



CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY
AND CIVIC LIFE

Voter Friendly Campus Engagement Plan

University of
Maryland,
Baltimore County
2024-2026

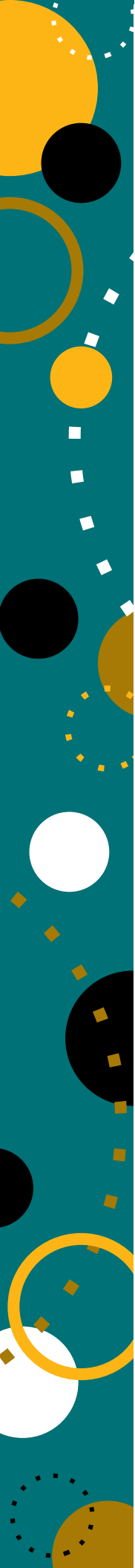


I. Executive Summary

For many years, the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) has pursued innovative approaches to civic learning and democratic engagement that have foregrounded students' capacity as agents and co-creators of their communities and democracy. These approaches orient students to democracy as a way of life enacted both in formal political processes and in everyday settings such as neighborhoods, workplaces, student organizations, and classrooms. Our work has both informed and been inspired by the [Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change](#), of which members of our Center for Democracy and Civic Life team are co-creators.

Our work builds from John Dewey's idea that democracy is a way of life enacted in everyday settings and relationships. We believe preparing students to build and contribute to thriving communities entails supporting civic learning and democratic engagement across their experiences in and beyond classrooms. Accordingly, we approach civic learning and democratic engagement holistically through academic courses, public programs, and empowering campus practices. Our BreakingGround initiative has seeded dozens of courses and community projects that have afforded students opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to contribute to a thriving democracy. Our Shriver Center has supported students' sustained engagement in Baltimore and other surrounding communities, helping them build meaningful connections with stakeholders addressing a variety of issues and challenges. Our STRiVE leadership for public purpose program prepares students to think critically about the social norms and expectations operating in their everyday environments and how they can be changed through collective action. Our Alternative Spring Break program involves exploring both the human and systemic dimensions of social issues affecting Baltimore communities and positions students for sustained involvement in work for positive change. Our approach to communication and decision-making on campus foregrounds relationship-building, collaboration, restorative practices, and shared governance. We host numerous programs emphasizing dialogue, reflection, and community engagement.





We view the work of building and sustaining an ethos of deep engagement as a shared responsibility, not the work of a single department or center. In 2018, UMBC launched its Center for Democracy and Civic Life to support the infusion of civic learning and democratic engagement opportunities and democratic practices in every corner of our institution. Beyond organizing some of the initiatives mentioned above, the Center works with faculty, staff, and student leaders to help them create inclusive and empowering environments. Its work has involved collaboration with staff and student leaders in Athletics; the Career Center; the Center for Social Science Scholarship; the Retriever Integrated Health; the Graduate Student Association; the Honors College; Initiatives for Identity, Inclusion & Belonging; Off-Campus Student Services; the Student Government Association; Residential Life; the Resident Student Association; scholars programs; the Shriver Center; Student Conduct and Community Standards; and many others.

In the context of this overarching concern for the development of civic agency and skills in every setting, election engagement means orienting students to the importance of informed participation in elections while challenging aspects of our broader U.S. civic culture that reduce citizenship to consumer participation and voting to a transaction. Our hope is to foster a sense of civic involvement as an everyday, lifelong commitment rather than episodic fulfillment of civic duties. The Center for Democracy and Civic Life created the Cast Your Whole Vote campaign to help reach this goal and support all UMBC community members' political engagement. In the run up to Election 2020, the campaign featured debate watch events and other campus programs that brought members of the UMBC community together for conversations about the issues that affect us. President Valerie Sheares Ashby signed the [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge's Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation](#), committing UMBC to a goal of full participation in elections by members of the campus community. As a part of that commitment, UMBC has recently launched an Institute for Politics within the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences to, in the words of our new Provost, "further elevate the work around democracy and civic engagement and provide meaningful opportunities for students to also engage in this work." This new Institute will be working with existing organizations to deepen, according to Dr. Sheares Ashby, "the beautiful work that we do around democracy writ large on this campus already through our Center for Democracy and Civic Life." Senior university leaders are working with others on this campus, including many of the organizations and people listed in the working groups below, to develop messaging, ideas, and strategies for enhancing political engagement on this campus.

The plan in this document has primarily been developed by UMBC's [Center for Democracy and Civic Life](#) (hereinafter, "the Center"). However, in the spirit of an open and inclusive democracy, the ideas contained within this plan were informed by a wide set of stakeholders and community members, including students, faculty, and staff. UMBC's political engagement networks are deep and strong, and the ideas in this plan are grounded in the spirit and voices of all listed individuals and organizations. Finally, UMBC has a strong culture of co-creation with frequent opportunities for community dialogue, and what we as leaders (students, staff, and faculty) have learned together from those experiences also informs the decisions we make.

This plan covers UMBC's approaches to democratic engagement over the course of the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years. Our work is always long-term in that we are consistently analyzing how our actions today contribute to the long-term project of empowering people in every community to build a thriving existence together. However, the shorter time frame for this plan reflects current institutional opportunities that will evolve over the next two years. UMBC has recently gone through major leadership transitions with the retirement of Dr. Freeman Hrabowski (who served as president for 30 years) and the subsequent investiture of Dr. Valerie Sheares Ashby as president. Alongside this change, UMBC has welcomed Drs. Manfred H. M. van Dulmen and Renique Kersh as Provost and Vice President of Student Affairs, respectively, marking a new era for this historic institution. We will soon be undertaking multiple strategic planning processes, including a strategic planning process for the university as a whole as well as one focused on UMBC's Division of Student Affairs. UMBC's new executive leadership team has already demonstrated clear commitments to civic engagement and willingness to support this work. Further, university leaders (including staff, faculty, and students) who have been deeply engaged in our civic engagement work will be involved in these various strategic planning processes, lending a democratic ethic to all of the work we will be doing to define the future of this institution.



II. Leadership

There are two working groups that are collaborating to implement UMBC's strategies for student election engagement. Both are coordinated by Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff and will be working closely in alignment with each other to tackle different dimensions of the action plan. The Center is in the process of hiring a Coordinator for Political Engagement, who will be taking on some of the responsibilities currently managed by other Center staff, including co-management of these working groups. The working groups consist of individuals who came to this work in various ways, including (a) some who were directly invited to participate as a function of their job responsibilities overlapping with the work of the group or Center staff's understandings of their unique and diverse perspectives, (b) some who were recommended to join by their own colleagues and supervisors, and (c) some who requested to be a part of the group because of their own passions for supporting political engagement. We anticipate that more will seek to join the work over time, and our democratic spirit leads us to welcome everyone to this work.

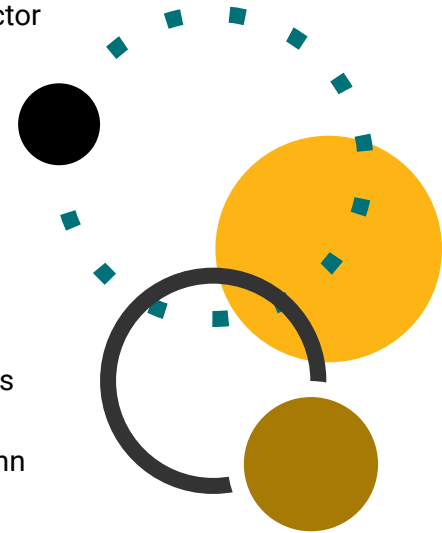
For all of the working groups below, regular planning meetings and conversations will keep people engaged, and when members leave, group members will collaboratively identify how those members should be replaced (if at all). The ethos we endeavor to cultivate is one where people do not think of this work as a job in which they are providing discrete kinds of expertise, but rather as a community effort by a coalition of people who get to bring their full and authentic selves to a process that is co-constructed from members' passions, unique viewpoints, and funds of knowledge. The primary implementation tasks are the responsibility of Center staff, with others' adoption of roles in this work being a function of interest. We are resourced to accomplish the central responsibilities of this plan among staff whose management structures mitigate the possibility of the work being not covered. Any efforts that a non-Center staff working group member takes on will be managed via clear understandings of what responsibilities that member unit's home organization (e.g., Department of Political Science) is adopting as a function of the working group member's involvement, and with ongoing coordination with the Center.

