



OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN



University of Michigan Dearborn Democratic Engagement Action Plan: 2022-2023 Academic Year

This plan was created using the Votes & Ballots Action Planning Form. We will submit the first draft of this action plan on May 31, 2022. The final draft will be completed before the Fall 2022 semester starts on Monday, August 29, 2022 to ensure it is the most up-to-date and incorporates feedback from the first draft submission.

I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by Julie Colbath, Coordinator of Civic Engagement, to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at University of Michigan Dearborn. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2022-2023 Academic Year, on and around our campus in Dearborn, Michigan.

The following groups will be leading this work at University of Michigan Dearborn in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections:

- Undergraduate Students, including Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows
- Student Affairs Staff

The mission of our initiative is:

- To prepare students to become active citizens who are committed to contributing to their local, national, and global communities

We hope to focus our efforts and programming on voter registration, voter education, voter turnout, and voting rights. We want to engrain the ideas of being democratically engaged in our students to develop a life-long habit.

II. Leadership

Julie Colbath, Coordinator of Civic Engagement, will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. She will be supported in this work by:

- Penny Kane - Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow
- Samuel Caruso - Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow
- Antonina Dreist - University of Michigan Dearborn student

This coalition is diverse and inclusive of student leaders, with different perspectives and areas of expertise who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus into our work.

From August 2022 to November 2022, our coalition plans to meet weekly in preparation for midterm elections, through a mix of in-person and virtually. From January 2023 to April 2023, our coalition will meet bi-monthly, again through a mix of in-person and virtually.

We are also partnering and working with the following organizations from the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition and our community to support our efforts on campus:

- All In Campus Democracy Challenge
- Campus Vote Project
- Dearborn City Clerk
- Democracy Works
- Henry Ford Community College
- Michigan Nonprofit Vote
- Michigan Secretary of State
- MTV Early Voting

III. Commitment

The University of Michigan 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 businessmen 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, 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.

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrates commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. As stated in our mission statement, the University of Michigan Dearborn is rooted in an ongoing commitment to the well-being of metropolitan Detroit. Since our inception, we have set ourselves apart in higher education through intentional, meaningful engagement with local industry, government, and nonprofits. The University of Michigan Dearborn is rich in opportunities for independent and collaborative research, integrated learning

and civic engagement. We are responsive to the changing needs of our diverse student body, the world in which they live and work, ever-advancing technologies, and a knowledge-based economy and impact.

The university's mission details out several bullet points of how we accomplish this mission, and several of these bullet points are civically or community minded:

- Preparing our graduates to become engaged citizens and creative leaders, ready to offer creative solutions to society's challenges impacting urban environments at all scales;
- Building the knowledge and skills essential for personal growth and transformation, professional success and advancing the common good;
- Creating and sharing knowledge through pioneering research and maximizing our partnerships with diverse sectors of our community;
- Forging mutually beneficial partnerships with businesses, community-based organizations, educational institutions and government agencies

We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values performance principles through promoting the success of our students - on campus and throughout their personal and professional lives; creating and sustaining a culture of respect, inclusion, and diversity; fostering the success and well-being of the campus community and the people who comprise it; creating and sustaining a respectful, inclusive, safe, and welcoming environment; and acting as honorable and wise stewards of all resources entrusted to us.

In addition, our campus has mentioned civic learning and democratic engagement in their strategic plan, by coordinating and expanding community-based teaching and scholarship, and leveraging our Carnegie Community Engagement status. We also have had a senior leader commit to civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.

On campus, we've seen:

- Voter education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
- Voter registration tables
- Protests / rallies / walkouts
- Signage promoting Election Day

On campus, we've experienced:

- Voting in student body elections
- Political speakers
- Town halls
- Registering to vote
- Civic Holiday events (such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day)

Though we have seen and experienced active engagement, the emphasis on civic learning and democratic engagement could be increased.

IV. Landscape

The following information provides a brief overview of the landscape of our campus. This information is based on data collected from 2021-2022 when our total student enrollment was 8,331.

Enrollment Data:

- 6,355 undergraduate students
- 1,845 graduate students
- 131 doctoral students
- 93% are Michigan residents representing 49 counties
- 83 birth countries represented
- 29% students of color
- 100% commuter students

The University of Michigan Dearborn is home to four colleges:

- College of Arts, Sciences, & Letters
- College of Business
- College of Education, Health, and Human Services
- College of Engineering and Computer Science

V. Goals

Before setting our civic learning and democratic engagement goals on campus, we took the following information into consideration.

We know our campus faces following challenges internally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- We don't have a coalition of people who are positioned to implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We don't have processes in place for registering large percentages of our students.
- We don't use the resources readily available to develop and implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- The voter engagement work on our campus is very siloed within one office.
- We have trouble engaging student leaders for the leadership of our initiative.

We also know our campus faces the following challenges externally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- We don't have a working relationship with our local election office.

- We don't have working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement.

With that said, we know our campus has the following strengths when we approach our voter engagement work:

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan mention civic learning and democratic engagement.
- We have someone whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have ways in which we communicate voting information to our students.
- We have sustainable or consistent funding.
- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan.

