



**CAMPUS
DEMOCRACY
CHALLENGE**

Susquehanna
UNIVERSITY

Susquehanna University 2022 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Jordain Moore

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. Since then, with the new Johnson Center Coordinator leading ALV efforts, we have continued to meet regularly with active ALV committee members to identify new goals for the 2022-2023 academic year in preparation for the 2024 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, Campus Vote Project, PennPIRG 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 goals include:

- Connect with leadership from the Black Student Union about voter engagement in the fall semester to increase black student voting rate to at least 50% this voting year
- Table to engage students and “pledge to vote” through studentvote.org to reach a voter turnout rate of at least 66% in this voting year
- Develop social media outreach techniques to incentivize students to vote in the midterms and primaries as well as pledge to vote in the 2024 Presidential election such as developing an “I voted” beverage with our Student-run Café and “I voted” ALV Committee t-shirts
- Connect with student organizations and clubs to develop voter turnout competitions and awards amongst members as well as with other student organizations
- Develop a cross-campus outreach method on National Voter Registration Day to ensure students get registered

Our long-term goals include:

- Secure a polling place on campus
- Provide institution-wide lenience to attendance policies on election day.
- Develop a Voter 101 course on Canvas in partnership with faculty and staff
- In partnership with Residence Life and RA’s, develop a training event each semester, such as the ACLU Voter Ambassador Training, with RA’s to ensure they can provide voting resources to residents and peers
- Continue building and enhancing the ALV website to increase accessibility to voter resources
- Utilize GivePulse platform and TurboVote to track and assess voting and civic engagement efforts

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 Jordain Moore and Alexis Jefferson plan to complete the ACLU’s Voting Ambassador training over Summer 2022 and

continue membership with the Pennsylvania Student Voting Coalition (PASVC) serving as representatives of Susquehanna University.

Leadership:

Our leadership team includes the following:

Jordain Moore, Coordinator for Civic Engagement

Shari Jacobson, Professor of Anthropology and liaison to the Faculty

Francy Magee, 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

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

Leadership Training and Succession Plans:

With the support of ALV Committee members, faculty and staff involved in leadership with the ALV Committee will independently seek alternative leaders to take on their role should they leave the institution, committee or take long-term leave.

Similarly, student leaders graduating or leaving the institution will conduct outreach to identify another qualified candidate to take their place whether within their student organization or curricular sphere.

All student leaders involved with the committee will engage in some form of formal training whether through the ACLU Voter Ambassador Training or in collaboration with leadership from Student PIRGS.

Starting in Fall 2022, ALV Committee members will meet on a bi-weekly basis whether virtually or in-person to discuss upcoming election plans, voter education and engagement, goals, and review our action plan.

Commitment:

Our campus has 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 aimed to see the voting rate reflect the majority of our eligible students. In 2020 our voting rate increased to 74%, earning us the award for “most improved voter turnout in 4 years.” We have approximately 2,300 students living on campus during an ordinary year. 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:

- Connect with leadership from the Black Student Union about voter engagement in the fall semester to increase black student voting rate to at least 50% this voting year
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Long-term goals are to:

- Secure a polling place on campus
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- Develop a Voter 101 course on Canvas in partnership with faculty and staff
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- Continue building and enhancing the ALV website to increase accessibility to voter resources
- Utilize GivePulse platform and TurboVote to track and assess voting and civic engagement efforts

Strategies and Tactics: Our campus has used the following strategies and organized the following events as we will continue to do for the upcoming election periods:

Top Tier

- 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), Pledge to Vote drive
- Plan and facilitate Fall 2022 student organization “take the pledge to vote” tabling drive prior to November general elections
- ALV-Student Voices meetings: Brainstorming sessions with student leaders about how they can help to mobilize their peers
- ACLU Voter ambassador training with ALV Committee student leaders, Ra’s and Service Ambassadors working within the Johnson Center for Civic Engagement to become voting ambassadors for peers

- 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.

Second Tier

- 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.
- In June of 2022, we have launched integration of the digital platform GivePulse, aimed at tracking, measuring, and assessing campus civic engagement efforts in partnership with TurboVote
- 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>
- Canvas course for all students (currently under construction, will be published soon). This Canvas 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 in the past and we plan to hire another in the upcoming fall semester.
- We collaborate with our CVP fellows on campus as well.
- 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.

Third Tier

- 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 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 and for the future.
- Social Media Engagement, regularly posting, reposting relevant content, and advertising events.
 - Our hashtag #achieveleadvote gets weekly posts and engagement.

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 2024. This data will be reflected and easily accessible through our 2024 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 university vans available to bring students to polling sites 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.