



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ILLINIVOTE

2022 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Executive Summary:

At Illinois we are committed to working to reduce apathy, increase engagement, and graduate civic-minded students prepared to solve the country, and the world's, most pressing challenges. With this in mind, we offer students many opportunities to become engaged citizens through our student voter initiatives. This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Illinois for the 2022 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2022 midterm election.

Leadership:

Our student voter engagement initiative is led by Dr. Gina Lee-Olukoya in the Office of Civic Life. Members of this interdisciplinary coalition include the following:

- Bob Flider, Director of Governmental Relations
- Dr. Lisa Jackson, Director of New Student Programs
- Jazmyn Kellogg, Director of African American Cultural Center
- Tracy Cunningham, Assistant Director of Residential Life
- Andrea Fierro, Coordinator of Access & Multicultural Education
- Kanittha Fay, Certified Housing, Advisor to Illinois Pledge to Vote
- Representatives from:
 - Illinois Student Government
 - Student Trustee
 - Champaign County Clerks Office
 - League of Women Voters
 - Campus Student Election Commission

Our campus works with these following nonprofit partners: Champaign County Vote, Campus Compact, Turbo Vote

Commitment:

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has a commitment to the facilitation of civic engagement through multiple strategies across the curriculum. From academic courses to co-curricular programs; these efforts are key to developing the campus civic ethos. Illinois cultivates this ethos through its strategic plans and campus student learning outcomes. For example, the learning outcome “effective leadership and community engagement”, suggests, Illinois students will build and sustain productive relationships to respond to civic and social challenges at local, national, and global levels, creating positive change in their communities.

In the 2017 report from the Special Adviser to the Chancellor on Engagement, the objective was to envision the mechanism that the University could utilize to establish a campus ethos across the curriculum of experiences to support students' growth to becoming “active citizens”. In the Nex 150: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Strategic Plan, goal three suggests that the land-grant mission of the institution is realized when students can create community change, both domestic and abroad, by harnessing their experiences across the curriculum to make a visible and sustainable impact. An impact anywhere that their paths may lead, including Champaign-Urbana. Further, the

campus strategic plan charges stakeholders to “develop our students to be future leaders with deep understanding of the unique commitments, traditions, and challenges of distinct communities by increasing student opportunities for service learning and volunteering through campus organizations and off-campus organizations”. Additionally, the Division of Student Affairs 2021-2026 Strategic Plan outlines civic engagement goals including, “expanding opportunities for students to explore their role in creating community change through civic education and democratic engagement”.

The Office of Civic Life (OCL) cultivates community partnerships that are designed to give students multiple entries to explore pathways to community involvement, global awareness, and civic responsibility. Civic Life enables students to realize, discuss, and address critical societal issues and gain the knowledge and capacity to be lifelong agents of change. We challenge students to explore social change through (1) democratic engagement and civic learning, (2) philanthropy, (3) social activism and advocacy, (4) community relationship building and development, (5) civic discourse, (6) public impact research and (7) volunteerism that prioritizes community needs. These tools provide the necessary strategies for students to bridge the ideals of volunteerism, justice, and democratic engagement.

OCL promotes active and engaged citizenship through a variety of initiatives across the Illinois curriculum that supports civic engagement and democratic education. Results from the 2016 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) suggests that 50% (N=1522) of seniors surveyed believed that their experiences at Illinois contributed to them “being an informed and active citizen”. Illinois is a public land-grant institution University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2020.

Landscape:

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is a public 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2018. In fall 2018, Student Affairs began to facilitate voter registration and engagement as required in the Higher Education Opportunity Act Section 493(a)(1) amended HEA Section 487(a)(23) (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)(23)). While the minimum expectation addressed in the Higher Education Act is to inform students of and provide them with the means to register to vote, the campus coalition was envisioned to conceptualize and implement strategies to create a campus civic ethos. Additionally, our campus has signed on to the ALL IN for Democracy’s “Presidential Commitment: Higher Education Presidents’ Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation” since 2020.

Campus demographic and voting data

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has 56,644 students, that are representative of the (50) states and the District of Columbia. Specifically, 30,814 students are considered residents of the State of Illinois. Additionally, 12,736 students are considered international, representing 135 different countries. The majority of students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign are full-time, undergraduates enrolled across the 11 colleges. Liberal Arts and Sciences, Grainger Engineering, Gies College of Business, and the College of Agriculture, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences represent the four largest colleges at the university.

The university is a diverse community with 5.2% of students identifying as African American; 17% identify as Asian, 11% Hispanic, 3% Multiracial, and 1% Native American. Additionally, 54% of the student population identify as men and 45.6% identify as women.

Illinois participates in the National Study of Learning & Voting Engagement (NSLVE) survey coordinated by Tufts College of Civic Life. At the 2019 ALL IN Challenge Awards Ceremony held to recognize colleges and universities committed to increasing college student voting rates, University of Illinois received a gold seal for achieving a student rate between 40% and 49%. Illinois had a 41.9% reported voter rate for 2018 election. The voting rate is the percentage of eligible students who voted on Election Day. For the 2018 midterm election, the national student voter rate was 39.1%.

