

UNC Greensboro Plan to Increase Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement for the 2024 Presidential Election

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNC Greensboro is a 4-year public research university in Greensboro, North Carolina that serves approximately 18,000 students each year. Community and civic engagement are central to UNCG's mission and vision of preparing students "for meaningful lives and engaged citizenship" and serving as "a source of innovation and leadership meeting social, economic, and environmental challenges in the Piedmont Triad, North Carolina, and beyond". UNCG is a minority serving institution that takes pride in its supportive environment and engaged community. UNCG has recently been recognized for being #1 in North Carolina for social mobility, a military friendly school, being a best college for your money, and for our success at closing the gap in graduation rates between black and white students (<https://www.uncg.edu/about-uncg/why-uncg/points-of-pride/>).

Many UNCG departments are involved in a wide range of community and civically engaged projects and partnerships both locally and globally. However, an administrative unit within the Division of Student Affairs, the Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement, serves as a catalyst for experiential co-curricular leadership development, civic engagement, and community service initiatives that empower students to affect positive change and serve as citizen leaders in a global community. The Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement is responsible for and submitting and coordinating the implementation this action plan to further its UNCG Votes initiative, which serves as an important feature of the office and university's civic learning and democratic engagement efforts.

This action plan will address the context, goals, and strategies of UNCG's voter engagement plan for the 2024 election season, January 2024-December 2024, although many of the strategies discussed in this plan are re-occurring annually. This plan is already underway and will be updated for subsequent election cycles. This action plan serves as a guide for how UNCG is seeking to develop and produce civic-minded graduates by engaging them in the democratic practices. This plan also seeks to connect broader institutional values, programs, and plans into a more cohesive examination of our civic learning and democratic engagement efforts.

UNCG seeks to engage students in a primarily in face-to-face interactions, but pivoted to offer more online and remote option during the height of the COVID pandemic. As of March 2022, UNCG dropped in-person restrictions to return to our primary mode of operation. Enrollment data for fall 2023 indicates that 78% of students are enrolled in a "main campus program" vs. online. While most activities will be in-person the action plan will have both in-person and online/virtual components and will take place on UNCG's campus in Greensboro, North Carolina.

LEADERSHIP

Kristina Gage, Associate Director for Civic Engagement
Office of Leadership & Civic Engagement

Keyanna Barnes, Graduate Assistant for Civic Engagement
Office of Leadership & Civic Engagement

Eli Singer, Student Democracy Fellow
Psychology Major

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Andrew Cagle, Director of State and External Affairs
Office of the Chancellor

Nikki Baker, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor
Office of the Chancellor

[TBD], Faculty Director of the Humanities Network and Consortium
History Department

Sue Dennison, Professor Emerita & President of Association of Retired Faculty
Department of Social Work

[TBD], Associate Director
Campus Activities and Programs

Chris Gregory, Director
Office of Military-Affiliated Services

Kathleen McGirty, Assistant Director
Elliott University Center

Erik Unger, Assistant Director
Kaplan Center for Recreation and Wellness

Partners

Campus Vote Project

All In Democracy Challenge/SoCon Votes

Voter Friendly Campus Program

North Carolina Campus Engagement, formerly NC Campus Compact

You Can Vote

Black Voters Matter

The UNCG Votes team or coalition consists of an active core team of student affairs staff and student fellows, affiliated with the Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement (OLCE), and a larger coalition of staff, faculty, and external organizations that partner and collaborate to support the work. The core team is led by Kristina Gage, Associate Director for Civic Engagement within OLCE and the Division of Student Affairs. Keyanna Barnes, Graduate Assistant for Civic Engagement directly supervises the student team of Democracy Fellows as they coordinate volunteer recruitment and co-curricular programs for students. Many of our co-curricular events such as Constitution Day, debate watch parties, Election Fest, etc. are partnerships with Campus Activities and Programs and Office of Intercultural Engagement.

Faculty members on the team work to engage faculty and academic departments in action plan efforts and serve as co-planners and sponsors of key events in the plan. This spring saw turnover in the team's faculty liaisons with retirements and departures. A goal for this upcoming fall semester and academic year is to recruit and connect with more faculty partners in the Academic Affairs division.

