



## **The University of Scranton 2020 Action Plan**

Developed by: Carolyn Bonacci

### **Executive Summary:**

The University of Scranton is working across campus to ensure that every eligible voter is prepared to vote in this election. This campus initiative is led by The Office of Community and Government Relations in collaboration with Scranton Student Government along with other on and off campus partners including Scranton Political Science Club, Department of Political Science, Student Life, Residence Life, Political Dialogues Working Group, and Campus Ministries among others. Our plan is informed by our Jesuit mission and core values with the aim of cultivating engaged citizens across campus that are women and men for and with others.

This action plan was implemented on campus and, this year due to the coronavirus, also largely implemented virtually online using our social media platforms, our dedicated resource page [www.scranton.edu/RoyalsVote](http://www.scranton.edu/RoyalsVote), and via Zoom.

The main goals of our plan are: to 1. ensure all eligible voters in our campus community are prepared for the election by registering to vote, knowing how to vote, and understanding their voter rights; 2. providing voter education and resources to help prepare our campus population to make an informed decision on their ballots that reflect their personal values, morals, and causes; 3. to work across difference to find common ground to keep our campus community one of inclusiveness, solidarity, and diversity; 4. to ensure that our campus community continues to engage in the political process after Election Day by remaining civically engaged and active to the causes that they support.

This action plan began in at the start of our fall semester at the end of August and will continue past Election Day. This year we are focusing on what the next steps are for our democracy, regardless of who is elected to office. We continue to seek feedback from our students to understand what they need to know and what types of programs and events will best meet their needs. Many of our students are first time voters and we are working to ensure that this is only the first step towards living a life as an engaged citizens.

### **Leadership:**

Our leadership team includes the following:

Our leadership team is Carolyn M. Bonacci, community and civic engagement coordinator; Conor Nealon, Scranton Student Government representative; Julia Hack, Scranton Student Government president; Sultana Rhaman, intern in the Office of Community and Government Relations; Julie Schumacher Cohen, AVP for Community and Government Affairs; Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

### **Commitment:**

Our campus has not yet signed the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation, but it is under review by the administration.

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

By email, By posting on institutional social media channels, dedicated voting resource website [www.scranton.edu/RoyalsVote](http://www.scranton.edu/RoyalsVote), posters on campus with QR codes to register voters, outreach to First Year Experience courses, outreach to students living in residence halls via RA's

## **Landscape:**

Our campus demographic and voting data:

The University of Scranton's voting rate in 2018 was 33.7% (an increase of 20.7% from 2014). The University of Scranton currently has 4,957 students enrolled with 3,658 undergraduates and 693 graduate students. The demographic breakdown of our total 4,957 students is as follows: 2,964 Female: 2206 White, 2 American Indian or Native American, 126 Asian, 98 Black or African American, 305 Hispanic/Latino, 6 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 31 Nonresident alien, 128 Race and Ethnicity Unknown, 62 Two or more races 1,993 Male: 1474 White, 4 American Indian or Native American, 64 Asian, 63 Black or African American, 192 Hispanic/Latino, 2 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 58 Nonresident alien, 89 Race and Ethnicity Unknown, 47 Two or more races

## **Goals:**

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

The University of Scranton's short-term goal for the 2020 election is to 1. Engage our entire campus community in the civic process by ensuring that all eligible voters are registered to vote and ready to cast their ballots; 2. Provide opportunities for members of our campus community to reflect on their own values and understand how their vote is a reflection of these values; 3. Provide voter and civic education to empower campus community members to understand how they can become active forces for change in our world.

Our long-term goals (2022 and beyond) are to 1. Continue to engage campus community members in civics beyond Election Day by providing actionable next steps; 2. To emphasize the importance of mid-term and local elections for making changes in our world; 3. Working to ensure that students are prepared to continue engagement and update their voter registration should they relocated after graduation.

## **Strategy:**

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

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.), nonpartisan political dialogue, office hours for voting information, posters across campus with QR codes to register to vote

Our campus strategy at The University of Scranton is to infuse our mission and core values into all that we do, including outreach on voting. As a Catholic and Jesuit institution, we believe it is important that our campus population sees voting and being civically engaged as an extension of how we live out faith and show our love for others. We are inspired by our partners at the Ignatian Solidarity Network who proclaim that "Voting Is An Act of Love" and we seek to create multi-issue voters here on campus that understand how their involvement in civics can change the world.

Our strategy this year in light of the coronavirus is to use social media and virtual platforms to our advantage. These platforms allow us to provide a consistent message and to reach students in modalities familiar to them. We worked with our student population to understand the student perspective and collaborated with Scranton Student Government to create events and guides that meet the needs of our students.

Below is a selection of our voter engagement events.

Voter Engagement Events

- What's Your WHY Social Media Campaign for National Voter Registration Day

- “Values That Inform Your Vote” nonpartisan political dialogue for students held on Constitution/Citizenship Day
- Examen for Civic Life hosted by Campus Ministries on YouTube – November 2
- Voting 101 Informational Sessions offered to courses including First Year Seminar
- Providing information to Residence Life to share with students living on campus
- Scranton Student Government created election related infographs to post across social media channels (topics include registering to vote, making a voting plan, what’s on the ballot, student voter guide)
- Creating a dedicated resource page at [www.scranton.edu/RoyalsVote](http://www.scranton.edu/RoyalsVote) to share nonpartisan voting information, links to important voting websites, and to offer ways to reflect on values and issues before voting
- Voting notification added to Scranton.edu login page.
- Video message from our President Fr. Scott Pilarz , S.J. on voting and the importance of peaceful fair and free elections
- Voting Q&A Drop-In Session for students
- Voter registration posters put up across campus with QR codes to register to vote
- Collaborate with Paige Cognetti, Mayor of Scranton on Voter Activation Event to register voters, provide voting information, and drop off mail-in ballots at county elections office
- Social Media campaign “Vote Today! Be an Active Citizen Tomorrow!” to engage students in civics beyond Election Day
- “Election 2020: Analysis & Q&A with the Political Science Department” scheduled for November 4

#### **NSLVE:**

The University of Scranton has authorized NSLVE.

#### **Evaluation:**

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

To evaluate the success of our action plan and strategies we will 1. utilize attendance data for online events (Zoom attendance reports); 2. track our #royalsvote and #royalsvote2020 to assess the reach of our social media campaigns; 3. solicit student feedback by meeting with key student groups and by working with leaders of student groups including Student Government president, Dean of Students, and members of Residence Life. This evaluation will be done by the Office of Community and Government Relations.

#### **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 hasn't confirmed a plan to post our NSLVE reports on our campus website.