



# Fall 2024 Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan



# University of Michigan-Dearborn



## Table of Contents

2	<b>Executive Summary</b>	7	<b>Tentative Calendar</b>
3	<b>Leadership</b>	8	<b>Demographics &amp; NSLVE Data</b>
4	<b>Goals</b>	9	<b>Learning Outcomes</b>
5	<b>Barriers</b>	10	<b>Reporting</b>
6	<b>Strategy</b>	10	<b>Evaluation</b>



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# Executive Summary

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.

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." The University of Michigan-Dearborn is a difference maker for southeastern Michigan, and remaining a Voter Friendly Campus fits squarely into our metropolitan vision. 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. However, previously, efforts to bolster voter engagement have been sparse and uncoordinated in recent memory.

We are striving to make stronger efforts to engage students past their initial voter registration and encourage them to find more ways to remain active citizens and aware of local issues and topics relevant to voting. This action plan will outline how we intend to engage with more students on our campus to remain aware of their power of vote and importance of engagement on a greater, campus wide scale. We plan to further integrate voter registration with education as well as opportunities for individual engagement. Our institution understands that it takes a village to make our hopes of high student voting rates a reality, and we plan to deeply collaborate with administrators, faculty, staff, community leaders, and students in different ways to engage our community and open the conversation about political engagement. We also intend to use our data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) to inform our future campus efforts and measure our progress.

This action plan was developed by JaNai' James, Civic Engagement Coordinator at the University of Michigan Dearborn, Office of Student Life, and Advisor for student organization Turn Up Turnout, as well as other civic engagement student organizations. This action plan will be active from September 3rd, the first day of our Fall Semester, and subject to review before the Winter semester begins on January 6th.



**"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

*We are a team of staff members and civic engagement based student organizations and their dedicated leadership teams. We work in collaboration with our other University of Michigan Campuses in Ann Arbor & Flint to form the UMICH Votes Coalition and engage students in democracy based civic engagement programming on campus.*

JaNai' James  
Coordinator for Civic Engagement

Edie Goldenberg  
UMICH Votes - Ann Arbor Faculty

Phobe Henninger  
UMICH VOTES - PhD Researcher

Dr. Amy Finley  
Dean of Students

Alexandria Bakhaus  
Director of the Office of Student Life

Molly Manley  
Assistant Director of the Office of  
Community Engaged Learning

Leadership Team of Turn Up Turnout

Leadership Team of Engaged Scholars  
Civic Engagement Learning Community

President and Vice President of Student  
Government

Rules & Ethics Chair & Committee of  
Student Government



# Goals

## 1 Voter Education Week

We plan to incorporate outside, nonpartisan voter organizations (League of Women Voters, Rise) to come to campus and engage with students for a full week of events and voter engagement and education. We also plan to engage with student organizations to host events and encourage their members to engage. We aim to educate students on their voter locations, upcoming local elections relevant to them, and making a voter plan for election days. Our goal is a successful Voter Education Week that can be repeated and become a staple in University programming for future years to come, to continue to emphasize voter education and familiarize students with the topic at the beginning of the school year.

## 2 Local Elections

We are not a residential campus, so our students come from and reside in many different areas in our state. Our goal is to strategize and plan around local elections in our area to get students aware of issues & elections in their local community.



## 3 NSLVE Results

Our report from 2022 was recently obtained from NSLVE (National Study for Learning, Voting, and Engagement) stating we have very high voter registration, but lower voter turnout at elections. We plan to restructure based on the current needs of our community in voter education to increase voter turnout rates and engagement throughout the year.

## 4 Campus Partners

We no longer have a Voter Coalition solely on our campus, but we recognize that this important work is best done from multiple aspects to best reach an entire campus community. Although our sponsored student organizations will work with our office to achieve these initiatives, we will be working on expanding and establishing partnerships between faculty and other groups and offices on campus to help promote our work and efforts throughout the year.



