

2024 Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voter Participation

<https://allinchallenge.org/>

University of Missouri–St. Louis

2024 Campus Action Plan



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## **University of Missouri-St. Louis ALL IN Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voter Participation for the 2024 Elections**

For the purposes of this action plan, we have made the decision to intentionally reference the 2020 presidential election as opposed to the 2022 midterm election – as it is most comparable to the upcoming race(s).

### **Executive Summary**

This Voter Friendly Campus action plan was developed at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) by the Civic Engagement Coalition. The Civic Engagement Coalition, formed in 2016, has representatives from a variety of departments and student organizations across the campus. The Civic Engagement Coalition includes representatives from the Office of Student Affairs, Operations & Events Services, the Gender Studies program, as well as the Associated Students of the University of Missouri, the Student Government Association, Sustainability/Environmental Health & Safety, and the Departments of Communication, English and Political Science, among others. Members of the UMSL Civic Engagement Coalition meet monthly. The Coalition helps coordinate voter registration, voter education and civic engagement efforts around campus. They host a voting information web page which includes a Frequently Asked Questions sheet that, among other things, offers answers to how and where to register to vote. These materials will be updated for the 2024 elections. At least three of the faculty members who are part of this team will offer courses on elections, voter literacy, or voter engagement in 2024, and some will include a community outreach component. The university community also will continue to offer civic engagement forums and events throughout the year.

This action plan is for the 2024 calendar year. In addition to ongoing efforts to promote voter registration and voter engagement, the coalition has three specific goals for the coming year.

1. Increase coordination with local institutions involved in voter outreach and increase student participation in elections during the year.
2. Engage in more direct activities with students to promote civic engagement, voter registration, and voting amongst our students.
3. Make UMSL a polling place for the 2024 general elections, and promote the UMSL polling location to students, staff, faculty, and the surrounding community.

In the sections below we describe how we will implement these goals.

## Leadership

The Civic Engagement Coalition at UMSL is composed of representatives from student leadership organizations, especially those with a mission related to civic engagement, representatives from Colleges and departments across the campus, and individual faculty and staff who are interested and active in democratic engagement work. This Coalition meets monthly to share information and coordinate, develop and support civic engagement events and activities throughout the year. The Coalition is chaired by the director of Community Engagement & Outreach at UMSL. The following people have been standing members of the Coalition representing their affiliated departments and units as well as a personal commitment to this important work:

Coalition Leader:

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2024 Coalition Members:

- Andrea Melrose, Associate Director, Student Conduct and Academic Integrity
- Austin Culbertson, Student Recruitment, Office of Admissions
- Jill Delston, Associate Teaching Professor, Department of Philosophy
- Scott Gericke, Associate Teaching Professor, Department of Art and Design
- Alan Heisel, Professor, Department of Communication and Media
- David Kimball, Professor and Chair, Department of Political Science
- Anita Manion, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science
- Courtney McDermott, Associate Teaching Professor, School of Social Work
- Katy Mike Smaistrila, Sustainability Energy & Environmental Coordinator
- Lynn Staley, Teaching Professor, Department of English
- Mindy Dilley, Director, Office of Student Involvement
- Myron Burr, Coordinator for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives
- Tanisha Stevens, Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Lester Stewart, Associate Director for Operations and Event Services
- Doug Swanson, Labor Studies Program Coordinator
- Jim Wallis, Adjunct Instructor, School of Social Work and Alumni Legislative Advocacy Committee representative
- Sydney Young (student), Political Science Graduate Student Association
- Lara Zwarun, Associate Professor, Department of Communication and Media
- Chaebong Nam, Assistant Professor, Department of Educator Preparation and Leadership
- Alex Orywall (student), Student Government Association President

- UMSL Associated Black Collegians (student President or representative)
- Associated Students of the University of Missouri-UMSL Chapter (student President or representative)

Local Elections Office:

- Eric Fey, Democratic Director, St. Louis County Board of Elections
- Rick Stream, Republican Director, St. Louis County Board of Elections

Other Important Community Organizations:

- Local elected officials and area governments
- East-West Gateway
- Focus St. Louis
- League of Women Voters
- Missouri Campus Compact
- The Missouri Municipal League
- Ferguson PROUD
- 24:1 Municipal Partnership
- Beyond Housing
- University of Missouri Extension
- ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
- Voter Friendly Campus initiative
- National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE)

It is important to note that the president or a designated representative of the three student organizations listed above are always included in the Coalition as they collectively represent 100% of students on campus. Almost always, the representatives from these three organizations are also affiliated with a number of other student organizations as well. The Student Government Association includes all student organizations, and the representatives make sure to share information and invite these other groups to be co-sponsors in events and help support such activities as voter registration drives, election forums, etc.

