

Voter Friendly Campus Engagement Plan

University of Maryland, Baltimore County
2020-2023



UMBC


CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY
AND CIVIC LIFE



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.

In the spirit of the recommendations in the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement's influential 2012 report *A Crucible Moment*, we have sought to support civic learning and democratic engagement across students' experiences in and beyond classrooms. Our Shriver Center has supported students' sustained engagement in Baltimore communities, helping them build meaningful connections with stakeholders addressing a variety of issues and challenges. Our BreakingGround initiative has seeded more than 40 courses across the curriculum and more than 30 community projects that have afforded students opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to contribute to a thriving democracy. Our STRiVE leadership for social impact retreat prepares students to think critically about the cultural scripts (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.



The work of building and sustaining this ethos of deep engagement is and must be a shared responsibility. Our **Center for Democracy and Civic Life**, established in 2018, has served as a hub for a network of engaged students, faculty, and staff who are leveraging the resources of their departments and organizations to support students as stewards of community and agents of positive change. The Center for Democracy and Civic Life team has coordinated and authored this Campus Plan, but enacting it over the next several years (2020-2023) will be a collective endeavor.

One of the ways we will enhance our already thriving civic initiatives is by formally establishing an advisory board for the Center for Democracy and Civic Life (making official a network of collaborators that is already largely in place) to help guide and coordinate the continuing infusion of cutting-edge civic practices across UMBC. In addition, we will work with more departments and organizations to ensure that civic education is embedded in their approach to teaching, learning, and programming.

In addition, we will continue longstanding but newly energized work to confront and dismantle structural racism, which is a barrier to the full participation of all Americans in creating a thriving democracy in what Langston Hughes called “the land that never has been yet, and yet must be.”





II. Leadership

UMBC's Center for Democracy and Civic Life coordinates our civic learning and democratic engagement efforts with many campus partners. To date, the network of participants in this work has been robust but informal. It includes leaders from:

- the **Shriver Center**, which has supported students' sustained engagement in Baltimore communities for more than 25 years;
- the **Honors College**, which promotes community engagement and social commitment;
- the **Sondheim Public Affairs Scholars Program**, which supports undergraduates aspiring to public service careers;
- the **Global Studies program**, which supports global civic literacy and community engagement;
- **OCA Mocha**, an off-campus coffee house run by UMBC alumni with a civic mission: uniting the campus with its surrounding community;
- the **Sherman Scholars Program**, which supports students' development as culturally responsive STEM teachers;
- the **Student Government Association**, which has played a leading role in voter engagement programming;
- **The Retriever**, UMBC's student newspaper, which has sponsored programs aimed at helping students know their rights and use their voice;

