

ALL IN Action Plan to Increase Voter Turnout and Engagement at SIUE

2020 Preliminary Plan May 30, 2020

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 strategies specific to the 2020 election.

Team Members

Carolyn Compton is a staff member inside the Kimmel Student Involvement Center of the student affairs department at SIUE. Additionally, she serves as the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge chair. Her professional role at the university includes civic engagement, student voting engagement, and serving as a liaison between local government and the university coordinating on campus voting and polling sites and dates.

Dr. Laurie Rice is a professor of political science and coordinator of the civic education project at SIUE. She serves as the team's external liaison to the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and the NSLVE, is co-PI of the Student Election Survey, and part of the data analytics team using survey and elections data to help guide and assess team efforts.

Dr. Jennifer Erwin is an assistant professor of social work at SIUE. She serves as the faculty advisor for a new student organization, Every Vote Counts.

Matthew Burgess is a chemistry student, the president of the campus's Gay-Straight Alliance, secretary and founding member of the campus's Students For Liberty organization, and an otherwise active, engaged member of the SIUE student community.

Michelle Black is a graduate student at SIUE studying College Student Personnel Administration. In her role as a graduate assistant for the Campus Election Engagement

Project, Michelle supports civic engagement efforts on campus and serves as a co-advisor to the Every Vote Counts chapter at SIUE.

Bailey Concatto is a student athlete at SIUE completing a bachelor's degree in Applied Communications with a specialty in Public Relations and a minor in Political Science. She has been a member of the SIUE Softball Leadership Council for two consecutive years as well as the SIUE Athletic Department Leadership Development Program. She is the current vice president of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee and works to actively represent student athletes across the SIUE community.

Dr. Ken Moffett is Professor and Chair in the Department of Political Science at SIUE. He is co-PI of the Student Election Survey and is a member of the data analytics team that uses election and survey data to support and evaluate the efforts of the ALL-IN Challenge team at SIUE.

Jacob I. Wilson is a Faculty Research Fellow in the College Student Personnel Administration program at SIUE and a State Director with Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP). He works with college and university campuses to develop and institutionalize election engagement practices and will be supervising three CEEP Engagement Fellows in Illinois in fall 2020, including one Fellow at SIUE.

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.*^[1]

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*^[2]

At SIUE, we take these commitments seriously.

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

In addition, the Kimmel Student Involvement Center fosters co-curricular engagement with a variety of community and student organizations and helps develop leadership skills.^[4]

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."^[5] Our general education requirements are meant to further these objectives. Some academic departments, such as political science, also offer elective classes open to all majors that are meant to further civic skills and values.

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.

When SIUE officially joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge on September 27, 2016 we made commitments 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."^[6]

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. We have made significant gains in voter registration and voter turnout since then and this plan seeks to build on our success.

Our Strategy

Civic education & engagement. Education and engagement regarding civic duties, primarily voting and supporting the effort of spreading awareness about the need to participate civically will involve education about the voting process and benefits of voting.

To ensure proper education of the voting process Integrated Voter Education (IVE) will be key. (Call Hub, Joy 2020) IVE will be essential in training students that volunteer with the All In Initiative as they support voter education and engagement. IVE is achieved by inclusion, outreach and recruitment of on campus student organizations, sororities and fraternities, student athlete organizations, faculty and staff supported student departments (ACCESS, SOAR, CSDI, CAB, Student Government) as key collaborators in this process.

Intentional messaging will be key in voter registration and voter process education and engagement. This is specifically tied to the speech and language used when communicating our voter registration messages and our calls to assist in education and sharing messaging. Calls to action rather than messages perceived as passive or strictly educational will be relied on to move the needle, appealing to citizens sense of action and engagement.

Ensuring that education amongst All In participants involves understanding the difference between voter apathy and political alienation. This is critical in messaging but stands alone as it will also need to be addressed when we work with collaborative partners as well. There is a need to ensure we are as inclusive as possible and make no assumptions about group's level of involvement based on motivations.