For the 2020 election cycle, Illinois student voter rate increased to 66%, up from 53% in the 2016 election cycle. 80.8% of students eligible, registered to vote during the 2020 election cycle. Additionally, 59% of Illinois students aged 18-21 voted in 2020, which is an increase (+15) from the 2016 election. For this effort, the University was recognized with the 2020 Silver Seal from All-IN.

Other campus data and trends

The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) which examines student leadership values at institutional and national levels with specific attention to campus experience factors that influence leadership development in college students. Of the Illinois respondents, 76% (n = 473) indicated that they participated in at least one form of activism/democratic engagement with voting and signing petitions the most frequent. Other activism/democratic engagement related activities on the 2021 MSL survey that Illinois students engaged in include:

- Emailing/calling elected officials
- Organizing/canvassing
- Demonstrating/marching
- Boycotting
- Fundraising/donating for/to a cause
- Encouraging/helping others to vote
- Having conversations with others with different viewpoints
- Volunteering

Though the data suggests that our campus is trending in the right direction for positive civic and democratic engagement outcomes, recent national data suggests that colleges and universities will need to increase its efforts to institutionalize civic engagement outcomes. According to the 43rd edition of the Harvard Youth Poll, there was a significant increase among 18–29-year-olds, in the belief that our democracy was either “in trouble” or “failing”. Additionally, the participants expressed (1) low faith in the motivation of our elected officials, (2) a growing disdain for our political discourse, and (3) seriously questioned whether politics can even meet the challenges our nation is facing. The percentage of youth agreeing that “political involvement rarely has any tangible results” has risen from 22% in 2018 to 36% in 2022. Further, agreement with the statement “I don’t believe my vote will make a real difference,” increased from 31% in 2018 to 42% in 2022. Other key findings from this study that guides our goals and strategies include:

- The survey found that 59% of young Democrats and 61% of young Republicans see the other party as a threat to democracy.
- Nearly half of young Republicans (46%) believe that people who hold their political views are under attack “a lot” in America, compared to 24% of Democrats who feel the same way.

- 45% of LGBTQ-identifying youth feel like people with their sexual orientation are under attack “a lot” (59% of young Black Americans believe people of their racial background are under “a lot” of attack in America, 43% of AAPI youth, 37% of Hispanics, and 19% of whites feel the same.
- 50% of young Americans ranked education as one of the two most important factors to America’s global strength in the future.

These national and campus trends inform our strategy to enhancing our civic life opportunities to support citizenship and social change. Additionally, our investment in IlliniVote will generate positive civic engagement outcomes that will cultivate transformative learning and inquiry.

Goals:

The **IlliniVote** Student Voter initiative works to reduce apathy, increase engagement, and graduate civic-minded students prepared to solve the country, and the world’s, most pressing challenges. Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

1. Increase student voter turnout rate to 75% in 2022 and 85% in 2024.
2. Increase student voter registration rate to 85% in 2022 and 95% in 2024

Strategy:

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation. The strategies are intended to focus on the pillars of research, register, vote. The adopted strategies incorporate curricular and co-curricular activities that support:

- Voter Education
- Voter Registration
- Voter Outreach/ Turn-out

Voter Registration

- Short-term (2022-2023)
 - Facilitate voter registration sessions during all Extended Orientation sessions, INBOUND & R.I.S.E.
 - Collaborate with community partners to table during Welcome Days/Fall Orientation events
 - Send mass mail communications to undergraduate and graduate students about voter registration as part of National Voter Registration Day
 - Partner with the Campus Student Election Commission on voter registration tables at all campus dining centers
 - Partner with Colleges , i.e., Geis College of Business, to facilitate voter registration tables targeting underrepresented students.
 - Deliver voter registration and engagement workshops to student athletes.
- Long-term (2024)
 - Ensure the inclusion of the voter registration link ([Illinois.turbovote.org](https://illinois.turbovote.org)) on the new student checklist as part of the initial enrollment process.

- Collaborate with the registrar to send birthday cards to students encouraging them to register to vote on their 18th birthday.

Voter Education

- Short-term (2022-2023)
 - Facilitate programs that focus on democracy, election integrity, voter topics.
 - Collaborate with university library, community organizations, law school to deliver targeted voter education workshops.
 - Promote National Voter Education Week.
- Long-term (2024)
 - Partner with ACES to deliver a curricular experience with a focus on civic engagement
 - Design, Recruit, and train, IlliniVote Ambassador initiative.

Voter Outreach/Turnout

- National Early Voting Day gathering. Spend the day handing out Block I cookies with vote early campus locations.
- Collaborate with RSOs for a social media campaign on voting & why it matters
- Sponsor “Why Vote” windows campaign on Green Street
- Coordinate Election Hero acknowledgements

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

- NSLVE 2022 data
- 2023 MSL survey
- Program Evaluations after each presentation and workshop.

Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN’s website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/university-of-illinois-at-urbana-champaign/>.

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

The NSLVE reports and Action Plans are posted on the IlliniVote website and shared with the members of the student voter engagement coalition.