



Democratic Engagement Action Plan

The University of Maine

Overview of the University of Maine

The University of Maine is one of New England's premier universities. Founded in 1865, UMaine is a land, sea and space grant institution and the flagship campus of the University of Maine System. UMaine hosts students from all 50 states, and 67 counties and offers 90 undergraduate majors, 85 master's degree programs and 35 doctoral programs.

Introduction to The Center for Student Involvement

The Center for Student Involvement is a member of the Division of Student Life. Focusing on the co-curricular student experience, the offices within the Center for Student Involvement are: Campus Activities, Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, Leadership Development, and Student Organizations. Within the programming offered through Leadership Development, voter education and registration are executed through the multidisciplinary group: UMaine UVote.

Mission of UMaine UVote

UMaine UVote oversees the planning and execution of on-campus voter education, registration, and engagement efforts. This effort is largely successful due to the diverse campus and community partners. Staff, faculty, students, and town officials all play an essential role on our campus.

Programming is focused around election cycles, but the educational components of voter registration and education take place year round at the University of Maine.



Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by the Coordinator for Leadership Development and Chair of UMaine UVote in collaboration with key campus and community partners. Through the efforts outlined in this plan, it is hoped to engage students on campus and support them through their voter engagement efforts.

This action plan will be implemented on the University of Maine's campus located in Orono, ME. This action plan was developed to showcase the great work being done on campus and to continue to expand the reach and scope of voter education. The focus of this proposal will be for the Fall 2020, in order to meet the guidelines for the Voter Friendly Campus designation, but the scope of the implementation and evaluation will be continued for years to come. UMaine UVote, in partnership with faculty, students, and town officials will execute the goals outlined in this plan.

The primary point of contact for this coalition and action plan is:

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Leadership

UMaine UVote is an interdisciplinary group that brings together students, faculty, staff, and community partners. Leadership of this coalition is housed in the Division of Student Life but is largely successful due to the efforts of many campus and community members. Key UMaine UVote members include:

- Assistant Dean and Director of Community Life
- Coordinator for Leadership Development
- Associate Professor of Political Science and Honors
- University of Maine Student Government, Inc.
- Maine State Director Campus Election Engagement Project
- Orono Town Clerk

In addition to these key members, many students, faculty, and student organizations contribute to voter education and engagement efforts throughout the year.

Leadership (cont.)

UMaine UVote currently has a strong structure for engagement as members offer diverse and vast outreach on campus and in the community. Through our different connections on campus, we also have the opportunity to recruit more parties that are not currently represented within the group. Potential groups to engage further could be: different academic departments, Residence Life, and New Student Orientation.

UMaine UVote typically meets twice a semester to discuss large events and the mission and vision of the coalition. Volunteers are regularly recruited and trained to hold voter registration drives and volunteer at the polls during election day.

The largest voter education and engagement efforts take place in the fall beginning with campus wide move-in day, through Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day leading up to the November election.

Commitment

The State of Maine supports and provides a robust model for democracy and political participation. A few key structures that support political activism in Maine are same-day voter registration, a citizen legislature, and the ability for citizens to engage politically with Citizen's Initiatives and People's Veto.

Additionally, the University of Maine has an institutional mission of community engagement and service, which is pervasive through teaching, research, and co-curricular programs. By demonstrating these values, our campus earned the Community Engagement classification by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in 2008 and renewed in 2015. Furthermore, through our efforts to engage students around voter education, we received a bronze seal from the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge for having a student voting rate between 50-60%. Our commitment to engaging our students on campus can further be demonstrated through the relocation of the Orono poll location to an on-campus location.

Landscape: Assessment Data

NSVL 2014 & 2018 Campus Report:

The National Survey of Learning, Voting, and Engagement has informed our goals for the upcoming election cycles.

Although we were pleased with an increase in the voting rate from 2014-2016, we believe we can still provide further opportunities to educate students and engagement them in their civic responsibility.