Social media. Social media will be an important strategy to increase voter registration and turnout amongst students. A variety of social media platforms have been found to help boost young adults' civic engagement.^{7,8}

Social media efforts will be led by the newly formed SIUE chapter of Every Vote Counts, a non-partisan student organization aimed at increasing student voting. This strategy will be especially important if in-person events cannot be held due to COVID-19.

Action Point One: Develop a social media plan around key events and election deadlines.

Action Point Two: Create social media content for Facebook and Instagram to share with students about events, deadlines, and voter education.

Action Point Three: Collaborate with campus leaders and student groups to share content on multiple platforms in order to reach the most students.

Our Goals

Goal One: Achieve a voter registration rate of over 80% prior to the November 2020 election.

Voter registration is a core component of any plan to increase student voting. SIUE aims to achieve a voter registration rate of 80% or more prior to the November 2020 election. According to our NSLVE report, we nearly achieved this rate in 2016, suggesting that it is an attainable goal. However, it is also a goal that may be challenging due to the uncertainty of campus activities and necessary adjustments due to COVID-19.

Action Point One: Have student organization and staff members trained as deputy registrars in Madison County.

Action Point Two: Hold voter registration drives in the student center, high traffic classroom buildings, and residence halls as well as at student organization fairs.

Action Point Three: Share voter registration information on various campus list-serves and via social media.

Action Point Four: Encourage the sharing of information about voter registration on learning management systems. If a campus-wide announcement through ITS is not possible, seek cooperation from faculty to place course-specific announcements.

Goal Two: Increase voter turnout through Early voting/Get Out the Vote/Absentee/In person to a voting rate of at least 55% and a voting rate of registered students of at least 68.5%

Action Point One: Continue to work with the Madison County Clerk's office to make SIUE a site for early voting and a polling place on Election Day.

Action Point Two: Encourage the sharing of information about voting on learning management systems. If a campus-wide announcement through ITS is not possible, seek cooperation from faculty to place course-specific announcements.

Action Point Three: Seek a coalition member from Greek life and work to help spread social media campaign through Fraternities and Sororities.

Action Point Four: E-mail leadership of student organizations and build personal contacts at student organization fairs. Maintain regular communication and request that they share e-mails and social media posts about voting with their members.

Action Point Five: Inquire about injecting content about voting into Student Organization Leadership Orientation (SOLO). (SOLO organizers have been contacted).

Action Point Six: Encourage intraorganizational engagement through co-sponsored Watch Parties, Debates, Registration Drives, and other visible and interesting political events.

Action Point Seven: Encourage nonpartisan political activity of currently non-political student organizations, especially of cultural/special interest groups (while making sure groups abide by federal law and do not engage in prohibited political activities under Illinois law)

Goal Three: Increase voter turnout among previously underrepresented groups.

Using data from the 2016 NSLVE, we noted that there were inequities in turnout rates by: race and ethnicity, gender, and fields of study. Using the NSLVE data, we identified groups whose voter turnout rates were significantly under the mean and developed goals and strategies to help correct this underrepresentation. Our goal is to **Achieve a voting rate of at least 53.9% in the November 2020 election** among eligible students of **Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic** backgrounds, eligible students who are **men**, and eligible students of the **Engineering, Natural Resources and Conservation, Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness, Physical Sciences, Computer and Information Sciences, and Biological and Biomedical Sciences** fields of study.

Action Point One: Compile a list of specific Advocative/Cultural and Educational Student Organizations and seek representatives from these groups by mid-September 2020. Focus on known points of contact and contacting individual members personally.

Action Point Two: Encourage advocative/cultural and educational/major/career-based student organizations to lead the charge in efforts to increase voter turnout among the groups they represent.

Action Point Three: Reach out to faculty in departments whose students were less likely to use their right to vote in 2016 and ask them to encourage their students to vote.

