

Campus Democratic Action Plan
2024
Towson University



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Towson University's (TU) [2020-30 Strategic Plan](#) "Leadership for the Public Good" names devotion to civic responsibility and community engagement as a core value and encourages faculty and staff to create opportunities that "challenge students to be engaged participants in an inspiring educational journey preparing them for professional success and positive impact as engaged members of their communities."

The 2024 Campus Democratic Action Plan serves as such an opportunity and is designed to infuse civic learning and democratic engagement across the institution.

The Director (Romy Hübler), Assistant Director (Heather Polonsky), and Coordinator for Civic Engagement (Charis Lawson) in the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR), situated in the Division of Student Affairs, worked with a diverse group of students, staff, and faculty representing a multitude of departments and divisions to develop the 2024 Action Plan:

- Andrew Goodman Ambassador:
 - Jayden Johnstone, Undergraduate Student
- BTU – Partnerships for Greater Baltimore:
 - Matt Durlington, Faculty Director for Community Engagement
 - Tess Heron, Engagement and Data Manager
- Center for Student Diversity:
 - Allyson DeMaagd, Coordinator for Sexuality and Gender Diversity
- Department of Mass Communication:
 - Pallavi Guha, Assistant Professor
- Department of Political Sciences:
 - Alison McCartney, Faculty Director of the Honors College and Professor in Political Science
 - John McTague, Assistant Chair and Professor in Political Science
 - Joseph Dietrich, Assistant Professor in Political Science
 - Sara Oliver, Associate Professor in Political Science
- Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Criminal Justice:
 - Matt Durlington, Professor
- Fraternity & Sorority Life:
 - Roodinz Vital, Director
- Counseling Center:
 - Emily Wiegand, Outreach Programming Coordinator
- Honors College:
 - Alison McCartney, Dean
 - Margo Stebbins, Director of Co-Curricular Programs and Constituent Relationships
- Housing & Residence Life:
 - Jake Garner, Assistant Director for Residential Education
 - Kelly Hoover, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs

- Inclusive Excellence Education & Support:
 - Brian Jara, Director
- Military & Veterans Center:
 - Rebecca Cossaboom, Assistant Director
- New Student & Family Programs:
 - Gail DeShields, Assistant Director
 - Katie Murray, Director
- Office of the Senior Vice President of Student Affairs & University Life
 - Vernon Hurte, Senior Vice President
- Office of the Dean of Students:
 - Alison Peer, Associate Dean of Students
 - Anthony Skevakis, Dean of Students and Associate Vice President of Student Affairs
- Office of the President:
 - Katie Maloney, Executive Director of Government and Community Relations
- Student Accountability & Restorative Practices:
 - Danielle Woody, Director and Assistant Dean of Students
 - Bridget Woolery, Coordinator
 - Rica Clements, Coordinator
- Student Activities:
 - Chris Rindosh, Coordinator of Student Organizations
- Student Government Association:
 - Simi Sanni, Director of Civic Engagement, Undergraduate Student
- Student Success Programs:
 - Tammie King-Kelly, Director
- Towson University Northeastern (TUNE):
 - Allison Frey, Director of Student Services
- University Marketing & Communications
 - Teri O’Neal, Associate Vice President
- University Residence Government:
 - Gabriella Linsky, Undergraduate Student

In the development of the Action Plan, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) not only invited a diverse set of collaborators to provide insights and feedback but also paid close attention to creating intentional opportunities to reach audiences who have experienced historic disenfranchisement. In addition, CESR assessed TU’s current civic learning and democratic engagement landscape and developed long-term goals to close existing gaps.

CESR and the campus partners listed above identified the following goals:

Goal I: By 2034, infuse civic learning and democratic engagement into the first-year experience.

- By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into New Student Orientation materials and programs.

- By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into Housing & Residence Life processes and programs.
- By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into First-Year Experience Academic Advising.

Goal II: By 2034, infuse civic learning and democratic engagement into the general education curriculum.

- By 2026, develop a networked civic learning and democratic engagement community among faculty.
- By 2026, create a process to identify a student representative from each academic college to be a liaison between students in their college and the TU Votes Coalition.
- By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement in 10% of courses.

Goal III: By 2034, increase student voter registration rates to 95% and student voter turnout rates to 80%.

- By 2026, student voting rates at the institution will increase to 90% and voter turnout rates to 50%.

Goal IV: By 2034, institutionalize communication practices that convey the importance of voting to students from all backgrounds.

- By 2026, solidify the practice of senior leadership encouraging voter registration and turnout in a nonpartisan, culturally sensitive, and accurate manner.
- By 2026, increase the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility budget by \$5,000 to fund additional marketing and educational materials.

Goal V: By 2034, infuse civic learning and democratic engagement with co-curricular diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice campus efforts.

- By 2026, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility signature programs are informed by students' social change interest.
- By 2026, at least two TU signature peer educator programs integrate civic learning and diversity, equity, and inclusion approaches.
- By 2026, develop civic engagement workshops that speak to student groups who experience historic disenfranchisement and/or are not eligible to vote.

The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility will work with relevant collaborators to implement the Action Plan at the urban campus in Towson, just outside Baltimore City, and at Towson University Northeastern (TUNE), TU's rural campus in Harford County. Implementation begins July 1, 2024, and ends when the 2026 Campus Democratic Action Plan goes into effect.

LEADERSHIP

Overview

Towson University's (TU) [2020-30 Strategic Plan](#) "Leadership for the Public Good" names devotion to civic responsibility and community engagement as a core value and encourages faculty and staff to create opportunities that "challenge students to be engaged participants in an inspiring educational journey preparing them for professional success and positive impact as engaged members of their communities."

The [Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility](#) (CESR) leads TU's civic learning and democratic engagement efforts. CESR is a department in the Division of Student Affairs and a member of the Dean of Students Leadership Team. CESR offers many opportunities for TU students, staff, and faculty to participate in civic life and to develop the disposition, skills, and knowledge to be active co-creators of a shared future.

Students, staff, and faculty can also partake in civic learning and democratic engagement through programs hosted by campus partners, including:

- [Democracy Today](#) (College of Liberal Arts)
- [Dialogue@TU](#) (Office of Inclusive Excellence Education & Support)
- [Fair Chance Higher Education Initiative](#) (Office of the Provost)
- [Grantwriting in Valued Environments Project](#) (College of Liberal Arts)
- [Retreat for Social Justice](#) (Office of Inclusive Excellence Education & Support)
- [Tiger Pride Day](#) (Student Government Association)

TU's civic engagement efforts are supported through local and national organizations, including:

- ALL IN Democracy Challenge
- American Democracy Project
- Andrew Goodman Foundation
- Baltimore County Board of Elections
- Baltimore County League of Women Voters
- Campus Compact
- Campus Vote Project
- Imagining America
- Students Learn Students Vote Coalition
- Transform Mid-Atlantic
- NASPA

The resources provided through these organizations have been integral to voter education and engagement efforts across campus. In addition to informational resources, the Andrew Goodman Foundation has provided funds to support student leaders as voter engagement ambassadors, and Campus Compact and Transform-Mid-Atlantic have offered civic fellowships to TU students, allowing them to develop important civic leadership skills.



"I Voted" sticker held in front of Stephens Hall.

TU Votes Coalition

The [TU Votes Coalition](#) is the main vehicle to foster a campus civic ethos defined by the infusion of democratic values into everyday interactions, cultural practices, and structures. The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) coordinates this cross-divisional group of students and staff and guides them in the institutionalization of civic learning and democratic engagement. The TU Votes Coalition promotes the following learning outcomes among students through programs, campaigns, and initiatives:

- Develop an understanding of the importance of active civic participation for the health and wellbeing of a democratic society.
- Recognize one's own capacity to be a civic actor.
- Seek opportunities to be a civic actor in everyday spaces (e.g., student organizations, orientation, workplaces).
- Recognize the importance of effective communication in building community.
- Examine a range of perspectives, including one's own and those of others, to recognize commonalities and engage in productive conversations.

CESR's Coordinator for Civic Engagement, Charis Lawson, convenes the TU Votes Coalition to provide updates, brainstorm, and plan. The Coalition meets biweekly during semesters in which Midterm or Presidential Elections take place. In non-election semesters, the Coalition meets monthly. Members of the Coalition also collaborate on programs outside of these meetings and share important information with their networks. At the end of the academic year, Charis meets with each member individually to gather feedback. Together with CESR's Assistant Director for Civic Engagement and Director, Charis uses the feedback to improve processes.

