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STRENGTHENING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voter Participation Among College Students

THIRD EDITION, OCTOBER 2021

About the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition

Colleges and universities are leaders in cultivating generations of informed, engaged community members needed for democracy to thrive. They are designed to educate and develop citizens. With nearly 20 million college students in the United States, institutions of higher education have a responsibility to help their students overcome the structural and psychological obstacles that new voters often face. Additionally, they can instill the importance of democratic participation, which can inspire lifelong participation in our democracy.

Recognizing the importance of getting college students more engaged in our democratic processes, the Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) Coalition was founded in February 2016 to design and advance a shared agenda around student voting and political learning in higher education.

The Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) Coalition is the national hub and largest nonpartisan network in the United States dedicated to increasing college student voter participation. The SLSV Coalition convenes and connects campuses, nonprofit partners, students, and philanthropic leaders with each other, and with resources and programming towards achieving the vision of ensuring that every student has easy and equal access to participate in every election. It uses data, relationships, celebration, and easy-to-follow planning structures, to help campus and local leaders register and turn out more student voters every year. The SLSV Coalition is managed by a team that is fiscally sponsored by the Congressionally-chartered nonprofit the National Conference on Citizenship and governed by an executive committee and a rotating advisory board of representatives from coalition partner organizations, higher education institutions and associations, local election officials, and students.

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Foreword

Four years ago, members of the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition published the first *Strengthening American Democracy* guide in an effort to help institutions of higher learning graduate more civically informed and democratically active students.

Since then, the campus democratic engagement space has transformed thanks to the remarkable work of voter mobilization and nonpartisan democratic engagement efforts proliferating on campuses and in communities throughout the country. Student activists, campus faculty and administrators, as well as local and national organizations, have taken the principles of the *Strengthening American Democracy* guide and put them into practice, making their mark on our democracy in the process. And in response to the unprecedented challenges of 2020, leaders throughout this space came up with innovative solutions to enable civic engagements to continue – and succeed – virtually as well as in-person.

Year-round support and planning around *Strengthening American Democracy*, guided by an action plan, has enabled campuses to increase their student institutional voting rate to 66% in 2020 up from 52% in 2016; as noted in the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education's Democracy Counts 2020:Record-Breaking Turnout and Student. Thanks to initiatives like *Ask Every Student* which integrates voter registration into existing campus processes that reach every individual student, colleges and universities have more available resources and strategies to help them reach full student voter participation of every eligible student.

Most importantly, these resources and strategies have proven to be powerful tools in efforts to promote diversity, equity, inclusion and justice, both within the democratic engagement space and among campus populations as a whole. By definition, *Strengthening American Democracy* requires approaching voter participation with an eye toward equity and parity – something that leaders in our space have long emphasized, with an even stronger focus in the year since the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent national reckoning on racial injustice.

However, these same areas of progress also serve as reminders of how much we have yet to achieve. As we move closer to a truly inclusive democracy with parity among all demographics, we focus even more on the still-too-great distance between that goal and our present reality. We're also cognizant of the new and evolving conditions that may necessitate different solutions in the service of the same goals.

This edition of the *Strengthening American Democracy* guide addresses some of the evolving conditions that have emerged in our space, including new state-based regulations such as Maryland's Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act and California's Student Civic and Voter Empowerment Act.

This resource also includes updated support for how to use the Guide and assess progress via a rubric, as well as a new, interactive and digital Votes & Ballots tool to help leaders create and evolve dynamic action plans. Additional resources from across the Coalition can be found in the SLSV Resource Library.

In all, we hope that the following content will fortify your efforts to educate the next generation of civically informed and democratically active citizens, while offering a useful framework for the institutionalization of this work on campuses everywhere. We look forward to your feedback and thank you for all that you do for our students, and our democracy.

REVISION PARTNER LEADS:

ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, Civic Nation
Campus Vote Project, Fair Elections Center
Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, National Conference on Citizenship
StudentPIRGs

Action Plans

Introduction

This is a guide designed to help faculty, staff, students, and other campus stakeholders write strong action plans to increase nonpartisan civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation on college and university campuses. It provides a framework for developing and documenting institutional goals and strategies for fostering a civic ethos on campus and institutionalizing elements of democratic engagement into the curriculum and co-curriculum that persist regardless of election cycles. This guide is not meant to be prescriptive and should be adapted to your institutional context.

Completing the action planning process can help an institution assess current efforts, set short-term and long-term goals, plan and implement strategies and tactics, assess progress towards goals, and continuously work to improve democratic engagement efforts. This work can and should be collaborative and occur in a team setting. Depending on the campus, this may be accomplished in a committee, coalition, task force, or working group. The hope is that through this process, the institution will be able to garner additional support and resources, change culture, improve systems and policies, build lasting capacity, and ultimately institutionalize efforts.

This third edition of the guide includes the self-assessment rubric originally released with the second edition of the guide. The third edition focuses more on how to strategically prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in an institution's action plan. It also highlights efforts regarding voter mobilization and the Ask Every Student program. It is strongly suggested that completed action plans be shared on the institution's website, along with campus National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) reports. Together, these demonstrate an institution's belief in transparency and its commitment to broadening and deepening civic learning, political engagement, and student voter participation.

