serves as a liaison with other Student Affairs staff, student government, and student organizations.

**Dr. Ken Moffett** and **Dr. Laurie Rice** are professors in the political science department at SIUE. They are the authors of *Web 2.0 and the Political Mobilization of College Students* and conduct ongoing research on college students' civic engagement and political participation. They use insights from this research to help guide future working group efforts. As permanent members of the working group, they also serve as liaisons with the political science department, its student organizations, faculty from other departments, and a variety of state and national organizations working on youth political engagement.

### *Rotating members*

Each midterm and presidential election year, representatives from University Housing, student government, and a wide range of student organizations are invited to join the working group to develop plans to increase political engagement and participation.

In Fall 2018, students in Dr. Rice's Freshman Seminar Leadership and Civic Activism will also be invited to participate. A call to participate will also be sent to the list-serve of students majoring in political science and an announcement will be made in several political classes.

The full working group will resume meeting in September 2018 and a full meeting schedule, expanded plan, and further division of responsibilities will be adopted at that time.

## Commitment and Landscape

Our institution's commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement figures prominently in its mission and values.

**SIUE's Mission:** *Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is a student-centered educational community dedicated to communicating, expanding and integrating knowledge. In a spirit of collaboration enriched by diverse ideas, our comprehensive and unique array of undergraduate and graduate programs develops professionals, scholars and leaders who shape a changing world.*<sup>1</sup>

One of SIUE's core values is **Citizenship**. At SIUE we define this value as:

- *Social, civic and political responsibility — globally, nationally, locally, and within the University*
- *Active partnerships and a climate of collaboration and cooperation among students, faculty, staff, alumni and the larger community*
- *Sustainable practices in environmental, financial and social endeavors*<sup>2</sup>

At SIUE, we take these commitments seriously.

Our Chancellor, Dr. Randall Pembroke, actively encourages high impact community engagement practices.<sup>3</sup> As a result of his leadership through both words and action, these are increasing across campus and include the efforts of SIUE's ALL IN Challenge working group.

The Kimmel Student Involvement Center fosters co-curricular engagement with a variety of community and student organizations and helps develop leadership skills.<sup>4</sup>

This commitment also figures prominently in the curriculum. For example, SIUE's objectives for the baccalaureate degree include "As a public institution, SIUE strives to develop students who are well-informed, effective citizens; who provide leadership in civic and community affairs; who appreciate the arts; who have increased capacity for self-reflection, self-assessment and healthy living; and who will pursue life-long learning."<sup>5</sup> Our general education requirements are meant to further these objectives. Some academic departments, such as political science, also offer elective classes meant to further civic skills and values.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.siu.edu/about/mission.shtml>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.siu.edu/about/mission.shtml>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.siu.edu/news/2017/01/Chancellor-Pembroke-SIU-Deans-Explore-HICEP-Opportunities-in-Costa-Rica.shtml>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.siu.edu/kimmel/index.shtml>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.siu.edu/policies/1h1.shtml>

While we take these commitments seriously, we also recognize that there is more work to be done. Prior to 2016, when SIUE first joined the ALL IN Challenge, our efforts to achieve this commitment were not coordinated across campus. When we received our first report from the National Study of Voting, Learning, and Engagement, we were disturbed to learn that our election participation rates in 2012 and 2014 lagged behind other master's public institutions.

SIUE officially joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge on September 27, 2016. Part of joining the ALL IN Challenge means our campus commits to:

*“**Increasing** student voting rates, **helping** students form the habits of active and informed citizenship, and **make** democratic participation a core value on our campus.*

***Convening** a campus-wide committee that includes members from academic affairs, student affairs, and the student body, as well as any other relevant stakeholders.”<sup>6</sup>*

These commitments are consistent with our university's mission, vision, values, and practice. Participation in the challenge encourages us to think strategically about advancing these objectives and engage in coordinated action.

## Goals and Strategy

Voter turnout in midterm elections averages significantly lower than voter turnout in presidential elections.<sup>7</sup> This presents an additional barrier to our efforts to promote participation in 2018.

With the 2018 midterm elections approaching, we adopt the following short-term SMART goals as part of our larger, ongoing efforts to foster civic engagement and democratic participation.

**Goal One: Achieve a voter registration rate of over 70% prior to the November 2018 election.**

If students are not registered, they cannot vote. Thus, any plan to increase voter turnout needs to start with registration. We have achieved this level of registration in 2012 and 2016 (presidential election years), which suggests it is attainable, but registration levels fell below this in 2014, the last midterm election year, which suggests this goal will not be met without effort.

**Goal Two: Increase overall voter turnout rate by at least 2 percentage points.**

Midterm elections suffer from consistently lower turnout than presidential elections, suggesting that increasing voter turnout in a midterm election year may be substantially more difficult. While a two-percentage point interest is a modest goal, this is the first midterm election addressed by our working group, and we believe it should be attainable.

**Goal Three: Increase voter turnout rate to at or above the average for all Master's Public institutions.**

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<sup>6</sup> <https://allinchallenge-civication.bsd.net/page/s/join-the-challenge>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.electproject.org/>

In 2014, the NSLVE reported SIUE's turnout rate as 16.5%, two percentage points below the average for all Master's Public institutions. This is distinct from goal two because with more campuses participating in efforts to increase voter turnout, achieving this goal may require more than a two percentage point increase. We are encouraged, though, by the results of our participation in the ALL In Challenge in 2016 when we went from below the average voter turnout for Master's Public institutions in 2012 to above it in 2016.

To achieve these goals, we plan to pursue the following strategies:

**Strategy One: *Getting students registered before voter registration deadlines.***

Students cannot vote if they are not registered. Thus, to achieve all three of our goals, we need to get as many students registered as possible prior to registration deadlines.

*Registration Deadlines*

**October 9** paper

**October 21** online

**November 6** Grace period registration and voting through Election Day

**Action Point 1:** *Voter registration in the Morris University Center (student center)*

**Action Point 2:** *Voter registration table in Peck Hall, the main classroom building for the College of Arts and Sciences.*

**Action Point 3:** *Voter registration table in the Engineering Building to target students majoring in computer science and engineering.*

**Action Point 4:** *Drop-in voter registration at Kimmel Student Involvement Center.*

**Action Point 5:** *E-mails to residence hall list-serves with voter registration information and deadlines*

**Action Point 6:** *Coordinated social media blitz to as many organizations as possible about online deadlines.*

**Action Point 7:** *Chalking voter registration deadlines around campus.*

**Action Point 8:** *E-mails to student list-serve with voter registration information and deadline*

**Action Point 9:** *After registration deadlines, publicize grace period registration available until Election Day).*

Responsibilities: Kimmel Student Involvement Center, student government, and student organizations will coordinate with the Madison County Clerk to get individuals trained to register voters. Student government and student organizations will secure permission through Kimmel Student Involvement center to engage in tabling and will provide staffing for tables. Kimmel Student Involvement Center will facilitate drop-in voter registration and request e-mail to be sent via student list-serve. Liaison from University Housing will secure cooperation of residence hall staff and facilitate e-mails to residence hall list-serves. Representatives from student government and student organizations and other working group student members will work on media blitz (under advice from permanent members) and engage in chalking.

### **Strategy Two: Informing Voters.**

Discussions with students enrolled in POLS 112 (Introduction to American National Government and Politics) repeatedly reveal that a major barrier to students voting is feeling like they don't know enough about the candidates or offices.

**Action Point 1:** *Political Science department to host three midterm election related events (including Constitution Day Program)*

**Action Point 2:** *Coordinate with the Political Science Association, College Democrats, and College Republicans, and the Campus Activities Board to develop additional election related programming.*

**Action Point 3:** *Reach out to local League of Women Voters about developing candidate information sheets or hosting candidate forums.*

**Action Point 4:** *Promotion of information sources such as ballotpedia or the sharing of candidate information sheets on residence hall list-serves*

**Action Point 5:** *Encourage staff at the Alestle to write articles about local races.*

Responsibilities: Dr. Moffett will coordinate Action Point 1. Dr. Rice will reach out to contacts about Action Point 3. University Housing representative will oversee Action Point 4. Additional working group members will be responsible for Action Points 2 and 5.

### **Strategy Three: Publicizing Early Voting.**

Some students have all their classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays and go straight from class to work. They don't think they can fit in time to vote on Election Day. SIUE is an early voting location for Madison County – students registered here can vote when it is convenient.

**Action Point 1:** *E-mail information to student listserve.*

**Action Point 2:** *Share information on early voting in The E-Today.*

**Action Point 3:** *Ask staff at the Alestle to write an article about early voting.*

Responsibilities: Permanent members to coordinate Action Points 1 and 2. Additional working group members will use their contacts to pursue Action Point 3.

### **Strategy Four: Getting out the Vote.**

Getting students registered is only part of the challenge. According to the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) report, 25% of registered SIUE voters voted in the 2014 presidential election. GOTV efforts are a critical component of our plan.

**Action Point 1:** *Pepsi Banners for the day before election day hung near main road through campus/parking lots - Don't Forget to Vote Tuesday*

**Action Point 2:** *Spray paint the rock with Vote!*

**Action Point 3:** *Put slides on voting on student involvement pages and greek life pages*

**Action Point 4:** *Social media campaign - reach out to as many students and student organizations as possible with reminders to vote and reasons why people should vote*

**Action Point 5:** *Encouragement to vote in political science classes (ask faculty in other departments to participate, too)*

**Action Point 6:** *Reminders to vote in residence hall*

Responsibilities: Student government and student organization representatives handle Action Points 1 and 4 and work with the Kimmel Student Involvement Center on Action Point 3. Additional student members coordinate Action Point 2 and help with Action Point 4. Drs. Moffett and Rice carry out Action Point 5. Representative from University Housing facilitates Action Point 6.

## **Reporting and Evaluation**

This will be the first midterm election year addressed by our working group and it will help serve as a baseline for future efforts. We will use data from the 2018 NSLVE and the 2018 Student Election Survey, conducted by Dr. Ken Moffett and Dr. Laurie Rice, to help us track the effectiveness of current efforts, identify proven practices, and further refine our efforts for 2022. Data from the NSLVE and the Student Election Survey will be used internally to measure whether we met our goals and help us assess the effectiveness of specific activities. Results of SIUE's NSLVE report are then shared with SIUE's administration and shared externally via the ALL IN Challenge. Findings from the Student Election Survey are also shared externally with the academic community through peer reviewed publications and with practitioners through research reports, op-eds, and conference presentations.