In the 2023-24 academic year, the Coalition was comprised of:

- BTU – Partnerships for Greater Baltimore - Tess Heron, Engagement and Data Manager

- Center for Student Diversity – Allyson DeMaagd, Coordinator for Sexuality and Gender Diversity
- Fraternity & Sorority Life - Roodinz Vital, Director
- Counseling Center - Emily Wiegand, Outreach Programming Coordinator
- Honors College - Margo Stebbins, Director of Co-Curricular Programs and Constituent Relationships
- Housing & Residence Life – Jake Garner, Assistant Director of Residential Education
- Military & Veterans Center – Rebecca Cossaboom, Assistant Director
- New Student & Family Programs – Katie Murray, Director
- Office of the President – Katie Maloney, Executive Director of Government and Community Relations
- Student Accountability & Restorative Practices – Rica Clements and Bridget Woolery, Coordinators
- Student Activities – Chris Rindosh, Coordinator of Student Organizations
- Student Success Programs – Tammie King-Kelly, Director
- Towson University Northeastern (TUNE) - Allison Frey, Director of Student Services
- Student leaders:
 - Student Government Association - Simi Sanni, Director of Civic Engagement
 - University Residence Government – Gabriella Linsky
 - Andrew Goodman Ambassador - Jayden Johnstone

Members of the Coalition offer unique insights into student interests and help identify opportunities to engage them. Because they interact with students in different settings (e.g., orientation, housing, involvement, mentoring, leadership, conduct), Coalition members direct information in ways that reaches students in established networks across the university.



Two students hold TU Votes and TU Athletes Vote signs during National Voter Registration Day.

Opportunities

While faculty have not been attending regular TU Votes Coalition meetings, they have been great supporters and collaborators on joined programming and in sharing information with their students. They include:

- Joseph Dietrich, Assistant Professor, Political Science
- Matt Durlington, Faculty Director, Community Engagement; Professor, Sociology, Anthropology, & Criminal Justice
- Pallavi Guha, Assistant Professor, Mass Communication
- Alison McCartney, Dean, Honors College; Professor, Political Science
- John McTague, Professor, Political Science
- Sara Oliver, Associate Professor, Political Science

The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) is actively working with faculty to form a community of practice that would provide a space for integrating civic learning across the curriculum. This group would work alongside the TU Votes Coalition to align efforts to foster a civic ethos on campus. The Faculty Academic Center of Excellence at Towson (FACET) would provide meeting spaces and funding for the faculty co-chair.

CESR is also going to expand efforts to recruit student leaders to the TU Votes Coalition. One effort will focus on expanding paid leadership opportunities for students. In addition to the paid Andrew Goodman Ambassador, CESR will hire Voter Education Ambassadors through federal work-study funds. All Ambassadors will serve on the Coalition. A second effort will focus on working with the Student Government Association Director of Civic Engagement to take a leading role within the Coalition. A third effort will involve one-on-one meetings with students from identity-based, cultural, and political organizations to recruit them to the Coalition. Finally, CESR will utilize the NSLVE report on the 2022 midterm election to identify majors with lower voter turnout and recruit students from those majors to improve voter rates.

CESR would also like to increase involvement in the TU Votes Coalition among senior leaders. Katie Maloney, Executive Director of Government and Community Relations, represents the President's Office and has been a wonderful collaborator. CESR is also going to invite leaders from University Marketing & Communications to serve on the Coalition. In addition, CESR is going to identify senior leaders to join as guests, including President Ginsberg and Senior Vice President for Student Affairs & University Life Vernon Hurte, to increase awareness and offer support.

Lastly, while members of national and local voter engagement groups are not actively serving on the TU Votes Coalition, their resources are informing the work of the Coalition. CESR will brainstorm ways to more actively include these groups (e.g., guest visits and presentations).

COMMITMENT

Towson University's (TU) mission statement includes civic engagement as an important component of the student experience:

Towson University fosters intellectual inquiry and critical thinking preparing graduates who will serve as effective, ethical leaders and engaged citizens. Through a foundation in the liberal arts, an emphasis on rigorous academic standards, and the creation of small learning environments, we are committed to providing a collaborative, interdisciplinary and inter-professional atmosphere, excellence in teaching, leadership development, civic engagement, and applied and sponsored research opportunities at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The Student Affairs [Strategic Roadmap \(2022-2030\)](#) identifies building on TU's commitment to civic engagement as a key strategy to enhance students' leadership development and encourages departments in the Division to utilize this strategy to develop programs and initiatives.

TU also developed a [Diversity Strategic Plan](#) that aligns with the institution's civic engagement efforts, and the [TU Engagement Glossary](#) provides civic and community engagement definitions and concepts that are "intended to be applied through anti-racist and justice-centered approaches to address inequities that impact our campus community and the Greater Baltimore region."

In addition, the [Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility](#) strives to foster a justice-centered civic ethos, defined by the infusion of democratic values into everyday interactions, cultural practices, and structures. The department collaborates extensively with faculty, staff, and students to advance this vision through the TU Votes Coalition, the Civic Renewal Initiative, Impact TU, and many other efforts.

While TU does not have campuswide civic engagement learning outcomes, the Core Curriculum includes a [Perspectives](#) category in which students learn about societal and cultural issues and develop different perspectives. Additional courses are offered across the curriculum to engage students in civic learning.

Senior leadership demonstrates TU's commitment to civic engagement in many ways, including:

- President Ginsberg signed the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge [Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation](#).
- President Ginsberg annually nominates TU students for the [Transform Mid-Atlantic Civic Fellowship](#) and the [Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellowship](#).
- The [South Campus Pavilion](#) serves as a polling location and is also the site of a mail-in ballot drop box.
- The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities is headquartered at TU.
- TU dedicates funds to pay annual membership fees to higher education associations that lead civic and community engagement efforts, including the American Democracy

Project, Campus Compact, Imagining America, Place-Based Justice Network, and Transform Mid-Atlantic.

- TU has been the host of multiple civic engagement summits. Senior leadership provided remarks at all of these programs. In the 2023-24 academic year, they included:
 - Changemakers Retreat, Campus Compact
 - Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion – Civic and Community Engagement Institute, Transform Mid-Atlantic
 - Regional Civic Engagement Summit, Transform Mid-Atlantic
 - Symposium on Civic Education and Civic Engagement, University System of Maryland

Guided by advice from TU’s Provost and Vice Presidents, a multi-divisional effort is underway to foster a justice-centered civic and community engagement ecosystem. Staff from the [Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility](#), the [Office of Partnerships & Outreach/BTU](#), and the [Office of Inclusive Excellence Education & Support](#) lead this effort. They have been charged with:

- coordinating civic and community engagement across TU through the BTU-Engagement Council,
- establishing curricular and co-curricular pathways to civic and community engagement,
- expanding justice-centered community engagement training institutionally,
- creating an equity-focused support and reward system for community-engaged faculty,
- streamlining assessment and evaluation of curricular and co-curricular civic and community engagement opportunities, and
- increasing resources and support for students, faculty, and staff involved in community and civic engagement work.



A student writes an answer to the question “Why is free speech important to you?” on the Freedom Square community chalkboard.

Under the leadership of the Division of Student Affairs and the Office of Inclusion & Institutional Equity, the Tiger Advocacy Advisory Team (TAAT) is charged with educating and supporting students on activism on and off campus, coordinating the appropriate level of response for different events, and serving as the primary liaisons between administrators, the TU Police Department, and students. The team connects with event organizers, protesters and counter-protesters, identifies trusted faculty and staff to aid in facilitating conversations and provides support for event logistics.

TAAT also provides “just-in-time” guidance in the event of spontaneous demonstrations, including but not limited to referring event organizers, protesters and counter-protesters to a [campus webpage on activism](#), advising students on campus policies and local, state and federal laws, and providing printed resources with emergency contact information for students in crisis.

Current members of the Tiger Advocacy Advisory Team include:

- Alison Peer, Associate Dean of Students, Student Affairs
- Anthony Skevakis, Dean of Students and Associate Vice President, Student Affairs
- Ashley Venneman, Assistant Director, Office of Events & Conference Services
- Brian Jara, Director, Inclusive Excellence Education & Support
- Carolyn Harris, Director, Office of Student Activities
- Charles J. Herring, Director of Public Safety and Chief of TU Police
- Cynthia Cooper, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
- Heather Polonsky, Assistant Director, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility
- Jordan Colquitt, President, Student Government Association
- Katie Maloney, Executive Director of Government & Community Relations, President’s Office
- Keeba Gardner, Director for Outreach, Media and Prevention, Counseling Center
- Kelly Hoover, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, Housing & Residence Life
- Matt Palmer, Director, Media Relations & News, Communications & Media Relations
- Matthew Lenno, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs in Campus Life
- Matthew Reinhart, Associate General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel
- Melanie Perrault, Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Melinda Reznik, Director, Housing & Residence Life
- Molly Herman, Director, Counseling Center
- Naila Neely, Student-Athlete Advisory Committee Representative
- Patricia Bradley, Vice President for Inclusion & Institutional Equity
- Robert Reed, Lieutenant, Administrative & Technical Services Bureau
- Romy Hübler, Director, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility
- Tammie King Kelly, Director, Student Success Programs
- Terry Porter, Associate Athletic Director, Compliance Services
- Scott Beyer, Director, Events & Conference Services
- Sean Welsh, Vice President, University Marketing and Communications
- Tyler Fultz, Assistant Director, Housing & Residence Life
- Vernon Hurte, Senior Vice President, Student Affairs & University Life

In addition, University Marketing & Communications frequently features stories that highlight TU's civic engagement efforts. These stories are shared with the entire campus through a daily newsletter and reach off-campus audiences as well. Examples include:

- A [story](#) and a [video](#) about Tiger Pride Day, an annual day of student advocacy during the Maryland General Assembly.
- A [story](#) about TU's efforts to protect free expression.
- A [story](#) about Impact TU, an annual day of engagement on campus and in local communities.