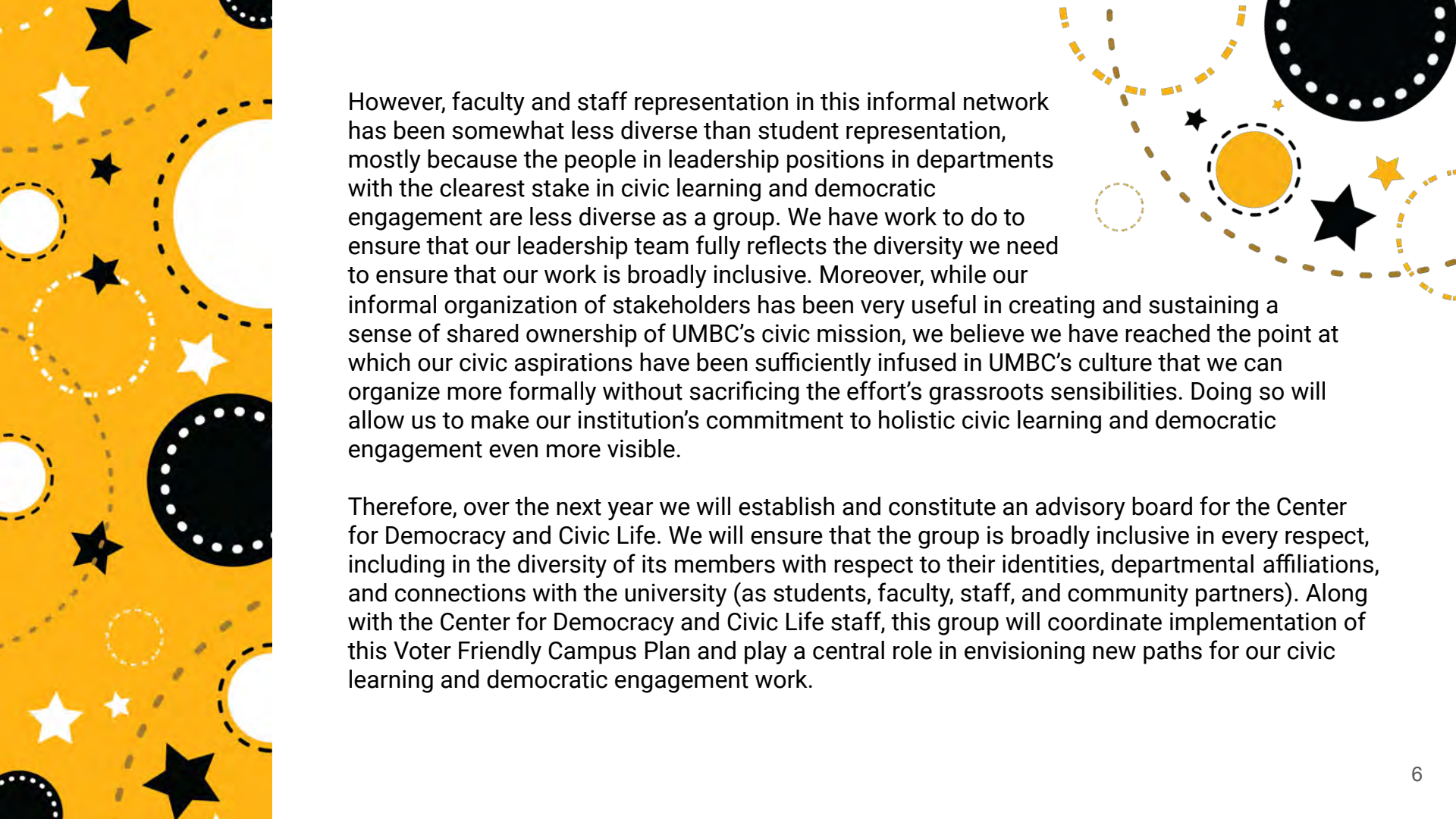


- **Residential Life**, which builds community through restorative practices and prepares Resident Assistants to facilitate civic learning;
- the **Political Science department**, which promotes engagement with public issues and supports voter registration efforts;
- the **Provost's Office**, sponsor of the BreakingGround initiative, a grant program that has supported the creation or redesign of more than 40 courses and 30 community programs fostering civic agency and engagement;
- the **Environmental Sustainability office**, which helps members of the UMBC community recognize and embrace opportunities to live and act sustainably, individually and collectively;
- the **Language, Literacy, and Culture doctoral program**, which promotes socio-cultural and linguistic diversity in research, practice, and policy, with special emphasis on social justice, change, equity, power, and identity;
- **Institutional Advancement**, which supports the development and dissemination of messages encouraging active engagement in communities and democracy;
- the **Division of Student Affairs**, which hosts programs that engage staff members in civic life and prepare them to support students' civic engagement; and
- **Media and Communications Studies**, which has produced television programs featuring information about voting and other forms of community engagement.



Each of these partners approaches its civic engagement initiatives collaboratively, and most involve students and/or external community partners in framing and enacting their work. The network and its collaborative work have been well supported at the highest levels of institutional leadership, as is reflected in the commitments and initiatives we share in other sections of this plan. Our commitment to a collaborative, inclusive approach to engagement across the institution helped to earn UMBC the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification in 2020.