Leadership succession can be a concern as students graduate and sometimes faculty and staff who are members of the coalition leave the university or are no longer available to take part. However, there is an open invitation on campus for people who are interested in taking part in the Coalition and new people join each year. Further, if there are large departments not represented, there has been active recruitment by the coalition to identify and invite new members.

## **Commitment**

Civic Engagement is a strong priority at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL). It is woven into the culture of the institution and is reflected in the institution's mission, learning outcomes, and in both curricular and co-curricular activities. It takes shape through a variety of formats guided by the mission and vision in the university's Civic Action Plan.

We strive to be a university where civic learning and engagement is pervasive, where people think critically, where deliberative conversations and engaged research address real-world problems, where diversity and inclusive practice is not just an ideal, but a reality, and where collaboration is commonplace. We want all UMSL students to have the competence and confidence to be informed and engaged citizens both now and throughout their lifetimes and to take an active role in community life. We address these goals through the academic curriculum, research and scholarship, integrated community partnership activities, volunteerism, and personal and professional development opportunities, so that UMSL students, faculty and staff will have the capacity to be informed, empowered and active participants in creating a more robust, equitable and livable community.

Chancellor Kristin Sobolik is a strong supporter of the civic engagement efforts at UMSL. She is a signatory for the ALL IN President Commitment. She demonstrates her support in many ways including reviewing and approving nominations for the Campus Compact Civic Newman Fellowship, as well as the ALL IN Student Honor Roll nominations. She annually presents the UMSL Excellence in Civic Engagement awards for faculty, staff and student recognition. Further, she includes mention of the ALL IN and Voter Friendly Campus recognitions and other civic engagement efforts in her annual State of the University address and makes sure that they are featured in the UMSL Daily publication. The Chancellor's office has been instrumental in helping establish the campus as a polling place for not only the university community, but for the people who live and work in the area around campus. The Provost, Vice-Chancellor for Research and Economic and Community Development, and the Vice-Chancellor for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are also advocates for the civic engagement activities on campus and promote them broadly.

## **Landscape**

UMSL is proud to have been designated as a Voter Friendly campus in 2016, 2019, 2021 and again in 2023. Further, UMSL has been a part of the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) coordinated by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University since 2012. The study has revealed UMSL's high voting rate compared to other universities (even after controlling for demographics including student population's age, commuter status and the civic health in the state).

Participation in this study has shown a continual increase in students registering to vote and participating in elections than in previous years. UMSL had a high voter registration and turnout as compared to other universities with a voter registration rate of 88% and voting rate of 71% in the 2020 presidential election. These figures are an increase from previous elections for UMSL. We are still waiting on the 2022 NSLVE report.

Approximately 90% of UMSL students are in-state students, and over half live in the St. Louis region. The vast majority of UMSL students commute from home and work part-time or full-time while taking courses at UMSL. That means most of our students are engaged in local civic activities. However, it is important to schedule campus events and voter registration tables, when students are most likely to be on campus (usually between Monday and Thursday during the middle of the day). In addition to campus posters and signs, we need to communicate voting and election information to students through social media, email, and other communication networks that many students use.

Approximately 60% of UMSL students are white, and almost 20% of UMSL students are Black, while the remaining subgroups include Asian (5%), Hispanic (4%), multiple races (3%), non-resident international students (4%) and students of unknown race (5%). NSLVE data, reported below, show a racial participation gap, with higher voting rates for white and Black students than for other races. We also see a participation gap by age and year of school, with lower voting rates for freshmen and younger students.

Missouri state law changed in 2022 to require voters to provide valid photo identification when they vote, and to allow approximately 10 days of early in-person voting before each election. The photo ID requirement is quite strict (e.g., student IDs are usually not valid), so we will need to educate students about the types of ID that are allowed. We also plan to provide information about early voting, particularly on our campus (for students who are residents of St. Louis County).

## **Goals**

Our action plan is designed to address three short-term goals and two long-term goals. Short-term goal: Make UMSL a polling place for the 2024 general elections, and promote the UMSL polling location to students, staff, faculty, and the surrounding community.

Short-term goal: Maintain or improve on UMSL 2020 registration and voting rates in 2024 and 2028. We will measure this goal in future NSLVE reports.

Short-term goal: Increase voting rates for freshmen by providing registration and voting information to students in the first-year experience courses. We will measure this goal in future NSLVE reports.

