



PennState

2024 Action Plan

ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge



[PSUVOTES.PSU.EDU](https://psuvotes.psu.edu)

The Pennsylvania State University 2024 Democratic Engagement Plan

Developed by: Lisa Kerchinski, Assistant Director, Service and Leadership

Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by The Pennsylvania State University in Pennsylvania for the 2024 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 general election. The goals for The Pennsylvania State University for the 2024 election are: (1) increasing our student voter registration rate to 88% in 2024, (2) increasing our student voter turnout rate to 73% in 2024, and (3) increasing awareness of and number of PSU Votes programs.

Leadership Team:

A. PSU Votes Leaders

- a. Lisa Kerchinski: Assistant Director, Service and Leadership
- b. Kendall Mainzer: Coordinator of Civic Engagement

B. Faculty & Staff Partners

- a. Kate Hynes: PSU Votes Faculty & Staff Co-Chair
- b. Jeremy Hoffman: PSU Votes Faculty & Staff Co-Chair
- c. Jimmy Werner: Advocacy & Communications Specialist, Office of Government and Community Relations, PSU Votes Communication Chair (ORCR)
- d. Jenna Lewis: Director, Student Affairs Communications and Marketing, PSU Votes Communication Committee
- e. Jenna Spinelle: Marketing and Communications Specialist, McCourtney Institute for Democracy, PSU Votes Communications Committee
- f. Jessica O'Hara: Teaching Professor of Communications Arts and Sciences, General Education Faculty Scholars Civic Engagement Subcommittee

C. Student Roundtable Leaders

- a. Ethan Galley: President, Council of Commonwealth Student Governments (CCSG), Student Roundtable Co-Chair
- b. Maddie Hindman: President, NextGen PA at PSU, PSU Votes Intern, Student Roundtable Co-Chair
- c. Amber Gordon: Student Roundtable Co-Chair

D. Student Organization Partners

- a. University Park Undergraduate Association
- b. Lion Caucus
- c. Association of Residence Hall Students
- d. College Democrats
- e. College Republicans
- f. PSU League of Women Voters
- g. Next Gen Leadership Academy

E. University Partners

- a. WPSU Penn State

- b. McCourtney Institute for Democracy
 - c. Schreyer Teaching Institute
 - d. University Libraries
 - e. Sustainability Center
 - f. News Literacy Center
- F. *Community Partners*
- a. League of Women Voters Center County
 - b. NextGen Pennsylvania
 - c. Fair Districts Pennsylvania
 - d. Centre County Office of Elections and Voter Registration

Commitment:

Penn State’s mission statement includes the following: “As Pennsylvania’s land-grant university, we provide unparalleled access to education and public service to support the citizens of the Commonwealth and beyond.” A key element of that public service as a land-grant university is preparing its students to be educated and engaged citizens of the Commonwealth. This is particularly reflected in our General Education learning outcome of “Social Responsibility and Ethical Reasoning” and our university values of Respect, Discovery, and Community. The Pennsylvania State University has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2022.

Landscape: The Pennsylvania State University is a multi-campus, land-grant, public research university that joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2016.

In Fall 2023, The Pennsylvania State University had 87,903 students, of whom 78,292 were U.S. residents and 51,307 were Pennsylvania residents. A majority of out-of-state students are from the states of New Jersey, New York, Maryland, Virginia, and California. Students who identify as a man comprise 53% of the student population and students who identify as a woman comprise 46% of the population. White students comprise 0%, Hispanic/Latino 9%, Asians 7%, Blacks/African Americans 6%, two or more races 4%, and unknown race 3% of all students. First generation college students are 21% of the student population. Of domestic students, 60% are 18-24 years old and 73.8% are 18-29 years old.

The Pennsylvania State University has authorized NSLVE. Our contract is being reauthorized.

- Our institution had a 2020 campus voting rate of 68.8%.
- Our institution had a 2020 voter registration rate of 83.8%.

2018 NSLVE report:

- Our institution had a 2018 voter turnout rate of 35.5%.
- Our institution had a 2018 voter registration rate of 74.2%.

Our institution has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals: 2016 Bronze, 2018 Silver, 2020 Silver.

Since the 2020 election, there have been a variety of institutional changes in leadership and administration. Previously, PSU Votes was administered through the Center for Character, Conscience, and Public Purpose. Due to budget constraints, the CCCPP was closed in Fall 2023 semester and the oversight of PSU Votes was moved to the Office of Student Leadership and Involvement. Though a role for a civic program coordinator position was approved and created to lead PSU Votes, it will not be filled

until late June 2024. In the meantime, the Assistant Director of Service and Leadership has overseen the PSU Votes program along with their other staffing responsibilities with assistance from the Service and Leadership graduate student.

In addition, the University has a new president, a new/interim Provost, new Vice President of Student Affairs, and a new reporting structure with Student Affairs now reporting to the Provost instead of the President. In addition, there is a new Vice President for Government and Community Relations, new Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses, new Vice President of Strategic Communications and new Director of Communications and Marketing for Student Affairs. With these numerous changes, there is a need to create awareness of the PSU Votes mission and enhance partnerships and educational strategies across the University with faculty, staff, and students.

Democratic Engagement Goals:

- Increase student voter registration rate to 86% in 2022 and 88% in 2024
- Increase student voter turnout rate to 50% in 2022 and 73% in 2024
- Increase awareness of registration information and voter education through a two-part campaign.
 1. August 26 – October 21: Focus on voter registration with an emphasis on completing application properly, particularly the address. (August 26 is the first day of classes and October 21 is the deadline to register to vote in PA)
 2. October 22 – November 5: Provide comprehensive resources and information to help students create a plan to vote.