The Action Planning Process

An action plan is a roadmap that documents specific strategies for starting new programs and initiatives, or improving existing ones. It takes goals and breaks them down into steps so that desired results can be achieved. It is a documented strategy to meet objectives, as well as to increase efficiency and accountability. Action planning is the process used to develop and document the action plan.

The following steps are a guide for carrying out the action planning process in general. These steps can be used for any initiative and should be amended to work within an institution's culture and surrounding community.

1

ASSIGN LEADER(S)

Action planning is a group exercise, not an individual task. For best results, choose a leader to facilitate the process. The leader may be internal, though an external facilitator can provide a neutral voice in discussions.

2

ASSEMBLE A TEAM AND DEVELOP A TIMELINE

A team helps establish a collective vision. Assemble a diverse team representing appropriate constituent groups, internal and external. Those involved should have clear expectations of their roles.

3

ASSESS CURRENT WORK AND OUTCOMES

Knowing what is already occurring, and to what extent, allows for discovering strengths and areas for improvement.

4

SET GOALS

Goal setting provides a roadmap to achieving desired results. Campus should include both long- and short-term goals in their action plan(s).

5

PLAN WORK

Strategically planning activities assists in accomplishing goals. Intentionally design activities to achieve goals.

6

DOCUMENT PLAN

An action plan captures the goals and activities in writing.

7

IMPLEMENT PLAN

Mobilize resources and execute actions.

8

ASSESS PROGRESS TOWARDS GOALS

A plan may take a few years to fully implement; therefore, it should be reviewed at least yearly to ensure that progress towards goals is being made. Use data to analyze the impact of activities and determine next steps.

9

REVIEW THE PLAN

Reviewing the plan allows for making adjustments along the way if progress is not being made towards goals. If change was successful, how can it be expanded? If change was not successful, what adjustments should be made? Revise the plan to ensure effectiveness.

10

REPEAT

Continuous improvement is a process that requires frequent review to ensure desired goals are achieved.

Guiding Principles

These principles should be kept in mind as the institution develops its action plan. A strong action plan, designed to increase civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation among college students should be:

COMPREHENSIVE

Strategies and tactics should focus on local, state, and federal elections; include election and non-election related programming; and be nonpartisan. Strategies and tactics should focus on registering, educating, and turning out eligible students; and engaging all students in civic learning and the democratic process.

CONTINUOUS

Strategies and tactics should occur every semester or term of every year, not just during an election cycle.

INTEGRATED

Strategies and tactics should be curricular and co-curricular.

INTENTIONAL

Goals, strategies, and tactics should be informed by data and evidence-based research.

PERVASIVE

Strategies and tactics should occur across campus and reach all students.

DEEP

Strategies and tactics should not be marginal or add-ons. They should be embedded in the curriculum and co-curriculum of the campus and tied to the institution's learning outcomes.

INNOVATIVE

Strategies and tactics should improve existing efforts and include new and original ideas.

INCLUSIVE

Campus coalition, goals, strategies and tactics authentically bring traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

EQUITABLE

Goals, strategies, and tactics should focus efforts on and distribute resources to campus populations that have historically engaged in civic learning, democratic engagement, and voter participation at lower levels.

Definitions of frequently used terms are included to provide a common understanding of terminology used within higher education and this document. The SLSV Coalition recognizes that these terms carry different connections and interpretations depending on an institution's context; regardless the goal is to ensure that through this document all parties are informed of the meaning of the words as they are used in the action planning context.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT is any act intended to improve or influence a community through deliberation, collaboration, and reciprocal relationships and community-building.

CIVIC LEARNING is promoting the education of students for engaged citizenship through democratic participation in their communities, respect and appreciation of diversity, applied learning, and social responsibility.

CURRICULUM is an academic course of study; the knowledge students are expected to learn in the classroom.

DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT is a combination of promoting the education of students for engaged participation through democratic mechanisms and principles in their communities, respect and appreciation of diversity, applied learning, and social responsibility.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION is civic engagement that involves democratic processes (e.g., when an organization puts a matter to a vote and there is individual participation).

FULL PARTICIPATION this occurs when all students are asked to participate in the democratic process

NATIONAL STUDY OF LEARNING, VOTING, AND ENGAGEMENT (NSLVE) offers colleges and universities an opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates and, for interested campuses, a closer examination of their campus climate for political learning and engagement and correlations between specific student learning experiences and voting. https://idhe.tufts.edu/nslve

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION is civic engagement that emphasizes governmental institutions and/or power (e.g., voting in a local, state, or federal election). Participating in the political process also occurs by making one's own opinions and beliefs known outside of the electoral process (e.g., protesting, campaigning, performing jury duty, running for office, community organizing).

S.M.A.R.T.I.E. is an acronym used to guide goal-setting: Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.

VOTER REGISTRATION is the process of successfully completing the application to be able to cast a ballot in an election.

VOTER EDUCATION is the curricular and co-curricular activities offered to students and designed to facilitate civic learning, political engagement, and increase participation in elections.

VOTER MOBILIZATION the act of implementing tactics to encourage potential voters to follow through with becoming voters.

Template and Guiding Questions

Executive Summary

This section provides a summary of the campus democratic engagement action plan. It should be clear, concise, and allow the reader to easily understand what the campus is doing and why. It distills the plan into just a few paragraphs or pages so that the reader can rapidly become acquainted with the action plan. Consider sketching out an executive summary as a starting point and then revisiting and finalizing as the final step in your action plan development.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

> › The following questions should be addressed in the executive summary.