Long-term goal: Engage in more direct activities with student organizations, particularly groups that serve underrepresented minorities, to promote civic engagement, voter registration, and voting among our students.

Long-term goal: Increase coordination with local institutions involved in voter outreach and increase student participation in elections during the year. We plan to share registration and voting information with at least five local organizations or community groups.

## **Strategy**

UMSL has been intentional in developing partnerships to support voter registration and engagement efforts. In 2018, UMSL formed a partnership with the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) to help mobilize students to participate in the electoral process. The League of Women Voters of St. Louis has also been an important partner in this work and has been helpful in the voter registration efforts. The St. Louis County Board of Elections is a partner, and they along with a representative from the City of St. Louis Board of Elections are regular presenters in classes and election information sessions for students. Further, the UMSL alumni legislative advocacy group has become a partner in supporting civic engagement activities on campus focused on elections as well as creating opportunities for students to interact with civic leaders. For the midterm elections, their voting engagement subcommittee helped recruit and provide training opportunities for more than 20 people to become public notaries, which were needed to process mail-in ballots in Missouri. They also helped coordinate voter registration events both on campus and throughout the community. These efforts, combined with others hosted by departments and groups across campus, led to a successful election and engagement process at UMSL in 2020. This group is actively engaged in planning to support 2022 civic engagement and voter registration efforts.

UMSL hosted a polling place for the first time during the August 2022 primary election and the November 2022 general election. Roughly 1,000 voters cast their ballots at the UMSL location in 2022, and we aim to increase that number in 2024. Our coalition initiated discussions with the St. Louis County Board of Elections to make UMSL a polling place again in 2024. We expect that UMSL will serve as a polling place for Election Day and for the two week early voting period prior to Election Day. St. Louis County has a voting system that allows registered voters to cast their ballots at any polling location in the county (rather than an assigned polling place). This provides us an opportunity to attract many voters to the UMSL polling place. The next step is to educate the UMSL and local community about the UMSL polling location. We will work with coalition members to create educational materials and develop a communications plan to share that information with the campus community. We will work with community

organizations to inform and educate the people living and working in the communities surrounding campus about the UMSL polling location.

The polling location at UMSL will be a substantial benefit for the campus community and the broader residential community. In the 2020 election, the nearest early voting location was five miles from the UMSL campus. Voter turnout for the communities around UMSL (67%) was substantially lower than in the rest of the county (80%) in the 2020 election. Thus, the UMSL location will make it easy for those at and around UMSL to vote. The polling location also provides an opportunity for some students to work as poll workers and election judges. Outreach activities will include print materials, social media, features in the online UMSL community newsletter, and an op-ed in local newspapers.

We will collaborate with the Art + Design program to create “I Voted at UMSL” stickers to give to voters at the UMSL polling place. Examples from 2022 are on the title page of this action plan.

The UMSL School of Social has expressed interest in hosting a candidate forum in the fall prior to the general elections. We will work collaboratively to promote and support this effort across campus and engage the campus and the local community for participation.

Further, we have presented to the UMSL athletics department about civic engagement efforts taking place on campus and invited them to take a more active role in the work. We have shared with the athletics department the [coaches' initiative through the ALL IN for Democracy Challenge](#) which provides voter registration and engagement resources for coaches. UMSL is Division II level, so the NCAA does not have a civic engagement requirement. However, the Tuesday after the first Monday in November is a required day off for all student athletes to encourage civic engagement on that day. The UMSL athletics department expects all of our teams to complete community/civic engagement hours each year. We plan to be more proactive in involving the coaches in voter registration efforts, and provide information and additional opportunities for athletes to take part in civic engagement activities.

Along with members of our campus coalition, we will provide voter registration and other voting information to students on National Voter Registration Day (Sept. 17) and National Voter Education Week (Oct. 7-11). This will include a voter registration table in the student center, as well as communications to share registration and voting information, like our “Voting FAQ” and “#UMSLVotes” web pages.

After the 2024 elections we will continue to work with campus stakeholders and local community organizations to promote voter participation in Missouri local elections, which take place in April 2025.



## Voter Registration

Our coalition has several ongoing efforts to promote voter registration. For example, we organize voter registration events on campus each year. A couple of years ago Missouri began offering online registration using a mobile device, tablet, or touchscreen computer where someone could complete the form and electronically provide a signature. This made registration much more accessible and was the primary method of registration during our events in the 2022/2023 academic year. It also allows people to go online to check and confirm their registration information. We also worked with faculty to share voter registration information in some online courses.

