



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA ROCHESTER

Democratic Engagement 2024 Action Plan

Overview and Commitment

The University of Minnesota Rochester (UMR) 2024-25 Democratic Engagement Plan was first drafted by Jenny Casper (Interim Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Success, Engagement, and Equity and UMR Campus Vote Coordinator) and Bridget Tetteh-Batsa (Director of Community Engagement and Career Development). This plan builds off the previous Democratic Engagement Plan and will ultimately be adopted and implemented by the cross-campus Election Engagement Group, composed of students, faculty, and staff. The group is co-convened by Bridget Tetteh-Batsa (Director of Community Engagement and Career Development) and Elizabeth Dunens (Civic Engagement Scholar). Feedback from the diverse constituents including members of UMR's Rochester Student Association (RSA) - Student Government continue to be incorporated. This action plan intends to comprehensively demonstrate existing and future actions, commitments, and priorities around democratic and civic engagement at UMR. In researching what worked well previously, we continue to find areas for growth and future collaboration across various campus stakeholders and in the wider community. Important note: the 2023 MN State Legislature passed sweeping election law legislation that has impacts for how we conduct our election engagement efforts.

It's important to recognize that UMR is a part of the University of Minnesota System and all five campuses within the system center on the value of community and civic engagement. At a high level, "community" is one of UMR's core values, and the definition of this value aligns with UMR's definition of engagement: "We value collective work and a culture of trust that promotes collaboration, problem-solving and partnerships while creating belonging, accountability and courageous action." In addition, core elements of the UMR strategic plan also flow from this understanding of engagement: Generate transformative contributions to the renewal of higher education, providing a collaborative environment of inquiry that allows innovative thought-leadership in teaching and learning, educational research, public engagement, organizational efficiency and community integration. This value led to hiring faculty and staff, Bridget and Elizabeth, to support community and civic engagement. The value also led to UMR embedding a Community Engagement Learning (CEL) requirement in the required core curriculum of the primary undergraduate degree. This course is taught by the Civic Engagement Scholar and includes learning outcomes directly aligned to civic engagement.

Institutionally, UMR is a member of several national organizations and coalitions who actively support civic and democratic engagement, including but not limited to Campus Compact, AAC&U, and NASPA. We have and will continue to avail ourselves of resources and support from these groups as we implement this engagement plan. Earlier this year, UMR was awarded the Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement, a national recognition that highlights UMR's extraordinary commitment to community and civic engagement. The University of Minnesota is the first system to have all member institutions receive this classification. The



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classification highlights the UMR assessment plan on Community and Civic Engagement which continues to be refined to create data informed efforts.

Election Engagement Group

- Leadership/Administration: Jenny Casper, Interim Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Success, Engagement, and Equity
- Students: Rochester Student Association
- Staff: Bridget Tetteh-Batsa, Director of Community Engagement and Career Development
- Faculty: Elizabeth Dunens, Civic Engagement Scholar
- Marketing and Communications will offer support and representation on an adhoc basis
- League of Women Voters, Rochester Chapter Voter Registration Coordinator, Mary E. Jones offers critical support and partnership on an adhoc basis as she liaisons with UMR. This liaison role allows for regular communication and coordination of activities between the LWV and the campus community.

Context

UMR is a small, health-focused institution partnering with Rochester and the surrounding communities. In Fall of 2022, UMR was home to 41 faculty members, 62 staff members, and 630 students. Its students hail from 22 U.S. states and 13 foreign countries and reflect the current and growing diversity in healthcare, with 41 percent identifying as BIPOC. Enrollment is expected to increase - our upcoming enrollment goal is 1,000 students.

As noted by the current legislature, college students in the state of MN are allowed to vote wherever they consider “home.” For those who do choose to vote in Minnesota, many external factors contribute to an ease in accessing the ballot. Individuals must have resided in Minnesota for 20 days prior to 7 the election (although they are allowed to register before the 20 day period has been met) and may pre-register to vote at least 21 days before Election Day or can register on Election Day at a polling place. One of our greatest assets is having a polling station on campus on the third floor of our University Square space for the majority of our residential students, UMR is a highly residential campus given our first and second year live-on requirements. This results in the vast majority of students passing by the polling station on election day, significantly reducing the cost our student voters face of figuring out where and when to vote. For early voting, students must go to the Olmsted County Elections Office city hall which is a few miles away. Many students do not have their own modes of transportation, although there are a few public transportation options that students can utilize. There may be opportunities to consider incentivizing early voting to reduce wait times on Election Day. In addition to these factors that were already in place for previous elections, the MN State Legislature passed sweeping legislation in 2023 to hold colleges and universities more accountable for encouraging students to vote and providing information in multiple ways. For instance, each campus must designate a campus voter coordinator (fulfilled currently by Jenny Casper) to ensure that they are meeting all the new requirements, which include:



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- Sharing voter registration information every fall and spring and, if done electronically, must be exclusively devoted to voter registration
- Maintaining a website with voter registration and voting information for both MN and other states
- Creating an voter engagement plan with goals and activities, resources to accomplish the goals and activities, individuals or key departments responsible for executing the goal and activities, and identification of the vote coordinator
- Reporting to the MN Secretary of State by November 30 each year on how and when voter registration information was shared with students This democratic engagement plan takes into account these new requirements and points to the many ways in which we are exceeding them.

