

OFFICE FOR  
**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
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## University of Minnesota – Twin Cities 2024 Voting Action Plan

### Executive Summary

The 2024 Action Plan was developed by the University of Minnesota (UMN) and was written by Merrie Benasutti, UMN Twin Cities Voting Coordinator with input from student leaders, faculty, staff and community partners.

The Action Plan includes UMN’s student voter engagement strategy for the 2024 General election, designed to increase voter registration and voter turnout rates. This will be emphasized throughout voter registration, voter education and civic engagement opportunities. These efforts are consistent with our UMN goals of sustained community and civic engagement.

The Action Plan uses the framework described in Strengthening American Democracy, fourth edition, and is in alignment with UMN’s stated goals to educate students to be engaged citizens, reflected in our mission statement, programming priorities, and in administrative, faculty, staff, and student culture. This action plan also serves as a guiding document with specific strategies and evaluation targets to measure our success.

This action plan continues through January 6, 2025. The action plan will be updated annually in January per the 2023 State of Minnesota legislative requirements and will be available on the M-Vote website and distributed as needed.

The action plan will be implemented by the UMN campus voting coordinator in partnership with UMN students, community partners, faculty, and staff from across our campuses.

### Leadership

The UMN voter engagement work is coordinated by the Office for Public Engagement and the UMN Voting Alliance. 2023 State of Minnesota legislation prompted UMN to formalize our campus infrastructure regarding voter education and advocacy. Civic engagement and voter education is a collaborative effort at UMN with multiple schools, centers and offices involved. Our students lead the way!

**UMN Voting Alliance members** include staff from the Office for Public Engagement, the Office of the President, Student Affairs, Government and Community Relations, Office of the General Counsel and Institutional Analysis.

**Student Leadership through Undergraduate Student Government (USG).** USG coordinates voter registration events, an early vote pop-up voting site on campus, and a “Row the Vote” webpage. “Row

the Vote” is a riff on our UMN head football coach’s motivating slogan, “Row the Boat.” USG uses the Row the Vote slogan on social media and communications materials to promote voting.

**The UMN Voting Collaborative** is made up of students, staff and faculty from across campus, as well as city, county and community partners that meet regularly to share updates and information on voting related efforts.

#### **Partners from across the Institution:**

- Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL)
- College of Continuing Education and Professional Studies (CCAPS) ○ Master of Professional Studies in Civic Engagement
- College of Liberal Arts
- Government and Community Relations Office
- Humphrey School of Public Affairs, Center for Politics and Governance ○ Dialogue Across Difference webinar series, Elections Certificate Program  
Office of Institutional Analysis
- Student Affairs
- Undergraduate Student Government (USG)
- Welcome Week Office

#### **Partners across the Community:**

- **MN Secretary of State.** Minnesota Secretary of State, Steve Simon, is our state’s chief elections official. Minnesota has consistently been a national leader in voter turnout, election reform, and ballot integrity. The MN Secretary of State Office is committed to protecting and strengthening the security and fairness of our elections process.
- **Minnesota County Elections Offices.** We partner with our MN County Elections Offices to provide student residence lists per 2023 State of MN legislation. Lists are provided 20 days prior to elections, four times a year.
- **League of Women Voters (LWV).** The LWV is committed to empowering voters and defending democracy through voter education and engagement, advocating for democracy, encouraging civic participation, and supporting local League leaders and members.
- **Braver Angels.** Braver Angels was co-founded by a University of MN faculty member, Bill Dougherty. Americans on opposite sides of the political spectrum don’t only disagree on issues — they increasingly dislike one another. Bill believes this growing partisan animosity is the crisis of our time and threatens our nation. He co-founded Braver Angels to address this challenge through facilitated dialogue.

#### **Partners across the Nation:**

- **The ALL IN Challenge.** The ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge empowers colleges and universities to achieve excellence in nonpartisan student democratic engagement.