NSLVE CAMPUS REPORT | University of Maine

YOUR STUDENTS' VOTING DATA | MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Voting and Registration Rates

2018 Voting Rate

39.3%

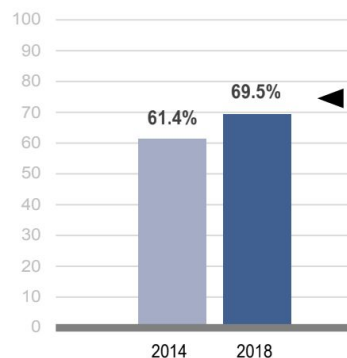
CHANGE
FROM 2014

+9.4

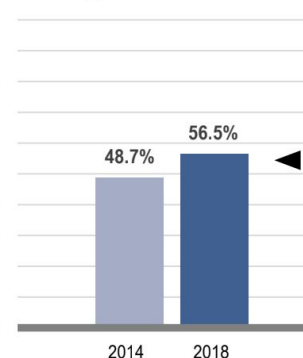
2018 VOTING RATE
FOR ALL INSTITUTIONS

39.1%

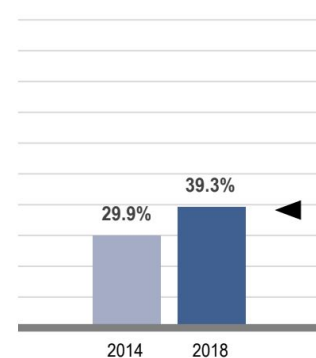
Registration Rate



Voting Rate of
Registered Students



Voting Rate



Landscape: External Barriers

Voter Registration:

A barrier we regularly face related to voter registration is the inability in Maine to edit voter registration information electronically. Student addresses change every year, regardless if the address is on campus or off. This means even though a student registered to vote the previous year, we need to capture their information again in order for the town to recognize them as a registered voter. This can create confusion and frustration on election day for students unaware of the policy, but recent efforts to educate campus on the policy and have staff members working at the registration table have helped.

COVID-19:

Following the uncertainty of large gatherings, the 2020 primary election may pose new challenges. In order to stay ahead of potential challenges and new regulations, education around absentee voting is even more important this year. It is essential that we educate students and help support their voter engagement during these new and uncertain times.

Goals

The long term vision for students at the University of Maine is to build a culture of civic responsibility around voting. We want students to engage in the dialogue and learn along with the community on how to impact our area.

We will work to*:

- Register 90% of eligible first-year students
- Visit 45 classes and educate approximately 1600 students
- Register 400 students from tabling, Constitution Day, and National Voter Registration Day efforts

If we are not able to hold regular events on campus this fall, we will work to:

- Host Q&A sessions over zoom
- Promote voter education and registration virtually
- Provide detailed absentee ballot information for students

*Depending on our University's action plan for Fall 2020, our goals may need to be adjusted if in-person gatherings are limited or have restrictions.

Strategy

Short-Term:

- Campus wide email notifying students of opportunities to register to vote and election day information (e.g. same day voter registration, poll location, etc.).
- Regular Tabling opportunities in the Student Center for voter education and registration.
- Visiting classes to educate students and help them register to vote.

Long-Term:

- Working with the Town of Orono to determine ways for students to update addresses in a more user-friendly and proactive way.
- Collaborate with academic departments to reach more students in their classes

Reporting

This action plan and the results will be shared on the University of Maine website under the Center for Student Involvement and UMaine UVote pages. Additionally, the results of the action plan will be detailed in the Center for Student Involvement annual report.

This report as well as the NSLVE report will be made available to the public via the website mentioned above. The UMaine UVote webpage will be updated regularly to reflect changes in this plan and updates to voter education and engagement on campus.

Evaluation

We will measure success of this plan through the following:

- Engagement at in-person events related to voter education and registration
- Tracking attendance and voter registration cards turned in