Both working groups are diverse and inclusive in their construction and collaboration process. All of the learning and engagement opportunities in this plan employ intentional strategies to recruit leaders and participants who are diverse in terms of many factors, including (but not limited to) race and ethnicity, gender, campus role (e.g., students, staff), and citizenship status. In addition, the main organizers of this process have employed facilitation methods in these discussions informed by organizing, intergroup, and sustained dialogue methods to ensure not only that any planning space includes diverse voices, but also that the processes honor and thoughtfully reflect diverse voices and experiences.

Working Group on Election Engagement

While the Center for Democracy and Civic Life takes responsibility for the majority of the implementation of UMBC's election engagement work, other campus units have their own initiatives that are supported by the Center. The purposes of this working group are to develop and steward UMBC's approach to election engagement and serve as a feedback and support mechanism for election engagement initiatives across the university (including the Center for Democracy and Civic Life). The network of participants in this work includes the following leaders (coordinator listed in **bold**).

- Academic Engagement and Transition Programs: Gavin Gilliland (staff), assistant director of first-year experiences
- Academic Opportunity Programs: Peter DeCrescenzo (staff), assistant director
- Athletics: Jonathan Cousins (staff), coordinator of marketing and promotions
- Campus Life: Abdoulie Sarr (staff), coordinator for student organizations
- Center for Democracy and Civic Life: **Ricky Blissett** (staff), associate director; David Hoffman (staff), director; Ann Tropea (staff), assistant director/media advisor
- Center for Social Justice Dialogue: Ciara Christian (staff), director
- Center for Social Science Scholarship: Eric Stokan (faculty/staff), associate director
- College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences: Preminda Jacob (faculty/staff), associate dean
- College of Engineering and Information Technology: Krista Wallace (staff), assistant director of transfer success initiatives
- Government Relations and Community Affairs: Jake Weissmann (staff), vice president
- Graduate Student Association: Jessica Burstrem (student), president; Yash Soni (student), legislative concerns director
- Office of Health Promotion: Samantha Smith (staff), director
- Political Science: Laura Antkowiak (faculty), professor; Megan Rehbehn (student), scholar
- Resident Student Association: Christian Jassani (student), director of advocacy and leadership
- The Retriever: Ash Shehzad (student), editor



- Retriever Integrated Health: Summer Hecht (staff), associate director of counseling
- Shriver Center: Nusrat Tusi (student), Choice Program mentor
- Sondheim Public Affairs Scholars Program: Jessica Cook (staff), associate director
- STEM Transfer Student Success Initiative: Sarah Jewett (staff), director
- Student Conduct and Community Standards: Jeff Cullen (staff), director
- Student Events Board: Ben Bazarsuren (student), event programmer
- Student Government Association: Hira Khan (student), co-director of civic engagement
- Women's Center: Lauren Allen (staff), director; Zoe Brown (student/staff), program coordinator; Carrington Cline (student), intern

Working Group on Election Night Events

In addition to the groups above, UMBC has historically invested significant effort into programming surrounding election day with an event called Election Night Extravaganza. This collaborative effort seeks to create opportunities for UMBC community members to be engaged in the election in ways that are fun, connect people to one another, and communicate a civic culture that grounds attention to the election process in shared civic values. This effort is coordinated by a planning committee comprised of the representatives below (with the coordinator in **bold**).

- Center for Democracy and Civic Life: **Ricky Blissett** (staff), associate Director; Tess McRae (staff), coordinator for civic design
- Graduate Student Association: Yash Soni (student), legislative concerns director
- Sondheim Public Affairs Scholars Program: Donna Cazeau (student), scholar
- Student Government Association: Praise Korie (student), co-director of civic engagement

The efforts detailed above do not constitute all of the collaborative efforts across UMBC to engage community members in learning, dialogue, and action about political engagement. Three important additional groups who work to foster healthy engagement include:

- the **BreakingGround Working Group**, consisting of leaders from the Center for Democracy and Civic Life (David Hoffman, director; Ricky Blissett, associate director), the Department of Political Science (Felipe Filomeno, associate professor and director of Global Studies), and the Grand Challenges Scholars Program (Maria Sanchez, director), which administers grants that promote civic agency through creation and redesign of courses and the development of community projects;

- the **Curricular Infusion Working Group**, consisting of leaders from Academic Engagement and Transition Programs (Laila Shishineh, assistant vice provost/assistant dean), the Career Center (Marykate Conroy, assistant director of internships and employment), the Center for Democracy and Civic Life (David Hoffman, director), the Department of Modern Languages, Linguistics & Intercultural Communication (Maria Manni, principal lecturer), the Department of Political Science (Ian Anson, associate professor), the Provost's Office (Margaret Re, interim vice provost for academic affairs), the Division of Professional Studies (Collin Sullivan, program director for digital credential innovation), the Division of Student Affairs (Renique Kersh, vice president), Institutional Research, Analysis & Decision Support (Shannon Tinney Lichtinger, director), and the Student Government Association (Meghna Chandrasekaran, president), the objectives of which are to develop and enact a robust vision for students' civic learning that draws on insights from the work of UMBC's Shriver Center, Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Intercultural Communication program, and other innovative thinking hubs about how to prepare students to be informed, engaged, ethical contributors to their communities, state, and nation (supported by a \$19,000 grant from the University System of Maryland (USM) in support of campus initiatives that integrate civic learning into the curriculum); and
- the **Together Beyond Working Group**, consisting of leaders from the Center for Democracy and Civic Life (David Hoffman, director; Tess McRae, coordinator for civic design), the Center for Social Justice Dialogue (Ciara Christian, co-director), along with campus experts in restorative practices (Jeff Cullen, director of student conduct and community standards; Davonya Hall, associate director of student conduct and community standards), which organizes and prepares campus leaders to facilitate conversations about potentially traumatizing and divisive events (e.g., the aftermath of Election 2020; the January 6 insurrection).

Partnerships

All of this work involves not only the efforts of those in the various working groups, but also the many individuals and offices whose services contribute to the successful implementation of our political and election engagement work. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Campus Card & Mail Services and Residential Life, which are connected to this work through conversation about how election-related mail should be handled during election season;
- Division of Information Technology, which ensures that there is a central URL to direct people to election resources and also ensures that voter registration information is available in appropriate locations (e.g., campus portals);
- Student Affairs Creative Services, which has been supporting the development of marketing and communications materials connected to the election; and



- University Communications and Marketing, which has been developing external communications about UMBC’s election work and providing additional web locations for connecting people with election resources.

Our campus has productive relationships with external organizations that support our political engagement efforts. Beyond our ongoing leadership in networks such as AASCU’s American Democracy Project, we have solicited support from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge through both the use of their voter registration portal as well as a training their staff conducted in fall 2024 for our community members who are interested in supporting student voter registration efforts. In addition, for both Center programs and programs hosted by partner campus organizations, UMBC regularly invites the expertise of external partners to opportunities for community learning. Recent invitees have included the American Civil Liberties Union, the League of Conservation Voters, the *Baltimore Banner*, state and local policymakers, and other organizations and individuals with important perspectives to share about political engagement. In addition, we have been supported by the Maryland State and Baltimore County Boards of Elections (Ruie Lavoie, chair, Baltimore County Board of Elections), with whom we have worked to locate a ballot dropoff box on campus for Election 2022 and 2024, and to encourage students to serve as poll workers.