The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility and University Marketing & Communications also regularly coordinate campus-wide messages from senior leadership to encourage students to become educated voters and active participants in their local communities.

TU has high levels of voter registration. According to the [2022 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement \(NSLVE\) report](#), more than 85% of TU students were registered to vote in the 2020 Presidential Election. In addition, TU has been nationally recognized for its civic engagement efforts:

- The Carnegie Foundation awarded TU the [Elective Classification for Community Engagement](#).
- NASPA and the Campus Vote Project named TU a [Voter Friendly Campus](#).
- The [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#) awarded TU with the following:
 - Highly Established Action Plan
 - Campus Champion Award for Best Action Plan
 - New Most Engaged Campuses for College Student Voting Recognition
 - Best in Class for a 4-year Public Institution



ALL In seals including Gold Campus for 2018 election, Gold Campus for 2020 election, Presidential Commitment, and Highly Established Action Plan 2022 received by TU.

Efforts at TU are strengthened through leadership and support from the University System of Maryland (USM). USM is comprised of twelve institutions, including TU, and three regional centers. The System has been a [long-time supporter](#) of civic engagement. In May 2024, Chancellor Perman shared a message to USM school that stated:

In our strategic plan, Vision 2030, we commit to integrating civic education throughout our general education curricula. Rather than requiring a single civics course for all students, this approach calls on our universities to incorporate elements of civic learning across all majors and degree programs, challenging students to become thoughtful consumers of news, to recognize and reject manipulation and misinformation, and to apply their fields of study to solve the very real crises we face—crises of sustainability.

USM initially convened civic engagement working groups that have morphed into a Civic Engagement and Community Engagement (CECE) Council to advance civic education, democracy engagement, community engagement, and service-learning across the system. The CECE Council is responsible for leading and consolidating USM's commitment to implementing the Regents' recommendations in the Regent's Task Force on Civic Education and Civic Engagement (2018) and Action Plan developed at the AACU Institute for Engaged and Integrative Learning (2023).

The CECE Council specifically supports and promotes the work of individual institutions' progress toward the Regents recommendations:

- Foster an ethos of civic engagement and participation across all parts of all institutions and throughout the educational culture of USM.
- Identify civic literacy as an expectation for all students.
- Support and share best practices and explore how institutions can collaborate across the System.
- Support institutions to develop and implement their Civic Education and Community Engagement implementation plans, which would set forth institution specific goals to strengthen institutional commitment to civic learning and community engagement, including current and future resources as needed.
- Support institutions to apply for and maintain their Carnegie designation.

The CECE Council is led by Nancy Shapiro, USM Associate Vice Chancellor for Education, and includes two voting members from each USM institution. TU's representatives are Romy Hübler, Director, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility and Matt Durlington, Faculty Director, Community Engagement and Professor, Sociology, Anthropology, & Criminal Justice.

In November 2023, the CECE Council held its [Symposium on Civic Education and Civic Engagement](#) at TU. The daylong Symposium included representatives from USM institutions as well as U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller, and Secretary Paul Monteiro from the Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation.

In the 2023-24 academic year, USM has also made available almost \$40,000 of grants to each USM institution to support their civic and community engagement work.

TU was awarded the following USM grants:

- The Institutional Documentation of Civic Learning Grant supports TU in assessing and evaluating curricular and co-curricular civic engagement courses and projects (\$9,000).
- The Integrating Civic Learning into the Curriculum Grant supports TU in developing a community engagement training program for students, staff, and faculty (\$19,000).
- The Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement Grant supports TU in preparing for the reclassification of a community-engaged campus (\$8,900).
- The Constitution Day Mini Grant supports the Office of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility in hosting a Constitution Day program (\$500).



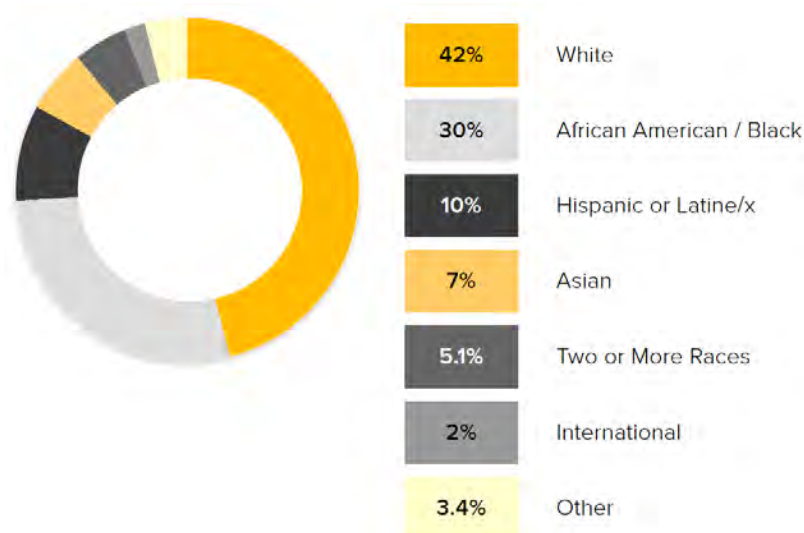
A Political Science professor engages students in a classroom for a Constitution Day program.

LANDSCAPE

Demographic Information

Towson University (TU) is a public institution just outside of Baltimore, Maryland. It enrolls nearly 20,000 undergraduate and graduate students. More than half of TU's undergraduate students are from underserved racial and ethnic groups. TU's student body is 42 % white, 30% African American/Black, 10% Hispanic or Latine, 7% Asian, 5.1% two or more races, 2% international, 3.4% other.

For legal reasons, TU does not provide NSLVE with information about students' race. However, national NSLVE data shows that white students vote at higher rates than minoritized students. TU's student population is 58% non-white, requiring TU to put more emphasis on breaking down popular perceptions that negatively impact turnout among minoritized students.



Circle chart depicting TU demographics break down.

Learning Outcomes

Civic learning and democratic engagement are important components of TU's fabric. While no campus-wide learning outcomes exist, the [2020-30 Strategic Plan](#), the Student Affairs [Strategic Roadmap \(2022-2030\)](#), and the [Diversity Strategic Plan](#) illustrate the importance of civic engagement at TU.

In addition, the [Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility](#) developed the following learning outcomes for its programs:

Civic Agency

1. Develops an understanding of the importance of active civic participation for the health and wellbeing of a democratic society.
2. Recognizes one's own capacity to be a civic actor.
3. Seeks opportunities to be a civic actor in everyday spaces (e.g., student organizations, residence halls, workplaces).

Intercultural Knowledge

1. Articulates the impact of one's experiences on one's cultural expectations and biases.
2. Understands significant components (e.g., values, beliefs, customs, politics, history) that are valued by individuals of a distinct culture.
3. Demonstrates evidence of adjustment in own attitudes and beliefs because of working within and learning from diversity of communities and cultures.

Systems Knowledge

1. Understands the intersectionality of systems of oppression, privilege, and power.
2. Articulates the influence of systems of oppression, privilege, and power on one's identities and sociopolitical perspectives.
3. Actively works to change systems of oppression, privilege, and power.

Civic Communication

1. Recognizes the importance of effective communication in building community (e.g., storytelling, one-on-one meetings, affirmative statements, consensus-building).
2. Examine a range of perspectives, including one's own and those of others, to recognize commonalities and engage in productive conversations.
3. Demonstrates evidence of building community across difference through effective communication practices.

Civic Action

1. Describes how their active participation in civic life benefits society.
2. Develops a logical, consistent action plan informed by potential consequences of proposed actions.
3. Pursues collective and sustained actions to foster the health and wellbeing of a democratic society.

Civic Professionalism

1. Connects one's academic study to one's participation in civic life.
2. Develops skills, knowledge, and practices to navigate complex structures to affect institutional culture change.
3. Recognizes their capacity to adapt and apply skills, knowledge, and practices gained from active participation in civic life to their future career.

Assessment

TU utilizes large-scale surveys to measure political climate and democratic engagement on campus. TU participates annually in the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE), which provides insights on student engagement with a focus on first-year students and seniors.