Goals

- Add additional programming to support student voter education
 - Specifically, financially support a student led voter engagement experience this fall
- Increase student voter registration and voting rates, specifically, close the gap between the voting rate of white and BIPOC eligible students given our diverse student population
 - Close the voting rate gap between white and BIPOC students to within 15 percentage points for all disaggregated racial groups
- Foster a strong partnership between curricular and co-curricular efforts, specifically, incorporate strategic efforts into academic offerings
 - Specifically, have at least two additional faculty (other than the Civic Engagement Scholar) commit to election and democratic engagement work
- Foster a strong partnership with community partners, such as League of Women Voters, and collaborate to ensure students know about election engagement options
 - Host joint programming and support one another's efforts

Actions and Activities

We commit to a variety of actions involving many different groups, organizations, and individuals on campus in order to fully involve the entire student body in our democratic engagement efforts. These efforts will be largely spearheaded by various members of the Election Engagement Group and the student election organizers. Many of these strategies have been used successfully during the 2020 and 2022 election cycles, although refinements and improvements will be made on an ongoing basis. Budget will be allocated to implement these items. We will meet the above goals by implementing -

- **Talking Sense Event**
UMR partnered with Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) and Braver Angels to host a “skills for disagreeing better” workshop on civil discourse in April (open to all students, staff, and faculty and the Rochester Community). The event focused on helping UMR students, staff, and faculty as well as community members develop the skills for constructive conversations about divisive political topics.



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- **Involvement Fair**
Early September community and student club/organization fair to increase awareness and involvement
- **Promoting National Voter Registration Day**
In-person student voter registration table on Tuesday, September 17 from 10 am through 2 pm. Students can pick up a paper voter registration application and learn about how to register to vote through their MyU page.
- **National Voter Education Week**
Student led voter education panel on Wednesday, October 9 featuring UMR faculty, Student Government Leaders, League of Women Voters and Olmsted County Elections. UMR social media channels
- **National Vote Early Day**
Tabling on October 29 in partnership with League of Women Voters to direct students (who plan to vote in Olmsted County) to Olmsted County Elections (2122 Campus Drive SE, Ste. 300, Rochester, MN).

Marketing and Communications

- **Promote Election Related Programming/Events (ongoing)**
The Raptor Report campus-wide e-newsletter will be a key resource along with RaptorLink to promote various programming and events.
- **Digital/Paper Posters**
Create digital posters featuring our mascot urging voting. Paper posters will be distributed along with image file. Will need concept, slogan, hashtag, design, copies.
- **Social Media**
From September through Election Day, UMR Marketing and Communications will use various social media platforms to out occasional voter content and links. Special artwork, memes, and other content will be created.
- **Email from UMR Chancellor**
During Voter Education Week, Chancellor Carrell sends an email to all UMR students on the importance of civic literacy.
- **Web**
The primary source of communication will be the website, which will serve as a central hub for information on all things election and democratic engagement. Faculty, staff, organizers, and ambassadors will be encouraged to link to the website in their email signatures and share through their networks. The website hosts the necessary requirements for the new state legislation, including information on registering to vote in MN and in other states, a timeline with deadlines for voting (registration, absentee, early



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voting, etc.) in MN and links for where to find that information for other states; and the Campus Vote Coordinator's information. In addition, the website links to our overall system website - there are sections of the website dedicated to our campus political policies, information for non-US citizens, and ideas for faculty who wish to incorporate the election into their courses.

Post-Election

- **Continued effort**

The election engagement will meet ongoing to continually center this work.

- **Data and Evaluation**

The 2024 Democratic Engagement Plan and NSLVE results will be publicly accessible. To inform future work, an assessment and evaluation process will need to be developed. The Civic Engagement Scholarship in partnership with the Director of Community Engagement and Career Development will lead this effort with support from the Election Engagement Group. Measuring the effectiveness of the above efforts and strategies will be a focus as well as impacts to the political climate at UMR. The group will use these findings as they create the next democratic engagement plan.