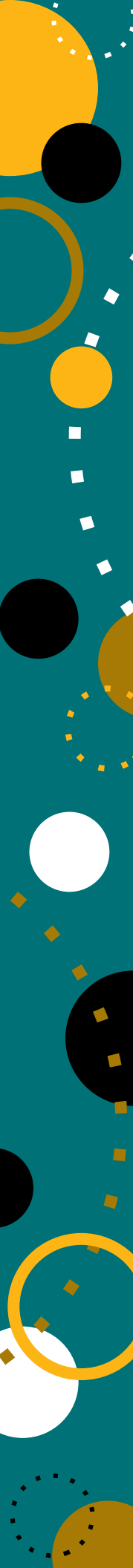
III. Commitment

UMBC leaders have long valued student civic engagement as integral to our mission as an institution. UMBC’s vision statement foregrounds its commitment to civic engagement: “Our UMBC community redefines excellence in higher education through an inclusive culture that connects innovative teaching and learning, research across disciplines, and civic engagement.” The actions described in this Voter Friendly Campus Plan are some of the many ways in which UMBC enacts its commitment to social responsibility, inclusive excellence, and lifelong learning. In addition, among the principal goals named in UMBC’s current Strategic Plan are:

- “Elevate UMBC as a nationally and internationally recognized research university strongly connected with the economic and civic life of the Baltimore region and the State of Maryland”, and
- “Create vibrant, exceptional, and comprehensive undergraduate and graduate student experiences that integrate in- and out-of-classroom learning to prepare graduates for meaningful careers and civic and personal lives”.

President Valerie Sheares Ashby signed the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge’s Higher Education Presidents’ Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation, committing UMBC to a goal of full participation in elections by members of the campus community. As a part of that commitment, UMBC has recently launched an Institute for Politics within the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences to elevate our civic engagement work and provide meaningful opportunities for student engagement. Senior university leaders are working with others on this campus to develop messaging, ideas, and strategies for enhancing political engagement on this campus. Further, UMBC’s fall 2024 convocation featured the debut of a renewed community commitment statement for entering students. Included in the statement is an acknowledgement that “[e]ach of us has a responsibility to foster an environment where all students, faculty, and staff feel they belong, they are valued, they are safe, and their story matters. Through our words and actions, we honor inclusion, freedom of expression, and dialogue. We respect differing opinions, beliefs, practices, and needs. We foster brave spaces where people of all backgrounds and viewpoints can use their voices.” This commitment is evident in language across regular university communications and at major university events.





The aspirations reflected in the community commitment statement have been fulfilled through years of collaborative work that has produced a palpable ethos of engagement at UMBC. The Center for Democracy and Civic Life has helped to infuse civic learning and democratic engagement across the university and influenced practices at institutions across the U.S. by:

- **Coordinating election efforts:** The Center is responsible for coordinating UMBC's voter registration and engagement efforts. In addition to offering election programming, staff provide guidance and support to student leaders as they organize voter registration drives and voter education programs. For Election 2024, the Center is working with campus partners to develop and enact the Cast Your Whole Vote campaign, featuring campus messaging, issues-focused dialogues, and a well-attended Election Night celebration. Center staff also work with faculty and staff who are looking for ways to support students' political engagement through their classes and living learning communities.
- **Building a student leadership culture through immersive programs:** The Center hosts annual immersive programs in which students reflect on their civic identities and aspirations, share personal stories, develop relationships with each other, and learn techniques for building strong communities and pursuing positive social change. Among the ways in which these programs build participants' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions is by preparing them to lead inclusively and collaboratively. A great many student organizations officers, resident assistants, and commuter assistants have participated in these programs, which often have been their entry point to leadership.
- **Providing civic innovation grants:** The Center hosts the BreakingGround grant program, which is a seed grant program that supports civic innovations at UMBC, including courses, community events, and forums for sharing and deliberation. The crux of BreakingGround's strategy is recognizing, integrating, and building upon existing strengths in UMBC's personnel, programs and culture by stimulating discussion and creative action around themes of civic innovation, social responsibility, applied learning, and the public purposes of higher education. Since its launch, BreakingGround has supported the development of dozens of courses across the curriculum and more than 40 campus and community engagement projects.
- **Training and guiding the ConnectionCorps:** The Center hosts ConnectionCorps, an initiative through which UMBC students learn to foster democratic participation and authentic connection through dialogue aimed at empowering people to work in community to advance social change. ConnectionCorps facilitators participate in training sessions to build community, develop civic skills, and prepare to facilitate civic dialogues.
- **Developing and facilitating workshops:** The Center's workshops provide participants opportunities to reflect on their own civic pathways and possibilities, identify approaches to addressing challenges and working on change projects, and build community among workshop attendees. Partners across the institution, including staff directing scholars programs, student organization officers, and faculty groups, request these workshops.

- **Teaching civic courses:** Center staff teach Talking Democracy and Be Your Best Self in Real Life, both 200-level seminars offered through UMBC's Honors College. In Talking Democracy, students become critically aware of the interplay among communication styles and techniques, democratic values, and the civic health of communities. They reflect on their own values, hopes, experiences, and approaches to communication; build skills that can help them initiate and enact positive social change; and emerge with greater confidence and clarity about how to move forward as a contributor to collective problem-solving and community-building. In Be Your Best Self in Real Life students investigate how people can collectively and individually thrive within institutions, and how they must sometimes change institutions in order to do so. (Note: There are civic courses offered by many UMBC departments, as we explain in more detail in the Landscape section below).
- **Working with national higher education networks:** Center staff coordinate UMBC's [American Democracy Project](#) (ADP) participation, and Center director David Hoffman serves on the ADP Steering Committee. In addition, staff members have served many times on the planning committee for the annual [Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting](#).
- **Organizing conference delegations:** Infusing new thinking about civic learning and democratic engagement across an institution requires the participation of many stakeholders. The Center brings diverse delegations composed of UMBC administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partners to the annual Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement meeting and the annual Imagining America national gathering to develop shared experiences and knowledge that supports our collective work back on campus.
- **Sharing innovations through publications:** Center staff have authored and co-authored magazine and journal articles, book chapters, and blog posts focused on civic learning and democratic engagement.

The state of Maryland has been increasing its investment in civic learning, providing fertile ground for UMBC's efforts to thrive. In 2021, the University System of Maryland joined the Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Coalition, which includes the objective to "revitalize education for democracy for all postsecondary learners and the democracy we share." According to the University System of Maryland (USM) webpage, "The USM has two primary goals guiding its civic engagement work: 1) foster an ethos of civic participation across all parts of all System institutions; and 2) identify civic literacy as a core expectation for all students." In 2023, USM created a grant program for "proposals up to \$19,000 from system institutions to support efforts to integrate civic learning into the curriculum as part of the curricular or co-curricular student experience." UMBC applied for and was awarded one of these grants.