The 2023 NSSE survey conducted at TU found that:

- 26% of first-year students and 40% of seniors spend more than 1 hour doing community service or volunteer work in a typical week, compared to 23% of first-year students and 28% of seniors nationally.
- 72% of first-year students and 72% of seniors understand people of other backgrounds quite a bit or very much, compared to 62% of first-year students and 65% of seniors nationally.
- 54% of first-year students and 60% of seniors consider themselves informed and active citizens quite a bit or very much, compared to 54% of first-year students and 58% of seniors nationally.

In addition, 43% of first-year students and 41% of seniors said that TU emphasizes the attendance of events that address important social or political issues quite a bit or very much, compared to 44% of first-year students and 39% of seniors nationally.

Comparing TU data with national data illustrates that TU students are either at or above national averages, which is particularly apparent in weekly volunteerism among seniors and students' ability to understand people from different backgrounds.

In Spring 2025, TU is planning to distribute the NSSE [topical civic engagement module](#) to students.

The [Office of Inclusion & Institutional Equity](#) (OIIE) administers a Campus Climate Survey, which tracks TU's progress and measures the impact of the original action items in the [Diversity Strategic Plan](#). In Fall 2023, both students and employees completed the survey. The university contracted with [Campus Climate Surveys, LLC](#) to administer both surveys. The survey includes questions about political climate and civic engagement.

OIIE is currently analyzing the results.

The [Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility](#) administers the Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement survey, which is coordinated through [Campus Compact](#) and the [Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford University](#). The survey asks students about their experience with six pathways.

In Spring 2024, 172 students participated. The survey shows students' interest in (a lot and some) and experience with (a lot and some) each pathway:

- Direct Service: 70% interest, 61% experience
- Community Engaged Learning & Research: 61% interest, 46% experience
- Community Organizing & Activism: 58% interest, 48% experience
- Philanthropy: 44% interest, 47% experience
- Social Entrepreneurship & Corporate Social Responsibility: 51% interest, 30% experience
- Policy & Governance: 48% interest, 23% experience

A ten-percentage point gap or bigger exists between interest and experience in these pathways:

- Policy & Governance (25%)
- Social Entrepreneurship & Corporate Social Responsibility (19%)
- Community Engaged Learning & Research (15%)
- Community Organizing & Activism (10%)

The Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement survey also shines a light on topic areas that students are most interested in:

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (23%)
- Education and youth development (20%)
- General (18%)
- Health (13%)
- Human services (13%)
- Environmental sustainability (12%)

National Pathways of Public Service and Civic Engagement survey data will become available in August 2024.

TU also participates in the [National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement](#) (NSLVE), a signature initiative of the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education at Tufts University. TU renewed participation in NSLVE in 2023. TU's 2020 Presidential Election NSLVE report showed:

- 86.4% of TU students were registered to vote, compared to 83% nationally.
- 71.9% of eligible TU students voted, compared to 66% nationally.
- 30% of TU students voted early.
- 46% of TU students voted absentee.
- 16% of TU students voted in person on Election Day.

- 76% of TU graduate students and 70% of TU undergraduate students voted, compared to 62% nationally for both graduate and undergraduate students.
- Voter turnout increased across almost all age groups, and most significantly among students 18-21, reaching 71%. This age range had the *lowest voting rate* in 2016, but in 2020 surpassed students 25-29 who had 68%. TU students in the 30+ age group experienced a decrease in voter turnout (78% in 2020 compared to 86% in 2016). Nationally, 64% of students 18-21, 57% of students 25-29, and 64% of students 30+ voted.
- 68% of first-year and second-year students voted compared to 71% of upper-level students. Nationally, 59% of first-year students, 63% of second-year students, 65% of third-year students, and 67% of fourth-year students voted.
- Among fields of study with at least 200 enrolled majors, Computer & Information Sciences had the lowest voter turnout (63%), and History had the highest voter turnout (80%). The national average for Technical Fields (including Computer & Information Sciences) was 56% and the national average for Social Sciences and History was 68%.

Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility staff assess their programs regularly to learn how they meet their departmental learning outcomes. Assessment includes pre- and post-surveys and reflections. Staff utilize their assessment data to make improvements to their programs.



Three students hold “I vote early” signs and share voter resources.

Curricular and Co-Curricular Civic Engagement

Civic learning and democratic engagement are well represented across TU.

The [Perspectives](#) category in the Towson University Core Curriculum includes courses in Metropolitan Perspectives, the United States as a Nation, Global Perspectives, Diversity and Difference, and Ethical Issues and Perspectives. The learning outcomes in this category are focused on societal and cultural issues and the development of different perspectives. The Office of Assessment captures data related to these learning outcomes.

Beyond the Core Curriculum, civic learning and democratic engagement features in the curriculum of several academic units:

The College of Liberal Arts, in both its undergraduate and graduate programs, seeks to convey knowledge and to sharpen the tools of thought to aid students in constructing their personal, professional, and civic lives.

The Department of Electronic Media & Film encourages students to create collaborative and interdisciplinary partnerships; discover real-world experiences through internships and service-learning opportunities; explore artistic, social and cultural diversity through civic engagement; and grow as enterprising and self-directed individuals who can practice creative entrepreneurship.

The Department of Family Studies & Community Development emphasizes civic engagement through service-learning and internships in the community.

The Department of Political Science promotes understanding of the nature of political relationships. In addition to its academic curriculum, the department offers opportunities providing a broad range of related experiences. Classes travel to Annapolis and Washington, D.C., to observe first-hand the political workings of government. Political Science majors are given the opportunity to edit the Towson Journal of International Affairs, one of the few undergraduate academic journals in the United States.

Both the History-Secondary Education and Social Sciences with Secondary Education Track majors follow the National Standards for the Preparation of Social Studies Teachers. The following standards align with civic learning and democratic engagement:

- Standard 2: Application of Content Through Planning Candidates plan learning sequences that leverage social studies knowledge and literacies, technology, and theory and research to support the civic competence of learners.
- Standard 3: Design and Implementation of Instruction and Assessment Candidates design and implement instruction and authentic assessments, informed by data literacy and learner self-assessment, that promote civic competence.
- Standard 4: Social Studies Learners and Learning Candidates use knowledge of learners to plan and implement relevant and responsive pedagogy, create collaborative and interdisciplinary learning environments, and prepare learners to be informed advocates for an inclusive and equitable society.
- Standard 5: Professional Responsibility and Informed Action Candidates reflect and expand upon their social studies knowledge, inquiry skills, and civic dispositions to advance social justice and promote human rights through informed action in schools and/or communities.

Examples of courses with a civic learning and democratic engagement component include:

- POSC 101 - Introduction to Political Science:

- Undergraduate level
 - Political Science Department
 - Professor Anneliese M. Johnson
 - The origins of modern governments. The nature of constitutions and constitutionalism. A definition and interpretation of politics.
- POSC 103 - American National Government:
 - Undergraduate level
 - Political Science Department
 - Professors Anneliese M. Johnson, Sarah M. Oliver, and Joseph Dietrich
 - Structure and functions of the government of the United States and the problems involved in the extension of the scope of democratic government in our contemporary life. Core: The United States as a Nation.
- POSC 305 - Urban Government and Politics:
 - Undergraduate level
 - Political Science Department
 - Professors Aminata A. Sillah and John T. Bullock
 - The political history of American cities from the 18th century through the recent reform movement. City charters, home rule, types of executives, political machines, the metropolitan area. Prerequisite: POSC 103. Core: Metropolitan Perspectives.
- Special Topics in POSC | POSC 470 - Activism and Global Politics:
 - Undergraduate level
 - Political Science Department
 - Professor Molly A. Ruhlman
 - An examination of current topics in political science. The content of the course will depend upon mutual faculty and student interest. May be repeated for a maximum of 9 units provided a different topic is covered. Prerequisite: Any 100-level POSC course or consent of instructor.
- COMM 470 - Topics in Public Discourse and Advocacy (3)
 - Undergraduate Level
 - Communications Studies Department
 - Professor Blake Abbott
 - In-depth study of a selected area in public discourse and advocacy dependent on student and faculty interest. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 units provided a different topic is covered. Prerequisite: COMM 201 [COMM 101].
- CRMJ 254 - Introduction to Criminal Justice:
 - Undergraduate Level
 - Criminal Justice Department
 - Professors Miriam D. Sealock, Laura R. Hahn, Walter Jackson
 - The history, the present structure, the functions, and the contemporary problems of the police, prosecution, courts, corrections system, probation and parole. A

brief introduction to law as an element of social control will be given. Core: The United States as a Nation.

- CRMJ 337 - Controversies in Criminal Justice:
 - Undergraduate Level
 - Criminal Justice Department
 - Professor Elizabeth M. Hilliard
 - Contemporary issues and controversies in criminal justice philosophy, policy, and practice from the counting and reporting of crime to the rights of citizens, the dilemmas of victims, and the punishment of the perpetrator; implications of criminal justice policy upon the community. Prerequisite: CRMJ 254.