The Director of Federal and External Affairs, Andrew Cagle, and Executive Assistant to the Chancellor, Nikki Baker, serve as the university liaisons to the Guilford County Board of Elections. In this role they work to find ideal locations for the on-campus precinct polling site and early voting sites. They ensure clear communication between the Board and University regarding on-campus addressing for voter registration, what counts as proof-of residency for on-campus students, and clarifying status of UNCG student IDs as voter ID. Andrew also ensures programming aligns with state and university policy regarding non-partisan political activity and leads development and communication of policy for groups hosting political events or speakers on campus. Andrew supports the team amongst upper administrators and can direct many inquiries of information or support to the team.

Listed as partners, a few national, state, and local organizations play an important role in supporting election engagement work at UNC Greensboro. Campus Vote Project, NASPA, North Carolina Campus Compact, Campus Election Engagement Project, the All In Democracy Challenge, the League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad, Black Voters Matter, and You Can Vote provide innumerable resources, ideas, and opportunities to network with colleagues at other institutions, and grant and funding opportunities. Several of these partners have worked with us on in-person initiatives by providing guest speakers, panelists, and staffing for nonpartisan voter registration events.

COMMITMENT AND LANDSCAPE

The University motto since 1893, "Service" continues to be a guiding principle put into practice through all aspects of university life. UNCG's commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement are primarily understood through the institution's sense of public purpose, and connectedness to place. The mission and vision statements, provided below, both implicitly and explicitly highlight this commitment. Additionally, the University's new strategic plan echoes this identity through its inclusion of regional transformation as one of three main areas, with vibrant communities and global connections as areas of focus within this transformation. This strategic plan and stated goals align the University's motto of service with a commitment to "develop a capacity for active citizenship, ethics, social responsibility, personal growth and skills for lifelong learning in a global society" (UNC Greensboro General Education Council, 2015).

Mission and Vision: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro will redefine the public research university for the 21st century as an inclusive, collaborative, and responsive institution making a difference in the lives of students and the communities it serves.

UNCG is ...

- A learner-centered, accessible, and inclusive community fostering intellectual inquiry to prepare students for meaningful lives and engaged citizenship;
- An institution offering classes on campus, off campus, and online for degree-seeking students and life-long learners;
- A research university where collaborative scholarship and creative activity enhance quality of life across the life-span;
- A source of innovation and leadership meeting social, economic, and environmental challenges in the Piedmont Triad, North Carolina, and beyond; and
- A global university integrating intercultural and international experiences and perspectives into learning, discovery, and service.

In 2016 UNC Greensboro Chancellor, Frank Gilliam signed the Campus Compact 30th Anniversary Action Statement and an institution-wide Civic Action Plan was developed that reflected goals which supported the new strategic plan. This civic action plan can be found in Campus Compact National's library. UNCG's institutional commitment goes well beyond the words of its statements and plans. A variety of entities within UNCG speak to its long-standing commitment and cross-sectional approach to community engagement and civic pursuits. These offices, centers and institutes provide students, staff, and faculty many opportunities to develop skills, share research, and promote civic involvement.

- Office of Leadership & Civic Engagement
- Institute for Community and Economic Engagement

- Center for Housing and Community Studies
- Center for Community-Engaged Design
- Center for New North Carolinians
- Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships
- Center for Women's Health & Wellness
- North Carolina Entrepreneurship Center

In addition to these entities, many academic programs continue to seek ways to advance civic learning and democratic engagement within the classroom. In May 2018 UNCG's Communication Studies department was awarded a grant from AAC&U through their Civic Learning in the Major by Design Initiative to promote civic learning and social responsibility as expected dimensions within student's majors.

In fall 2021 the Provost chartered a university-wide Community Engagement Council to coordinate, support, and communicate about the institution's community engagement work and appointed a group of faculty and staff to serve on it. This has served as an important step of improving coordination on a campus where community engagement work is very decentralized. The Council is currently focused on an audit of the institution's work in preparation for re-application to the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. While not specifically inclusive of elections, the Council is committed to many civic and democratic aims and will create opportunities for cross-unit collaboration. Kristina Gage, who leads the UNCG Votes coalition is a Co-Chair for the Council.