Strategy: The Pennsylvania State University will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation:

- A. *Build and Support PSU Votes Coalition*
 - a. Student Roundtable focused on student outreach, event planning, voter registration training and tabling, and resource feedback.
 - b. Faculty & Staff committee focused on creating and sharing educational resources for students and faculty including voter modules for courses, educational videos, and communications regarding Faculty Senate Policy encouraging faculty to hold classes asynchronously on Election Day.
 - c. Communication committee to create a university wide communication plan including messaging, and scheduling for news stories, social media, stall stories and signage, communication from student leaders, communication from senior leadership, utilization of apps including Penn State Go, Student Engagement App, Student organization and member messaging and banners
 - d. Create an Advisory Board including elected officials, election board staff members, PSU Votes staff, and Office of Government and Community Relations staff to ensure proper communication and information dissemination regarding on campus voting site and drop box coordination and communication.
- B. *Improve the Accessibility and Distribution of Key Resources and Information*
 - a. Revise the PSU Votes website to include access to resources for faculty as well as key information for students including registration resources for PA, out-of-state, and out-of-country registration and election information.
 - b. Create motivational and instructional videos with WPSU (PBA) on registration, voting, and obtaining non-partisan information. These will be shared via social media and made available to faculty for use in their courses.

- c. Create PSU Votes Ambassadors, a cadre of trained students who serve as representatives at PSU Votes tabling, class/student organization visits, and registration events.
 - d. Collaborate with the Centre County Office of Elections and Voter Registration to identify best practices and most frequent mistakes made by students in the registration, mail-in ballot, and voting processes.
 - e. Create online voter registration training sessions for students along with a shadowing program for all students representing or partnering with PSU votes to conduct registration drives.
 - f. Hire and train Work Study students to assist with voting registration efforts
 - g. Revise the PSU Votes marketing campaign to more fully utilize Student Affairs social media platforms, student e-newsletters, Penn State daily e-newsletter, direct emails (including at least one from university administration), Canvas (course instruction platform), Penn State Go (Penn State's official mobile app), Penn State Student Engagement Network Engagement App, University digital signage, banners, and traditional print advertisements. These materials will be shared with all 23 campuses, colleges, student governments, and recognized student organizations collaborating with PSU Votes.
 - h. Revise the faculty voting resources webpage in collaboration with the General Education Faculty Scholars Civic Engagement Subcommittee.
 - i. Share resources and action plans for utilization at our Commonwealth campuses and World Campus.
- C. Event Planning to Inform and Educate Students about the Election*
- a. Hold a PSU Votes HUB-Robeson Takeover Day during National Voter Education Week. The HUB-Robeson Center is the student union building at University Park. The event will include voter registration and voter education tables, food, games, music, and swag. Students will be encouraged to create and share individual voting plans to obtain PSU Votes prizes.
 - b. Hold daily PSU Votes registration tabling from September through October 21 (last day to register) in the HUB and in locations across the campus in coordination with various student organizations.
 - c. Hold daily PSU Votes information tabling from October 21 through November 5 in the HUB and various locations across the campus in coordination with various student organizations to ensure students are informed and prepared ahead of the election with an enhanced focus on ensuring students are aware of their polling location.
 - d. Host a candidate forum for U.S. Senate race at Penn State University Park in conjunction with the McCourtney Institute for Democracy and WPSU Penn State (PBS).
 - e. Hold an Election Day Celebration Event in the HUB-Robeson Center. The HUB is the polling place for almost all students living on campus.
 - f. Create, purchase, and distribute PSU Votes promotional merchandise at events, tabling, and class visits.
- D. Extend Campus Outreach*
- a. Partner with Intercollegiate Athletics to conduct a full class session during all student athlete first year seminars, collaborate on student-athlete civic engagement programming, and develop student-athlete community engagement activities for Election Day.
 - b. Partner with student governments representing University Park students and our Commonwealth campuses on voter registration efforts, outreach, and events.

- c. Partner with Residence Life, Greek Life, multi-cultural centers, registered student organizations and student caucuses coordinate voter registration training and tabling as well as events.
- E. Implemented Since Last Election*
- a. Added voter registration information to student course registration in LionPATH, Penn State's student information system. This requires all students to view a message from PSU Votes with a link to psuvotes.psu.edu, our comprehensive voting information website, when registering for courses.

Evaluation:

In addition to our 2022 NSLVE data, PSU Votes will coordinate evaluation of our action plan by:

- Number of new and updated registrations submitted at tabling and events conducted by PSU Votes and student organizations collaborating with PSU Votes.
- Number of visits to the PSU Votes website during course scheduling, following each major communications push, clicks out to the appropriate official state registration websites, etc.
- Number of views of PSU Votes motivational and instructional videos (social media, YouTube, PSU Votes website, etc.)
- Number of views of PSU Votes social media postings
- Number of PSU Votes class visits and students attending said classes
- Number of promotional items distributed
- Number of participants at PSU Votes events

Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/penn-state-university-park/>.

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our NSLVE reports which are posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website.

Our NSLVE report will be shared with the entire Penn State community via a Penn State Today article (daily e-newsletter) and the PSU Votes website. It will be shared directly with university administration (President's Council, deans, chancellors, and vice-provosts), Faculty Senate, student governments, and organizations on the PSU Votes leadership team and collaborate with PSU Votes. The campus action plan will be shared on the PSU Votes website.