- EDUC 203 - Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Society:
 - Undergraduate level
 - Education Department
 - Professors Debra M. Seeberger, David R. Wizer, Hannah Cawley, Tracey L. Durant, Tracy E. Miller, Cara Jeanne, Eric Whitehair, Kerica M. Henlon, and Walter Gill
 - Multicultural influences on education, processing self-awareness and awareness of others while exploring approaches to advocacy and social action with special attention to educational contexts. Includes field experience. Core: Diversity & Difference.

- ENGL 401 - Grant and Advocacy Writing
 - Undergraduate level
 - English Department
 - Professor Carrie Grant
 - History, theory, and practice of writing in public, non-profit, democratic, and humanitarian spaces. May include the study of rhetoric, writing, and communication as it applies to service-learning, community engagement, community organizing, grants, fundraising, charity drives, advocacy, social movements, e-newsletters, social media, public service announcements, and public relations. Prerequisite: Two ENGL courses.

- ENVS 603 - Environmental Law and Regulations:
 - Graduate Level
 - Environmental Science Department
 - Professor Johns W. Hopkins Jr
 - Operation of the American legal system as it functions to control and remediate environmental problems; emphasis on the law and legal processes which govern environmental disputes; function of legal institutions in these disputes; role of regulations in environmental protection. Prerequisite: Admission into the graduate program in Environmental Science or consent of the instructor.

- FMST 387 - Community Services for Families:
 - Undergraduate level

- Family and Human Services Department
 - Professor Emily G. Margolis
 - Application of conceptual knowledge within community support and service programs, including needs assessment, program planning, and direct or indirect service to communities. Requires 30-35 hours of service learning outside of class time. Prerequisites: FMST 101; FMST 250; PSYC 101; SOCI 101.
- WMST 345 - Women, Environment, and Health:
 - Undergraduate
 - Women and Gender Studies Department
 - Professor Esther Wangari
 - Relationships between economic development, health, and the environment from a global perspective with a focus on women's roles in environmental management; how women's activism affects social and public policy agendas.



Five panelists and a facilitator are on stage while attendees listen during TU Community Conversation: After the Elections.

TU is also committed to civic learning and democratic engagement outside of the classroom.

The [Student Affairs Strategic Roadmap](#) names civic engagement as a strategy to enhance student leadership. Each department in the division completes an end-of-year report that includes assessment data that illustrates their contributions to the strategic priorities. This data is summarized in an annual [impact report](#).

The [Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility](#) (CESR) leads civic engagement efforts within the Division of Student Affairs and beyond. The department's mission is to create a thriving civic culture in which every member of the TU community has the disposition, skills and knowledge to be an active co-creator of a shared future. Students who engage in CESR programming and initiatives are developing their knowledge and skills related to civic agency, intercultural knowledge, systems knowledge, civic communication, civic action, and civic professionalism. The learning goals are measured at the end of signature programs and throughout yearlong programs. Measurements include surveys, essays, and reflections.

CESR is responsible for voter engagement initiatives on campus, which includes:

- Sharing resources
- Registering students to vote
- Hosting programs (e.g., National Voter Registration Day, Party to the Polls, Constitution Day Talks, Debate Watch Parties, Election Night Watch Parties)
- Coordinating the TU Votes Coalition (see the Leadership Section for a full description and membership information)
- Selecting and working with [Andrew Goodman Puffin Democracy Fellows](#)

To expand civic learning and democratic engagement beyond voter engagement, CESR coordinates several signature civic learning programs:

- The **Civic Transformation Living Learning Community (LLC)** fosters meaningful connections among TU students, staff and faculty who are passionate about actively co-creating just and equitable communities. The LLC explores social justice issues through the lens of public policy, civic engagement and community-based learning. Residents in this LLC learn about the intersection of community engagement, civic engagement, equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice. Students also identify pathways for lifelong active participation in civic life (e.g., neighborhoods, workplaces, organizations). *The LLC is a collaboration with the [Department of Political Science](#) and [Housing & Residence Life](#).*
- **Civic Renewal Initiative**, which utilizes restorative practices and dialogue to foster democratic engagement. The Initiative offers opportunities for the TU community to engage in civil conversations about current local, national, and global issues. Programs include TU Community Conversations, TU Collective Reflections, and TU Resource Shares.
- The **Civic Renewal Fellowship** is a one-year cohort-based training program that teaches restorative practices and dialogue to prepare fellows to facilitate conversations about current events effectively. *This fellowship as well as the Civic Renewal Initiative are coordinated in partnership with the Office of Student Accountability & Restorative Practices, the Office of the Dean of Students, and the Office of Inclusive Excellence Education & Support.*
- The **Social Action Collaboratory** is a yearlong program in which students cultivate individual and collective capacities to foster transformative social change. Each cohort focuses on a different social justice topic. Participants engage in capacity-building workshops, peer reflections, and site visits with local social justice-oriented community groups.
- **Impact TU** provides an opportunity for 500 TU students to engage with community partners who are committed to fostering sustainable communities. Students learn about local efforts toward developing sustainable communities and then engage in hands-on

projects focused on environmental sustainability, economic security, social well-being, and civic engagement. Project sites are on campus and in the Towson-Baltimore area.

The following are examples of co-curricular civic learning programs hosted by campus partners across multiple divisions:

- **Democracy Today** provides opportunities for cross-disciplinary and cross-departmental collaboration to address overarching questions: What makes a 21st century society democratic? How can democracy be sustained in the United States? What role and responsibility do higher education and the liberal arts have in sustaining a democratic society? *The program is coordinated by the College of Liberal Arts.*
- **Dialogue@TU** offers opportunities for TU staff and faculty to develop a perspective that prioritizes TU's increasingly diverse campus to find more opportunities to learn about each other, our identities, our experiences, and our views. It also provides opportunities to develop the skills needed to practice deep listening, suspend judgement, and navigate challenging moments by turning to curiosity and open questions. *The program is coordinated by the Office of Inclusive Excellence Education & Support and the Office of the Provost.*
- The **Retreat for Social Justice** gives students an opportunity to explore their cultural identities and interact with people from diverse backgrounds while developing skills for interrupting prejudice, advocating for social justice and inclusion, and helping to build the cultural capacity on campus. *The program is organized by the Office of Inclusive Excellence Education & Support and features workshops facilitated by the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.*
- **Restorative Practices Training** introduces participants to ideas of shared power and responsibility, challenging all members of a community to do things with others rather than to them or for them. It provides participants with an understanding of the theories and concepts that frame restorative work, introduces restorative tools and provides opportunities to apply them. *The trainings are coordinated through the Restorative Practices Steering Committee, which is comprised of staff and faculty representing Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.*
- The **Social Justice Workshop Series** introduces fraternity and sorority leaders to concepts of oppression and allyship and provides them with an opportunity to identify how their chapters can create an inclusive community. *The series is organized by the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life.*
- **Tiger Pride Day** is an annual day of legislative advocacy during the Maryland General Assembly in Annapolis in which 100 students, staff, and faculty participate. *The program is organized by the Student Government Association with support from Student Activities, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, Alumni Relations, the Office of the President, Division of University Marketing & Communications, Towson University*

Northeastern, Department of Communications Studies, and the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life.

Additionally, TU staff and faculty are coordinating several campus-wide civic learning and democratic engagement efforts to support student success and active participating in civic life:

- **High Impact Practices Community of Practice:** A university-wide effort to increase high-impact programs and initiatives designed to support student retention and graduation. One of the pillars focuses on community engagement.
- **TU Community of Belonging:** Intentional efforts to foster an inclusive, equitable, and collaborative community in which its members put each other’s humanity at the forefront, develop shared accountability, communicate respectfully across differences, and engage in conflict resolution collectively. This group coordinates dialogue and restorative practices work at TU to provide training and opportunities for practice and reflection.
- **Civic and Community Engagement Ecosystem:** A cross-divisional effort to advance opportunities for student civic learning, which includes coordinating civic and community engagement across TU, establishing curricular and co-curricular pathways, expanding justice-centered engagement training institutionally, creating an equity-focused support and reward system, streamlining assessment and evaluation, and increasing resources and support.
- **Civic Fellows Nominations:** Committees comprised of TU students, staff, and faculty coordinate the nomination process for the [Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellow](#), [Transform Mid-Atlantic Civic Fellow](#), and University System of Maryland Langenberg Legacy Fellows.



Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility staff laugh together at Party to the Polls.

Barriers

TU does not have a centralized unit to coordinate the university's civic and community engagement work. The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR), the principal department organizing civic engagement at TU, is housed in the Division of Student Affairs. Their efforts have been most successful in the co-curricular space. While CESR staff have been facilitating successful partnerships with faculty members from several departments, infusing civic engagement across the academic curriculum has been challenging without a centralized approach.