In addition to the Center for Democracy and Civic Life's infusion of civic learning and democratic engagement across the university and nationally, UMBC's commitment to this work is evident in the work of departments across campus. A few examples:

- The [Shriver Center](#), UMBC's community engagement center, is also committed to advancing civic learning and democratic engagement through service-learning experiences in which students address critical social challenges. The Shriver Center's work has positioned UMBC as a national leader in applied learning, community engagement, and community-based service delivery. Among its many programs, the Shriver Center coordinates [Public Service Scholars fellowship programs](#) on behalf of the state of Maryland, including the Governor's Summer Internship Program, the Sondheim Public Service Law Program, and the Sondheim Nonprofit Leadership Program. The Shriver Center received funding from the **American Association of Colleges and Universities** (AACU) to create a Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation Campus Center, and works to dismantle white supremacy by implementing and promoting anti-racist practices.
- The department of **Residential Life** identifies its [mission](#) as preparing residents "to be active and responsible citizens within the UMBC community and beyond." Where Residential Life once took a reactive, punitive approach to maintaining community standards, in recent years it has adopted a learning-centered approach focused on restorative practices. As Residential Life leaders wrote in a post on the [ACPA Commission for Housing and Residential Life blog](#): "We have found that this approach allows us to be both educators and co-creators of community and the student experience. We are starting to realize that if we want to reach outcomes around community engagement, social justice, civic engagement, and global citizenship, we may need to radically rethink our approach to learning and community within residential environments." All residential assistants are trained to foster thriving communities in which residents are active participants.
- The [mission](#) of the department of **Student Conduct and Community Standards** includes "[facilitating] student and community developmental and ethical growth opportunities promoting personal integrity, civility, self-responsibility, citizenship and appreciation for diversity." The department takes a restorative approach in its work in order to repair harm, restore relationships, resolve conflicts, and work with students in order for them to flourish and create thriving civic communities.
- Residential Life and Student Conduct and Community Standards also spearhead a [campus-wide effort](#) to foster a culture grounded in restorative practices, which they understand as a form of democratic dialogue and a way to "strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within our community leading to increased well being, active, participatory learning, community building, decision-making, greater safety, and a sense of belonging." The departments have trained dozens of UMBC faculty, staff, and students in restorative practices.

IV. Landscape

As of September 1, 2024, UMBC’s enrollment (including undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education students) totaled 13,952 students. UMBC’s main campus (with 96% of UMBC students) is in Catonsville, Maryland, and there is a branch campus (Shady Grove, with 4% of UMBC students) in Rockville, Maryland. The majority of the opportunities detailed in this plan will be implemented with the main campus as the central audience of our in-person opportunities, though we continue to explore opportunities with our Shady Grove colleagues as well as avenues for providing online options for engagement. For some opportunities, we are offering both in-person and virtual offerings to allow for multiple modes of engagement.

UMBC’s student body is extraordinarily diverse, especially with respect to race and ethnicity. As of September 1, 2024, the racial demographics of enrolled students (including undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education students) were as follows:

Racial/Ethnic/National Origin Category	Percent of Enrolled Students (September 1, 2024)
White	27
Black	21
Asian	20
International	15
Hispanic	9
Two or More Races	5
Unspecified	2
American Indian	<1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	<1%

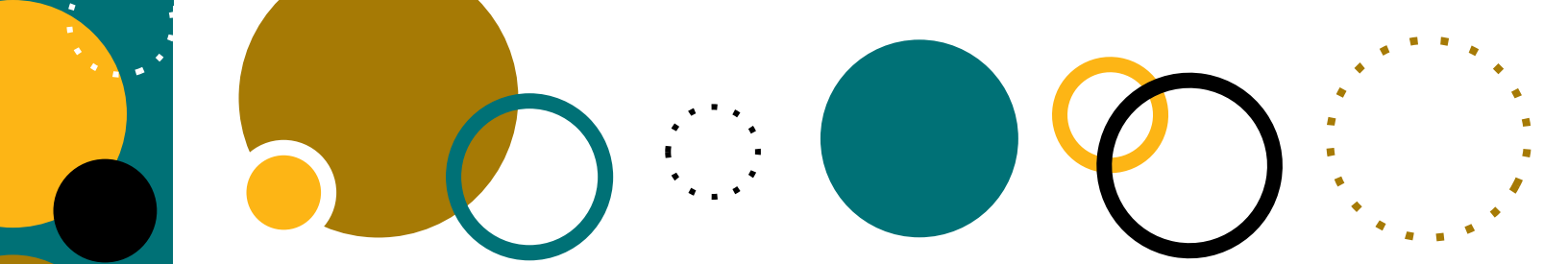
Relevant to our election engagement efforts, 2% of UMBC’s enrolled population is under the age of 18, and 20% of the enrolled population does not have United States citizenship.

The Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change, which has been at the heart of national efforts by AASCU’s American Democracy Project and NASPA to promote civic engagement, draws extensively on experiences of building a strong civic culture at UMBC, and UMBC Center for Democracy and Civic Life director David Hoffman was the lead author. The Theory of Change proposes that higher education’s civic work should do more than prepare students for participation in democracy; it must enable them to help create “the thriving democracy we have not yet achieved, but can build together.” The Theory of Change identifies the following values as being at the heart of a thriving democracy:

- **Dignity:** respect for the intrinsic moral equality of all persons
- **Humanity:** embracing environments and interactions that are generative and organic; rejecting objectification, and the marginalization of people’s identities

- **Decency:** acting with humility and graciousness; rejecting domination for its own sake
- **Honesty:** frankness with civility; congruence between stated values and actions; avoidance of deceit, evasions, and manipulative conduct
- **Curiosity:** eagerness to learn, have new experiences, and tap the wisdom of other people)
- **Imagination:** creativity and vision, including with respect to possible futures in which all of these values have become more central to our society and institutions
- **Wisdom:** discernment; comfort with complexity; nonmanipulability
- **Courage:** fortitude to act with integrity even when there is a cost; capacity to thrive in the midst of ambiguity, uncertainty, and change; willingness to acknowledge vulnerability
- **Community:** belief that advancing the general welfare requires organized, collective work, enacted through relationships, partnerships, and networks, leveraging the diverse perspectives and talents of many people in order to produce benefits greater than the sum of their individual contributions
- **Participation:** action with other people to develop and achieve shared visions of the common good
- **Stewardship:** responsibility to act individually and collectively in ways that support others' well-being, and the preservation and cultivation of resources, including norms and processes, necessary for all to thrive
- **Resourcefulness:** capacity to improvise, seek and gain knowledge, solve problems, and develop productive public relationships and partnerships
- **Hope:** belief in the power of people to bring about desired transformations; tenacity





Those values resonate strongly with (and their framing was inspired by) UMBC's campus culture. While measuring this resonance is a challenge, a UMBC campus climate survey from fall 2021 reveals that students experience UMBC as supportive of diverse identities and perspectives, and of community and political engagement. When asked about the degree to which UMBC is diverse with respect to gender, race, socio-economic class, age, sexual orientation, disability, immigration status, accent ethnicity, and national origin, 76% of respondents characterized UMBC as very diverse, 22% as somewhat diverse. 95% rate UMBC as very or somewhat inclusive (where inclusion is defined as access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized). 95% strongly or somewhat agree that diversity enhances their experiences as UMBC students.

Many of UMBC's courses that focus on civic learning and democratic engagement can be found in social science programs such as Public Administration and Policy (certificate), World Politics (minor), Law and Justice (minor), Practical Policy and Politics (minor), Political Science (B.A.), Public History (M.A.), and Public Policy (M.P.P., Ph.D.). However, consistent with the idea that every career can contribute to fostering a thriving democracy, there are many other courses with civic components. Faculty members have created or redesigned more than 40 such courses across the disciplines with support from [BreakingGround](#), a grant program funded by the Provost's Office and administered by the Center for Democracy and Civic Life. They have included:

- Critically Engaging with Heritage Ideas and Issues in Critical Heritages Studies (American Studies 420). Students explore the complexities of heritage-related issues at the local, national and international levels by participating in discussions about readings regarding cultural landscapes, international cultural policy and community outreach and cultural representation and meeting with local heritage professionals.
- Understanding Factors Influencing Literacy in Baltimore Communities (English 100P/281). Students work with the Reading Partners Program, a tutoring intervention, to collect data about factors influencing literacy achievement for elementary level students. Students also think critically and reflect on the role of the community in increasing literacy rates in Baltimore City.
- Environmental Justice (Geography and Environmental Systems 424/624). Students learn about the ways race, class, gender and geography have shaped communities' experiences of the physical environment in the U.S. by directly interacting with Baltimore residents about diverse perceptions of the environment and will develop GIS mapping skills through assisting in the identification and geolocation of amenities and hazards in the community.