The composition of this group has reflected UMBC's strengths and ongoing areas of growth when it comes to the diversity of its students, staff, and faculty. The compositional diversity of UMBC's student body is extraordinary, and our civic engagement work has supported students who are Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in playing key leadership roles on campus. The Center for Democracy and Civic Life's STRiVE leadership for social impact retreat prepares students to think critically about the cultural scripts (social norms and expectations) operating in their everyday environments and how they can be changed through collective action. Its 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. Its workshops on topics such as civic identity, civic professionalism, and civic courage help orient students to their capacity to make meaningful contributions to their communities on campus and beyond. Students participating in those programs build the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help steer UMBC's civic engagement efforts and deepen the institution's civic ethos. BIPOC students have opted into these programs in numbers even greater than their representation in the student body as a whole.



However, faculty and staff representation in this informal network has been somewhat less diverse than student representation, mostly because the people in leadership positions in departments with the clearest stake in civic learning and democratic engagement are less diverse as a group. We have work to do to ensure that our leadership team fully reflects the diversity we need to ensure that our work is broadly inclusive. Moreover, while our informal organization of stakeholders has been very useful in creating and sustaining a sense of shared ownership of UMBC's civic mission, we believe we have reached the point at which our civic aspirations have been sufficiently infused in UMBC's culture that we can organize more formally without sacrificing the effort's grassroots sensibilities. Doing so will allow us to make our institution's commitment to holistic civic learning and democratic engagement even more visible.


Therefore, over the next year we will establish and constitute an advisory board for the Center for Democracy and Civic Life. We will ensure that the group is broadly inclusive in every respect, including in the diversity of its members with respect to their identities, departmental affiliations, and connections with the university (as students, faculty, staff, and community partners). Along with the Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff, this group will coordinate implementation of this Voter Friendly Campus Plan and play a central role in envisioning new paths for our civic learning and democratic engagement work.

III. Commitment

UMBC is deeply committed to civic learning and democratic engagement. This commitment is evident in the university's [vision statement](#): "Our UMBC community redefines excellence in higher education through an inclusive culture that connects innovative teaching and learning, research across disciplines, and civic engagement. We will advance knowledge, economic prosperity, and social justice by welcoming and inspiring inquisitive minds from all backgrounds." In addition, among the principal goals named in UMBC's [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" (p. 8), 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" (p. 7).









The Division of Student Affairs similarly identifies “preparing students for work, civic engagement, and leadership” among its [Divisional Priorities](#). The Division established the [Center for Democracy and Civic Life](#) in 2018 to infuse civic learning and democratic engagement everywhere in the university. Its [mission](#): “The Center produces, inspires, and shares innovations in civic and democratic engagement, and supports collaborative activity that helps to build thriving civic cultures at UMBC and in communities involved in the Center’s work.”


These aspirations 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 and ensuring that UMBC fulfills all of its election-related legal responsibilities. In addition to offering election programming, staff provide guidance and support to student leaders as they organize voter registration drives and voter education programs. Center staff also work with faculty and staff who are looking for ways to support student engagement through their classes and living learning communities.
- **Working with national higher education networks:** Center staff coordinate UMBC’s [NASPA LEAD Initiative](#) and [American Democracy Project](#) (ADP) participation. Staff also serve as ADP Civic Scholars, Chair-Elect of the ADP Steering Committee, and National Advisory Board member for Imagining America. In addition, staff have been planning committee members for the annual [Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting](#).

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- **Providing civic innovation grants:** The Center hosts the BreakingGround grant program, which 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 more than 40 courses across the curriculum and more than 30 campus and community engagement projects.
 - **Conducting research:** Center staff serve as principal investigators on several grants that aim to develop students' agency and empower them as civic actors. Current grants include the [PLACE Collaboratory](#), a project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and a [Multi-Institutional Innovation Grant](#), funded by Bringing Theory to Practice.
 - **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.

