



University of Charleston 2024 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Developed by: Dr. Kara Fisher, Assistant Professor of Political Science

Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by University of Charleston in West Virginia for the 2024 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 general election.

The University of Charleston (UC) has long committed to sustained and energetic civic engagement through such efforts as get out the vote campaigns, voter registration drives, and community involvement. Executing this commitment in the pandemic has presented new challenges and UC is proud to report that we have been able to activate a robust response, actualizing a variety of events in this new environment.

The upcoming 2024 general elections presented our UC community another opportunity for civic engagement. In 2024, the Pi Gamma Mu Social Science International Honor Society staffed a voter education and pledge drive, complete with registration and absentee ballot initiatives on our campus. Students and faculty registered voters and helped their peers acquire absentee ballots across many US states. This effort is ongoing and our Political Science faculty are especially excited to help students figure out where they are registered and how they can vote absentee from our campus.

Additionally, we work closely with the West Virginia Secretary of State's Office to be sure we have the latest information to empower our students with all the tools they need to register in a timely manner and vote even when they are away from their West Virginian home polling place. Collegiate athletics is a significant part of the Golden Eagle campus culture. Student groups are coordinating locally with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to ensure that their peers are well apprised of their voting rights. The Black Student Union is hosting an intentional "Get Out the Vote" Campaign. Special consideration is given to marginalized voting groups including transgender communities, immigrant populations, formerly incarcerated citizens, among others.

As a teaching institution, UC recognizes that the promotion of voting as a civic responsibility is congruent with its Mission- to educate each student for a life of productive work, enlightened living, and community involvement. We hope that our university community, supported by our work and their dedication, will live active, engaged lives both by voting themselves and by democratizing access for civic engagement for others.

The goals for University of Charleston for the 2024 election are:

- Increased internal organizational participation in promoting civic engagement
- Increased voter participation
- Expanded community partnerships with new organizations

Leadership:

Our leadership includes the following:

Kara Fisher, Honors College Director, Assistant Professor of Political Science

Hallie Chillag, Honors College Director, Assistant Professor of Sociology

Kelton Boblits, Student Body President

Abbi Roberts, Pi Gamma Mu President

Ryan McFarland, University of Charleston Alumni; Pleasants County Elections Clerk

Commitment:

The University of Charleston has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2022.

The University of Charleston's vision is to fulfill its long-standing mission by embracing diversity and adopting innovative practices to develop and enhance professional programs that provide applied, career-focused, student-centered experiences that empower students for personal growth and professional success. Our mission is to educate each student for a life of productive work, enlightened living, and community involvement. We want every student to develop a pattern of community involvement. The foundation of our society rests on community involvement, so we want our graduates to take leadership responsibility and initiative in shaping organizations, institutions and communities (University of Charleston, 202; www.ucwv.edu)

A newly formed Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging Committee at the University of Charleston has affirmed that "by embracing and integrating diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging at UC, we bring out everyone's best and work collaboratively to build a better future." UC is committed to the following goals for a culture of inclusive practice promoting engagement:

- Be a Diverse Community in Composition and Thought
- Foster Equity and Inclusion
- Acknowledge and promote our diversity internally and publicly
- Enhance a Culture of Belonging

Each year on Labor Day our entire campus reflects on civic engagement and participates in a day-long event for community involvement, Labor of Love. This focus on engagement has presented the perfect opportunity to expand student understanding and experience of community. We measure student engagement in a post activity survey for this co-curricular event. In 2024 groups from the Social Sciences were specifically tasked with helping residents in the Charleston area learn about their polling place.

Landscape:

University of Charleston is a private 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2017.

Our campus demographic and voting data:

University of Charleston has 2,967 students encompassing the Charleston and Beckley, WV campuses and in the online environment. The undergraduate population accounts for 2,162 students.

University of Charleston has authorized NSLVE.

Our institution had a 2022 voter turnout rate 19.8%
Our institution had a 2022 voter registration rate of 67.3%.

Our institution had a 2020 campus voting rate of 47%.
Our institution had a 2020 voter registration rate of 67.9%.

Our institution had a 2018 voter turnout rate of 24.2%.
Our institution had a 2018 voter registration rate of 62.6%.

Our institution has been recognized by ALL IN with the following seals: 2018 Bronze, 2022 Bronze

Goals:

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

- Increased internal organizational participation in promoting civic engagement for 2024
- Expand community partnerships with additional organizations in 2024
- Increased voter participation in 2024

Strategy:

University of Charleston will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

Increased internal organizational participation in promoting civic engagement for 2024

- Invite student organizations to participate in tabling events through Student Government Association
- Share information for in-person and virtual meeting opportunities
- Attend ALL IN virtual training

Expand community partnerships with three additional organizations in 2024

- Consider the ALL IN challenge with regard to Labor of Love planning
- Meet with student organization presidents to focus outreach efforts
- Coordinate with resources from the City of Charleston

Increased voter participation in 2024

- Share voter engagement data across campus constituencies
- Focus on engagement specifically for student athletes
- Partner with internal offices and departments for collaborative efforts Focus on engagement specifically for student athletes

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

- University of Charleston has authorized NSLVE. Evaluate 2022 NSLVE voting data.
- Pi Gamma Mu student leaders will lead in organizing and assessing campus efforts.
- Student organizations will prepare annual reports of activities through Student Government Association.
- Civic engagement will be considered in the institutional strategic planning process and in preparation for accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission in 2025.

Reporting:

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

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

ALL IN information will be shared with institutional programs including: School of Arts & Sciences, Department of Social Sciences, Political Science Program, Athletics Department, Student Affairs, Provost Office, First Year Programs, Office of Communication, Institutional Research, Development Office, Office of Admission, and Office of the President.