University of Nevada, Las Vegas Democratic Engagement Action Plan: 2022-2023 Academic Year

This plan was created using the Votes & Ballots Action Planning Form, and has been further edited and added to.

I.   Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by Rian Satterwhite, Director, Office of Service Learning & Leadership to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2022-2023 Academic Year, on and around our campus in Las Vegas, Nevada.

This action plan is the institution's second, and advances the efforts begun in the previous cycle. It is aligned with our institutional strategic plan, titled Top Tier 2.0 (https://www.unlv.edu/toptier/about), specifically the core areas of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity; Community Partnerships; and Social Justice, Equity, and Inclusion. As an MSI/HSI/AANAPISI designated institution, recognized annually as one of the most diverse doctoral granting institutions in the country, UNLV strives to continuously center our students' diverse lived experience and identities.

The following groups are currently leading this work at University of Nevada, Las Vegas in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections:

- Government Affairs Staff
- Student Affairs Staff
- Academic Affairs Staff

The mission of our initiative is:
- UNLV Votes is a coalition working towards increasing civic learning and democratic engagement among UNLV students. Our goal is to expand voter access and student engagement in the civic sphere through education and programming as well as voter registration and turnout efforts.

II.   Leadership

Stine Odegard, Assistant Director for Service Learning & Leadership will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. Stine reports to Rian Satterwhite, Director of the office of Service Learning & Leadership, which falls within the Division of Student Affairs and the Provost. Stine will be supported in this work by:

- Supervising a newly reworked full-time position within the office, titled the Leadership & Democratic Engagement Program Coordinator.
- Facilitating our CLDE coalition team, which currently consists of the following members:
    - Bryan Hilbert, Director, UNLV Disability Resource Center
    - Chelsea Heinbach, Teaching and Learning Librarian, UNLV Libraries
    - Erich Ochoa, Service Programs Coordinator
    - Nevena Cvijetić, Executive Director of Leadership, Professional, and Career Development, UNLV Graduate College
    - Marni Dow, Assistant Director for Student Involvement
    - Rian Satterwhite, Director of the Office of Service Learning & Leadership
    - Sabra Newby, Vice President of Government and Community Affairs
- Additionally, we have identified areas of campus that we hope to include representation from in order to partner in this work and expand the capacity of the UNLV Votes coalition, including:
    - Office of Diversity Initiatives
    - Department of Political Science
    - Department of Public Administration
    - College of Education
    - Student government
    - Registered student organizations
    - Community partner organizations

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

Our coalition meets monthly on the last Tuesday of every month. In the event that our principal organizer leaves campus or is no longer involved in this work, we have a succession plan in place. This initiative is led primarily by the Office of Service Learning and Leadership. We've already experienced one departure (the founder of the coalition) and have successfully navigated this change while maintaining our coalition's monthly meetings. In the event of further departures or changes, the office will continue to identify interim or replacement roles to ensure that this work moves forward.

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

- CEEP, Every Vote Counts, Voto Latino, Mi Familia Vota

At this time we have not been actively coordinating with our local election office. However, Sabra Newby (Vice President of Government and Community Affairs) recently joined the coalition and has relationships there that we look forward to expanding upon.

III.   Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrates commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values. They are, "Access and Equity; Excellence and Integrity; Collaboration and Stewardship; Compassion and Inclusion."

On campus, we've strategically engaged or provided:

- Voter education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
- Campus leaders promoting voting
- On campus polling place
- Voter registration tables

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)
- Lobbying trips

The emphasis on civic learning and democratic engagement on campus could be increased by 1) communication from senior leadership that this area is a key focus for the institution, and 2) broader representation and engagement with the work of the coalition, which will be a primary focus area in the coming months.

IV. Landscape

The following tables provide a brief overview of the landscape of our campus. This information is based on data collected from 2021 when our total student enrollment was 30,679.

Enrollment Data:

Undergraduate	Graduate	Full Time	Part Time
82.80%	17.20%	26.80%	73.20%

In-State	Out-of-State	International Students	On-Campus Residents	Commuter
86.00%	14.00%	1.80%	9.77%	90.23%

Gender Demographics:

Men	Women	Non-Binary	Transgender
43.60%	56.40%	NA	NA

Age:

18-21	22-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50+
35.70%	20.60%	14.00%	9.80%	3.50%	1.70%

Racial Demographics:

Asian	American Indian / Alaska Native	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	2 or More Races
15.51%	0.25%	8.59%	30.85%	0.78%	29.20%	10.90%

Our institution has also utilized the following data gathering tools:

- National Survey of Student Engagement
- National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement

They help to inform our institution's civic learning and democratic engagement efforts by providing both direct and benchmarking/comparative data about student engagement that inform programming, outreach, and communications decisions. We could do more to actively use the NSSE data for our CLDE efforts. This will be a priority as we identify opportunities for growth.