1 Which individuals (e.g., name(s), title(s), department(s)) and/or organizations developed this plan?

2 What is this action plan for and what does it seek to accomplish?

3 Where will this action plan be implemented? Where will this action plan be implemented? E.g., name of the institution, the number of campuses the work will take place at, campus locations (city and state), in-person, online, hybrid.

4 Why was this action plan developed? How does this plan tie to broader institutional norms/values/strategic plans?

5 When does this action plan start and end? Is this an action plan focused on the short-term and long-term goals? When will it be updated?

6 How will this action plan be implemented? Who's in charge? What unit/office/division will be facilitating the effort?

7 What strategies were employed to make sure this plan was equitable and included a diverse audience?

The leadership section of a campus action plan describes the team that is responsible and accountable for the institution's efforts to increase civic learning and democratic engagement among its students. Designating a leader(s) and establishing a working group that includes a variety of stakeholders increases the likelihood of success, long-term sustainability, and the institutionalization of civic learning and democratic engagement efforts on campus. Including representatives from on-campus departments and student groups, as well as off-campus organizations, ensures efforts are collaborative and coordinated, and that a variety of perspectives are taken into consideration. The working group should reflect your campus and community, with intentional and equitable inclusion of diverse voices. Campus coalitions can grow and evolve over time to best meet the civic learning and democratic engagement needs of your institution. The group should strive to build a leadership team over time that is reflective of your campus community including diverse partners. Beyond the recruitment of diverse working group members, it's important to consider and describe how exactly members will be involved in order to leverage their strengths and promote inclusivity as central to your success. Keep continuity year to year. It's always hard to start a program from scratch. When you are building your voter engagement efforts, consider ways to keep it going strong year-to-year. Importantly, if your coalition includes student leaders, be aware when there will be turnover because of graduations. Succession planning can be a key feature to ensure that the work continues especially when transitions occur.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1 Who are the working group members and how are involved? How is the working group ensuring there is diversity within the campus' voting coalition?

a What academic departments and which faculty within academic affairs are involved? (e.g., political science professor(s), fine arts department)

b What units within student affairs are involved and which administrators are involved? (e.g., office of new student involvement, director of student life, office of diversity and inclusion)

c Which students and student organizations are involved? (e.g., student government, issue-based student orgs)

d What community and/or national (private, nonprofit, government) organizations are involved? (e.g., League of Women Voters, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge) How do national and local partners support your institution's efforts?

e Is the working group coordinating with the local election office? If so, with whom and how? If not, what is your plan to get the local election office involved?

GUIDING QUESTIONS, cont.

2 2a) Who is this person(s) and/or office(s) held accountable to, what is their reporting line? 2b) If student-staff or community members are involved, how are they compensated for their involvement?

3 What are working group members' unique strengths and, with those in mind, what are their responsibilities?

4 How will people be brought into the coalition who currently are not there? Why have these individuals/groups been identified to join? 4a) Which groups have traditionally been underrepresented within your mobilization efforts and how does your working group work to strategically involve members of those groups?

5 How is the working group inclusive of different campus and community stakeholders?

6 Does the working group have the support of upper administrators (e.g., president, provost, chancellor, VPSA) who can help advocate on behalf of the working group?

7 What other offices on campus need to be involved? (e.g., website or portal management, registrar, university relations)

8 How often will the working group meet and communicate? Identify who is responsible for communicating amongst the group and how the group will meet (e.g., in-person, virtually, over email).

9 How are you keeping working group members engaged over time and addressing stakeholder turnover?

10 If someone in the working group stops showing up and doing the work or needs to step away, what steps will be taken to ensure the efforts continue?

III	Commitment

This section describes how the institution demonstrates its commitment to increasing civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation. A public institutional commitment is critical for improvement across campus; it signals to all stakeholders that these efforts are significant and long-term. Before action planning begins, the working group should first explore the process's underlying context, motivations, and commitment. This process also evaluates if voter registration information is featured in campus-wide materials, if the campus supports placing a polling location on campus and is willing to make a building available, and examines how voter registration is embedded in the campus culture by being included in processes that all new students go through every year, even in non-general or midterm election years.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1 How does the institution and its leadership demonstrate commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement? Is there an explicit, visible commitment on the part of the governing board, president/chancellor, and senior leadership?

  a Is the commitment communicated within the institution? To whom, specifically, and how?

  b Is the commitment communicated outside the institution (i.e., to external stakeholders and the general public)? To whom, specifically, and how?

  c Does the institution's commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement consider diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice tenets?

  d Has the institution's senior leadership (e.g., president, provost, chancellor) made an outward commitment to democratic engagement? For instance, signing the ALL IN Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

2 Is educating for civic learning and democratic engagement a pervasive part of institutional culture? Is it ongoing, consistent, systematic, and sustainable across programs, departments, and the entire institution? How do you know?

3 How is the institution's commitment reflected in existing statements and documents (e.g., mission statement, vision, core values, strategic plan)? Has the institution created and implemented an action plan in previous years?

4 What are the institution's overall civic, democratic, and/or political learning outcomes? Is there a process in place to ensure that outcomes are measured and met?