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- **Teaching civic courses:** Center staff teach Talking Democracy (a 200-level seminar) and Be Your Best Self in Real Life (a 300-level seminar), both 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.
 - **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. They include:


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- **“Tools for Living Democracy: Putting the CLDE Theory of Change into Practice”** (coauthored by Romy Hübler and David Hoffman; eJournal of Public Affairs 9(1)). This article tells the story of national innovations in civic learning and democratic engagement that have been informed and inspired by work at UMBC.
 - **“Reimagining student affairs practice by enacting the CLDE Theory of Change”** (coauthored by David Hoffman and Romy Hübler; 2020 NASPA Knowledge Community Publication, pg. 28-31). This article connects the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Theory of Change with ACPA and NASPA Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators, and identifies specific steps student affairs can take to support students’ engagement.
 - **“Infusing CLDE Theory of Change into student affairs: New thinking about civic learning and democratic engagement”** (coauthored by Romy Hübler and David Hoffman; Leadership Exchange 17(3), pg. 18-23). This magazine article outlines what higher education leaders can do to support students’ development as effective.
 - **“Talking democracy”** (coauthored by David Hoffman and Romy Hübler; in *Creating space for democracy: A primer on dialogue and deliberation in higher education* edited by Nick Longo and Tim Shaffer, pg. 184-190). This book chapter focuses on dialogue and deliberative pedagogy in higher education and describes how democratic teaching practices have fostered agency and authentic connections in a course Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff teach in UMBC’s Honors College.

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- **“Why should college students—or anyone else—bother voting?”**
(coauthored by David Hoffman and Romy Hübler; Forbes CivicNation Voice). This blog post outlines why voting matters not only for college students but for everyone.
 - **“Higher education’s role in enacting a thriving democracy: Civic learning and democratic engagement theory of change”** (coauthored by David Hoffman; American Association of State Colleges and Universities’ American Democracy Project, NASPA LEAD Initiative, and The Democracy Commitment). This collection of five essays constitutes the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change, which outlines the kind of practices necessary for higher education professionals to foster a thriving democracy.
 - **“Ethos matters: Inspiring students as democracy’s co-creators”** (authored by David Hoffman; NASPA). This blog post describes how to orient students to lives of agency and deep engagement in their communities, including their university.
 - **“Fostering civic agency by making education (and ourselves) real”** (authored by David Hoffman; in *Democracy’s education: Public work, citizenship and the future of colleges and universities* edited by Harry Boyte, pg. 154-160). This book chapter describes UMBC’s approach to developing a civic ethos that inspires individual and collective agency.



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 departments across campus. Among them:

The [Shriver Center](#), UMBC's community engagement center, is also committed to advancing civic learning and democratic engagement through "address[ing] critical social challenges by bridging campus and community through engaged scholarship and applied learning." The Center coordinates several [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 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 Kaleigh Mrowka and Lauren Mauriello (both Assistant Directors in Residential Life) 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 “facilitat[ing] student and community developmental and ethical growth opportunities promoting personal integrity, civility, self-responsibility, citizenship and appreciation for diversity.” The department uses a restorative justice 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” ([Restorative Retriever group description](#)). Dozens of UMBC faculty, staff, and students have been trained in restorative practices.



IV. Landscape


The commitments described in the preceding section involve departments, organizations, and individuals across the institution and encompass voter education, voter turnout, engagement around public policy issues, service-learning and community engagement, and active participation in students' own communities and institutions.

UMBC's National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) results provide an indication of the impact of some of this work. In the 2018 midterm elections, the national average turnout among students who were eligible to vote was 39.1% (up from 19.7% in 2014). At UMBC that figure was 49.2% (up from 23.1% in 2014). In the 2016 presidential election, UMBC's turnout rate was 63.6%, compared to the national average of 50.4%.