Data from the 2020 NSLVE is worth sharing at greater depth (see below) to illustrate the current campus climate and landscape.

The work of CLDE is supported in academic spaces on campus in multiple ways. The UNLV University Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (https://www.unlv.edu/provost/gen-ed/uulo) articulate 30 learning outcomes in five categories that are measured throughout the university curriculum. Of those, the following directly align with CLDE efforts:

- Demonstrate lifelong learning skills
- Recognize the complexity of problems, and identify different perspectives from which problems and questions can be viewed
- Identify, analyze, and evaluate reasoning, and construct and defend reasonable arguments and explanations
- Collaborate effectively with others to share information, solve problems, or complete tasks
- Respond to diverse perspectives linked to identity, including age, ability, religion, politics, race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality; both in American and international contexts
- Apply the concept of social justice
- Function effectively in diverse groups
- Demonstrate awareness of one's own place in and effect on the world
- Acquire knowledge of political, economic, and social institutions
- Identify the various rights and obligations that citizens have in their communities
- Apply various forms of citizenship skills such as media analysis, letter writing, community service, and lobbying
- Explain the concept of sustainability as it impacts economic, environmental, and social concerns
- Examine various concepts and theories of ethics, and how to deliberate and assess claims about ethical issues
- Apply ethical concepts and theories to specific ethical dilemmas students will experience in their personal and professional lives

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 the following challenges internally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan do not mention civic learning and democratic engagement explicitly, though it is consistent with the culture and identity of the institution.
- The voter engagement work on our campus is siloed within one office, though the ongoing work of the coalition has improved this.
- We don't have sustainable or consistent funding aside from what the Office of Service Learning and Leadership can provide, or what partners on campus can allocate.
- We have trouble engaging student leaders for the leadership of our initiative. Fostering sustained student engagement in the coalition is a top priority for us moving forward.
- As a commuter campus serving a population that primarily comes from the county we are in, student engagement in general can be challenging at UNLV. A high percentage of our students hold one or multiple jobs, and given that they have existing ties in the broader community students often do not prioritize staying on campus for social or involvement reasons.

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, though we now have a plan to address this.

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

- We have someone whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have a coalition of people who are positioned to implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have processes in place for registering large percentages of our students.
- We have ways in which we communicate voting information to our students.
- We use the resources readily available to develop and implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan.
- We have working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement.
- We have an established platform (TurboVote) that eases access to voter registration processes and reminders.
- We have strong data sources such as NSLVE that help shape our work.
- Nevada has now implemented a fully vote-by-mail system.

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

1. Strengthen the UNLV Votes Coalition to include at least 15 active members including faculty and students by December, 2022.
2. Expand voter engagement programming through partnerships on and off campus
3. Build a relationship with the local election office

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

1. By 2024, the institution will incorporate voter registration and automatic voting reminders into new student orientation
2. By 2028, the institution will increase student voting rates to at least 75%
3. By 2024, the institution will increase voting rates by students of color by at least 5%

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)**:**
- National Voter Registration Day
- TurboVote
- UNLV Votes Coalition
- Voter registration tabling
- Voter information website

These are tactics that we **plan to do** in the **short term:**
- Voter education workshops
- Expand student staffing to support greater programming and student engagement
- Collaborate with UNLV Government Affairs to produce events and initiatives
- Increase student representation on the UNLV Votes Coalition

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **short term:**
- Voter Education Week
- Build a relationship with the local elections office

These are tactics that we **are already doing** for the **long term** (beyond the next year)**:**
- Build relationships with UNLV faculty to increase engagement with CLDE efforts on campus
- Continue to invest in building relationships with other Nevada System of Higher Education institutions and peers doing this same work

These are tactics that we **want to do** in the **long term:**
- Develop a plan for social norming campaigns on campus
- Host candidate forums
- Invest in supporting student attendance at CLDE skill-building retreats and training

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **long term:**
- We hope to develop a full-time position fully dedicated to this work on campus, with a sustained budget

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 83.2%. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased.

In 2020, our voting rate was 69.5% and our voting rate among registered students was 83.5%. 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
- Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- White

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
- Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- White

Our age group stats improved across the board from 2016, but particularly for younger voters:
- 18-21 (57% to 68%)
- 22-24 (57% to 67%)
- 25-29 (56% to 64%)

VIII.   Reporting & Evaluation

We plan to share this Action Plan internally when it is complete by taking the following actions:
- Email to members of our campus coalition
- 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:

- Regrouping with campus coalition to debrief and reflect
- 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 coalition
- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly