CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE **Susquehanna UNIVERSITY**

Susquehanna University 2020 Democratic Engagement Action Plan
Developed by: Miranda Carrasquillo

Executive Summary:

Susquehanna University is a small, private, liberal arts institution. In the late Fall of 2019, a small team was assembled by our Dean of Students to begin non-partisan proactive planning for the 2020 General Election. This initial team grew to include many more members over time. Our working group now consists of faculty, staff and students alike. With a renewed mission, and sense of urgency and purpose, the team began to develop practices and initiatives in pursuit of increasing Susquehanna's rates of voter registration and turnout. Our group and the accompanying social media campaign is entitled "Achieve, Lead, VOTE" (hereafter referred to as "ALV"). This slogan, coined by one of our own students—is an extension of our campus values which are achievement, leadership, and service—making ALV a campaign that is both unique and recognizable to Susquehanna University. ALV began meeting regularly and coordinating events as an organized group in the Spring of 2020, just prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic. We continued to meet weekly over zoom throughout the summer months in preparation for the 2020 General Election. Our enduring outcomes have been the following;

1) To educate/inform the campus community about the voting process and the importance of voting and
2) To empower and encourage our students to actively participate in democracy and exercise their right to vote in each election which they are eligible.

Thus far, we have become partners with the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and a member-institution of the Pennsylvania Student Voting Coalition (PASVC). Our Johnson Center for Civic Engagement is the campus-life department at the helm of the following plans and initiatives.

Our immediate short-term goal is to get as many students as possible voting in the 2020 general election. According to data supplied by The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), our previous voting registration and turnout rates are each below the national average. We pushed registration for months and are now highly encouraging students to vote early in-person or by mail to avoid lines and crowding at the polls on election day. Our long-term goals are to secure a polling place on campus, provide a mail-ballot drop box on campus, and perhaps to one day suspend classes on election day or at the very least provide institution-wide lenience to attendance policies on election day. Ideally these initiatives will yield better rates of voter registration and turnout over time. Immediate micro improvements as well as institutional level changes are needed to eliminate the social and institutional barriers which currently hinder student voting. We hope that ultimately the work of ALV will shift campus culture, normalize and systematize voting as a part of the Susquehanna student experience, and cultivate a collective understanding that civic engagement is accessible to everyone, and a necessary aspect of one's growth and development into a productive and educated citizen.

The following plans and practices have been a collective effort of our ALV team and developed in partnership with the constituents and participants listed below.

ALV has facilitated talks, trivia events, tabling sessions, open houses via zoom, lead non-partisan campaigns, and made other tremendous efforts since the time of its inception. These efforts are outlined in further detail below. ALV's co-leaders Shari Jacobson and Miranda Carrasquillo have both completed ACLU's Voting Ambassador training and are members of the Pennsylvania Student Voting Coalition (PASVC) serving as representatives of Susquehanna University. Miranda is temporarily facilitating

PASVC meetings every other week in partnership with Eva Gonzalez from University of Pennsylvania's non-partisan voting group, Penn Leads the Vote (PLTV). PASVC includes more than 10 PA member institutions including but not limited to University of Pennsylvania, Millersville University, University of Pittsburgh, Swarthmore, and Duquense among many others.

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following:

Miranda Carrasquillo, Coordinator for Civic Engagement
Shari Jacobson, Professor of Anthropology and liaison to the Faculty
Michael Dixon, Chief Inclusion & Diversity Officer
Christie Kracker, Dean of Students
Amanda Bannon, Digital Marketing Manager
Scott Kershner, University Chaplain and Director of Religious and Spiritual Life
Amy Davis, Coordinator of the Center for Diversity and Inclusion
Sarah Farbo, Assistant Director of SU Service Leaders Program and Career Development Center
Emma Fleck, Professor of Management and Marketing and Department Head
Jordan Smith, Professor of Music and Director of Orchestra
Amanda Stante, Professor of Music
Alan Zemaitis, Assistant Football coach and liaison to Athletics Department

Thomas Tang, Student, President of the SU Democrats
Derek Dengler, Student, President of the SU Republicans
Alexander Stone, Student, President of the SU Libertarians
Alexis Jefferson, Student, PASVC Fellow
Larry Czeponis, Student, CVP Fellow
Anna Leeds, Student, CVP Fellow
Connor Dunn, Student, Transfer Student representative and Volunteer
Natalie Santos, Student, Association of Latinx & American Students (ALAS)
Kiarah Leonard, Student, Black Student Union Representative
Jena Lui, Asian Cultural Association Representative and Volunteer
Emily Lua Lua, Student, SGA Representative
Billy Mild, Student, Personal Development Club Representative
Kayla Bush, Student, Slam Poetry, LCM Representative

Working partnership with Debbie Bilger, Director of Elections for Snyder County

Commitment:

Our campus has not yet signed the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

Our campus has used the following methods to communicate with students about the election:

Email communications, posting on institutional social media channels, in campus newsletters, in classrooms, during meetings, etc.