More broadly addressing learning dimensions, UNCG's General Education curriculum was redesigned in 2020 with several required competencies that highlight important aspects of civic learning and democratic engagement. Each competency includes specific student learning outcomes that can be mapped to civic engagement:

Global engagement and intercultural learning: *Courses in the Global Engagement and Intercultural Learning competency provide students with knowledge and critical understanding of similarities and differences across world cultures over time and emphasize the development of global perspectives and skills to engage cross-culturally.*

Diversity and equity: *Courses explore systems of advantage and oppression, structures of power, and institutions while making connections to US or global societies and examining intellectual traditions that address systems of injustice. These courses will equip students with the intellectual skills and tools needed to connect both their positionalities and experiences as they reimagine their relationships with the world.*

Foundations: *Foundations courses connect students to the campus community by combining university transition content, information literacy, and transferable skills acquisition to facilitate academic and personal development. It is notable that foundations courses for the Honors College and many of the First Year Experience*

courses contain a version of Voting 101, facilitated by the Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement.

UNCG's co-curriculum similarly reveals a culture of civic learning and democratic engagement. Within the Student Affairs Division, two main offices offer regular civic engagement programming. The Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement offers community service, civic engagement, and leadership development programming to students. The Office of Intercultural Engagement offers intercultural engagement and education, dialogue, and community building. The athletics department also staff person focused on diversity and intercultural engagement. This role provided student athletes with civic programming and ran an inter-sport voter registration drive in 2020.

There are few current assessments or collections of data that directly speak to the political climate and democratic engagement on campus.

- National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement – This study, coming out of Tuft's institute for Democracy and Higher Education, offers colleges and universities an opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates. UNCG has data for mid-term and presidential election years beginning in 2014 with rates resting near average or above similar 4-year institutions.
- Co-curricular Transcript – UNCG uses Campus Labs to power an online tool called Spartan Connect that allows students to build a comprehensive record of their participation in activities and accomplishments. With a civic category that is attached to applicable programs, this program will allow for a deeper and more thorough picture of what civic programming is happening campus-wide, and who is participating.
- Collaboratory – This tool, primarily designed to track an institution's community engagement and public service data, can track and report activities at UNCG in which faculty or staff selected "civic engagement" as a student learning goal. It also offers "voter registration" as option for the outcome or impact of an event or program. This tool is a nice complement to the co-curricular transcript as it currently contains mostly curricular or research-based content.
- iBelong Campus Climate Survey Report – This project, now in its second administration, utilized the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) survey developed by the National Institute for Transformation and Equity. This survey is a representative statistically valid sample of undergraduate and graduate students who were asked about their experiences at UNCG to better determine the strengths and needs of our campus climate. The 2023 survey indicated that 59% of undergraduate students agreed or strongly agreed that there were enough opportunities to discuss important political issues with people from different cultural backgrounds while 75% reported there were enough opportunities to discuss important social issues with people from different cultural backgrounds. This indicates some room for improvement, particularly in opportunities to discuss political issues, which is why the Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement is including dialogue, critical conversation, and topic guides in the Canvas resource site for faculty.

NSLVE RESULTS AND CAMPUS TRENDS

UNCG participates in the National Study for Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), which is run by the Institute of Higher Education at Tufts University. This study provides institutions with information about their students voting and registration rates. UNCG has data for even year elections since 2012. Several trends are worth noting and have informed this plan's goals and strategies.