5 How is educating for civic learning and democratic engagement included in the general education curriculum?

6 How is educating for civic learning and democratic engagement included in the co-curriculum?

This section describes the current campus landscape, including climate, programming, and student engagement. A self-assessment of current work and data (e.g., established learning outcomes, assessment data, curricular and co-curricular activities, resources) provides the institution with a comprehensive understanding of current efforts and student engagement with those efforts. It also provides the opportunity for the institution to evaluate those efforts and determine areas of strength and those needing improvement. Campus voting coalitions are encouraged to reach out to department heads, faculty, student government, student group leaders, student affairs staff, local election officials, and community partners (local and national) that engage with the campus when doing their landscape analysis. It's unlikely, especially at large campuses, that even a diverse task force or working group will know about all of the civic engagement activities on a campus so reaching out to as many stakeholders as possible to best understand the campus' reach and engagement is important.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1 Are civic learning and democratic engagement overall campus learning outcomes? If so, what are the learning outcomes and how are they measured?

2 Do you have access to assessment data for your campus? If so what does assessment data show about the political climate and democratic engagement on campus? How does this data compare to that of peer institutions? See following page for examples.

3 How is civic learning and democratic engagement present in the curriculum?

    a In which courses is it taught?

    b In which courses is it listed as a learning outcome?

    c Are courses connected to civic learning and democratic engagement available to all students or a particular group of students (e.g., only incoming first-years, political science majors)?

4 How is civic learning and democratic engagement present in the co-curriculum?

    a In which departments is this included?

    b What initiatives, programs, and activities focus on this?

    c What student groups and clubs are engaged?

5 What internal barriers (e.g., limited funding, staff resistance, lack of leadership) prevent the institution from being successful?

6 What external barriers (e.g., election laws, voter ID laws, lack of proximity to polling location) prevent the institution from being successful?

7 What is the demographic makeup of the institution's student body? How is this information considered when mapping out civic learning and democratic engagement efforts?

8 What resources are available to help the institution be successful? Specifically, what internal and external factors lead to successes (e.g., president's support, in a fully vote-by-mail state)?

9 What additional resources are needed to help the institution be successful?

ASSESSMENT DATA EXAMPLES

> **Ask Every Student First Step Form**

sls.vote/aesfirststep

The Ask Every Student First Step Form assists campuses in applying the Ask Every Student Framework to their campus context. After filling out the form, campuses will automatically receive a PDF response with their answers and recommendations for how they can best use the Ask Every Student Toolkit for their context.

> **Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement**

bcsse.indiana.edu

BCSSE collects data about entering college students' high school academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as their expectations for participating in educationally purposeful activities during the first college year.

> **National Survey of Student Engagement**

nsse.indiana.edu

NSSE annually collects information at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about first-year and senior students' participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.

> **Higher Education Research Institute and Cooperative Institutional Research Program**

heri.ucla.edu

CIRP is a national longitudinal study of the American higher education system. The CIRP longitudinal program consists of the Freshman Survey (TFS), Young First College Year (YFCY) Survey, Diverse Learning Environments Survey (DLE), and the College Senior Survey (CSS).

> **National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement**

idhe.tufts.edu/nslve

NSLVE offers colleges and universities an opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates and, for interested campuses, a closer examination of their campus climate for political learning and engagement, as well as correlations between specific student learning experiences and voting.

> **Community College Survey of Student Engagement**

ccsse.org

CCSSE provides information on student engagement. The survey asks questions that assess institutional practices and student behavior that are correlated highly with student learning and student retention.

> **The National Inventory for Institutional on Community Engagement (NI³CE)**

public-purpose.org/initiatives/national-institutional-inventory-of-infrastructure-for-community-engagement/

NI³CE or NIIICE is a free institutional assessment tool to map infrastructure of campuses and community engagement centers vis-à-vis different types of institutions who were successful in completing the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification.

V	Goals

This section describes what the institution hopes to achieve. By setting goals, the institution can plan activities to achieve results and assess impact. It is suggested that prior to setting goals, there should be a clear vision of what the institution wants to accomplish and what it wants students to learn. With a clear vision, goals can be set to achieve the desired outcomes. Long-term goals help the institution achieve its vision – what impact does the institution seek to have? Long-term goals should be tied to the institution's mission and learning outcomes. Short-term goals break long-term goals into manageable parts. Goals should be S.M.A.R.T.I.E. – specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, and time-bound, inclusive, and equitable. Goals should reflect the number of people involved and the resources available.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

LONG-TERM GOALS

1. What is the long-term vision the institution hopes to achieve?

2. What knowledge, skills, and capacities (learning outcomes) does the institution want students to achieve and graduate with in order to be active and informed?

3. What are the outcomes the institution wants to accomplish over the next 10 years?

4. Are the goals S.M.A.R.T.I.E. (specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, time-bound, inclusive, and equitable)?

5. Do the goals contribute to expanding access to voting for a diverse set of students?

6. Are these goals informed by principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice?

7. Are these goals informed by data and research?

EXAMPLES

› By 2028, the institution will increase student voting rates by 20 percentage points over 2016 turnout levels, with students of color voting at the same rates as white students.

› By 2024, implement the *Ask Every Student* tactic to add electoral engagement to "First Year 101" class syllabi as a learning objective to the course.

› By 2024, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into the general education curriculum.

› By 2024, secure an on-campus polling location in a highly-trafficked area of campus.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

1 What outcomes does the institution need to reach during the next three years to stay on track to reach its longer-term vision? How do the goals of the campus voting coalition contribute to the institution's overall equity and inclusion goals? How do the goals support the institution's strategic plan?