## Commitment

The University of MN's institutional commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement is evidenced in its mission statement and in administrative, faculty, staff, and student culture. UMN has a significant commitment to community and civic engagement. That commitment extends through the institutional hierarchy to administrators, faculty, staff, and students and is highly visible both internally and externally.

Further evidence of institutional commitment across and throughout the University can be found in the willing and eager participation of the University departments referenced above in our voter engagement work, as well as the efforts of the many faculty, staff, students, and alumni who participate in civically engaged teaching, learning, research, and community engagement and integrate civic and democratic engagement into their efforts inside and outside the classroom.

Our Civic Engagement programs are primarily assessed through the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE).

## Landscape

**NSLVE Data (2016 - 2020)** \* Data from the 2022 NSLVE Report will be included in this document once received from NSLVE. \*

Data obtained from NSLVE indicates that U.S. students have become more democratically engaged over the past two presidential elections. In 2016, the voter registration rate was 88%, which increased to 92% in 2020. Voting rates of registered students rose from 69% in 2016 to 81% in 2020, and the overall voting rate increased by 12 percentage points.

Minnesota boasted the highest turnout among college students in the country in 2018, according to NSLVE data. And NSLVE data show that UMN students vote at a higher rate (80%) than the national average of all institutions (66%). In 2020, the University of Minnesota was an All In Platinum Seal campus and in 2022 we were one of the Most Engaged Campuses for College Student Voting. We are proud of these numbers and awards, but we still have work to do!

## **Internal Resources to Support Our Work**

UMN enjoys a number of internal factors that help encourage student voting engagement. They include:

- **M-Vote Website:** The Office for Public Engagement created and maintains a UMN system voting website that provides students, faculty and staff with information about key dates, voter registration information and links to the undergraduate student government Row the Vote webpage, as well as the MN Secretary of State website.
- **Designated Campus Voting Coordinators:** All UMN campuses have a designated campus voting coordinator. They are:
  - **Crookston:** T. Dale Scully, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
  - **Duluth:** Jeremy Leiferman, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Life
  - **Morris:** David Israels-Swenson, Senior Director, Student Activities, Health and Wellness

- **Rochester:** Jenny Casper, Interim Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Success, Engagement, and Equity
- **Twin Cities:** Merrie Benasutti, Coordinator for Community Partnerships and Civic Engagement, Office for Public Engagement

### **External Resources to Support Our Work**

UMN enjoys a number of external factors that help encourage student voting engagement. They include:

- **League of Women Voters (LWV):** UMN partners with LWV to provide students with voter information and to assist students in registering to vote, tabling with students at events such as Spring Jam and Voterpalooza.
- **State, County and City Government:** UMN partners with Secretary of State Steve Simon's office, Minnesota County election offices, and City election offices. Together we provide an early voting pop-up site on campus. In 2024, the site will be the Weisman Art Museum on October 22.
- **Braver Angels:** UMN partners with Braver Angels to provide UMN faculty with support and a toolkit for classroom debates.

### **Goals**

UMN has identified the following goals for its student voter engagement efforts leading up to the 2024 general election:

- **General Election student voting rates:** By 2024, the institutions student voting rates will increase over 2020 turnout levels, with students of color voting at the same rate as white students.
- **Student Engagement:** By 2024, USG will participate in an annual orientation that will inform their leadership team about the steps to register to vote.
- **Academic Engagement:** By 2024, academic colleges will make faculty toolkits available that include voter registration information.
- **Welcome Week Student Engagement:** By 2024, we will ensure that first year and transfer students receive voter registration information during Welcome Week.
- **Sustainable Partnerships:** By 2024, UMN will have established sustainable partnerships with nonpartisan community organizations that promote democratic engagement, inclusion and equity.
- **UMN System Collaborations:** By 2024, the Institution will establish quarterly meetings with system campuses and the campus voting coordinators.

### **Strategy**

UMN has identified strategies that will help us create a culture of civic engagement on campus and create and implement sustainable programming that is year-round.

The action plan seeks to meet our goals in democratic engagement efforts through the following:

#### **I. Voter Registration:**

- **Registration during Welcome Week.** USG will work with Welcome Week staff to host voter information tables.
- **Voterpalooza.** USG in collaboration with Hennepin County will organize and staff a Voter registration event in September 2024.
- **Registration info on M-vote website.** UMN provides State of MN voter registration info on the M-Vote website.
- **On Campus Early Vote Pop-up Site.** UMN partners with Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis to provide a pop-up early voting site on campus.

## II. Voter Education

- **UMN Voter Collaborative Meetings:** Students, staff and faculty from across campus, as well as city, county and community partners meet regularly to share updates and information on voting related efforts.
- **Civic Engagement Workshops:** We host educational workshops for students on civic engagement and the voting process, voting rights and provide space for students to become more civic-minded leaders.
- **Election Seminars:** The Center for Politics and Governance at the Humphrey School for Public Affairs offers webinars on the elections and election-related issues through their Dialogue Across Difference Series.
- Braver Angels:

### Marketing:

- **Website and Online Voter Education Guide:** UMN will continue to publish and promote online voter education information located on our M-Vote website for both the primary and general elections to provide the entire University community with accessible and understandable information about voter registration and voting deadlines and procedures, ballot education resources, and answers to frequently asked questions. The UMN system campuses will link to this website.
- **Campus Wide emails:** UMN will continue to work with campus partners to send emails to the entire University community for the primary and general elections with timely information about voter registration deadlines, procedures for absentee voting, early voting, and voting on Election Day.
- **Canvas Page:** UMN will create a Canvas module offering introductory voter education and online voter services tools that faculty can import into their course materials. We will also update a faculty toolkit with additional ideas to integrate voter education and engagement activities into their courses and classrooms.
- **Registering to Vote Handout:** UMN has created a handout that is provided to students during tabling events that highlights key election dates and links to an online registration portal to help students register to vote or check their registration status.
- **Social Media:** USG will develop a social media plan that provides students with information about upcoming elections.

### Election Day:

- **Email from UMN President:** A week before each election cycle, all students, faculty and staff will receive an email from the UMN President that highlights voting information and how to find their polling location. We partner with the MN Secretary of State Office to get that information out to students.

### III. Voting Research

#### Student Voting Process Assessment

- **NSLVE Data.** The primary metric of our success as UMN students' actual voter turnout rates in general elections over time, as measured by NLSVE. We use NSLVE data to assess the success of our efforts and set goals for future years, both for overall turnout rates, and for turnout among specific populations of students. Once we receive our 2022 NSLVE data, we will also use this information.

### Reporting

The 2024 Action Plan for UMN will be publicly available on the M-Vote website and publicly featured by some of our partner organizations.

### Evaluation

The effectiveness of this plan will be evaluated through participation tracking, surveys, and in-person conversations. Metrics collected will include how many people were impacted by each event, whether those students found the events helpful, and whether those numbers are reflected in the final voter registration and turnout numbers. This information will be collected and evaluated.

- **Event Attendance:** Attendance during events will be tracked. This information will be used in the next campus plan, which will also be shared publicly.
- **Follow-up Surveys:** After events, if emails are collected, follow-up surveys will be sent to see what students found valuable about the event during our baseline platform. This information will be used in the next campus plan, which will also be shared publicly.
- **NSLVE Data:** NSLVE data will continue to be used for insight into the voter turnout and registration numbers. The data will also assist our team in gathering information on which academic areas have the most turnout or registration numbers. This information will be used in the next campus plan, which will also be shared publicly.

Using the Action Plan as a guide, and our other Evaluation methods mentioned above, UMN can effectively determine whether the approaches taken have resulted in the desired impacts across strategies related to students, faculty, staff and partners.