



# Democratic Engagement Action Plan

The University of Maine

# Overview of the University of Maine

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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

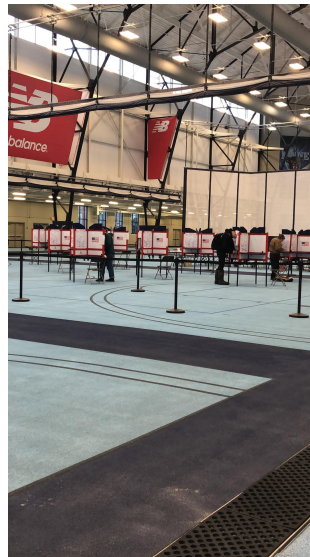
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The Center for Student Involvement is a member of the Division of Student Life. Focusing on the co-curricular student experience, the offices within the Center for Student Involvement are: Campus Activities, Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, Leadership 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 Assistant Director for Community Life 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 2021, 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. A potential group to engage further could be: academic departments with low voter turnout (e.g. College of Engineering)

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 gold seal from the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge for having a student voting rate between 70-80% in 2020. 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: NSLV Data Assessment

CAMPUS REPORT: University of Maine

## Voting, Registration and Yield Rates

### YOUR INSTITUTION

**72.9%**

2020 Voting Rate

**+10.8**

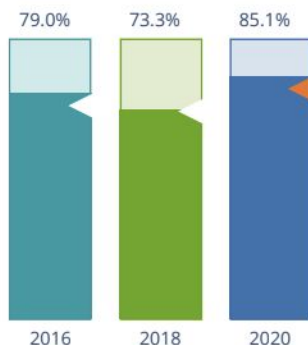
Change From 2016

### ALL INSTITUTIONS

**66%**

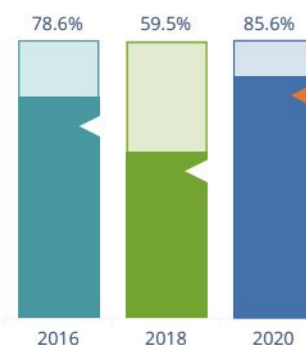
2020 Voting Rate

### REGISTRATION RATE



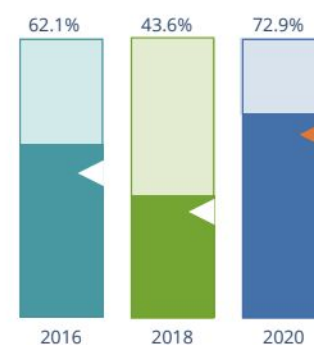
The **Registration Rate** is the percent of your voting-eligible students who registered to vote.

### VOTING RATE OF REGISTERED STUDENTS



The **Voting Rate of Registered Students** is the percent of registered students who voted on Election Day. We often refer to this as the “yield” rate.

### VOTING RATE



The **Voting Rate** is the percentage of eligible students who voted on Election Day. The voting rate is also the product of the registration and yield rates.

# Landscape: Demographics

We witnessed an increase across all demographics according to our NSLV data.

However, as a primarily white institution, it is at the forefront of our planning in ensuring voter education is accessible and equitable to all students.

## CAMPUS REPORT: University of Maine

### Looking Closer

#### By Race/Ethnicity

**This page provides the numbers we used to calculate race / ethnicity group voting rates.** We include the counts of students and the change in rates between the two most recent comparable election years. If you notice unavailable/missing data in this page, it could mean any of the following for your institution: (i) does not report this data; (ii) did not provide this data in past years; (iii) does not separately submit data for one or more of the demographic groups, or (iv) the data is reported for 10 or fewer students.

	2016			2018			2020			2016-2020 Change (p.p)
	Enrolled	Voted	Rate	Enrolled	Voted	Rate	Enrolled	Voted	Rate	
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
American Indian/ Alaska Native	155	95	61	139	70	50	120	88	73	↑ 12
Black	248	89	36	240	49	20	274	110	40	↑ 4
Hispanic	343	153	45	427	133	31	520	318	61	↑ 17
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	347	89	26	314	65	21	351	119	34	↑ 8
2 or More Races	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	9,399	5,848	62	9,693	4,189	43	9,535	6,957	73	↑ 11
Race Unknown	764	426	56	558	287	51	494	339	69	↑ 13

# 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. However, recent efforts to educate campus on the policy and have staff members working at the registration table have helped. We have been working closely with the Town Clerk and the State of Maine to help address this barrier. In addition, [state-level changes](#) aiming to modernize voter registration are in the process of development for implementation in the next few years.

## **Absentee Ballot Dropbox:**

Following COVID-19, our town and campus has implemented a greater push for absentee ballots. However, currently the only location that is approved to have an absentee ballot dropbox is at the Town Office. This is not a convenient location for students to return an absentee ballot. We have petitioned to make campus an approved location for a dropbox but have been unsuccessful in securing this yet. We hope to continue to push for this to allow students to vote absentee and turn in their ballots on campus.

# 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
- Provide electronic voter education materials to faculty for use in their classroom syllabi

We will measure these goals by:

- Event attendance
- Voter Registration card submissions
- Direct feedback from faculty/staff

# 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.
- Creating robust classroom materials for faculty members (syllabi language, and resources for the classroom)
- Advocating through the administration that UMaine has been recognized in the past as a Voter Friendly Campus.

## Long-Term:

- Working with the Town of Orono to determine ways for students to update addresses in a more user-friendly and proactive way.
- Collaborating with state and local partners to plan for and implement modernization of voter registration.
- Collaborate with academic departments to reach more students in their classes
- Creating publications to highlight the work being done with voter education and engagement so that it is widely known in the community and campus.

# 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.

Additionally, these reports will be shared with students learning about civic and community engagement through the UMaine UVote Ambassador program and other similar courses/organizations.

# 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.
- Analysing NSLVE data for ways to improve engagement across demographics.
- Engagement and collaboration with administrators and allies within underperforming units on campus to assess intra-institutional barriers to student engagement in underperforming units.
- Classroom surveys and feedback regarding access to information around voting.
- Partnership with the Maine chapter of the Scholars Strategy Network on a multi-year, grant-funded research project aimed at assessing [election enhancement and integrity](#). (This effort also involves colleagues at Colby College, enhancing our efforts at cross-institutional, statewide collaboration on student voter engagement).