2 What resources does the institution need to ensure its longer-term vision is within reach?

3 Who does the institution need to involve in order to reach its longer-term vision?

4 Does your campus voting coalition have the capacity and/or support to achieve this goal?

5 Is the goal SMARTIE (specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, time-bound, inclusive, and equitable)?

6 Does the goal solve an immediate issue student voters face?

7 Is the goal informed by data and research?

8 What does your institution need to do to best mobilize voters for the next election (whether local, state, federal primaries or general elections)?

EXAMPLES

› By fall 2022, the institution will ensure that 80% of students are registered to vote during orientation and that all students are encouraged to pledge to vote in the upcoming election as well as verify their registration details.

› By 2022, the institution will incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into 25% of courses.

› By 2022, the institution will institutionalize the practice of the president sending a letter to all students every semester about the importance of being civically engaged and participating in elections.

› By 2022, the institution will increase student voting rates by 10 percentage points over 2018 turnout levels, with students of color voting at the same rates as white students.

› By 2022, at least 30% of our working group leadership will represent marginalized communities on our campus.

› By the end of 2021, the institution will raise $25,000 from alumni to be used to carry out the tactics in this plan to increase nonpartisan voter engagement.

› By the end of 2021, the institution will establish a relationship with the local election official and invite them to join our working group.

The strategy section of a campus action plan summarizes how the institution intends to build institutional culture and infrastructure that supports civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation. Put simply, it outlines a strategic plan for this work. A campus's strategy should include a plan for achieving short-term and long-term goals and should consider means of achieving what is laid out in the other segments of your action plan. Developing a strategy should consider various institutional departments, programmatic efforts, and, ultimately, the infusion of a broad civic ethos into the mission of the institution.

Strategy can be infused into the institution's culture and infrastructure through a variety of methods; there is no one methodology for all campuses to follow. For instance, while many campuses are able to quickly articulate a variety of programmatic approaches, (e.g., listing tabling days for voter registration or campus debate watch parties), it is just as important for campuses to be exploring long-term strategy. What resources are needed for the institution to create a cultural shift in which democratic learning and participation become a part of everyday engagement?

In summary, this strategy section should describe shorter-term tactics for improving student voter registration, education, and turnout around elections (e.g., by including election deadlines and dates in a campus calendar of events). You can find numerous examples of successful campus strategies for student voter registration, education, and turnout in the bi-annual Voter Friendly Campus Report. Equally important is to consider and describe long-term strategies for further developing a campus ethos and set of experiences that help students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for full participation in our democracy. Such strategies might consider staffing, curricular offerings, cross-campus collaborations, and ways in which civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation are woven into campus communications and campus-wide events from orientation to convocation and graduation. There should be strategies aligned with all of your short- and long-term goals described in the previous section.

SHORT-TERM GUIDING QUESTIONS

1 What is the work? a) What are the planned activities and initiatives related to voter registration, voter education, voter turnout and mobilization, and voter access? b) What would it take to *Ask Every Student* on campus about participating in our democracy? For resources and tools to do so visit: www.studentvoting.org. c) Where will each activity occur (e.g., in a public campus space, in the classroom, virtually)?

2 Who is responsible for implementing each planned strategy and tactic?

3 Who is the audience for each strategy and tactic? a) What methods will be used to make strategies and tactics accessible to diverse populations? b) Are you including tactics that focus on reaching all students, especially traditionally underrepresented students?

4 Where will each activity occur on and off campus?

5 When will the work happen and what preparations are required beforehand to make it happen? Are individuals consistently (i.e. quarterly, semesterly or yearly) trained to ensure conversations remain nonpartisan, culturally sensitive, accurate, and that the voter registration processes result in zero errors?

6 Why is each strategy and tactic being implemented and what is the goal for each activity?

LONG-TERM GUIDING QUESTIONS

1 How would you describe a campus committed to educating for civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation? What would it look like and how would you know this commitment existed?

2 How might your institution deepen capacity and competence related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in tandem with civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation?

3 What will it take to build toward this vision of sustained commitment beyond a single election cycle (e.g., resources, curricular offerings, staffing)?

4 Where does work need to happen in order to institutionalize this vision (e.g., faculty senate, student government, division of student affairs)? a) Who is responsible within your working group for catalyzing or leading each effort? One step further, how would you know that this commitment has been institutionalized? b) Does your coalition have a succession plan that continually involves and builds up new student leaders, as well as provides for staffing transitions?

5 On what timeline will efforts to enact this vision occur? (Think in terms of years; e.g., in year one your institution will accomplish what? In year two your institution will accomplish what? And so on...).

6 How are you ensuring that your short-term tactics are embedded into the campus culture and can outlast the individuals leading that effort? (accounting for turnover)

Consider anchoring your tactics around civic holidays. A civic holiday is a day (or days) of action that is expressly focused on encouraging all citizens of the United States to be able to freely and confidently exercise their right to vote through community celebration. Here are a few you may want to consider integrating into your strategy:

- National Voter Registration Day - Third Tuesday in September

- National Voter Education Week - First week in October

- Vote Early Day - Last Friday in October

- Election Hero Day - Monday before Election Day

For more information about Civic Holidays visit: https://civicholidays.org/

Run by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) is a one-of-a-kind service to colleges and universities and a national database for research on student participation in democracy. More than 1,200 U.S. institutions across all fifty states and every institution type participate in NSLVE. For each of these campuses, IDHE provides a free report containing aggregate voter registration and voting rates for their students. With a database of 10 million de-identified records for the 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections, the NSLVE database is a robust research tool. IDHE also produces national, regional, and other comparative analyses as part of its research to advance political learning in higher education.