# Barriers

## 1 Commuter Campus

The major barrier that we face is that we are not a traditional, residential campus. We are a commuter campus with many of our students living in different counties across the state, all with different election dates and deadlines to remember and educate on, as opposed to one singular location with everyone living on one campus. Many Campus Voter Engagement Strategies (Walk to the Polls Together, Dorm Canvassing, other Late Night Events) do not work for our demographic.



## 2 Centralized System

Another barrier that we face is that we do not have a centralized voter system, programs, or office. Currently, if students are interested in voting or learning more about steps they can take to be more politically active, they must connect directly with our voting student group, TurnUp Turnout, or our Office of Student Life, which encompasses all aspects of Student Life/Campus Activities, and very rarely promotes voter engagement initiatives alone. We aim to establish stronger voter engagement & education initiatives that are more widespread and accessible for students, including making voter registration sheets available in more offices.

## 3 Consistency

The next barrier that we face is that we lack consistent messaging and visibility on campus to what our initiatives are, and that we are remaining nonpartisan. Voter Engagement is sometimes seen as very political to some students, who are adverse to further engagement with us for reasons of not ‘getting too political’. Many students are anxious that they will have to share, or be exposed to other intense or radical political standpoints in opposition to their own, which makes them uncomfortable and unlikely to interact with us or any voting organization tables in general. We have been trying to manage this through rebranding of some of our existing programs, switching “Popcorn & Politics” Movie Afternoons, to “Donuts & Democracy”. We also hope that our collaborations with other groups, and more consistent messaging will push that anyone can be an engaged citizen, anyone can and should be educated on issues for their own understanding of their community.

# Strategy

The following organizations have been identified as preliminary strategic partners in our efforts towards programming, developing resources, and fostering a culture of voter engagement on campus.

Throughout the year, in collaboration with these organizations, we will produce consistent and accessible programming and education to engage students on campus.



TURN UP TURNOUT



CAMPUS CONSERVATIVES



COLLEGE DEMOCRATS



UMICH VOTES COALITION



DEARBORN  
ENGAGED SCHOLARS  
ENGAGED SCHOLARS LEARNING  
COMMUNITY



POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION \*



SECRETARY OF STATE



STUDENT GOVERNMENT \*



CENTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE &  
INCLUSION



# Tentative Calendar

Fall 2018

17

SEP

## National Voter Registration Day



Turn Up Turnout & The Office of Student Life will be educating and registering students to vote on this special day, taking place during our University's annual Civic Action Week.

We will host Election Jeopardy on our University Center Stage for students to test their voter knowledge and win prizes, and host a special Donuts & Democracy Karaoke Night.



7-11

OCT

## National Voter Education Week



For the entire week, different organizations on campus representing various backgrounds will be tasked with holding programming and fostering engagement with students about voting.

We will host returning events including "Coffee & Chat about Local Elections with the NAACP" and include new ones based on targeting students to learn more about upcoming elections in the communities and issues that are most important to them.



15

OCT

## Donuts & Democracy



Taking place each month, Donuts & Democracy creates a casual, non partisan avenue for students to learn more about democracy and voter education, and learn how to get more involved.

This monthly event, a collaboration between Turn Up Turnout & Engaged Scholars, student organizations, takes many different shapes throughout the academic year to engage students, including movie nights, watch parties, and karaoke.



 - Voter Registration

 - Voter Education

 - Voter Turnout



# Demographics



**8,037 students**

6,071 Undergraduate  
1,830 Graduate  
136 Doctoral

**6,823 eligible voters**

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

**93%** are Michigan residents, representing 48 counties

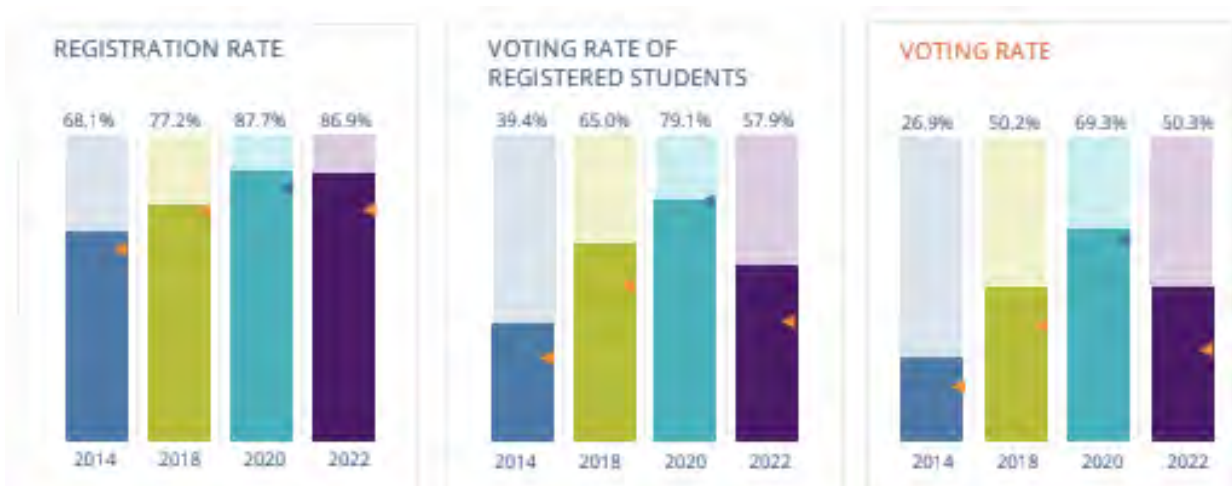
**31%** students of color

**46%** are Pell eligible

**83** birth countries represented

## NSLVE Data

A preliminary look into UM-Dearborn's National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) 2022 Campus Report shows impressive and interesting results. In 2022, registration rates increased by 1.2%, voting rates of registered students dropped by 21.2%, and voting rates decreased by 19%, compared to 2020. These voting rates were higher than the average rate for all institutions. Voting rates were highest among students studying ethnic, cultural, and gender studies, and lowest among those studying biological and biomedical sciences. We plan to further analyze this data to target and shape our voter engagement efforts.



# Learning Outcomes

## 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 democratic issues in order to make informed choices on election day. Through community forum and dialogue with students about many things related to voter education like polarization of issues in the media, fact checking, and 'fake news', developing within students strong abilities to decipher information and determine viable sources.

## Understanding of Voter Registration & Voter Processes

From local to National levels, we are educating students on how voting works and the different ways to ensure you are registered to vote, can find polling locations, and remain educated on elections and initiatives on their ballot. This will ensure continuing voter retention post graduation as students will be self sufficient in finding these resources and information themselves

## Development of civic identity

Through connections and collaborations with other organizations and offices on our campus, we hope to encourage and emphasize the importance of being an active citizen, which includes voting. We hope to base our initiatives around students haloing identify values that are important to them and would encourage them to remain current on current events and the political stances that surround them, and personally and individually be motivated to keep up their voter education and engagement post graduation

# Reporting

This action plan and our campus NSLVE 2022 Report will be shared internally with Senior Leadership, as well as within our Office of Student Life to better further these initiatives to students directly. We are hoping to educate and coordinate our leaders on campus on these efforts to help directly support them. The data that we collect throughout the semester will be managed internally and used in next year's report to evaluate our past initiatives and visualize change.

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.

# Evaluation

We expect that our evaluation of the progress made during the fall semester will determine the path we take for future democratic engagement initiatives at UM-Dearborn. We plan on tracking our progress through individual program attendance, 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.

We intend on being transparent with the campus community about our progress towards reaching each and every one of our goals, sharing relevant information through our official campus website, social media accounts and other avenues identified by our offices and organizations as efficient and sustainable options to relay information for long periods of time, to establish better consistency, and communication about voter engagement and education on our campus.