UMBC's many courses that focus on civic learning and democratic engagement can be found in Public Administration and Policy (certificate), World Politics (minor), Law and Justice (minor), Practical Policy and Politics (minor), Political Sciences (B.A.), Public History (M.A.), and Public Policy (M.P.P., Ph.D.). Aligned with the idea that every career can contribute to fostering a thriving democracy, there are many other courses with civic components. More than 40 such courses were created with support from [BreakingGround](#), a grant program at UMBC that supports civic innovations. They include:



- **American Studies:** Critically Engaging with Heritage Ideas and Issues in Critical Heritage Studies (AMST 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.
- **English:** Understanding Factors Influencing Literacy in Baltimore Communities (ENG 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.
- **Geography and Environmental Systems:** Environmental Justice (GES 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.
- **Gender, Women's, + Sexuality Studies:** Studies in Feminist Activism (GWST 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.


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- **Mechanical Engineering:** Baltimore City Water Supply Aging Infrastructure (ENME 220H). Students learn how to use their technical engineering knowledge to improve their communities specifically related to critical water treatment issues in Baltimore City.
 - **Music:** Civil Discord (MUSC 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 Work:** Social Action in Baltimore (SOWK 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.
 - **Sociology:** Putting the Sociological Imagination Into Practice Locally (SOCY 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 leading a life of active participation. Center for Democracy and Civic Life immersive programs with a civic mission include [STRiVE](#), a leadership for social impact retreat, and [Alternative Spring Break](#). In addition, the Center offers dozens of workshops annually to help students, as well as colleagues, explore the civic dimensions of

their majors or professional roles. The tools shared at these workshops guide participants through the process of co-creating their communities and addressing challenges to a thriving democracy. The Center also works with the Student Government Association and several student organizations, including College Democrats and College Republicans, to plan and host election-related programs and events. These programs include voter registration drives, debate watch parties, conversation programs about important campaign issues, and an election night festival. Hundreds of students attend these programs.

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While civic learning and democratic engagement have broad and deep support at UMBC, there is room to grow. The biggest challenges we face relate to staff and funding resources. The Center for Democracy and Civic Life has two full-time staff members, a very small budget, and inadequate office space. In addition, faculty and staff representation in UMBC's civic learning and democratic engagement work has been less diverse than student representation, mostly because the people in leadership positions in departments with the clearest stake in civic learning and democratic engagement are less diverse as a group. Additional personnel and funding for civic learning and democratic engagement as well as a more diverse faculty and staff representation would allow UMBC to provide more opportunities for student engagement and ensure that these opportunities are relevant and meaningful.

UMBC does not currently have a polling station. While the closest polling station is adjacent to campus, there is no safe walking path. We have worked with UMBC Transit to provide buses to the nearest station on Election Day, and to voting locations in several counties during the period of Early Voting, but providing these shuttle services is expensive.

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V. Goals

UMBC's goals for civic learning and democratic engagement are those identified in the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change. We aspire to position students as co-creators of the aspirational 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. Among the capacities we aim help students develop (as described on page 11 of the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change) are:


- **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.



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- **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.



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For the past 10 years, we have been actively organizing to infuse opportunities for students to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions described above across the curriculum and in many co-curricular activities. In addition, we have been working to connect and support people at UMBC interested in advancing these learning outcomes. The success of the BreakingGround initiative, which has supported the launch or redesign of dozens of courses and community projects, and the launch of the Center for Democracy and Civic Life are both indicators of how successful we have been at developing a civic ethos across the institution.

In the next 10 years, we plan to continue infusing civic learning opportunities aligned with the CLDE Theory of Change in UMBC courses, programs, and organizations. Our deep goal continues to be fostering a culture of profound and effective civic engagement. Our approach will continue to be organic and inclusive, so that faculty, staff, and students are true co-creators of the effort.

This approach makes it difficult to express many of our goals in concrete, measurable, time-bound terms, because that expectation is in tension with the transformative (and, to date, highly successful) process in which we are actually engaged. For the most part, rather than deploying campus resources in a manner calculated to achieve specific, measurable targets identified in advance, we work to deepen relationships, cultivate a shared sense of responsibility, and tease out the civic dimensions of people's campus roles. In our approach, quantifiable, transactional "wins" flow from the co-creative process rather than driving it.