Participation in NSLVE is free, easy, and protective of student privacy. To join NSLVE for the first time, or to reauthorize your campus before the release of this year's reports on the 2020 election, you must submit a signed authorization form. More information on NSLVE, including FAQ, how the project works, and sample campus reports, can all be found on the IDHE website.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING AND LEVERAGING YOUR NSLVE DATA

How to Read Your NSLVE Report
This 10-minute primer offers report recipients an overview of what an NSLVE campus report contains and how to interpret the data.

IDHE Report: Using Your NSLVE Reports
Written by IDHE staff, this document is meant to help practitioners brainstorm ways to use NSLVE reports for impact on campus.

Election Imperatives
Based off of IDHE research, this report is centered on 10 major recommendations for colleges and universities looking to build community and capacity around civic and political learning.

IDHE's Data Portal and Visualizations
For anyone interested in college student political engagement data, this area of the IDHE website allows users to engage directly with NSLVE data. The continuously-updated features on this page highlight everything from national comparisons and regional trends to more granular insights around particular elections.

The IDHE Toolkit
Designed as a living set of resources, the IDHE Toolkit provides a variety of ways for institutions to use NSLVE data and other tools in tandem to promote campus climates for student political learning and engagement.

VIII	Reporting

As part of the reporting process, it is encouraged for campuses to be as detailed as possible and continually retool their democratic engagement action plan to ensure the short- and long-term goals set forth in the plan are being met. If the goals change, these updates should be reflected in the plan in real time.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1 How will the plan be shared, internally and externally? Please state where the plan will be shared. Keeping in mind to share the report with multiple stakeholders. This could take place by sharing during departmental meetings, student organization gatherings, and with community partners.

2 Will the plan be made public? If so, how? This could take place by posting the report on your institution's website, social media, etc.

3 Will the data, such as your institution's NSLVE report, used to inform the plan be made public? If so, how? This could take place by posting the report on your institution's website, social media, with stakeholders, etc.

4 How will this plan be used to execute student voting coalition work on campuses? This will ensure all campus organizations and groups have access to data and reporting to be able to plan and strategize programming.

IX	Evaluation

This section describes how the democratic action plan and its impact will be evaluated, how the institution will know if it is making progress, and when its goals have been reached. Included in this section should be what information (data) will be collected, as well as how it will be collected, analyzed, and used for improvement. Evaluating the work should be a continual process, so the action plan can be adjusted to reach the institution's goals. Evaluation should not be limited to using data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, though it is a vital resource in measuring student voter behavior for the campus.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of the evaluation?

2. What does the institution want to know and be able to do with the information gathered?

3. Who is the audience for the evaluation?

4. Who will carry out the evaluation? Is there an Institutional Research office representative involved? Faculty who are already studying related research questions? Student Affairs educators carrying out programmatic and long-term learning assessments?

5. When will the evaluation be carried out and completed?

6. What impact is already being measured for other related initiatives, like the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement?

7. What information (data, evidence) must be collected and how will it be collected? What are the performance measures and indicators of success?

8. How will information (data, evidence) be analyzed? a) How will the results of the evaluation be shared? b) How will the success of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within the plan be evaluated, beyond NSLVE race/ethnicity breakdown information?

9. Will efforts to evaluate be limited to one person/one area of your campus or be part of a larger campus effort?

10. What are your institution's metrics for success? Share what worked, what didn't, why, and how things will be altered for future action plans.

11. What progress has been made toward each short- and long-term goal?

12. Were efforts utilized to advance or implement the Ask Every Student framework? a) Integrating voter registration or GOTV (mail-in ballots, early voting, voter ID asks) into existing processes b) Executing individualized voter registration and democratic engagement tactics c) Institutionalizing tactics to be a sustainable part of campus culture?

13. Were efforts advanced regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice priorities on campus?

14. Which efforts were most successful to contributing to shifts in NSLVE and other data? a) What could be done to improve upon data metrics? For instance, if there was a big voter registration push, but voter registration data in NSLVE didn't change much, how can we improve on that?

15. What are your key performance indicators, and did you satisfy expectations?

16. Was campus administration supportive of civic learning and democratic engagement efforts? What can be done to get university officials to sign the ALL IN IN Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation?

17. How can student research projects support evaluation measures?

18. What resources do we need next year to advance civic engagement and reach long-term goals?

19. What are next steps for how evaluation information will be shared?

Self-Assessment Rubric

To assist campus stakeholders with self-evaluating their institution's democratic engagement work, this rubric was developed to supplement the publication, Strengthening American Democracy: A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rates among College Students (Vol. 3).

It is intended to help colleges and universities develop and evaluate their institutional democratic engagement action plans. Action plans are the institution's roadmap to documenting specific strategies for starting new programs and initiatives, or improving existing ones to improve civic learning, political engagement, and voting on their campus.

Language in the rubric can and should be adapted to the language of the individual campus when necessary.