- Studies in Feminist Activism (Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies 200). This course focuses on the history and present of feminist activist movements. Students produce digital stories about local activist movements as well as their own activist projects at UMBC and in the surrounding community, creating an archive of what it means to do activism here at UMBC and beyond.
- Baltimore City Water Supply Aging Infrastructure (Mechanical Engineering 220H). Students learn how to use their technical engineering knowledge to improve their communities specifically related to critical water treatment issues in Baltimore City.
- Civil Discord (Music 308). Students in this course create an artistic performance that engages its Linehan Concert Hall audience in reflecting on and discussing the current polarization in America.
- Social Action in Baltimore (Social Work 200). In this course students explore civic engagement in the Baltimore area in relation to the practice of social work, including issues of poverty, hunger, health care or homelessness.
- Putting the Sociological Imagination Into Practice Locally (Sociology 698). This course offers students the opportunity to conduct action research with local communities on access to healthy food. Student research projects sit at the intersection of local social inequalities, public health issues, and social change.

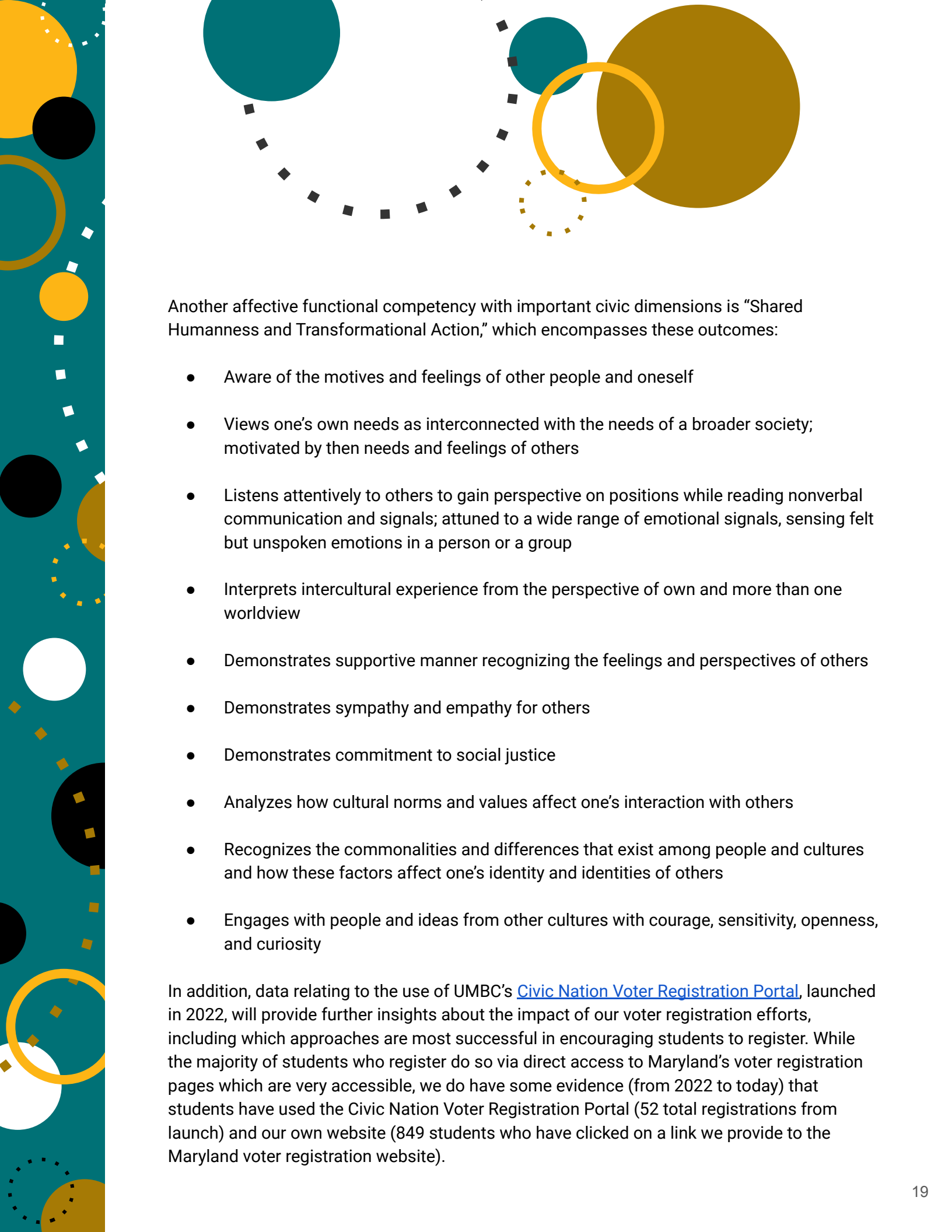
For a complete list of BreakingGround-funded courses and projects, follow [this link](#).

Civic learning and democratic engagement is central to UMBC's co-curricular activities as well. In addition to the BreakingGround funded projects linked previously, the Center for Democracy and Civic Life works with campus partners across the Divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs on programs that orient students to recognize and harness their civic agency and lead a life of active participation. Center for Democracy and Civic Life immersive programs with a civic mission include [Alternative Spring Break](#) and [STRiVE](#), which develops students' skills in leadership for public purpose. In addition, the Center offers workshops to help students and colleagues explore the civic dimensions of their majors or professional roles. These workshops guide participants through the process of co-creating their communities and addressing challenges to a thriving democracy. As is described in the Leadership section, the Center also works with the Student Government Association and other student organizations to plan and host election-related programs and events. These programs include voter registration drives, conversation programs about important campaign issues, and an election night festival. Hundreds of students attend these programs.

We have a good deal of information about the impact of particular courses and programs on students' knowledge, skills, and dispositions, but continue to refine our approaches to assessment. In addition, with leadership from the directors of the Shriver Center, Honors College, and Individualized Study program, UMBC has undertaken [a campus-wide effort](#), funded initially with a BreakingGround grant, to develop a list of affective functional competencies that can guide applied learning experiences and provide a framework for their assessment. The [affective functional competencies](#) that have emerged from this process include "Social Responsibility and Community-Minded Action," which encompasses the following outcomes:

- Examines the implications of one's actions/behavior/decisions/beliefs
- Acknowledges mistakes, learning from them, and adjusting over time
- Follows through on commitments
- Acts with interest of the larger community in mind
- Commits to social justice; takes informed and responsible action to address ethical, social, and environmental challenges to global systems and evaluates the local and broader consequences of individual and collective interventions
- Engages deeply with others both through learning and working with others
- Demonstrates sympathy and empathy for others
- Develops personal and civic responsibility with respect to global issues
- Develops solutions to global challenges using interdisciplinary perspectives
- Aligns personal values with civic actions
- Takes initiative to encourage and support others in their development of personal responsibility
- Creates positive bonds with people and social institutions
- Effectively addresses significant issues in the natural and human world based on articulating one's identity in a global context





Another affective functional competency with important civic dimensions is “Shared Humanness and Transformational Action,” which encompasses these outcomes:

- Aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself
- Views one’s own needs as interconnected with the needs of a broader society; motivated by then needs and feelings of others
- Listens attentively to others to gain perspective on positions while reading nonverbal communication and signals; attuned to a wide range of emotional signals, sensing felt but unspoken emotions in a person or a group
- Interprets intercultural experience from the perspective of own and more than one worldview
- Demonstrates supportive manner recognizing the feelings and perspectives of others
- Demonstrates sympathy and empathy for others
- Demonstrates commitment to social justice
- Analyzes how cultural norms and values affect one’s interaction with others
- Recognizes the commonalities and differences that exist among people and cultures and how these factors affect one’s identity and identities of others
- Engages with people and ideas from other cultures with courage, sensitivity, openness, and curiosity

In addition, data relating to the use of UMBC’s [Civic Nation Voter Registration Portal](#), launched in 2022, will provide further insights about the impact of our voter registration efforts, including which approaches are most successful in encouraging students to register. While the majority of students who register do so via direct access to Maryland’s voter registration pages which are very accessible, we do have some evidence (from 2022 to today) that students have used the Civic Nation Voter Registration Portal (52 total registrations from launch) and our own website (849 students who have clicked on a link we provide to the Maryland voter registration website).

V. Goals

Vision

At UMBC, we aspire to prepare and position students as co-creators of the thriving democracy America has not yet fully achieved. In the spirit of John Dewey's (1937) injunction that democracy must be "enacted anew in every generation, in every year and day, in the living relations of person to person in all social forms and institutions," we seek to orient students to democratic possibilities and responsibilities both on Election Day and in the everyday settings in which they will spend most of their lives.

In alignment with the [Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change](#) of which leaders of our Center for Democracy and Civic Life have been developers and champions, we want every UMBC graduate to have developed the following civic capacities:

- **Civic Literacy and Discernment:** encompassing individual and collective knowledge of democracy's principles, contested features, history, and expressions in the U.S. and around the world; knowledge of the philosophical and practical dimensions of public policy issues, and understanding of different perspectives on those issues; and the capacity to distinguish factual claims made credibly and in good faith from error and propaganda.
- **Civic Agency:** encompassing individuals' self-conception as active agents shaping their world, as well as their capacities to recognize cultural practices, navigate complex institutions and undemocratic environments, imagine alternative arrangements and futures, and develop strategies for effective individual and collective action; and the collective capacities to develop a vision for our common life, recognize and respond to problems, make decisions generally accepted as legitimate, and foster the ongoing development of all of these capacities.
- **Real Communication:** encompassing individual and collective capacities to engage in civil, unscripted, honest communication grounded in our common humanity, including about issues in connection with which individuals disagree based on their different stakes, life experiences, values, and aspirations; and the sensitivity and situational awareness to listen well and communicate authentically and effectively with different audiences.
- **Critical Solidarity:** encompassing individual and collective recognition of the intrinsic worth and equality of all human beings, capacity to envision and identify with each other's journeys and struggles, and disposition to work for the full participation (Strum, Eatman, Saltmarsh & Bush, 2011) of all Americans in our democratic life and against violations of people's agency and equality.
- **Civic Courage:** encompassing individuals' willingness to risk position, reputation, and the comforts of stability in order to pursue justice and remove barriers to full participation in democratic life, openness to learning from others, including people



with less formal training, positional power, and social status, and resilience in the face of adversity; and the collective capacity to embrace changes in cultural practices and institutional arrangements when such changes promote the general welfare and full participation in democratic life.

- **Integrity and Congruence:** encompassing individual and collective capacities and commitments to enact democratic values in our everyday interactions, professional roles, cultural practices, institutional arrangements, public decisions, policies, and laws. (Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change, page 11).

This framework is a step beyond civic education paradigms that conceptualize civics as a realm apart from everyday life, encompassed in government, elections, and voluntary service projects. We aspire to help and prepare students to take responsible, effective action in every setting, on and beyond Election Day, to reckon with and dismantle systems that oppress and exclude people based on their social identities, foster individual and collective agency and solidarity, and create conditions in which everyone can thrive.

In addition, the framework departs from approaches to civic education that develop individual capacities but not collective capacities. Our vision is not only that every UMBC graduate develops the individual capacities identified above, but that our UMBC community becomes more inclusive, cohesive, and capable of collective action, and adopts practices ever more congruent with our democratic values.

Since our last Voter Friendly Campus Engagement Plan, we are pleased to report multiple areas of progress that have supported our ability to do this work.

- We have added three new full-time staff roles to the Center for Democracy and Civic Life (coordinator for civic design, assistant director/media advisor, and coordinator for political engagement), more than doubling the size of the staff team.
- Because of staff changes and our efforts to build an inclusive coalition, the group of faculty and staff playing leadership roles in UMBC's civic learning and democratic engagement efforts is significantly more racially diverse than it was when we submitted our 2022 plan.
- Over the last two years, UMBC's Initiatives for Identity, Inclusion, and Belonging worked with the Center for Democracy and Civic Life to develop and deliver a first-year orientation session (featured in [Inside Higher Ed](#)) for all first-time freshmen, which integrates learning about inclusive environments with civic emphasis on the importance of fostering inclusion via interpersonal behavior and through working to change oppressive systems and structures.

That said, we have some goals we have carried forward from our last plan to be responsive to the great many institutional changes UMBC has seen over the last two years. In addition, progress toward some of our goals has been delayed by the need to devote time and care to navigating tumultuous local and global political environments. We have weathered these challenges with confidence and resolve, and our commitment to democratic engagement has benefited all of these efforts. However, one implication is that we needed to lengthen the time horizon for some of our goals, which are reflected in this plan.

Long-Term Goals (2+ years)

We plan to continue infusing civic learning opportunities aligned with the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change in UMBC courses, programs, and organizations. Our approach will continue to be organic and inclusive, so that faculty, staff, and students are true co-creators of the effort.

Our long-term goals include the following:

- By **May 2026**, the Center for Democracy and Civic Life and other campus units (e.g., the Center for Social Justice Dialogue) that train members of the UMBC community to facilitate difficult community conversations will work together to expand the reach of those training opportunities, including the development of new opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to build skills together .
- By **May 2026**, the Center for Democracy and Civic Life and other campus units (e.g., the Office of Government Relations and Community Affairs, the Student Government Association) will develop an array of new programs to support students in engagement with state politics, including engagement with lawmakers in Annapolis.
- By **May 2026**, training and tools developed by the Center for Democracy and Civic Life and its partners to implement the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change will be widely available and frequently used by UMBC faculty members, program leaders, and student organization officers. The training and tools will help them to build relationships and community in what might otherwise be transactional contexts, and to develop students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.



- By **May 2026**, the Curricular Infusion Working Group will have developed and built campus support for a comprehensive approach to infusing civic learning across the academic curriculum, and will have worked with campus partners to develop the infrastructure necessary to support the infusion effort.
- By **May 2026**, UMBC will establish and constitute a board structure to help guide and extend the Center for Democracy and Civic Life's work. The board will include students, faculty, staff, and external partners who can make meaningful, nonpartisan contributions to students' civic learning and democratic engagement. The board will reflect the compositional diversity of UMBC's student body.

Short-Term Goals (≤ 1 year)

- By **November 2024**, UMBC will increase the voter registration rate among students to 90% (it was 79.7% as of the 2022 election).
- By **November 2024**, UMBC will increase the voting rate (the percentage of eligible students who vote on Election Day) to 72% (it was 69.2% in 2020).
- By **November 2024**, each STEM field of study at UMBC will have a voting rate of at least 65% (the lowest voting rate in a STEM field was 56% in 2020).
- By **November 2024**, UMBC will host a range of programs featuring opportunities for large- and small-group conversations focused on engaging with the election and navigating a tumultuous media and information environment during the election.
- By **November 2024**, UMBC will have hosted weekly voter registration tabling events from the start of the fall 2024 semester.
- By **January 2025**, the Center for Democracy and Civic Life will add a full-time staff member to expand its programming relating to political engagement.
- By **May 2025**, UMBC will build a comprehensive plan for the engagement of graduate students in connection with elections. This plan will be sensitive to the circumstances and needs of UMBC's graduate student population, a large fraction of which is ineligible to register to vote in U.S. elections (but can still participate in a variety of ways that do not involve casting a ballot).