That said, our goals include the following:



- By **2022**, we will have established and constituted an advisory board for the Center for Democracy and Civic Life that includes students, faculty, staff, alumni, and external partners. The board will reflect the compositional diversity of UMBC's student body.
- By **2022**, the Center for Democracy and Civic Life and the Career Center will have developed joint programming available to all students to help them pursue meaningful careers as civic professionals.
- By **2023**, UMBC partners will have developed and implemented new messaging in a variety of forums that supports students' coming to see themselves as co-creators (i.e., producers) of UMBC itself, rather than as mere customers or recipients of knowledge.
- By **2024**, UMBC will increase the voter registration rate among students to above 90% (it was 84.3% as of the 2018 election), and the voter participation rate above 70% (it was 63.6% in 2016).
- By **2024**, UMBC will have achieved a more effective and complete integration of our civic learning and democratic engagement efforts with campus initiatives to address structural racism and promote social justice, so that students experience civic engagement as intrinsically connected with anti-racist work.
- By **2025**, facilitation guides, worksheets, and other civic 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 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.

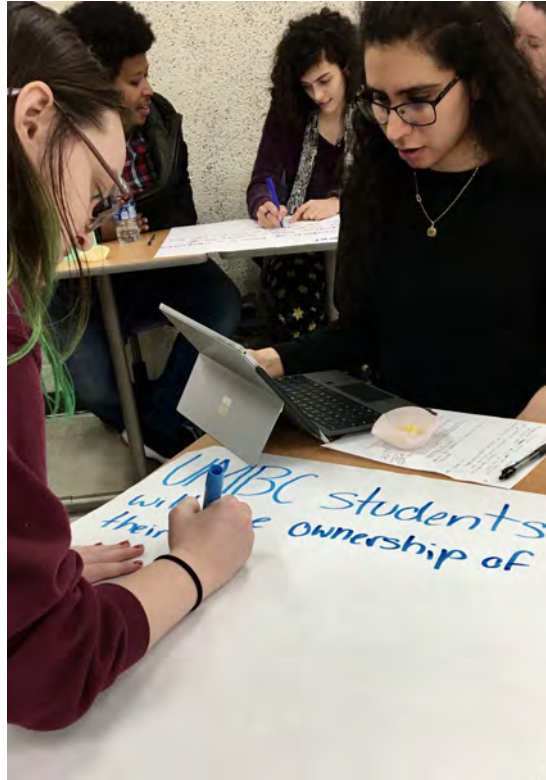


VI. Strategy


The work ahead for UMBC involves organizing. Having succeeded at developing new theoretical insights and practices that are advancing the field of civic learning and democratic engagement in higher education, we must continue to infuse those insights and practices across students' experiences.

As with our goals, our long-term infusion strategy is reflected in the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Theory of Change, which is based on our work. 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**, avoiding common uses of "institution voice," 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 takes the form of guidance in the context of administering the BreakingGround grant program; collaboration in designing and implementing courses and programs; and informal consultation.

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 current and new partners:



- Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff members will take the lead in organizing a diverse advisory board to guide and support the Center's civic learning and democratic engagement initiatives.
- Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff will work with current faculty and staff partners to broaden the coalition of departments and organizations supporting voter registration and engagement. Our principal partner in this effort will be the Director of the Honors College and the Student Government Association.
- Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff and Career Center staff already are exploring the development of joint offerings that can help students achieve clarity about their civic values, identify opportunities to enact those values in career settings, and pursue careers as civic professionals. We will continue to collaborate in order to make such programming available to all students.

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- The Center for Democracy and Civic Life already works with campus partners to develop messages that support students' civic identity development and agency. For example, we worked with UMBC's Honors College and prestigious scholarship programs to develop the [Co-Create UMBC Virtual Tour](#), an introduction to features of UMBC co-created by students, and shared it with incoming students at the June 2020 Honors Orientation. The Center for Democracy and Civic Life will initiate similar partnerships with other campus departments and organizations in order to develop and share more such messages with students.
 - Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff will work with the Inclusive Excellence staff in the Division of Student Affairs (encompassing UMBC's Mosaic Center for Culture and Diversity, Interfaith Center, and Pride Center) and the Women's Center staff to more fully integrate and align our efforts to address structural racism and promote social justice with our civic learning and democratic engagement initiatives.
 - Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff will continue developing and sharing civic tools, and will host institutes at which faculty, staff, and student leaders will learn to facilitate programs using the tools through 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 2020:

- Maintain an up-to-date web page with election-related deadlines and links to all states' voter registration and absentee ballot information: www.umbc.edu/voterregistration (Center for Democracy and Civic Life).
- Send emails to all students with a link to our voter information web page (Center for Democracy and Civic Life).
- Conduct virtual voter registration drives (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Student Government Association, and other campus departments and organizations).
- Participate in the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge, and encourage students to take the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge pledge to vote. UMBC finished 6th in the nation on the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge pledge-to-vote leaderboard (and 1st among Maryland institutions) in 2018 (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Student Government Association, and other campus departments and organizations).
- Host Dinner With Friends, featuring student-facilitated dinner conversations addressing issues important to people at UMBC and across Maryland (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Student Government Association, and other campus departments and organizations).

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- Host Change Makers Dinners, featuring student-facilitated dinner conversations with local leaders to learn how they have brought about change and what UMBC community members can do to support their initiatives and similar efforts (Center for Democracy and Civic Life).
 - Host a variety of roundtable discussions about public issues (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Mosaic Center for Culture and Diversity, 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 2020 election by providing resources and facilitation (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Student Government Association).
 - Host virtual Presidential debate watch gatherings (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Student Government Association, and other campus departments and organizations).
 - Host a virtual Election Night Extravaganza event to promote awareness of the 2020 election and bring our campus community together to watch the returns (Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Student Government Association, and other campus departments and organizations).



VII. NSLVE

UMBC participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), and has used the data it has provided to set goals as described in the Goals section of this report.

49.2% of UMBC students eligible to vote in 2018 cast a vote. This compares favorably to the 39.1% voting rate for all institutions participating in the study, and the 40.8% voting rate for public research institutions. Although the total number of eligible UMBC student voters dropped slightly from 2014 to 2018 (from 12,604 to 12,374), the number of students who cast votes more than doubled (from 2,907 to 6,087).

[Here](#) is a link to our NSLVE report for 2012-2016.

[Here](#) is a link to our NSLVE report for 2014-2018.

By 2024, UMBC will increase the voter registration rate among students to above 90% (it was 84.3% as of the 2018 election), and the voting rate above 70% (it was 63.6% in 2016).

Based on the Field of Study Data included in UMBC's 2018 NSLVE report, we intend to focus voter engagement efforts in 2020 and 2022 on students majoring in the STEM fields, and will organize campus partnerships to advance and support those efforts.

2016 Presidential Election

NSLVE CAMPUS REPORT | University of Maryland-Baltimore County

YOUR STUDENTS' VOTING DATA | PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Voting and Registration Rates

2016 Voting Rate

63.6%

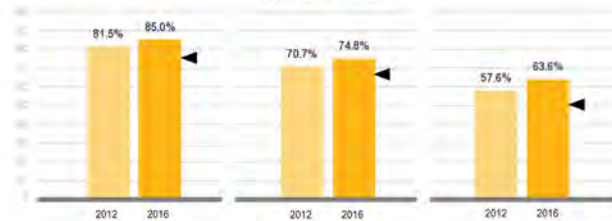
CHANGE
FROM 2012
6.0

2016 VOTING RATE
FOR ALL INSTITUTIONS
50.4%

Registration Rate

Voting Rate of
Registered Students

Voting Rate



◀ All Institutions, 2016

	2012	2016	Change
Total student enrollment	13,100	13,443	↑ 343
Age under 18/Unknown	(166)	(127)	↑
IPEDS estimated non-resident aliens	(888)	(1,011)	↑
FERPA records blocked	(27)	(16)	↑
Total eligible voters	12,019	12,289	↑ 270
Number of students who registered	9,799	10,443	↑ 644
Number of students who voted	6,923	7,812	↑ 889
Registration rate	81.5%	85.0%	↑ 3.5
Voting rate of registered students	70.7%	74.8%	↑ 4.2
Voting rate	57.6%	63.6%	↑ 6.0
Difference from all institutions	+10.7	+13.2	↑