TU's civic learning and democratic engagement efforts are stifled by limited resources. The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) has a fulltime staff of five and carries responsibility for providing co-curricular civic and community engagement programming and leadership opportunities to TU's 20,000 students. CESR also experienced a \$27,300 budget cut in FY21 due to COVID-19 cuts across the university. It became a base (permanent) cut in FY22. In FY23, funding for a full-time staff position was also cut. The loss of funding has been magnified due to increased costs of materials, services, and labor. In addition, CESR's budget is derived from student fees. TU has seen a drop in enrollment, resulting in even fewer funds to support civic learning and democratic engagement.

TU experienced changes in key positions, which paused programs, impacted partnerships, and redirected priorities. Between 2020 – 2022, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) underwent a complete staff turnover, leading to prolonged vacancies, including a multiple-year vacancy of the Director position. In February 2023, TU's President left her role, which was not filled until October 2023.

While TU does not face major external barriers, popular perceptions about civic life and voter participation can impact TU students' interest and participation in civic learning and democratic engagement efforts. According to TU's NSLVE report, TU students in STEM fields vote at lower rates. For legal reasons, TU does not provide NSLVE with information about students' race. However, national NSLVE data shows that white students vote at higher rates than minoritized students. TU's student population is 58% non-white, requiring TU to put more emphasis on breaking down popular perceptions that negatively impact turnout among minoritized students. In addition, TU has not deeply engaged immigrant and international students. There is a need to frame civic engagement as a person's capability to actively shape their community to provide students who are newcomers to the United States and/or are not eligible to vote a pathway to contribute meaningfully.

Success Factors

TU is committed to fostering a welcoming community where ideas are shared freely, respect for each other is promoted, and students, faculty, and staff feel valued and heard. The Tiger Advocacy Advisory Team (TAAT) is charged with educating and supporting students on

activism on and off campus, coordinating the appropriate level of response for different events, and serving as the primary liaison between administrators, the TU Police Department, and students. The team connects with event organizers, protesters and counter-protesters, identifies trusted faculty and staff to aid in facilitating conversations and provides support for event logistics. TAAT's educational team has been meeting to develop a campus communications plan, design programs, and identify opportunities for workshops to support the TU community in processing current events, including elections, and providing resources for active participation in civic life.

While the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) experienced a recent full staff turnover, the new team was charged with reimagining their department. In the 2022-23 academic year, CESR underwent a strategic planning process, which resulted in developing learning objectives, creating immersive high-impact practice programs, and working with the Office of Partnerships & Outreach and the Office of Inclusive Excellence Education & Support to lay the groundwork for a justice-centered civic and community engagement ecosystem. CESR is also designing pathways to civic learning, so that students can participate in programs from admission to graduation, ensuring multiple entry points and intentional scaffolding of learning. While more resources are needed, an ecosystem and pathways approach coupled with high-impact practice programming has the potential to engage students in meaningful and lasting ways.

Guided by the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR), the [TU Votes Coalition](#) is the main vehicle to foster a campus civic ethos defined by the infusion of democratic values into everyday interactions, cultural practices, and structures. This cross-divisional group of students and staff promotes civic participation among students through programs, campaigns, and initiatives. The group consists of representatives from over a dozen departments and organizations, which have networks that reach many corners of the TU campus.

The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility coordinates TU's participation in national and regional civic and community engagement organizations. They include ALL IN Democracy Challenge, American Democracy Project, Andrew Goodman Foundation, Baltimore County Board of Elections, Baltimore County League of Women Voters, Campus Compact, Campus Vote Project, Imagining America, Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, Transform Mid-Atlantic, and NASPA. These organizations have been invaluable in providing voter engagement and civic engagement information and resources that inform civic learning and democratic engagement work at TU.

TurboVote is TU's voter registration portal. TurboVote provides students with the information they need to vote with confidence. Through the portal, students can get election ready by registering to vote, checking their registration, signing up for election reminders, changing their address, making a voting plan, changing their voting method, finding their polling location, contacting their election office, and more. TurboVote provides unique engagement tools like personalized links and QR codes to encourage voter registration drives and efforts in support of creating a culture of voting on campus. TurboVote is easily accessible to students as one of the

main menu tiles they can select after logging into their TU account. The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility also regularly shares TurboVote weblinks and QR codes with the student body via tabling flyers, emails, social media posts, and newsletter stories.

TU is proud to serve as a polling location for Baltimore County and to provide access to a mail-in ballot drop box for State of Maryland voters at the [South Campus Pavilion](#). The polling location requires a 15-minute walk one-way from the University Union, which can provide accessibility and visibility challenges for students. To counteract accessibility challenges, TU promotes early voting and mail-in voting, so students do not have to navigate voting and attending classes on the same day. To help with visibility challenges, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility hosts Party to the Polls in the University Union on the first day of early voting. As part of the program, students receive maps that inform them about the polling location and provide information about how to access it on foot, via car, and by bus.

Additional Resource Needs

The University System of Maryland (USM) Vision 2030 calls on USM schools to make civic literacy an expectation for each student and to integrate civic education throughout their institutions. A more centralized and integrated approach is necessary at TU to achieve this goal. While the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility provides co-curricular opportunities for civic learning, it is housed in the Division of Student Affairs and is organizationally not positioned to lead the development of institutional learning outcomes and their assessment, curricular integration, and faculty professional development.

In addition, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) lacks resources to fully integrate co-curricular civic and community engagement programming and leadership at a 20,000-student campus. Staff are at capacity, making it challenging to fill gaps that persist in educating students. Additional staff members and a larger budget would allow the department to create intentional civic engagement pathways to guide students from admission to graduation.



A person uses the ballot drop box on TU's campus.

GOALS

TU envisions to have a campus-wide civic ethos defined by the infusion of democratic values into everyday interactions, cultural practices, and structures.

Students who graduate from TU will have achieved the following learning outcomes:

Civic Agency

1. Develops an understanding of the importance of active civic participation for the health and wellbeing of a democratic society.
2. Recognizes one's own capacity to be a civic actor.
3. Seeks opportunities to be a civic actor in everyday spaces (e.g., student organizations, residence halls, workplaces).

Intercultural Knowledge

1. Articulates the impact of one's experiences on one's cultural expectations and biases.
2. Understands significant components (e.g., values, beliefs, customs, politics, history) that are valued by individuals of a distinct culture.
3. Demonstrates evidence of adjustment in own attitudes and beliefs because of working within and learning from diversity of communities and cultures.

Systems Knowledge

1. Understands the intersectionality of systems of oppression, privilege, and power.
2. Articulates the influence of systems of oppression, privilege, and power on one's identities and sociopolitical perspectives.
3. Actively works to change systems of oppression, privilege, and power.

Civic Communication

1. Recognizes the importance of effective communication in building community (e.g., storytelling, one-on-one meetings, affirmative statements, consensus-building).
2. Examine a range of perspectives, including one's own and those of others, to recognize commonalities and engage in productive conversations.
3. Demonstrates evidence of building community across difference through effective communication practices.

Civic Action

1. Describes how their active participation in civic life benefits society.

2. Develops a logical, consistent action plan informed by potential consequences of proposed actions.
3. Pursues collective and sustained actions to foster the health and wellbeing of a democratic society.

Civic Professionalism

1. Connects one's academic study to one's participation in civic life.
2. Develops skills, knowledge, and practices to navigate complex structures to affect institutional culture change.
3. Recognizes their capacity to adapt and apply skills, knowledge, and practices gained from active participation in civic life to their future career.

To work toward this vision and these learning outcomes over the next ten years, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) facilitated a collaborative process to develop goals and identify tactics. The goals are informed by assessing the current commitment to and landscape of civic learning and democratic engagement efforts at TU (as described in the Leadership, Commitment, and Landscape sections). They are also informed by TU's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, and build on findings from political climate and democratic engagement assessments on campus (as described in the Commitment and Landscape sections).

The short-term goals are meant to be achieved by 2026. They identify the first steps that need to be taken to achieve the long-term goals. As part of the 2026 Action Plan, the CESR team in collaboration with campus partners will assess progress and identify the next set of short-term goals.

The following campus partners were involved in developing the long-term goals, short-term goals, and tactics:

- Members of the TU Votes Coalition
- Alison McCartney, Dean, Honors College
- Anthony Skevakis, Dean of Students; Associate Vice President, Student Affairs
- Brian Jara, Director, Inclusive Excellence Education & Support
- Danielle Woody, Director, Student Accountability & Restorative Practices; Assistant Dean of Students, Student Affairs
- John McTague, Professor, Department of Political Science
- Joe Dietrich, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science
- Katie Murray, Director, New Student & Family Programs
- Kelly Hoover, Assistant Vice President for Housing and Residence Life, Student Affairs
- Matt Durlington, Professor, Sociology, Anthropology & Criminal Justice; Faculty Director, Community Engagement
- Vernon Hurte, Senior Vice President, Student Affairs & University Life

Goal I: By 2034, infuse civic learning and democratic engagement into the first-year experience.

- By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into New Student Orientation materials and programs.
- By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into Housing & Residence Life processes and programs.
- By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into First-Year Experience Academic Advising.

Goal II: By 2034, infuse civic learning and democratic engagement into the general education curriculum.

- By 2026, develop a networked civic learning and democratic engagement community among faculty.
- By 2026, create a process to identify a student representative from each academic college to be a liaison between students in their college and the TU Votes Coalition.
- By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement in 10% of courses.

Goal III: By 2034, increase student voter registration rates to 95% and student voter turnout rates to 80%.

- By 2026, student voting rates at the institution will increase to 90% and voter turnout rates to 50%.

Goal IV: By 2034, institutionalize communication practices that convey the importance of voting to students from all backgrounds.

- By 2026, solidify the practice of senior leadership encouraging voter registration and turnout in a nonpartisan, culturally sensitive, and accurate manner.
- By 2026, increase the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility budget by \$5,000 to fund additional marketing and educational materials.

Goal V: By 2034, infuse civic learning and democratic engagement with co-curricular diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice campus efforts.

- By 2026, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility signature programs are informed by students' social change interest.
- By 2026, at least two TU signature peer educator programs integrate civic learning and diversity, equity, and inclusion approaches.
- By 2026, develop civic engagement workshops that speak to student groups who experience historic disenfranchisement and/or are not eligible to vote.

STRATEGY

The University System of Maryland Strategic Plan, the TU Strategic Plan, the TU Diversity Plan, and the TU Student Affairs Roadmap illustrate a commitment to educating for civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation. To foster a justice-centered ethos of civic engagement and participation that prepares a student body of 20,000 for lifelong, positive impact as active members of their communities, infusing civic engagement into everyday interactions, cultural practices, and structures is necessary.

The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) leads TU's efforts to build a culture and infrastructure to support civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation.

CESR offers signature programs to support these efforts. They include:

- **National Voter Registration Day** Resource Fair (annually in September): This tabling resource fair on [National Voter Registration Day](#) provides TU students with an opportunity to register to vote and engage in meaningful conversations and activities about important issues.
- **National Voter Education Week** Programming (annually in October): A variety of educational programs and social media campaigns occur during [National Voter Education Week](#) to provide TU students with the tools, information and confidence to cast their ballots.
- **Debate Watch Parties** (Midterm and Presidential Election Years only): In this program, the TU community comes together to watch and debrief the Presidential, Vice-Presidential and Gubernatorial Debates.
- **Party to the Polls** (Midterm and Presidential Elections only): This program takes place on the first day of early voting in general elections. It serves as an opportunity for the TU community to come together to celebrate the right to vote and learn about the U.S. electoral system.
- **Returns Watch Party** (Midterm and Presidential Elections only): This program invites members of the TU community to watch Midterm and Presidential Election results together, while also providing a space for games and relaxation.
- **Post-Election Program** (Midterm and Presidential Elections only): This program creates a space for the TU community to learn about the impact of the Midterm and Presidential Elections on the local, national and international levels and explore ways to engage in civic life in-between elections.

All programs take place on campus and are free and open to the public.

CESR also works with campus partners to infuse civic learning across the institution. Examples include:

- The **TU Votes Coalition** is the main vehicle to foster a campus civic ethos defined by the infusion of democratic values into everyday interactions, cultural practices, and structures. CESR coordinates this cross-divisional group of students and staff and guides them in the institutionalization of civic learning and democratic engagement.
- The **Civic Renewal Initiative**, which utilizes restorative practices and dialogue to foster democratic engagement. The Initiative offers opportunities for the TU community to engage in civil conversations about current local, national, and global issues. Programs include TU Community Conversations, TU Collective Reflections, and TU Resource Shares.
- The **Civic Renewal Fellowship** is a one-year paid cohort-based training program that teaches restorative practices and dialogue to prepare fellows to facilitate conversations about current events effectively. The fellowship as well as the Civic Renewal Initiative are coordinated in partnership with the Office of Student Accountability & Restorative Practices, the Office of the Dean of Students, and the Office of Inclusive Excellence Education & Support.
- The **Constitution Day Talk** is an educational program that commemorates the signing of the United States Constitution on September 17, 1787, and explores current topics related to it. The [Department of Political Science](#) is the lead organizer and received support from CESR. It takes place on campus and is free and open to the public.
- **Tiger Pride Day** is a day of advocacy on which TU students, staff and faculty visit the Maryland State House to meet with state lawmakers and advocate for legislation that the Student Government Association has identified as priority bills. Tiger Pride Day requires students to register and participate in a training prior to going to Annapolis. The [Student Government Association](#) is the lead organizer of the program. CESR staff support the program planning, including providing training to student participants.



Students and staff gather on the steps of the Maryland State House in Annapolis for Tiger Pride Day.

Short-Term Tactics

To achieve the goals in TU's 2024 Campus Democratic Action Plan, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) will expand its efforts using the short-term tactics outlined below. The primary audiences for each tactic are undergraduate and graduate students at TU. Secondary audiences are parents or guardians of TU students as well as TU staff and faculty.

Goal I: Infusing civic learning and democratic engagement into the first-year experience by 2034

By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into New Student Orientation materials and programs.

- Place voter registration information in highly visible areas during Orientation to encourage voter registration. Lead: New Student & Family Programs, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.
- Encourage students to register to vote in every Getting Involved session at Orientation. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.

By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into Housing & Residence Life processes and programs.

- Start a Civic Transformation Living Learning Community, developed as a high-impact practice, to introduce a cohort of first-year and transfer students to civic learning and democratic engagement. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, Department of Political Science, Housing & Residence Life.
- Include voter registration forms in move-in packets to encourage voter registration. Lead: Housing & Residence Life.
- Prepare Resident Assistants for conversations with their residents (e.g., voter information bulletin board templates for their floors, voter engagement facilitation guides for floor meetings). The Residents Assistants are trained semesterly to ensure conversations remain nonpartisan, culturally sensitive, accurate, and that the voter registration processes result in zero errors. Lead: Housing & Residence Life, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.

By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into First-Year Experience Academic Advising.

- First-Year Experience Advisors share voter registration materials during group advising. The Advisors are trained semesterly to ensure conversations remain nonpartisan, culturally sensitive, accurate, and that the voter registration processes result in zero errors. Lead: New Student & Family Programs, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.

Goal II: Infusing civic learning and democratic engagement into the general education curriculum by 2034

By 2026, develop a networked civic learning and democratic engagement community among faculty.

- Start a faculty-focused community of practice that is supported by TU's faculty development center (FACET). Lead: TU faculty member.

By 2026, create a process to identify a student representative from each academic college to be a liaison between students in their college and the TU Votes Coalition.

- Work with leadership from each academic college to identify a student representative and platform for them to share voter information with their peers. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, TU faculty member.

By 2026, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement in 10% of courses.

- Use the [Ask Every Student Faculty Champions Guide](#) to support faculty in integrating democratic and voter engagement activities into the classroom. Lead: TU faculty member, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, TU Votes Coalition.
- Reward faculty champions with badges. Lead: TU Votes Coalition.
- Provide civic learning and democratic engagement training to faculty. Lead: TU faculty member, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.
- Create a tracking system to capture information about course integration. Lead: TU faculty member, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, Registrar's Office.

Goal III: Increasing student voter registration rates to 95% and student voter turnout rates to 80% by 2034

By 2026, student voting rates at the institution will increase to 90% and voter turnout rates to 50%.

- Use federal work-study funds to hire Voter Education Ambassadors who will host voter registration drives, present in academic courses, and support the integration of voter education into the first-year experience. The Ambassadors are trained semesterly to ensure conversations remain nonpartisan, culturally sensitive, accurate, and that the voter registration processes result in zero errors. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.
- Increase voter registration drives and diversify locations throughout the academic year. Include information about the on-campus polling site. Lead: TU Votes Coalition, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.

- Develop voter registration drives specifically geared toward out-of-state students. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.
- Increase awareness of the on-campus polling site. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, University Marketing & Communications.
- Train Graduate Assistants in student-facing roles to support voter engagement through their positions. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, Office of the Senior Vice President of Student Affairs & University Life.

Goal IV: Institutionalizing communication practices that convey the importance of voting to students from all backgrounds by 2034

By 2026, solidify the practice of senior leadership encouraging voter registration and turnout in a nonpartisan, culturally sensitive, and accurate manner.