- The voting rate in both midterm and presidential elections are on a positive trajectory. In 2020 UNCG students voted at a rate of 74%, which was a significant jump from 57% in 2016.
- Over half of UNCG students that vote consistently take advantage of early voting. The percentage of students voting in-person on election day have decreased over time.
- In 2016 and 2018 older students voted in higher rates. 2020 was the first report that demonstrated a younger group voting at a higher rate than another. In that case, 18-21-year-olds voted at higher rates than other age groups except those over 40.
- There are some demographic gaps in voting rate. Female identifying students voted at a rate higher (75%) than male identifying students (67%) in 2020. In 2020 white students voted at a rate of 77%, students identifying as 2 or more races voted at 76%, Hispanic students voted at a rate of 74%, American Indian/Alaskan Native students voted at 74%, Black students voted at 72%, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students voted at 68%. UNCG's data was not sufficient to report a percentage of Asian students.

GOALS

Long Term

1. Expand opportunities for co-curricular civic engagement programming to reach 500 students per year by 2025, focusing on partnerships to reduce demographic gaps (currently on year 2 of this goal).
2. Seek out increased faculty involvement and partnership by developing and publishing a Canvas site that includes the following modules for classroom use by March 2024: examples of civic engagement learning outcomes, Voting 101, a GivePulse guide for community service, dialogue resources, and a guide for contacting representatives (year 2 of this goal).
3. Continue to find new ways to incorporate voter registration into first year processes including, but not limited to, move-in, Rawkin' Welcome Week, first year classes, and electronic on-boarding to raise the first-year registration rate by five percentage points by 2025.

Short Term

1. Increase UNCG's 2024 Voter Rate by 2% to 76% for the 2024 midterm election (2020 – 74%).

2. Student Democracy Fellows and/or OLCE staff will facilitate 30 classroom “Voting 101” presentations from January 2024-November 2024. These may be virtual or in-person.
3. Engage new faculty in institutional democratic engagement efforts by partnering with two new faculty members in fulfilling strategies within this 2024 action plan.

STRATEGY

The following list outlines the activities that the institution will implement towards achieving the stated goals. While some strategies fall in multiple categories, each is listed under its primary function: voter registration, voter education, or voter participation.

Voter Registration

- **Voter registration portal** – UNCG will begin utilizing a customized voter registration portal through ALLINtoVote.org to serve as a one-stop shop for students to navigate the voting process by registering or checking their voter registration status. This will primarily be shared through digital platforms and virtual communications but will also be on QR codes on flyers and yard signs around campus. The portal will be embedded in UNCG existing student voting information webpage.
- **Campus wide email** – The Division of Student Affairs will be sending a voting specific email to all students that provides basic voter registration and election information.
- **Welcome week:** Student Fellows will be registering voters and/or providing registration information at several large orientation and First Year events (Fountain Fest, Fall Kickoff and Spartan Service Day).
- **National Voter Registration Day:** The Office of Leadership & Civic Engagement (OLCE) staff, student Fellows, and several of our nonpartisan external partners set up registration stations in high-traffic areas of campus.
- **Provide resources for external groups:** Each year a variety of organizations, both partisan and non-partisan, come to campus to register students. The committee's procedure is to identify these individuals and ensure they are provided with a one-page guide for how our on-campus students should list their addresses to correctly register.
- **Partner with various campus activities for registration tabling:** To maximize effectiveness of tabling, OLCE student fellows will be setting up registration tables primarily at existing, well-attended events throughout the spring and fall semesters. These include an “exercise your right to vote” event with the wellness center, a “fall in love with voting” event during Valentine’s day with campus activities office, and others.

Voter Education

- **Host website:** OLCE will continue to host and update its webpage of voting information relevant to students. This will include the new voter registration portal via the ALL In Campus Democracy Challenge that will be embedded at this location.
- **Voting 101:** This 30-minute, interactive workshop offered by OLCE staff and student Fellows, has variations for staff and faculty groups, student organizations, and classes. It

covers the basics of registration, election dates and deadlines, the voting process, and a discussion on why voting is important. This workshop has been an effective tool in past action plans. This year this success is being leveraged by the acceptance of Voting 101 as a campus partner presentation for First Year Experience courses during the 2023-2024 academic year. Voting 101 is also available on the OLCE Canvas page, making it easy to copy as a module into existing courses.