2018 Midterm Election

NSLVE CAMPUS REPORT | University of Maryland-Baltimore County

YOUR STUDENTS' VOTING DATA | PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Voting and Registration Rates

2018 Voting Rate

49.2%

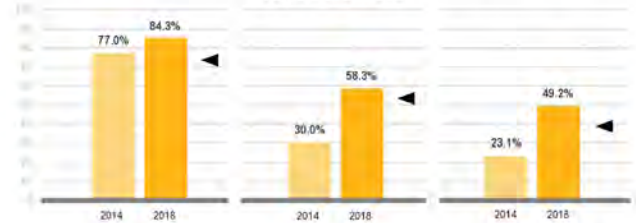
CHANGE
FROM 2014
+26.1

2018 VOTING RATE
FOR ALL INSTITUTIONS
39.1%

Registration Rate

Voting Rate of
Registered Students

Voting Rate



◀ All Institutions, 2018

	2014	2018	Change
Total student enrollment	13,850	13,481	↓ -369
Age under 18/Unknown	(182)	(105)	↑
IPEDS estimated non-resident aliens	(1,029)	(995)	↑
FERPA records blocked	(35)	*	↑
Total eligible voters	12,604	12,374	↓ -230
Number of students who registered	9,702	10,436	↑ 734
Number of students who voted	2,907	6,087	↑ 3,180
Registration rate	77.0%	84.3%	↑ 7.4
Voting rate of registered students	30.0%	58.3%	↑ 28.4
Voting rate	23.1%	49.2%	↑ 26.1
Difference from all institutions	+3.4	+10.1	↑

VIII. Reporting

The plan will be shared with university leaders and appointees to the Center for Democracy and Civic Life Advisory Board. It will serve as a guide for the work of the Advisory Board and staff. In addition, its content and goals will be shared with relevant stakeholders working to advance civic learning and democratic engagement at UMBC.

The plan will also be shared with the public.

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 voter 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, publically.



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IX. Evaluation

As we have described, UMBC has taken a community organizing approach to infusing civic learning and democratic engagement across our institution. Over the past 10 years, we have fostered a deep and powerful civic ethos by teasing out the civic dimensions of people's roles, building relationships among them, and supporting organic, collective work, guided by a common philosophy, in which the operational details have been co-created by the participants. This approach has worked well because it aligns with our aspiration to embed our civic values in our courses, programs, and everyday practices, so that students have countless opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to support a thriving democracy.

As a result, many of the goals we have identified are process goals: partnerships we intend to pursue and forums we plan to create. For those goals—including, for example, assembling a diverse Center for Democracy and Civic Life advisory board, developing new programs focused on meaningful careers and civic professionalism through a partnership between the Center for Democracy and Civic Life and the Career Center, and hosting Dinner with Friends and Change Makers programs—the principal measure of our success will be that the processes play out as we envision. We will gauge the impact on participants through evaluation forms and surveys, and will use the results to inform our program designs, but it is the relationships and the infusion of civic commitments across our campus culture that matter most.

In order to assess our success with respect to our voter engagement goals, UMBC will continue to participate in NSLVE, and will continue to share NSLVE data with campus partners and the public. 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 measure the effectiveness of their civic tools through workshop evaluations.

Center for Democracy and Civic Life staff will also assess the long-term impacts of students' exposure to UMBC's approach to civic learning and democratic engagement. This effort will involve undertaking two research studies. The first will investigate the paths students take after foundational programmatic leadership and engagement experiences, tracing their subsequent campus and community engagement. The second will be a qualitative study of how students make meaning of their experiences with UMBC's programs and initiatives and construct empowered civic identities.



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