Democratic Engagement Action Plan Rubric

DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT = CIVIC LEARNING + POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT + STUDENT VOTER PARTICIPATION

This rubric was developed to supplement the publication, Strengthening American Democracy: A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voter Participation Among College Students (3rd Ed.).

Language in the rubric can and should be adapted to the language of the individual campus.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	is any act intended to improve or influence a community through deliberation, collaboration, and reciprocal relationships and community-building.
CIVIC LEARNING	is promoting the education of students for engaged citizenship through democratic participation in their communities, respect and appreciation of diversity, applied learning, and social responsibility.
CURRICULUM	is an academic course of study; the knowledge students are expected to learn in the classroom.
DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT	is a combination of promoting the education of students for engaged participation through democratic mechanisms and principles in their communities, respect and appreciation of diversity, applied learning, and social responsibility.
DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION	is civic engagement that involves democratic processes (e.g., when an organization puts a matter to a vote and there is individual participation).
FULL PARTICIPATION	this occurs when all students are asked to participate in the democratic process
NATIONAL STUDY OF LEARNING, VOTING, AND ENGAGEMENT (NSLVE)	offers colleges and universities an opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates and, for interested campuses, a closer examination of their campus climate for political learning and engagement and correlations between specific student learning experiences and voting. https://idhe.tufts.edu/nslve
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	is civic engagement that emphasizes governmental institutions and/or power (e.g., voting in a local, state, or federal election). Participating in the political process also occurs by making one's own opinions and beliefs known outside of the electoral process (e.g., protesting, campaigning, performing jury duty, running for office, community organizing).
S.M.A.R.T.I.E.	is an acronym used to guide goal-setting: Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.
VOTER REGISTRATION	is the process of successfully completing the application to be able to cast a ballot in an election.
VOTER EDUCATION	is the curricular and co-curricular activities offered to students and designed to facilitate civic learning, political engagement, and increase participation in elections.
VOTER MOBILIZATION	the act of implementing tactics to encourage potential voters to follow through with becoming voters.

Democratic Engagement Action Plan Rubric

	4 | Established	3 | Progressing	2 | Emerging	1 | Undeveloped
Executive Summary Overview of the action plan explains: 1) Who developed it 2) The purpose of the plan 3) Where the plan will be implemented 4) The goal(s) of the plan 5) The intended duration of the plan 6) How the plan will be implemented.	Overview of action plan includes responses to all 6 of the suggested guiding questions.	Overview of action plan includes responses to 4-5 of the suggested guiding questions.	Overview of action plan includes responses to 1-3 of the suggested guiding questions.	Overview of action plan is not included.
Leadership Description, including names and titles, of the leadership coalition responsible for improving democratic engagement. 5 categories of participation are encouraged: 1) students 2) faculty 3) student affairs 4) community/national organizations 5) local elections office coordination.	A leadership team of all relevant stakeholders (across 5 categories) exists. The team includes academic affairs, student affairs, and students; as well as community partners and/or the local election office. The team includes diverse and marginalized communities.	A leadership team with many relevant stakeholders (across 3-4 categories) exists AND an effort is made to include diverse and marginalized communities.	A leadership team with a few relevant stakeholders (across 1-2 categories) exists, OR is in the process of being formed.	A leadership team has not yet been formed AND plans to develop one are not specified.
Commitment Description of institutional commitment to improving democratic engagement.	According to the plan, institutional commitment is visible and widely communicated - internally and externally. It is woven into the culture of the institution and is clearly reflected in the institution's mission, learning outcomes, curriculum, and co-curriculum.	According to the plan, institutional commitment is explicit, but is marginal - it is not woven into the culture of the institution, and appears in silos.	Institutional commitment is implied in the plan, but it is not explicitly described.	Institutional commitment is not apparent in the action plan.
Landscape Analysis of student data, campus climate, and current institutional efforts for improving democratic engagement.	The plan communicates a comprehensive understanding of its students, campus efforts, and climate; AND is using this information to inform its strategy.	The plan communicates an understanding of either its students, campus efforts, and/or climate; and may be using this information to inform its strategy.	The plan communicates that a landscape analysis is being developed.	The plan does not communicate that a landscape analysis exists or is being developed.
Goals Description of institutional short-term (e.g., by next election) and long-term (e.g., in next decade or two election cycles) desired democratic engagement results.	Short-term and long-term democratic engagement goals are described. Goals are also S.M.A.R.T.I.E.: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound, Inclusive, and Equitable.	Short-term AND long-term democratic engagement goals are described.	Only short-term OR long-term democratic engagement goals are described.	Neither short-term nor long-term democratic engagement goals are described.
National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) Free report providing campuses with their actual student registration and voting rates.	Summary AND detailed (e.g., demographic) NSLVE data are described and specific goals based on these data are set.	Either summary OR detailed (e.g., demographic) NSLVE data are described and general voting goals are set.	Participation in NSLVE is mentioned.	Participation in NSLVE is not mentioned.
Strategy Description of institutional efforts to reach desired democratic engagement results.	Strategy includes short-term tactics and long-term strategies. Tactics include a description of multiple voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout activities. Long-term strategies seek to make civic learning and democratic engagement an established part of the institution's curriculum and co-curriculum and go beyond the election.	Strategy includes short-term tactics. Tactics include a description of voter registration, voter education, and voter engagement activities. Activities occur inside and outside the classroom, but are not described as a systematic part of the curriculum or defined as long-term strategies.	Strategy includes short-term tactics. Tactics include description of voter registration, voter education, and/or voter engagement activities, but not all three. Activities predominantly occur outside the classroom. Long-term strategies are not described.	Institutional efforts to reach desired results in terms of voter registration, voter education, and voter engagement are not described.
Reporting Description of institutional efforts to make plans, data, and reports public.	Action plan, data, and reports are shared on campus AND are publicly available.	Two or more of the action plan, data, and reports are shared on campus and/or publicly.	One or more of the action plan, data, and reports is available either on campus or publicly, OR a plan to do so is being developed.	Institutional efforts to share plans, data, and reports OR to make them public are not described.
Evaluation Description of institutional efforts to evaluate the action plan, implementation, efforts, and results.	The evaluation strategy describes how and what information will be collected and analyzed as well as how the results will be used to make improvements. Includes more than just looking at NSLVE data. Evaluation happens before, during, and after plan implementation. Evaluation strategy crosses several categories of participation from the Leadership Section.	The evaluation strategy describes how and what information will be collected and analyzed. Includes more than just looking at NSLVE data. Evaluation happens during and after plan implementation. Evaluation strategy crosses 1 category of participation from the Leadership Section.	The evaluation strategy describes what information will be collected. Evaluation mostly consists of NSLVE breakdown data. Evaluation is limited to post-election information.	Institutional efforts to evaluate the action plan, implementation, efforts, and results are not described.