Landscape:

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Our voting rates for 2014 and 2018 were 8.6% and 29.5 % respectively. While we saw a significant improvement between 2014 and 2018, we would ultimately like to see the voting rate reflect the majority of our eligible students. We have approximately 2,300 students living on campus during an ordinary year.

In 2020, due to the pandemic and the option for students to study remotely, we currently have closer to 2,000 students on campus (approximately). Susquehanna is a predominantly white Institution with approximately 78% of our students being white. Our breakdown of male identified to female identified students is about even.

Goals:

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

Short-term goals are to get as many students as possible voting in the 2020 general election. We are highly encouraging students to vote early or by mail to avoid lines and crowding at the polls on election day.
Long-term goals are to get a polling place on campus, a mail-ballot drop box on campus, and to one day perhaps cancel classes on election day or at the very least provide institution-wide lenience to attendance policies on election day.

Strategy:

Our campus has used the following strategies and organized the following events:

- In-person voter registration drives, In-person voter education events (e.g. film screenings, debates, lecture series, etc.), Classroom voter registration presentations (in-person or virtual), Virtual voter registration drives (e.g. Couch Party text banking events), Virtual voter education events (e.g. film screening, debates, lectures series, etc.), Pledge to Vote drive
- We have injected an online voter registration link into several existing processes including but not limited to new-student orientation and our SU Mobile app.
- We facilitated several National Voter Registration Day Events (9/22) both in-person and virtually including a voting trivia event with prizes and tabling outdoors.
- Facilitated several Voter Education Week events (10/5-10/9) including but not limited to, a feature on a WQSU radio show, and a discussion with Political Science faculty members who conducted a research study on non-voters.
- Vote Early Day social media posts and virtual engagement
- ALV Interactive webpage (consistently being updated)
    - https://www.susqu.edu/about-susquehanna/in-the-community/achieve-lead-vote
- ALV-Student Voices meetings: Brainstorming sessions with student leaders about how they can help to mobilize their peers
- Social Media Engagement, regularly posting, reposting relevant content, and advertising events.
    - Our hashtag #achieveleadvote gets weekly posts and engagement.
- ACLU Voter ambassador training was completed by Miranda Carrasquillo and Shari Jacobson and they will train student leaders to become voting ambassadors for their peers.
- Blackboard course for all students (currently under construction, will be published soon). This blackboard course will be accessible to all students, all year round, and will include resources and instructions for registering to vote, voting, why it is important to vote, and finally getting involved with ALV efforts on campus.
- Grant & partnership with the PA Student Voting Coalition helmed by UPenn. We received grant funding to support a student fellow to aid in voting related efforts. We have since hired and trained a fellow who has been a large part of our success this Fall.
- We collaborate with our CVP fellows on campus as well.
- We have added the registration link in several places on the Susquehanna website, on our SU mobile app, and it went into online orientation.
- We have a robust partnership with our athletics department. As such they have ensured that there will be no athletic training, games, practices or events on election day & 100% of our Women's Basketball team is registered to vote!
- High involvement with ALV across many areas. Student leaders involved, athletics involved, and faculty involved. This is how we intend to move the needle towards institutional & cultural change

- We are widely sharing out the link for taking the ALL IN pledge

This is not an exhaustive list, however these are our most notable strides to date.

NSLVE:

Susquehanna University has authorized NSLVE.

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

We hope to see significant increases in our registration rates and voting rates for 2020. This data will be reflected and easily accessible though our 2020 NSLVE report. We also hope to see positive, institutional level changes and implementations for the long term. For example, we hope to have a polling place on campus at Susquehanna University, and an on-campus mail-drop box in place for future elections for the foreseeable future. Additionally, we eventually hope to conduct surveys, polls, and focus groups of students and their perception of the accessibility of voting information, the voter registration application, and accessibility to the polls. Qualitative assessments of this nature will be completed by the Johnson Center for Civic Engagement and relevant campus partners.

Lastly, we have partnered with our Marketing and Communications team and hope to be able to track clicks, views and virtual traffic to our Achieve Lead Vote website as well as our social media posts and pages. We will make notes of trends and attempt to make this a widely known and viewed resource. We will also be able to track clicks and views on our blackboard site.

Reporting:

We will report our campus action plan and NSLVE reports in the following ways:

Our action plan will be posted on our campus website and shared with the campus community.

Our campus NSLVE reports will be posted on our campus website and shared with the campus community.