VI. Strategy

Beyond reflecting the commitments of its leaders, UMBC's work for inclusive engagement has resulted from grassroots organizing that has taken place over many years. The strategic insights in the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change, which is based on our work, will continue to be our guide. Specifically, we will continue to support partners across the institution in identifying and developing opportunities to support students' civic engagement through their courses and programs by:

- **Sharing responsibility and control** between educators and students.
- **Enabling spontaneity** by affording students more flexibility and space to improvise and respond to situations as they are unfolding.
- **Embracing vulnerability** by approaching courses, programs, and everyday campus interactions with humility and openness, so that students are more likely to experience faculty, staff, themselves, and each other as human beings who are fully present and engaged in collective work within a community of learners.
- **Fostering authentic, mutual, and reciprocal relationships** among students, with faculty and staff members, and with community partners.
- **Building collective civic capacity** among members of our campus community, not just individuals' knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
- **Choosing empowering language** as opposed to language that puts distance between students and UMBC as an institution as when "we" or "us" (meaning the institution) shares information with "you" (students, who are symbolically reduced to customers, implicitly excluded from "we" and "us").
- **Providing support for learning from everyday interactions**, including unstructured experiences of navigating everyday politics, on campus and beyond, so that students become increasingly resilient and sophisticated.
- **Transcending categories and boundaries** by applying the foregoing strategies in every learning context at UMBC (not just the ones traditionally recognized as forums for civic learning): orientation sessions, student organization meetings, faculty office hours, commencement exercises, and more.

The Center for Democracy and Civic Life is responsible for working with campus departments, programs, and organizations to adapt and apply these strategies. This work continues to take the form of collaboration in designing and implementing courses and programs; guidance in connection with BreakingGround grants; informal consultation; and other opportunities for collaboration and shared learning.

As for the specific goals identified in the Goals section of this plan, the work of achieving them will involve the Center for Democracy and Civic Life collaborating with established and new partners:

- Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff members will finalize an agreement with the Maryland Board of Elections to locate a ballot dropoff box on the UMBC campus.
- The Election Engagement Working Group will develop and implement election engagement initiatives in the run up to Elections 2024 and 2026, co-creating programs and messaging and leading grassroots, peer-to-peer efforts to register, inform, and motivate student voters. These election engagement initiatives will include organizing to solicit and disseminate messages from academic leaders and peers that will especially resonate with students in particular majors and graduate programs.





- The Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff will continue working with campus partners to host guided conversation programs about issues and opportunities for engagement.
- The Center for Democracy and Civic Life will continue to work with campus partners to develop messages that support students' civic identity development and agency. The Center for Democracy and Civic Life will continue to work to develop similar partnerships with other campus departments and organizations.
- Student leaders and staff from the Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Initiatives for Identity, Inclusion & Belonging, the Center for Social Justice Dialogue, the Office of Equity and Civil Rights, and the Women's Center will continue to work to more fully integrate and align our efforts to address structural racism, promote social justice, and foster civic learning and democratic engagement.
- Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff will continue developing and sharing civic tools and hosting Together Beyond November-style training programs through which faculty, staff, and student leaders will learn to facilitate programs with and within their own departments and organizations.

In the short term, UMBC will employ all of the following strategies to encourage students to register and vote in 2024:

- Through campus-wide emails, social media posts, banners and posts on myUMBC (UMBC's online hub), promote UMBC's [Civic Nation Voter Registration Portal](#); the opportunity to be trained as a voter registration volunteer by the Maryland Board of Elections; the opportunity to be trained and serve as a poll worker; and the availability and convenience of the on-campus ballot drop box (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Division of Information Technology, Institutional Advancement).

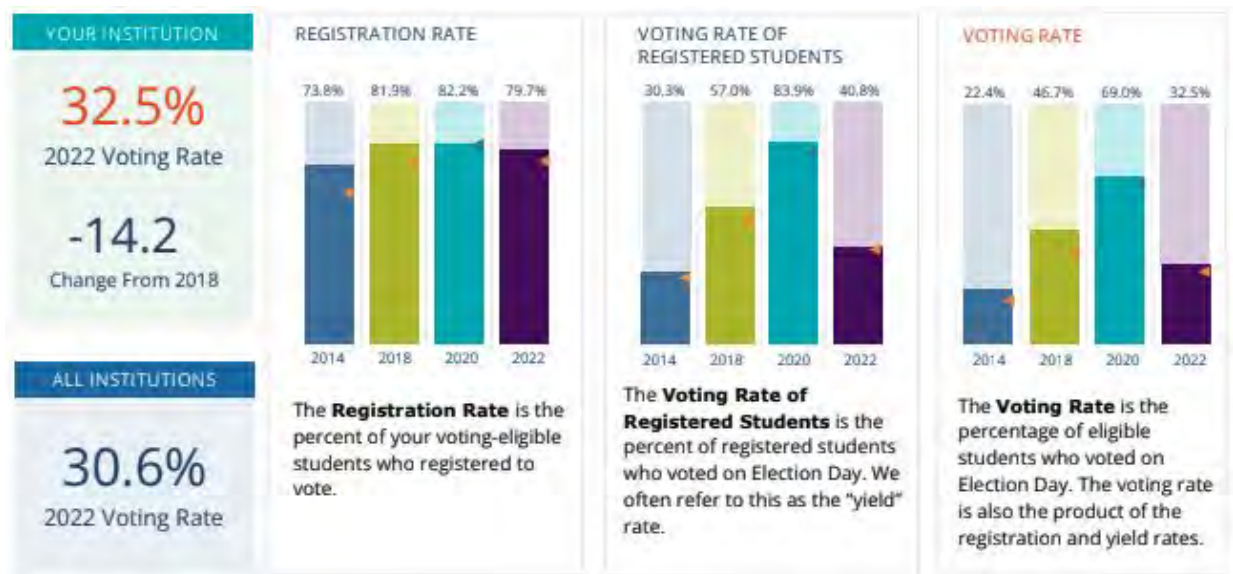
- Conduct in-person and virtual voter registration drives (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Student Government Association, and other campus departments and organizations coordinated and supported by the Center for Democracy and Civic Life and Election Engagement Working Group).
- Make voter registration materials available at high-traffic locations on campus (Center for Democracy and Civic Life).
- Participate in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge voter pledge competition. UMBC finished 4th in the nation in 2022 (Political Engagement Working Group).
- Host a variety of roundtable discussions about public issues (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Initiatives for Identity, Inclusion & Belonging, Student Government Association, Women’s Center, and other campus departments and organizations).
- Support members of the faculty and staff seeking to inform and engage students in connection with the 2024 election by providing resources and facilitation (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Student Government Association).
- Host UMBC’s traditional Election Night Extravaganza program to promote awareness of the 2024 election and bring our campus community together to watch the returns (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Student Government Association).
- Coordinate election-related events hosted by UMBC units across campus that are committed to providing learning and engagement opportunities during election season (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Women’s Center, University Athletics, Center for Social Science Scholarship, School of Public Policy)



VII. NSLVE

The National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) provides college campuses with data on their voter turnout rates to inform campus engagement efforts. The full standard report was delivered to the Center for Democracy and Civic Life in June 2024, covering data from 2022 (and incorporating comparisons to data from 2014, 2018, and 2020). Here, we briefly cover what was evident from the data.