- Develop a communications plan to include frequent campus-wide messaging and information about the on-campus polling location. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, University Marketing & Communications.
- Develop a multi-media campaign (pictures, videos, etc.) featuring student leaders, faculty, staff, and administrators speaking of the importance of voting. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, TU Votes Coalition, University Marketing & Communications.
- Work with groups who have lower engagement with campus voter education efforts and/or experience historic disenfranchisement to create messaging aligned with the civic interests and concerns of these groups. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, University Marketing & Communications.

By 2026, increase the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility budget by \$5,000 to fund additional marketing and educational materials.

- Advocate for a budget increase during the annual budgeting cycle, seek sponsorships, and apply for grants, to fund additional marketing and educational materials. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, Office of the Senior Vice President of Student Affairs & University Life.

Goal V: Infusing civic learning and democratic engagement with co-curricular diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice campus efforts

By 2026, Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility signature programs are informed by students' social change interest.

- Administer the Campus Compact Pathways of Public Service & Civic Engagement survey annually to identify students' social change interests. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.

- Review Pathways of Public Service & Civic Engagement survey data and determine collectively how to intentionally integrate students' social change interests in signature programs. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility.

By 2026, at least two TU signature peer educator programs integrate civic learning and diversity, equity, and inclusion approaches.

- Collaborate with campus partners with expertise in restorative practices, dialogue, and diversity, equity, and inclusion to integrate these initiatives more effectively with civic learning and democratic engagement. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, Office of Student Accountability & Restorative Practices, the Office of the Dean of Students, the Office of Inclusive Excellence Education & Support, Housing & Residence Life, Restorative Practices Steering Committee.

By 2026, develop civic engagement workshops that speak to student groups who experience historic disenfranchisement and/or are not eligible to vote.

- Build on existing civic engagement workshops to intentionally integrate messages that resonate with historically disenfranchised students and students who are ineligible to vote. Lead: Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility, Center for Student Diversity, International Students & Scholars Office.



A TU student is interviewed by local news about voting.

Long-Term Strategies

To achieve the goals outlined in this Campus Democratic Action Plan, TU will use the following strategies.

Coalition Building: The TU Votes Coalition will continue to be the main vehicle to foster a campus civic ethos defined by the infusion of democratic values into everyday interactions, cultural practices, and structures. The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) coordinates this cross-divisional group of students and staff and guides them in the institutionalization of civic learning and democratic engagement. The Coalition meets regularly throughout the academic year and has a dedicated SharePoint site to coordinate their work. In case of turnover, the Coordinator for Civic Engagement in CESR works with departments to identify another representative and onboards the new Coalition member.

Partnership: The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility will continue to foster partnerships with faculty, staff, and students to infuse civic engagement across the institution. Partnerships will particularly focus on departments identified as leads to achieve the Campus Democratic Action Plan goals, including infusing civic learning and democratic engagement with co-curricular diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice campus efforts:

- Center for Student Diversity
- Department of Political Science
- Housing & Residence Life
- International Students & Scholars Office
- New Student & Family Programs
- Office of the Dean of Students
- Office of Inclusive Excellence Education & Support
- Office of the Senior Vice President of Student Affairs & University Life
- Office of Student Accountability & Restorative Practices
- Registrar's Office
- Restorative Practices Steering Committee
- University Marketing & Communications

The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility will pursue additional partnerships, particularly with colleagues in Academic Affairs to support the infusion of civic learning and democratic engagement into the general education curriculum.

Sustained Commitment: At TU civic engagement is defined as “the participation of individuals or groups in activities that promote the well-being of their communities to ensure that individuals' voices are heard, promote social cohesion, encourage civic responsibility, and foster a sense of shared purpose and belonging” ([TU Engagement Glossary](#)). As such, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility will continue to offer programs and coordinate initiatives that ensure sustained commitment to active participation in our communities beyond

the election cycle. Examples include: the Civic Renewal Initiative, the Civic Transformation Living Learning Community, and TU Community Conversations.

Evaluation: To assess progress toward the Campus Democratic Action Plan short-term and long-term goals, the Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) will engage in ongoing evaluation (described in more detail in the Evaluation section). CESR and its partners will also use these evaluations to identify the next set of short-term goals.

Succession Planning: To ensure continuity in case of staff transitions, responsibility for writing and implementing the Campus Democratic Action Plan is a part of three Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility staff members' position descriptions. All related documents are kept on a departmental SharePoint drive.



TU Staff and students use photobooth props during National Voter Registration Day.

REPORTING

The Towson University (TU) 2024 Campus Democratic Action Plan will be shared both internally and externally. Within TU, the Action Plan will be shared with constituency groups and partners whose work feeds into the success of the goals and tactics. Administrators, including the Senior Vice President for Student Affairs & University Life, will have access to the Action Plan as a guiding document to talk about TU's work in civic and democratic engagement. The Action Plan will also be shared in division-wide meetings among Student Affairs Directors. The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) will meet with partners directly to discuss the Action Plan and co-create strategies for implementing tactics. The Coordinator for Civic Engagement will give a data-informed presentation to the TU Votes Coalition about the Action Plan, host continual touchpoints with the Coalition to execute student voting work on campus, and update the Coalition once a semester to share progress and discuss how the Coalition will continue to contribute to achieving the Action Plan goals.

The Action Plan will be shared externally with nonprofit partners including the Andrew Goodman Foundation, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, and Voter Friendly Campus. CESR will post the Action Plan on TU's website, share it in the CESR newsletter, and promote it in social media channels. CESR will also work with University Marketing & Communications to refer to the Action Plan as part of the marketing efforts for campus-wide democratic engagement messaging.

Additional data used to inform the Action Plan, including TU's 2022 NSLVE report (when it is available), will also be added to TU's website. When the report is released, CESR will work with University Marketing & Communications to promote TU's voter engagement data via social media, a press release, and relevant communications channels.



A student uses a phone to access a QR code as a method to register to vote.

EVALUATION

Towson University (TU) is committed to infusing civic learning across the institution. The Campus Democratic Action Plan will guide this effort. Internally, evaluating progress toward the short-term and long-term goals will be crucial to identify successes and opportunities to course correct. Externally, the evaluation of the Action Plan will be an accountability tool to ensure that TU is doing the work it said it would.

The Office of Civic Engagement & Social Responsibility (CESR) will lead the evaluation effort with support from the Director of Assessment, Evaluation, and Strategic Planning in Student Affairs. The evaluation will begin July 1, 2024 and last until the 2026 Campus Democratic Action Plan goes into effect. All components of the evaluation will be saved to a departmental SharePoint folder. Components will include:

- QR codes to TU's TurboVote portal that can track clicks associated with Orientation, Housing & Residence Life, and Advising respectively
- Post-engagement surveys to capture the impact of the Civic Transformation Living Learning Community, Resident Assistant Training, First-Year Experience Advisor Training, Graduate Assistant Training, and civic engagement workshops and programs
- List of student representatives' names from each academic college
- List of work-study funded Voter Education Ambassadors
- List of faculty champion badges
- List of course presentations
- List of voter registration drives
- Compilation of campus messages related to voter engagement, including instances that promoted the on-campus polling site
- Compilation of multi-media artifacts that speak to the importance of voting
- Description of the messages that were included to reach groups who have lower engagement with campus voter education efforts and/or experience historic disenfranchisement
- Notation of civic engagement-related budget increases
- Description of the integration of data from the Pathways of Public Service & Civic Engagement survey into signature programs
- Description of the integration of civic learning and diversity, equity, and inclusion approaches in at least two peer educator programs

The Director and Assistant Director for Civic Engagement in CESR will analyze the collected data during monthly assessment meetings with support from federal work-study funded Voter Education Ambassadors. The Director of Assessment, Evaluation, and Strategic Planning in

Student Affairs will participate in those meetings as needed. This group will share findings with the Coordinator for Civic Engagement to identify successful tactics and tactics that require tweaks to achieve Action Plan goals. The Director will work with the Senior Vice President of Student Affairs & University Life and the Dean of Students and Associate Vice President of Student Affairs to address any challenges that the data may reveal, including securing support and resources from campus administration to achieve the Action Plan goals. The Director and Assistant Director for Civic Engagement will provide semesterly progress reports to relevant campus partners listed as leads in the Strategy section and brainstorm new tactics as needed to achieve goals. Finally, the Coordinator for Civic Engagement will give a data-informed presentation to the TU Votes Coalition once a semester to share progress and discuss how the Coalition will continue to contribute to achieving the Action Plan goals.

The main tool to evaluate the success of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts will be post-engagement surveys of civic engagement workshops and programs. The surveys will have both qualitative and quantitative components that allow participants to describe their experiences and learning related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Evaluation will also include a description of the ways in which the Pathways of Public Service & Civic Engagement survey was used to integrate students' social change interests in signature programs.

The Director of CESR also serves on the TU's Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement working group and will share relevant data with that group.



"I Voted" sticker in the mouth of a TU Tiger statue.

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