



## **Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan 2022**

### **Executive Summary**

The University of Illinois Springfield (UIS) is a public university in the capital city of Springfield, Illinois. The University was established in 1969 as Sangamon State University by the Illinois General Assembly and became a part of the University of Illinois System on July 1, 1995. UIS serves roughly 4,000 students in 30 undergraduate degree programs, 20 masters degree programs and 1 doctoral degree. The university was once one of the two upper-division and graduate universities in Illinois, but now accepts freshmen, transfer, and graduate students.

In 2017, The UIS Strategic Compass was developed with a set of 7 Essential Values, meant to serve as guiding principles to clarify UIS' identity and guide the strategic direction of the university. The Essential Value of Civic Engagement was included with the statement, "*We build meaningful relationships that enable us to both learn from and contribute to our local and global communities.*" Therefore, UIS has a commitment to providing opportunities for students, staff, and faculty to be engaged citizens with a commitment to community and notably, democratic engagement. Although this commitment falls on the entire campus community, specific responsibility lies in the efforts of the UIS Volunteer & Civic Engagement Center (VCEC).

The UIS VCEC's mission is *to link the UIS Community to service and civic engagement opportunities in central Illinois and beyond.* Within this mission is a dedication to connect the campus community – consisting of students, staff, and faculty – to resources and information to be engaged citizens in the democratic process.

Building on our current designation as a Voter Friendly Campus, we aim to expand our efforts to exceed the accomplishments outlined in the 2020 NSLVE campus report. The continued designation as a Voter Friendly Campus (including all the resources, clarity, and support provided) will allow a compass for strategic thinking and planning to promote democratic engagement. This Action Plan is outlined to include efforts for the 2022 gubernatorial election, as well as the 2023-2024 Academic year. This action plan is designed for in-person, online, and hybrid students, with intentional collaboration among a wide variety of departments and organizations promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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## **2022 Goals**

- 1) To reach a voter registration rate of 90%
  - 2) To exceed the 2018 voter rate (of 67.5%) to 76.5%
  - 3) To incorporate Civic Engagement modules into all courses
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## **Leadership**

Leader: Jill Hawkins - Program Director, VCEC

Jill will serve as chair of this effort – planning meetings, outlining goals, timelines/deadlines, coordinating among campus constituents, and directing overall efforts.

Additional leadership – Volunteer & Civic Engagement Center Staff:

Connie Komnick - Assistant Director, VCEC

TBD - Graduate Assistant, VCEC

Student workers - VCEC

VCEC staff and student staff will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> level of involvement by assisting in coordinating efforts/events with additional members, designing/creating educational content, marketing events, leading events, and making connections with the campus community, as well as community groups

Campus Departments:

Diversity & Inclusion Center

Student Life Office

Residence Life  
Chancellor's office  
Admission & Orientation  
Academic Affairs  
Campus Media Relations  
Capital Scholars Honors Program  
Athletics  
Disability Services  
Career Development Center  
Brookens Library  
Faculty (specifically Political Science department)

Campus departments/units will play a key role in collaborating on reaching various students, sharing information and promoting events, meeting with students to discuss voter registration/education/etc., and fostering ideas for additional programming

Student Groups:

Student PIRG's  
Student Government Association  
Political Activist's & Understanding Group  
Student Advocacy Coalition  
College Democrats, Republicans, and any other politically affiliated groups  
Greek and Service Organizations  
Leadership for Life Living & Learning Community

Students are the best at reaching students! By working with students in leadership roles within well-known and highly involved organizations, we hope to see a surge in information sharing and increased registration and voting rates. Students will be asked to assist with tabling, information sharing, and planning/coordinating/emceeding in person events.

Community Groups:

League of Women Voters  
Sangamon Country Board of Elections

It is vital to get connected with local elections offices and organizations that offer timely information and opportunities outside of the campus. We are all in this effort together and are better together when we work together.

National Partnerships:

ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge  
Students Learn Students Vote  
Voter Friendly Campus  
Rock the Vote  
Vote Ready

These partnerships boost our efforts and save a great deal of time/planning as marketing toolkits and myriad resources/ideas are available. The ideas, flyers, hashtags, and swag offered through these partnership helps reach the campus and increase energy around democratic engagement

We will remain hopeful to include the potential partners listed above and will also welcome other groups whose values align with our efforts to achieve our goals.