Another ongoing project is to share voter registration, absentee, and mail-in ballot forms with each department in the College of Arts and Sciences and other colleges on campus. In doing so, we encourage faculty members to announce to students where they could access this information, whether online or in-person on campus. The coalition also designed a designated webpage and easy URL for fall elections at [www.umsl.edu/go/vote](http://www.umsl.edu/go/vote). The webpage includes voter registration deadlines as well as a link to find out what is on the ballot using <https://www.ballotready.org/>. The site also included a sign-up form for people to get reminders for voter registration, mail-in and absentee ballot request and return dates, in addition to Get-Out-the-Vote notifications through Vote.org. As judges in Missouri are also included on the ballot during the fall national elections, a link to information is available for researching judges. The website includes a link for voter identification laws for all states throughout the U.S. Finally, UMSL plans to again participate in National Voter Registration Day in 2024. Throughout the fall, messages reminding students to register to vote will be sent out campus-wide by various campus offices through email and social media mostly, and by flyers with voting information and QR codes for easy access to online registration.

## Voter Education

One of our new initiatives is to provide civic education workshops for the First-Year Experience classes on our campus. These workshops will provide information about voter registration, as well as basic information about how to vote. Our student collaborators will provide individualized information to encourage voter participation, as suggested by the Student Vote Research Network.

As in previous years, we plan to hold several events on campus, including debate watch parties, film screenings, panels and forums, to provide students and the broader community nonpartisan voter information. These events will address some current topics (how the candidates were polling, the Supreme Court status and potential implications of the elections, concerns around the voting process, etc.), and then engage in question and answer sessions with the participants. In the past, these events have been well-attended. One event will likely be a panel discussion on a Missouri

Constitutional amendment that will be on the ballot in the fall. There will also be some programming related to voting and elections in Constitution Day activities in September.

We will facilitate a tour of the St. Louis County Board of Elections so students, faculty, and staff can learn more about the election process. We also plan to invite election board officials from both the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County to present information to students about how to become election judges to work at the polls on Election Day. As in the past, this presentation can be recorded and then made available for others to view. We hope to have students help create brochures that could be printed or put on social media sites with easy to follow guidelines to help people understand the processes for mail-in and absentee ballots. Voter related materials including absentee and mail-in ballot request forms, instructions, envelopes, as well as postage stamps to help students, faculty, and staff request these ballots will also be available in the UMSL library, the Office of Student Involvement, and other locations around campus. We have a student social media manager to help with these outreach efforts.

At the height of the pandemic in 2020, several faculty members and alumni went through training to become notary publics and the alumni group helped cover some of the associated costs for 22 new alumni notaries. In Missouri, absentee ballots sent via mail need to be notarized. We plan to promote these notary services again in 2022, although we are not sure how many voters will need these services. Voters who cast their ballot at a polling location do not need a notary, and having a polling place on campus may alleviate much of the local need for absentee voting by mail.

In the spring of 2024, we will take students to visit a session of the Missouri General Assembly in partnership with the UMSL alumni association. In addition, several classes visit the General Assembly during the legislative session.

Finally, we hope to be able to have student voter engagement fellows again in 2024 who will help coordinate our voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts with the various entities on campus. These fellows did a lot of outreach into classes during the previous election cycle and the peer-to-peer approach was effective. The fall 2024 graduate intern in the Economic & Community Development office will also have responsibilities in supporting these efforts.

### **NSLVE as a Resource**

Our campus has participated in NSLVE for many years, and the data show that the UMSL student voting rate is consistently higher than the voting rate for other NSLVE institutions. In addition, our campus registration rate and voting rate have increased in each successive election cycle. For example, UMSL had a voter registration rate of 88%

and voting rate of 71% in the 2020 presidential election. The voting rate for Black students at UMSL was 70% in the 2020 election. We are awaiting the 2022 NSLVE data. Our goal is to maintain high registration and voting rates in 2024.

In the high turnout 2020 presidential election, the average St. Louis County polling place had 1,300 voters. Our goal is for more than 1,200 voters to cast their ballots at the UMSL polling place in the November 2024 election. We believe this is a reasonable goal, since our student population is mostly composed of commuter students, and many classes remain online or hybrid options. Therefore, we will encourage those students who are not on campus to vote at their regular polling places.

Portions of the UMSL 2020 NSLVE report are included below. The data show a racial participation gap, with higher voting rates for white and Black students than for other races. We also see a participation gap by age and year of school, with lower voting rates for freshmen and younger students than for older students.

