



# Fall 2019 Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan





# University of Michigan-Dearborn



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# Executive Summary

The University of Michigan-Dearborn (UM-Dearborn) was built on the foundation of civic engagement. Six decades ago, the Ford Motor Company saw the need to develop aspiring local engineers and business leaders and provided the University of Michigan with \$6.5 million and 200 acres of land to found the Dearborn Center in 1959. Located on Henry Ford's former Fair Lane and within a stone's throw of the Ford Estate, UM-Dearborn has become a hub of community growth in a region that demands leaders for the rebirth it has long yearned for.

In our university's mission statement, we express our institution's appreciation for our framework of metropolitan impact, explaining that "we have set ourselves apart in higher education through intentional, meaningful engagement with local industry,

government and nonprofits." UM-Dearborn is a difference maker for southeastern Michigan, and becoming a Voter Friendly Campus fits squarely into our metropolitan vision. Although UM-Dearborn has developed programs such as an annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, Academic Service Learning courses, volunteer days of service, and various other opportunities for students to engage in their greater community, efforts to bolster voter engagement have been sparse and uncoordinated in recent memory. That is, until this past fall semester. Fall 2018 saw the launch of the #victorsvote initiative through the Office of Student Engagement, and there has been tremendous growth and increased interest in voter engagement as a result.

This document will outline how UM-Dearborn plans to build off of the success of the fall and serve as a guide for voter engagement initiatives on campus. By creating this action plan, we hope to continue our university's mission of creating a positive metropolitan impact. The action plan was written by Jordan Wohl, an undergraduate student studying Political Science at UM-Dearborn and member of the Civic Leadership Board.

While the University of Michigan has three universities in its system, this plan is designed specifically for the Dearborn campus. The following plan will be active from May 1, 2019 and will be reviewed for the Fall Semester on May 1, 2020.



**"THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN HAS BECOME A HUB OF COMMUNITY GROWTH IN A REGION THAT DEMANDS LEADERS FOR THE REBIRTH IT HAS LONG YEARNED FOR."**

<sup>1</sup> <https://umdearborn.edu/about/university-history>



# Leadership

*The UM-Dearborn Voter Friendly Campus action plan will be carried out with the support of the Democratic Engagement Coalition, chaired by Sheryl Edwards and Jordan Wohl.*

**Julie Colbath**

Coordinator for Civic Engagement  
(position vacant August-December 2019)

**Sheryl Edwards**

Collegiate Lecturer in Social Sciences

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Alumnus, Executive Director of Engage

**Jordan Wohl**

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Associate Professor of Political Science

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ACCESS

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Dean of Students

**Nancy Kursman**

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**Sarah Nassar**

President of Student Government

**Michael Latvis**

Government Relations Manager

**Tracy Hall**

Executive Director of the Office of  
Metropolitan Impact

One Student Representative from the  
Political Science Association

**Molly Manley**

Assistant Director of the Office of  
Metropolitan Impact

One Representative from the League of  
Women Voters

## THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COALITION




The CEC serves as a resource for democratic engagement efforts by providing suggestions for all related initiatives and influencing campus policy and culture on the subject of voter engagement.

The CEC is continuing to develop a mission statement to guide the work that will be done on campus related to campus-wide voter and democratic engagement efforts. Once we solidify a mission statement, we will revisit the name "Democratic Engagement Coalition" to ensure that it is appropriate. We expect this mission statement and name decision to be completed before the end of the Winter Semester.


Originally, the Democratic Engagement Coalition was set to meet once a semester, but we will continue to meet once a month in the Winter Semester, as we have been in the fall.


## REVISITING SHORT TERM GOALS FROM FALL 2018


 Create a Democratic Engagement Coalition (DEC).


 Acquire Turbovote for voter registration and programming by the beginning of the Fall 2018 Semester.

 Acquire NSLVE data.

 Facilitate three events that collectively address each of the three pillars of Voter Engagement.


 Campus-wide letter to all students, faculty, and staff from UM-Dearborn Chancellor Dominico Grasso.


 Work with External Relations at our University to adopt and support the #VictorsVote campaign, hashtag, and logo.


 Develop a guiding mission statement for the DEC.

## NEW SHORT TERM GOALS FOR FALL 2019

(INCOMPLETE GOALS FROM THE FALL SEMESTER WILL  
BE CARRIED OVER TO THE WINTER SEMESTER)

 To complement the active role of the Democratic Engagement Coalition, we plan on creating a ***Grassroots Voter Union (GVU)***. The GVU will be made up of representatives from student organizations invested in voter engagement work and other interested students, and aims at supporting collaboration and co-sponsorship. The GVU will meet bi-weekly.

 Although we have acquired NSLVE data for our campus, it was acquired very recently. A major goal of the beginning stages of the Winter Semester is to ***thoroughly study the data*** as soon as we can and extrapolate meaningful directions of action. This will inform the establishment of long-term goals.

 We were successful in planning three events in the Fall semester centered on the three pillars of voter education, registration, and turnout. One pillar that we failed to address was the fourth: Students as voter advocates. In an effort to properly address the fourth pillar, we will be setting a goal of ***identifying and supporting three major voter engagement events*** on campus through the GVU.

# Strategy

The following organizations have been identified as strategic partners in our efforts towards programming, developing resources, and fostering a culture of voter engagement on campus. They will assist in voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout activities happening both inside and outside the classroom. Organizations will host some events individually, and some events will be co-sponsored by the Democratic Engagement Coalition; however, all events will be promoted and shared amongst each group's network.

 <p>AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: UM-DEARBORN CHAPTER</p>	 <p>CAMPUS CONSERVATIVES</p>	 <p>COLLEGE DEMOCRATS</p>
 <p>DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT COALITION</p>	 <p>EMGAGE</p>	 <p>POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION</p>
 <p>NEXTGEN AMERICA</p>	 <p>STUDENT GOVERNMENT</p>	 <p>INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT</p>

\*Organizations that will be representatives on the Democratic Engagement Coalition



# Demographics



**9,195 students**

6,914 Undergraduate

2,184 Graduate

97 Doctoral

**47%** of new students are first-generation college students

**94%** are Michigan residents, representing 40 counties

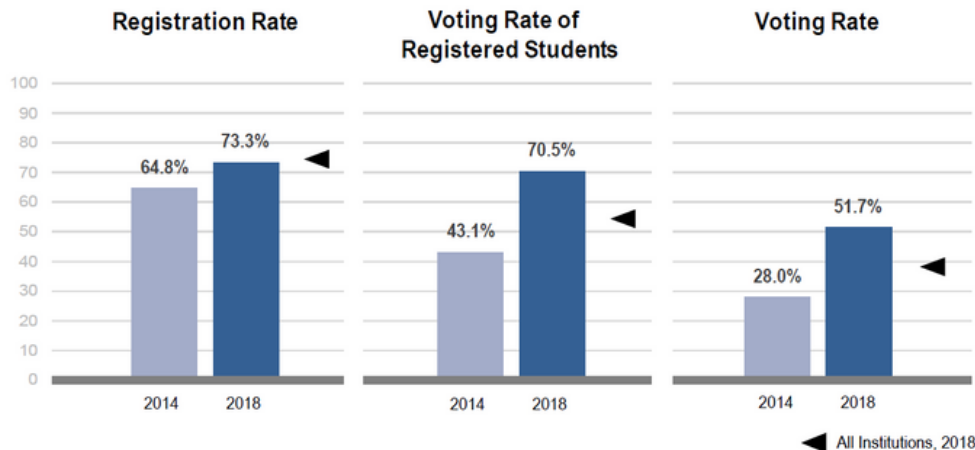
**28%** students of color

**44%** are Pell eligible

**83** birth countries represented

## NSLVE Data

A preliminary look into UM-Dearborn's National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) 2014 & 2018 Campus Report shows impressive results, especially for midterm elections. In 2018, registration rates increased by 8.5%, voting rates of registered students increased by 27.3%, and voting rates increased by 23.7%, compared to 2014. These voting rates were higher than the average rate for all institutions. Voting rates were highest among students studying public administration and social service professions, and lowest among those studying foreign language and education. We plan to further analyze this data to target and shape our voter engagement efforts.





# Barriers

One barrier that we have faced is *the lack of an existing system in place for voter engagement*. Because we are starting from scratch, our goals and vision will start small. This approach will allow us to build incrementally on our successes and establish a strong foundation for a greater impact in coming years.

The second challenge that we will face is that fact that *UM-Dearborn is a commuter campus*. Because a majority of our students do not live on campus, our efforts around the three pillars of voter engagement will have to address democratic engagement in students' home communities.

A third barrier is *collaborating across all colleges*. The Fairlane Center houses our College of Business (COB) and College of Education, Health, and Human Services (CEHHS), while the College of Engineering and Computer Science (CECS) and College of Arts, Science, and Letters (CASL) is located on main campus. It is essential that we build bridges of collaboration and be in constant communication with all colleges, in an effort to coordinate a campus-wide effort of democratic engagement.





# Learning Outcomes

## **Grasp basic voter engagement processes**

As a result of our voter education initiatives, students will feel more comfortable, confident, and competent when it comes to the process of voting. Through programming, resources, education, and awareness, students will have an in-depth understanding of the whole voting process.

## **Critical-thinking and informed decision making**

As a result of students' participation in democratic programming, and access to relevant resources, students will develop critical-thinking skills through exposure and engagement with diverse perspectives. It is our mission to ensure that students on our campus challenge their pre-dispositions on societal and community-based issues in order to make informed choices on election day.

## **The value of voting**

Active participation in a local, state, or national election is vital to the health and sustainability of our democracy. The candidates who are elected have power over the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the land we live on. It is essential that our students understand the power of their vote, the value of casting a values-based vote, and the influence we have in a Representative Democracy.

## **Development of civic identity**

Our voter engagement work aims to nurture in students a civic identity. Through the development and acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values necessary for being a productive member of our society, students will develop a holistic sense of how engaging in the democratic process is vital to being civic-minded.

# Reporting

This action plan and our NSLVE report will be shared with both the DEC and our institution's senior level leadership in an effort to unite our campus community around this common objective. We also hope to be as transparent as possible with our student body as we progress and develop an understanding of voter engagement on our campus and how we can collectively work towards increasing it.

The data that we collect and the avenues for reporting the results to campus will be determined by the Democratic Engagement Coalition.

# Evaluation

We plan on tracking our progress before, during, and after the election through individual program attendance at events, TurboVote data, and data collected through the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). This will help us determine what initiatives are most effective in engaging students on campus. The Democratic Engagement Coalition will meet at the end of winter semester to plan for fall 2020 and winter 2021, utilizing our evaluation to continue with effective efforts and rethink strategies for efforts that may not be as successful.

We intend on being transparent with the campus community about our progress towards reaching each and every one of our short-term and long-term goals, sharing relevant information through #VictorsVote social media accounts and other avenues identified by the DEC.





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