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## **STRATEGY**

### **Current Work (continued)**

The VCEC hosts early voting efforts on campus and provides information about voter deadlines, residency requirements, voter ID, student address options, vote by mail, and online registration. Within the VCEC a “Campus Vote Coordinator” is a registered deputy registrar with the State Board of Elections. This individual serves as the point of contact for any on-campus organization wishing to conduct a voter registration effort.

In recent years, UIS has collected valuable data to aide in creating goals and monitoring progress toward voter engagement and voter rates. Membership with Illinois Campus Compact has allowed us to stay abreast of news and resources available to engage students. Data from participation in the National Study for Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) will continue to drive efforts.

### **Voter Registration**

- New students are informed of voter deadlines, residency requirements, voter ID
- student address options, online voter registration, and absentee ballots (now known as “Vote by Mail” ballots) as a part of the required orientation session in the days prior to the start of classes for each semester.

- UIS Residence Life makes proof of residency letters available to students wishing to register to vote with their campus address.
- Zoom helpline offers students the chance to hop online and get immediate assistance with registration, requesting vote by mail ballots, and any questions related to voting – offered 2x/week 8 weeks leading up to an election day
- The UIS Student Advocacy Coalition, a student organization supported by the University, will conduct several voter registration drives throughout the fall and spring.
- First Voter Registration drive is scheduled for Constitution Day in September
- The UIS Volunteer & Civic Engagement Center provides information about vote deadlines, residency requirements, voter ID, student address options, online voter registration, and absentee ballots by:
  - Tabling at key locations during key times
  - Announcements in campus-wide (daily) mail
  - Announcements on the UIS Connection student engagement platform
  - Announcements via social media
  - Hosting a student debate (e.g., College Republicans v College Democrats) and voter registration drive prior to state and national election cycles
  - Publishing voter information and a non-partisan voter guide in the student newspaper prior to state and national election cycles
  - Partnering with student organizations to host voter registration drives on campus
  - Using National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement data to improve our outreach to areas of the campus that showed low or decreased voter turnout
  - The Volunteer & Civic Engagement Center works with the county clerk’s office to host early voting on campus
  - “Shuttle to the polls” transportation provided for up to 11 people at a time to the polls. Shuttles run every 15 minutes on election days

**Proposed Activities:**

On-going:

- Making Civic Education systemic: Creating modules on civic learning/responsibility and incorporating them into every class and/or as part of first year seminar courses (so that EVERY student completes them to graduate)
- Students are required to complete hours in “Engaged Common Citizen” courses which center on Civic Engagement and social issues
- Promote the Institutional commitment to Civic Engagement (re: Democratic Engagement) via the UIS Strategic Compass goals and informing the Springfield Community
- Create virtual information presentations (Voter registration, Voter education, Candidate information) and make connections to Academic Affairs - ask to share with students
- Create Social media plan to promote events, voter registration drives, and countdown to election days

Aug:

- Voter registration event during new student orientation week with a focus of registering first-year students
- Offer in-person and/or virtual information sessions (Voter registration, Voter education, Candidate information)
- Engage and train students as “Election Ambassadors”

Sept:

- Voter Registration Competition (hosted by Residence Life - TBD)
- Constitution Day - Voter Registration tabling
- National Voter Registration Day; voter registration drive with information on early voting requirements
- Possible Gubernatorial debate watch party

Oct (election years)

- Vice-Presidential debate watch party
- Presidential debate watch party
- Presidential debate watch party

Nov.

- Shuttle to the Polls - occurs every 15 minutes.
- Evening - Election party
- Post debate discussion/reflection
- Post results discussion/reflection

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**EVALUATION**

Data from the NSLVE will be used to determine rates of both voter registration and voting. Comparison of this date with our previous data from 2020 will determine the results of our efforts to reach our future goals.

We also will use UIS Connection to track student attendance at each event, in hopes that we will see growth beyond our typical programming.

The Star Map Student Affairs Curriculum will provide quantitative feedback from students regarding the level of engagement and learning achieved as a result of participating in these events.

Tracking course information will allow us to determine the level to which we reach goal #3 of incorporating Civic Engagement modules (required) into all courses offered at UIS.

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## **REPORTING**

Efforts and achievements will be shared on social media on the VCEC pages and encouraged/asked to be shared by all leadership. We will work closely with Campus Media Relations to create press releases to inform the city of Springfield and surrounding areas of our accomplishments. The UIS webpage will boast accomplishments and designations as well, including the sharing of our Campus Action Plan and designation(s).