Action Point Four: Build relationships with supportive Educational/Health/Community Focused Departments (SOAR, ACCESS & CSDI, Mental Health Services, Athletics, Housing and Student Focused Staff led Committees for welcoming events) and seek collaboration in sharing information about voter registration and the importance of voting.

Goal Four: Increase voter registration and voter turnout among student athletes.

Student athletes come from many different states. One of the biggest challenges student athletes face when it comes to voting is how hard it is to get absentee ballots and the lack of information available to students concerning absentee ballots.

Action Point One: Increase communication with the athletic department. Build relationships with both coaches and athletes. Make sure all elements of our social media campaign are shared with members of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee who can help spread the word to student athletes.

Action Point Two: Identify helpful resources with registration deadlines, online voter registration, online absentee request forms and absentee deadlines and share these with student athletes either at a meeting or electronically.

Another challenge student athletes face is the timing of voting. A lot of student athletes go straight from weights, to class, to practice, to study tables and really do not have much of a chance to stop by somewhere and vote. In addition, voting may not be a priority to all coaches on campus, especially those that are in their championship seasons.

Action Point Three: Share information with coaches about how they can make it easier for athletes to vote. Work with coaches to schedule times the student athletes they coach who are registered locally can vote on campus via early voting or on Election Day.

Goal Five: Obtain support from Housing

Many students who live in campus housing are new to the area and lack strong community ties. Working with campus housing will be important in engaging these students.

Action Point One: Publicize registration deadlines in housing communities.

Action Point Two: Hold election-related events in residence halls.

Action Point Three: Encourage residents to vote through passive or active programming.

Goal Six: Make civic education more accessible to help better prepare students for voting and other civic responsibilities.

Action Point One: Time course and extracurricular offerings to help prepare students to participate.

The political science department is rearranging its schedule of course offerings to better fit election cycles, has added a campaign internship, and rescheduled offerings of Introduction to American National Government and Politics so that some sections each semester are offered at times that do not conflict with labs required of students in the hard sciences. As part of its rearranged schedule, Spring 2020 course offerings included Presidential Campaigns, Parties and Interest Groups, and Issues in American Public Policy while Fall 2020 course offerings include Voting and Elections, the Presidency, Congress, and American State Governments. The political science department has also removed prerequisites for most of these classes to make them as accessible as possible.

Action Point Two: Increase collaborations between academic departments and student organizations.

For example, the Political Science Department sponsors the Political Science Association, and has students actively engaged in both the College Democrats and the College Republicans. They have held jointly sponsored events in past election years and will explore doing so again. A member of the Social Work faculty is the advisor for the new student organization Every Vote Counts.

Action Point Three: Publicize Constitution Day activities.

The Political Science Department puts on the annual Constitution Day presentation for the University. The 2020 Constitution Day talk will be entitled, "The Constitution and COVID-19."

Action Point Four: Publicize nonpartisan sources of election information via e-mails and social media.

Action Point Five: Work with reporters at *The Aestle* to help inform students about the election

Long Term Goal One: Conduct faculty education or enrichment aimed at incorporating civic engagement in the classroom across campus.

Faculty Engagement In order to increase student voter engagement in 2020 and beyond, faculty and college educators are an important partner and resource. We have identified two long-term goals to increase faculty capacity, commitment, and involvement in terms of civic learning and election engagement:

- Collaborate with SIUE's Faculty Development office to develop and deliver a training on how faculty can incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into their courses. (Deliverable Spring 2021?)
- Develop content for new faculty orientation on how to incorporate civic and election engagement into their courses across disciplines. (Deliverable Fall 2021?)

Campus Climate and Community Needs Assessments Understanding the climate of our campus and the needs of our community will provide data that can better enable us to build on areas of strength and address challenges. The following long-term goals have been developed to assist with this:

- Work with the Office of Institutional Research and Studies and academic departments to develop and conduct a campus climate assessment for civic learning and engagement. (Deliverable Spring 2021?)
- Work with the Kimmel Student Involvement Center and academic departments to develop and conduct a community needs assessment in the greater Edwardsville area. (Deliverable Fall 2021?)

Long Term Goal Two: Make voter registration an expectation within student organizations and student government

- Compile and maintain a list of active cultural and political organizations and consistently communicate with them.

- To maintain consistent engagement, have student organizations encourage voting in student elections each year, as well as national and state elections every 2 or 4 years.
- Increase perceived importance of student government elections on campus and work with members of student government to build ongoing support for coalition efforts to increase voter registration and voter turnout.

Timeline and Important Dates

Fall 2019

Campus coalition meets to discuss the results of the 2018 NSLVE and assess the success of our 2018 Action Plan.

Spring 2020

Campus coalition focuses on expanding membership and beginning work on the 2020 Action Plan.

- May 31 – Submit action plan.

June and July 2020

Campus coalition considers how the plan may need to shift as both the campus and election officials make decisions for fall related to Covid 19.

August and September 2020

Campus coalition adds to its members as fall semester begins, with a focus on recruiting representatives from student organizations including: Black Student Union, College Democrats, College Republicans, Greek Life, Hispanic Student Union, and the Political Science Association

Begin focus on voter registration.

- August 4th- Missouri State Primary
- August 5th- First day to request an absentee ballot in IL
- August 24th- First day of fall classes
- September 17th – Constitution Day (Political Science department organizes event)
- September 22nd- National Voter Registration Day

- September 24th- IL Early Voting begins (at County Clerk's office)

October and November 2020

Campus coalition continues voter registration push through mid-October. Campus coalition then shifts focus to civic education and encouraging voter turnout.

- October 6th- IL Regular Voter Registration Deadline (i.e. last day for paper registration drives)
- October 7th- IL Grace Period Voter Registration & Voting begins (in person at election authority)
- October 7th- MO Voter Registration Deadline
- October 18th- IL online voter registration deadline
- October 19th-IL early voting period begins
- October 21st- MO absentee ballot request deadline (requests must be received by 5:00 pm)
- October 24th- National Vote Early Day
- October 29th- IL absentee ballot request deadline
- November 3rd- Election Day

November through February 2021

Data analytics team assesses data on student participation in the 2020 elections.

March 2021

Campus Coalition meets to discuss what the survey data reveal about its 2020 efforts and begins work on the 2022 Action Plan.

Reporting and Evaluation

In 2016, we used data from the NSLVE and the Student Election Survey (which was an on-campus survey of our undergraduate students) to guide our efforts in that year. In 2020, we make use of updated variants of both data sources, and use peer-reviewed academic research conducted by Drs. Ken Moffett and Laurie Rice to guide our 2020 Action Plan.

Conducted by Drs. Moffett and Rice, the 2020 Student Election Survey will allow us to track the effectiveness of current efforts, identify proven practices, and hone subsequent efforts in this area. We will use data from both the NSLVE and the Student Election Survey to measure whether we met our goals and help us assess the effectiveness of specific activities.

Results of SIUE's NSLVE report are shared with SIUE's administration and 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.

References

^[1] <http://www.siue.edu/about/mission.shtml>

^[2] <http://www.siue.edu/about/mission.shtml>

^[3] <https://www.siue.edu/news/2017/01/Chancellor-Pembrook-SIUE-Deans-Explore-HICEP-Opportunities-in-Costa-Rica.shtml>

^[4] <http://www.siue.edu/kimmel/index.shtml>

^[5] <https://www.siue.edu/policies/1h1.shtml>

^[6] <https://allinchallenge-civcnation.bsd.net/page/s/join-the-challenge>

[7] Moffett, Kenneth W. and Laurie L. Rice. 2016. *Web 2.0 and the Political Mobilization of College Students*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

[8] Rice, Laurie L. and Kenneth W. Moffett. 2019. "Snapchat and civic engagement among college students." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*. 16(2): 87-104.