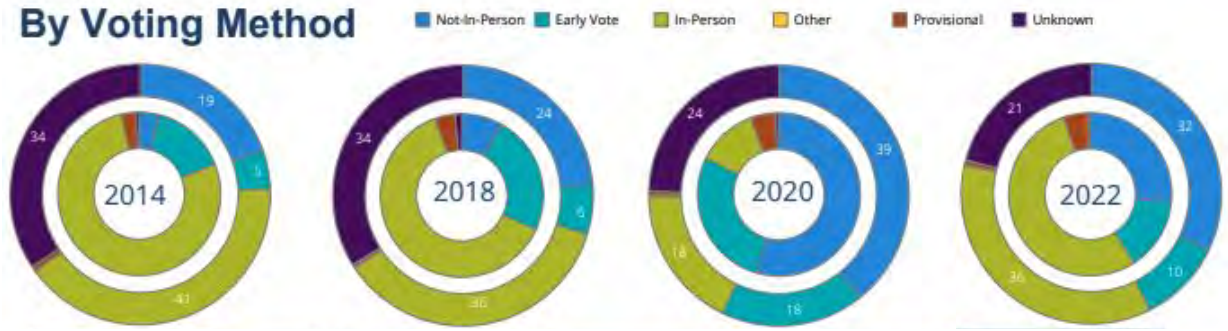
The graphs in the figure below show our registration rates (of eligible voters) and voting rates (of registered voters). While our registration rates have remained relatively stable over time, voting rates have fluctuated in predictable ways, where voting rates for mid-term elections are always lower than those for presidential elections. 2020 is the only presidential election represented in the data in this report.



UMBC's student voting rate in 2022 was 33%, which is comparable to the average of "similar" institutions (33%) and slightly higher than the average voting rate for all institutions included in the study (30.6%). In the full report, there are also data suggesting that our voting rates have consistently been roughly average as compared to similar institutions. From this data, we can infer that while there is still certainly work to be done to promote voter registration, the largest gaps seem to be a function of turnout.

The next figure to look at contains the method by which people voted, where the inner rings of each graph represent UMBC's data, and the outer rings represent "national level" data.

By Voting Method



The breakdown for method of voting for 2018, for UMBC and for the country, is very similar to the breakdown for 2014. National rates are in the outer rings, and UMBC rates are in the inner rings. Comparisons to national data are less useful given the very high percentage of “unknown” entries in national data. However, UMBC’s changes over time do mirror overall trends in national voting, with dramatically increased not-in-person voting in 2020 as a function of the pandemic. There was some rebounding of in-person voting in 2022, though not to the same extent as national trends. That said, we do not advise direct comparisons between 2020 and 2022 given they represent very different election contexts.



Subgroup Analyses

NSLVE also provides rates for specific subgroups of students, disaggregating by race/ethnicity, age, sex, undergraduate/graduate status, class year, enrollment status, and field of study. However, UMBC does not provide race/ethnicity, sex, or citizenship data as a function of student privacy considerations, so our NSLVE report does not contain those subgroup analyses. In addition, because NSLVE does not have access to student citizenship data, the voting percentages presented in the rest of this section should be taken to represent the percent of enrolled students (regardless of voting eligibility) in each category who voted.

We re-calculated the percentages to mirror UMBC’s organization, put 2018 and 2022 together to show comparable elections next to each other, and placed 2020 separately to provide a comparison for the 2024 presidential election (though, of course, the 2020 election was unique in ways that make comparison difficult). We have omitted “unknown subgroups” (e.g., students whose data did not contain field of study information), as they represented a very small percentage of students.

Voting rates for all subgroups except fields of study are shown in the table below. From this data, there do not seem to be major differences between groups that would warrant different

outreach strategies, and where there are major differences, it is unclear if those differences are a function of behavioral differences or differences in the concentration of students who are ineligible to vote. For example, while it may seem alarming that the graduate student voting rate (and the voting rate for older students) is more than 10% lower than that for undergraduate students, we also know that graduate students at UMBC are much more likely to be international students (as of September 1, 2024, 51% of graduate students, compared to 5% of undergraduate students).

	2018	2022	2020
Age Group			
18-24	42%	25%	65%
25+	48%	35%	59%
Education Level			
Undergraduate	42%	27%	65%
Graduate	44%	33%	54%
Undergraduate Class Year			
Freshman	34%	21%	60%
Sophomore	42%	26%	63%
Upperclassmen	45%	30%	67%
Enrollment Status			
Full-time	41%	53%	62%
Part-time	51%	42%	67%

Similar cautions should be kept in mind when evaluating differences across fields of study, condensed below into the buckets that constitute UMBC’s three Colleges. While there is a difference in voting rates that mirrors research highlighting lower engagement among STEM students, again, we should be cautious when understanding that students who are ineligible to vote are more concentrated in the College of Engineering and Information Technology, for example. While the exact alignment to UMBC’s majors is unknown, the fields of study listed in the original NSLVE report with the lowest voting rates (in 2020) are Computer and Information Sciences (55%), Engineering and Engineering Technologies (60%), and Mathematics and Statistics (61%). The highest rates are in Education (78%), English Language and Literature (77%), and History (76%). Finally, almost all fields of study (except Philosophy and Religious Studies) saw decreases in voting rates between 2018 and 2022, with the strongest decreases being among arts and humanities students including visual and performing arts, communications, and English.

	2018	2022	2020
18-24	42%	25%	65%
25+	48%	35%	59%
Undergraduate	42%	27%	65%

VIII. Reporting

The Center for Democracy and Civic Life will share this plan with university leaders and with the stakeholders identified in the Leadership section for whom it will serve as a guide. The Center also will post the plan on its website.

The Center for Democracy and Civic Life is the entity at UMBC that receives the NSLVE report. Staff have shared that data with the institution's President's Council and with the campus community at election engagement events; in the Center's annual report; and on the Center's [website](#). Center staff will continue to share NSLVE report data, as well as other relevant data, in these forums.

In addition, the Center for Democracy and Civic Life will proactively and widely distribute NSLVE data, this plan, and a report on the success of the strategies contained herein and gaps to address as we prepare for future elections.

Distribution methods will include:

- email messages to all UMBC students (note: students can choose to opt out of these emails);
- emails to lists of faculty, staff, and student leader stakeholders, including senior university leaders and every staff member in the Division of Student Affairs;
- postings in the Center for Democracy and Civic Life group on MyUMBC and on the Center for Democracy and Civic Life's website;
- emails to community partners, including the Maryland State and Baltimore County Board of Elections and the University System of Maryland chancellor's office.



IX. Evaluation

We have conducted and will continue to pursue research studies approved by UMBC's Institutional Review Board to understand the impact of our civic learning and democratic engagement strategies. We initiated several such studies in the 2023-24 academic year, and will continue and complete these projects over the course of the 2024-25 academic year, including a narrative study to understand the transformative and long-term impacts of the STRiVE program, a measurement study seeking to develop ways to assess civic learning, and a case study exploring the cultural impacts of BreakingGround.

We shared these studies at the Division of Student Affairs' annual assessment conference, as well as the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association where our submission was awarded the Outstanding Conference Submission award by the Experiential Education and Community Engagement special interest group.

Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff are planning another study to assess the long-term impacts of students' exposure to UMBC's approach to civic learning and democratic engagement. This study will investigate the paths students take after foundational programmatic leadership and engagement experiences, tracing their subsequent campus and community engagement.

In order to assess our success with respect to our election engagement goals, UMBC will continue to participate in NSLVE, and will continue to share NSLVE data with campus partners and the public. UMBC will also utilize voter registration data gathered through its [Civic Nation Voter Registration Portal](#) to identify approaches that are most successful in getting students to register to vote. In addition, Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff will work with campus partners in the Department of Information Technology to gather data on the proliferation of campus-wide election and voter related messages. Center staff will continue to measure the effectiveness of their civic tools through program evaluations at the conclusion of each program. The Center for Democracy and Civic Life team will analyze the data and share it with the Election Engagement Working Group to inform our election engagement strategy and tactics.

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