**CAMPUS REPORT: University Of Missouri-St Louis**

## Looking Closer

By Race/Ethnicity

**This page provides the numbers we used to calculate race / ethnicity group voting rates.** We include the counts of students and the change in rates between the two most recent comparable election years. If you notice unavailable/missing data in this page, it could mean any of the following for your institution: (i) does not report this data; (ii) did not provide this data in past years; (iii) does not separately submit data for one or more of the demographic groups, or (iv) the data is reported for 10 or fewer students.

	2016			2018			2020			2016-2020 Change (p.p.)
	Enrolled	Voted	Rate	Enrolled	Voted	Rate	Enrolled	Voted	Rate	
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
American Indian/ Alaska Native	34	21	62	27	-	-	21	16	76	↑ 14
Black	1,713	1,180	69	1,597	965	60	1,449	1,013	70	↑ 1
Hispanic	309	171	55	318	167	53	289	185	64	↑ 9
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	543	284	52	485	188	39	418	203	49	↓ -4
2 or More Races	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	6,896	4,797	70	6,699	3,859	58	6,082	4,549	75	↑ 5
Race Unknown	970	310	32	764	201	26	889	383	43	↑ 11

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## Looking Closer

### By Education Level / Undergraduate Class Year

	2016			2018			2020			Change (2016-2020)
	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	Enrolled	Voted	Rate (%)	
<b>EDUCATION LEVEL</b>										
Undergraduate	7,311	4,654	64	6,806	3,611	53	6,061	4,140	68	↑ 5
Graduate	2,574	1,718	67	2,466	1,401	57	2,460	1,758	71	↑ 5
Class Unknown	580	391	67	618	377	61	627	451	72	↑ 5
<b>CLASS YEAR</b>										
Freshman	674	334	50	721	299	41	611	385	63	↑ 13
Sophomore	926	523	56	957	465	49	945	623	66	↑ 9
Upperclassman	5,724	3,804	66	5,106	2,831	55	4,477	3,109	69	↑ 3
<b>ENROLLMENT STATUS</b>										
Full-time	6,349	3,851	61	6,185	3,145	51	5,580	3,742	67	↑ 6
Part-time	4,116	2,912	71	3,705	2,244	61	3,568	2,607	73	↑ 2

These are estimated voting rates by Education Level (undergraduate/graduate), Class Year, and Enrollment Status (full-time/part-time), and the numbers we used to calculate these rates.

If you notice missing data in this page, it could mean any of the following for your institution: (i) does not report this data; (ii) did not provide this data in past years; (iii) does not separately submit data for one or more of the demographic groups, or (iv) the data is reported for 10 or fewer students.

## Reporting

We will post our action plans and NSLVE reports on our campus “citizenship in action” website:

<https://www.umsl.edu/recd/ecd/community-engagement/citizenship-in-action/index.html>.

We also will share those reports with UMSL administration and college deans.

Furthermore, UMSL Daily (our campus newsletter to all students, faculty, and staff) will continue to do feature articles on UMSL Civic engagement activities, highlighting the student efforts in particular around voter registration and engagement. The Civic Engagement Coalition, made up of representatives from across the campus community, also reviews the report and can use it to identify areas where there may need to be more direct programming or student outreach. We have similar plans to review and make public data on voter turnout at the UMSL polling place in the 2024 election, including comparisons between the UMSL polling place and other polling places in St. Louis County.

Our student partners will conduct a post-election session with students in the First-Year Experience courses to get their reactions to the election and the voting process.

## Evaluation

It is important to have both formative and summative evaluations as we implement our strategies to attain the goals we have outlined. There is a debrief at each Civic Engagement Coalition meeting where we review the activities that have taken place and discuss any feedback we have gathered. This informs upcoming projects and activities and helps us know if we are being successful. Summative evaluations will be done after the general elections. We plan to count how many students serve as poll workers, to determine whether we meet our goal of increasing the number of student poll workers in 2024. We will count the number of people who register to vote at our registration tables and campus events. The coalition will evaluate voter turnout at the UMSL polling location, as well as NSLVE data on voter turnout, to evaluate our action plan. We will review the data to identify areas where there may need to be more direct programming or student outreach for future elections. We also will engage in a post-election debrief with St. Louis County election officials to get their perspective on the UMSL polling location and discuss future plans. Finally, the Coalition will debrief on the implementation of our civic engagement plan. This qualitative data is essential to help us continuously improve our efforts. We have used information from these types of conversations after the 2022 election to update some of our communication plans for 2024 and plan to do so during and after this election cycle.