Acknowledgments

Contributing Organizations

ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE
allinchallenge.org
The ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge believes that more young people need to participate in the electoral process. By recognizing colleges and universities for their commitment to increasing student voting rates, this national awards program encourages institutions to help students form the habits of active and informed citizenship. Hundreds of colleges and universities have joined the Challenge and have committed to making democratic participation a core value on their campuses. Together, they are cultivating generations of engaged citizens who are essential to a healthy democracy.

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY PROJECT
aascu.org/programs/ADP
The American Democracy Project (ADP) is a multi-campus network focused on higher education's role in preparing the next generation of informed, engaged citizens for our democracy. ADP was established in 2003 through a partnership between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and *The New York Times*. Membership is available to all AASCU institutions. The network currently consists of over 250 state colleges and universities and reaches 2.2 million undergraduate students nationwide.

CAMPUS VOTE PROJECT
campusvoteproject.org
In 2012, the Fair Elections Legal Network (FELN) launched Campus Vote Project (CVP) to expand its work around student voting issues. CVP works with universities, community colleges, faculty, students, and election officials to reduce barriers to student voting. Our goal is to help campuses institutionalize reforms that empower students with the information they need to register and vote.

DEMOCRACY WORKS
democracy.works
Democracy Works is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit o ganization dedicated to the idea that voting should fit the way we live. We're a team of software developers, public policy wonks, and civic organizers building the tools needed to upgrade the infrastructure of our democracy and improve the voting experience for voters and election officials ali e. TurboVote, our fi st service, helps voters register, stay registered, and cast a ballot in every election, from municipal to national. Our vision is straightforward: make voting a simple, seamless experience for all Americans so that no one misses an election.

NASPA LEAD INITIATIVE
naspa.org/constituent-groups/groups/lead-initiative
The NASPA Lead Initiative on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (Lead Initiative) comprises a network of NASPA member colleges and universities committed to encouraging and highlighting the work of student affairs in making civic learning and democratic engagement a part of every student's college education.
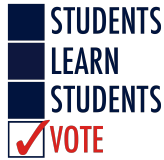
STUDENTS LEARN STUDENTS VOTE (SLSV) COALITION

slsvcoalition.org

The Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) Coalition is the national hub and largest nonpartisan network in the United States dedicated to increasing college student voter participation. The SLSV Coalition convenes and connects campuses, nonprofit partners, students, and philanthropic leaders with each other, and with resources and programming towards achieving the vision of ensuring that every student has easy and equal access to participate in every election. It uses data, relationships, celebration, and easy-to-follow planning structures, to help campus and local leaders register and turn out more student voters every year.
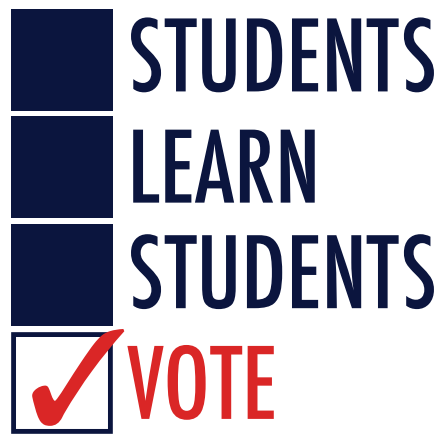
STUDENT PIRGS

studentpirgs.org

Students have the power to shape the future we will inherit. We work with professional staff at colleges and universities to make sure our peers have the skills, opportunities and training they need to create a better, more sustainable future for all of us. Our chapters on 35 campuses provide the training, professional support and resources students need to tackle climate change, protect public health, revitalize our democracy, feed the hungry and more. For over 40 years we've helped students to get organized, mobilized and energized so they can continue to be on the cutting edge of positive change.

THE ANDREW GOODMAN FOUNDATION

andrewgoodman.org

Established to continue the legacy of Andrew Goodman, a civil rights worker murdered by the KKK during Freedom Summer of 1965, The Andrew Goodman Foundation works to make young voices and votes a powerful force in democracy.

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