- **Outreach to faculty:** Through prior action plans we've learned we can reach more students through courses than we can through co-curricular programs. We plan to utilize existing partnerships and develop new ones to connect with faculty to offer Voting 101 and to encourage them to add our Canvas modules to their course pages. These partnerships include but are not limited to Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, The Institute for Community and Economic Engagement, University Teaching and Learning Center, Campus Weekly, the Greensboro branch of the American Association of University Women, and the UNCG Humanities Network and Consortium. We also want to explore putting up a temporary banner in Canvas.
- **Distribute voter guides:** A group of non-partisan organizations in North Carolina often puts out a printed voter guide that provides a profile of each candidate with their answers to the same questions. OLCE distributes these guides across campus and makes the information more easily accessible.

Voter Participation/Ballot Access

- **On-campus voting:** An on-Campus early voting site is anticipated on UNCG's campus for the general election. In addition, one election-day voting precinct is in our University Center, for students living in residence halls on the main part of campus. Print, web, and social media will be created to educate voters of this opportunity. The Walk to the Polls and Party at the Polls events are also designed to draw attention to these locations.
- **Election Fest:** This event, co-hosted by OLCE, the Student Government Association, and Campus Activities and Programs, is a fun, visible, and interactive GOTV event that promotes registration and election engagement through giveaways, music, games, and student speakers.
- **March to the polls:** Depending on the nearest early voting site, OLCE and student Fellows lead a celebratory walk to the polls to raise visibility of the beginning of the voting period. This event is typically co-sponsored by multiple student organizations.
- **Party at the Polls:** Party at the Polls is an Election Day station with information and free treats to celebrate voting. It/they are located near campus polling stations to direct attention to the polling site.
- **Drawing People to the Polls/chalking:** Previously UNCG partnered with the Freedom Center for Social Justice in Charlotte, NC to do a chalk art installation near election day in which a local artist designs and leads participatory chalking to encourage students to vote and share what is important to them. Leading up to election day OLCE student Fellows and volunteers will chalk additional popular sidewalks with information about polling places and provide directional signage to the on-campus early voting site.

- **Social media campaign:** OLCE student Fellows will create and post regular content on OLSL's social media pages.
- **Providing guidance on “proof of residency”:** Each October OLCE works with Housing and Residence Life to ensure that an email is sent out to on-campus students that affirms their residency information. This email serves as proof of residence for NC students who plan on voting locally for the first time. In addition, the university will be sending a all-student email about on-campus early voting and clarify rules for voter ID, which have recently changed.

REPORTING

Because this plan was developed for early submission in December it will be continuously updated as new efforts and opportunities emerge throughout the spring and will be shared with coalition members and made public on the Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement’s voting information webpage. The plan will also be made public through the Voter Friendly Campus program and the All-In Democracy Challenge webpage. UNCG’s NSLVE data/report will also be publicly available on the Office of Leadership and Civic Engagement’s website.

EVALUATION

Evaluation will be taking place on multiple levels. This plan itself will be evaluated once the activities outlined in this plan are completed. A follow-up report will be made public on the Office of Leadership & Civic Engagement’s website. The report will include an evaluation of progress made towards stated goals, data related to student participation in election engagement programming, program effectiveness, challenges and barriers to completion of the plan, and student voting rates (if available). This information, along with new NSLVE data, will be used to inform future election engagement efforts.

Evaluation of specific activities will also be taking place to determine program effectiveness. A few examples are provided below:

- Voting 101 workshop will include a brief pre- and post-test anonymous online survey embedded in the presentation to evaluate whether participants have met the workshops learning outcomes. Results will be recorded and tracked.
- Fellows use a counter to record the number of students they support through outreach efforts (tabling, etc.) whether it is helping them make a plan to vote, helping them look up a polling place, or registering to vote.
- At turnout events we will record student attendance and demographic data (classification, gender, race) through card-swiping so we can better understand who we are reaching.
- Social media efforts are evaluated through analytics provided by social media platforms. These analytics will help evaluate what is the most effective platform, when messages

are reaching the greatest audience, and how the audience is engaging with them so we can tailor our outreach in the future.

- Students participating in Spartans-in-Dialogue or other democracy related dialogue programs will take a post-assessment survey to determine if the program met learning outcomes.