With this in mind, we have set the three goals that we would like to achieve over the next academic year:

1. Facilitate three events that collectively address each of the three pillars of Voter Engagement (Education, Registration, Turnout) so that students can learn more about elections, how to register to vote, and why their vote matters
2. Bring 3 different city clerks to campus to help students register and sign up to be poll workers
3. Create a university coalition to promote democratic and civic engagement

We have also set three goals that we would like to achieve over the next five years:

1. Achieve voter parity across racial and ethnic groups, with students of color voting at the same rate as white students
2. Work with campus leadership to either close campus or cancel classes for election day so that students, faculty, and staff can either stay in their local community to vote or come to the University Center to vote
3. See significant increases in fields of study that have traditionally low voting rates

VI. Strategy

Below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months and years.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** in the **short term** (within the next year):

- Partnering with TurboVote
- Integrating TurboVote into VictorsLink
- Creating, printing, and posting flyers promoting upcoming elections
- Participating in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement
- Promoting our Voter Friendly Campus status

- Working with the Campus Vote Project to understand and promote student voting rights in our state
- Participating in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge

These are tactics that we **plan to do** in the **short term**:

- Host an event on National Voter Registration Day (September 20) and Vote Early Day (October 28)
- Incorporate voter registration into an unrelated, yet popular event(s) on campus
- Incorporate voter registration into new and transfer student orientation
- Have our institution's chancellor send out a campus-wide email about the importance of voting
- Table in various places on campus for the months leading up to the general election
- Provide stamps and envelopes for absentee ballots
- Visit with or email faculty about encouraging students to vote after each of their classes the week leading up to Election Day
- Join monthly calls of the Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) Coalition
- Work with the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP)
- Add a page to our school website dedicated to nonpartisan student voter education
- Create and distribute a nonpartisan voter guide featuring FAQs tailored to student voters
- Promote and host debate watch parties, complete with swag and snacks

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **short term**:

- Host a mock poll booth event to help prepare students for what to expect on Election Day
- Voter registration competitions through Greek Life and nearby off-campus student housing facility
- Recruit our institution's local election clerks to come on campus to help train students on registering voters
- Coordinate a group of students to pause class for ~5 minutes to talk about voting and help students register
- Incorporate voter registration into the process for student government elections
- Work with student organizations to incorporate voter engagement into at least one meeting each semester
- Do a student takeover of campus social media accounts with voting content
- Launch an "I care about..." social media campaign (share photos of what they care about, either as voters or students ineligible to vote – inclusivity is important!)
- Organize a campus-wide pledge to vote campaign
- Promote and host an info session for students who are not eligible to vote to get involved
- Work with the student newspaper to launch a series of articles about youth voting
- With the help of our local election clerks, recruit students to be poll workers on Election Day
- Create a university coalition to promote democratic and civic engagement

These are tactics that we **are already doing** for the **long term** (beyond the next year):

- Partnering with TurboVote
- Integrating TurboVote into VictorsLink
- Participating in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement
- Having our institution's president or student government president send out a campus-wide email about the importance of voting
- Focusing on encouraging democratic and civic engagement outside of only election years

These are tactics that we **want to do** in the **long term**:

- Work with campus stakeholders to institutionalize Service Saturdays
- Build relationships in our community by visiting local, public spaces to register and speak with voters
- Promote and host a roundtable discussion where international students share about political experiences in their countries with peers
- Organize a Lobby Day or Advocacy Day to support student-friendly voting laws

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **long term**:

- Offer 1:1 appointments for students to ask questions about how to get engaged
- Strategically analyze NSLVE data to inform programming and efforts
- Work with staff to incorporate voter registration into the online campus platforms we frequently use
- Build our network through partnering with community organizations and other universities
- Further incorporate voter registration into new and transfer student orientation
- Add Election Day to the campus calendar
- Organize a walk/ride to the polls on Election Day
- Start the conversation with administration and faculty about attendance on Election Day
- Work with faculty, staff, or identity-based groups to host a deliberative dialogue series
- Incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement activities into First Year Experience courses
- Work with motivated faculty and/or identity-based groups to host Lunch & Learns about issues affecting your community
- Promote and host a speaker series featuring candidates running for office

VII. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

Our campus has access to our National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data for 2020. In 2020 our registration rate was 87.7%. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased.

In 2020, our voting rate was 69.4% and our voting rate among registered students was 79.1%. During this year, our voting rate was higher than the national average.

In our NSLVE report, we had racial data for the following groups:

- Asian
- American Indian / Alaska Native
- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- 2 or More Races

For the racial groups that have recent voter turnout data, we saw the following groups increase in voter turnout compared to four years ago.

- Asian
- American Indian / Alaska Native
- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- 2 or More Races

Upon initial review of our NSLVE data, the following data stood out:

- By voting method
 - We had an increase in the number of students who did not vote in person.
- Age groups
 - We had a decrease in the rate of voters in the range 30-39, but an increase in all other age groups.
 - Voting rates were highest among students 50+, followed by students 18-21 and 40-49.
- Education level
 - Voting rates were higher amongst undergraduate students than graduate students.
- Fields of study
 - We saw an increase in voting rates amongst all fields except History and Public Administration and Social Services, which both saw a decrease in voting rates.
 - The fields with the lowest rates of voting are Computer & Information Sciences and Engineering & Engineering Technologies.

VIII. Reporting & Evaluation

We plan to share this Action Plan internally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Email to campus administration

We plan to share this Action Plan externally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Post on the campus website

We will collect feedback on this plan by:

- Sending a post-election survey to students
- Sending a post-election survey to faculty
- Integrating feedback collection into individual campus efforts

We plan to evaluate our success by:

- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year
- Seeking out feedback throughout the action planning process from people outside of our action planning team
- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly