



# Democratic Engagement Action Plan 2022-2023 Academic Year

## **I. Executive Summary**

The University of North Florida is excited to be embarking on a new endeavor: organizing and formalizing our democracy education efforts. While various activities and programs have been taking place on and around campus for some time, never before have these efforts been supported by a centralized office, working as both a partner to current initiatives and creating new programming.

This action plan was developed by a coalition of campus leaders and community partners with a shared passion for civic engagement. This working group proposes the plan to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at University of North Florida (UNF). The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2022-2023 Academic Year, on and around our campus in Jacksonville, Florida.

Students, faculty, and Academic & Student Affairs division staff, led by the Center for Community-Based Learning, will be working to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize the UNF commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections.

This action plan includes both live and digital strategies since our campus community remains responsive to the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategies were developed with a Fall 2022 launch date in mind, but much of the groundwork has begun, demonstrating our sincere commitment. Sustainability and continuity were built into our strategies from the outset, ensuring that the effort remains strong and consistent going forward. For example, many of the planned events and strategies will be the first (or in some cases, second) in what will be an annual series.

## **II. Leadership**

The Civic Education Action Plan Steering Committee has been charged with implementing work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. The committee is comprised of campus

leaders who have demonstrated active commitment to student success and civic and community engagement:

#### Faculty and Staff

- Susan Trudeau, Co-Curricular Coordinator, Center for Community-Based Learning (chair)
- Dr. Justin Sipes, Director, Center for Community Based Learning
- Dr. Gordon Rakita, Associate Vice President of Faculty Development & Professor of Anthropology
- Dr. Amy Lorenz, Associate Director of Housing and Residence Life
- Dr. Sean Freeder, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Public Administration
- Brandi Winfrey, Director of Inclusive Excellence, President's Office
- Mark Harris, Coordinator of Mentoring Programs and Student Success
- Kaitlyn Minnicks, Coordinator, Office of Undergraduate Research
- Phaedra Dejarnette, Program Assistant, Academic and Student Affairs, is directly involved in the planning and implementation of student engagement efforts.
- Jessica Spangler, Athletic Academic Advisor Student-Athlete Center for Excellence, represents athletics and is a strong connection to the Student Athlete Advisory Board, especially crucial as UNF approaches its Motivate/Osprey Vote implementation plan.
- Marla Lewis, Associate Director of Student Financial Aid provided guidance about the use of Federal Work Study monies to support civic education efforts.
- Robert Rose, Instructional Designer, Center for Instructional Research and Technology
- Matthew Grandstaff, Institutional Effectiveness Specialist, Institutional Research has provided data and support.

#### Community Partners

- Joshua Young, Director, Institute for Civic Engagement and Democracy, Miami Dade Community College, has been generous with guidance and suggestions throughout our program's development. The level of engagement at MDC under his leadership is inspiring and serves as a goal for UNF.

#### Students

- Rita Jacobs, sophomore student, former Civic Influencers fellow
- Katie Jones, junior student, co-president of We the People; former Student PIRG intern
- Katie Renzi, first-year student
- Madeline Trudeau, junior student; co-president of We the People; former Student PIRG intern
- Selah Jones, senior student, treasurer of We the People; member, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
- Jaylene Cabrera, junior student, former Campus Vote Project fellow; former Civic Influencers intern

This coalition is diverse and inclusive of representation from different parts of campus, including student leadership, representation from different perspectives and areas of expertise, trusted leaders and organizations who support communities that are historically underrepresented in democracy, and leaders who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus into our work. It is hoped that the coalition continues to grow and evolve as the work gains momentum, and new members will be invited regularly.

Our group plans to meet once a month via Zoom and conduct most business through Microsoft Teams; using these online collaboration tools facilitates participation by our diverse group when they are unable to gather in person. We are also partnering with the following organizations from the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition to support our efforts on campus:

- Campus Election Engagement Project (now Civic Influencers)
- Campus Vote Project
- Student PIRGs
- Miami Dade Community College
- League of Women Voters

### III. Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrate commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement by recently dedicating increased staff and resources to these efforts, including the purchase of Motivote and a new agreement to participate in NSLVE. We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values, listed on the UNF website. They are as follows:

Integrity	We do the right thing for the right reason at the right time.
Respect	We treat everyone with kindness, we are informed by the perspectives of others, and we draw strength from our differences.
Accountability	We are responsible for how the outcomes of our actions affect others and our environment.
Innovation	We harness creativity and talent to turn challenges into opportunities and problems into solution in a uniquely UNF way.

While they do not explicitly reference democratic engagement and education, the values reflect the requirements of responsible stewardship of global resources, and certainly civic engagement fits into that paradigm. In particular, the expectation that UNF graduates are informed by the perspectives of others and understand the impact of their actions are primary characteristics of an engaged citizenry.

Senior leadership, including the president's and provost's offices, have demonstrated commitment by allocating resources to purchase Motivote and by joining the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement.

In recent years, the state of Florida has taken action to require that postsecondary students complete a course in civic literacy as a requirement for graduation. This requirement may be satisfied by taking one of two courses, either US History Since 1877 (AMH2020) or Introduction to American Government (POS2041). At UNF, faculty in both departments are currently working to ensure compliance with this requirement and develop plans for dealing with the resulting significant increase in student enrollment in their departments.

UNF provides students with several opportunities to get engaged democratically and politically, such as the following:

- Voter education resources provided in partnership with Campus Election Engagement Project (now Civic Influencers), the Campus Vote Project (CVP), the Center for Community-Based Learning, and the League of Women Voters;
- Political clubs or student organizations, both partisan and non-partisan;
- Voter registration tables hosted by both partisan and non-partisan registered student organizations and by community partners such as the League of Women Voters
- Voting in student body elections and by faculty as members of the UNF Faculty Association;

- Opportunities to register to vote co-hosted by partner agencies and campus offices and registered student organizations;
- Civic Holiday events such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day co-hosted by the Center for Community-Based Learning and Campus Vote Project and Campus Election Engagement Project/Civic Influencers.
- Robust Constitution Week programming, including opportunities to register to vote and annual events offered by the Center for Community-Based Learning in partnerships with campus partners like the College of Arts and Sciences and community partners such as the League of Women Voters.

Undeniably, UNF is facing some challenges as we embark on this endeavor, notably, tremendous change in leadership over the past few years, including a new provost and a new president as well as no mention of civic engagement in the UNF Mission statement or strategic plan. While these changes represent a challenge, they also present an opportunity to re-affirm our commitment to civic engagement.

## IV. Landscape

The following tables provide a brief overview of the landscape of our campus. This information is based on data collected from 2022 when our total student enrollment was 16,594.

### Enrollment Data:

Undergraduate	Graduate	Full Time	Part Time
86.00%	14.00%	31.00%	69.00%

In-State	Out-of-State	International Students	On-Campus Residents	Commuter
93.00%	7.00%	2.30%	19.50%	80.50%

### Gender Demographics:

Men	Women	Non-Binary	Transgender
41.00%	59.00%		

### Age:

18-21	22-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50+
55.70%	19.00%	10.00%	7.40%	3.20%	2.10%

### Racial Demographics:

Asian	American Indian / Alaska Native	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	2 or More Races
5.70%	0.20%	10.90%	15.00%	1.30%	60.70%	5.10%

Our institution has also utilized the following data gathering tools:

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

This is a new initiative at UNF, so we are establishing baseline information from which to develop goals and design new strategies to increase engagement across demographics.

## **I. Goals**

Before setting our civic learning and democratic engagement goals on campus, we took the following information into consideration:

We know our campus faces challenges internally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters. Historically, civic education has not been a centralized focus at UNF, although it has long been occurring in different venues throughout the campus community. Unfortunately, our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan do not mention civic learning and democratic engagement.

While we do not have processes in place for registering large percentages of our students, UNF has committed to the purchase and implementation of Motivote, branded as Osprey Vote, to address this concern. Without a centralized digital or physical space for civic education, it is difficult to mobilize student leaders in this initiative. Osprey Vote is an important step toward creating a “home” for civic education at UNF.

We do not have sustainable or consistent funding earmarked for this new endeavor, but individual projects are consistently supported.

As a public state institution in the Florida State University System, we must tread carefully to make sure we are non-partisan in our get out the vote and registration efforts. Voter engagement is often politicized, which can result in administrative reluctance to engage, particularly at public universities which must be scrupulously non-partisan in their efforts.

Other challenges include that we have not yet established a working relationship with our local election office; moreover, we must conform to state laws in all our efforts to support student voter registration efforts

However, we also know our campus has considerable strengths to support our voter engagement work:

- We have someone whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus, the co-curricular coordinator in the Center for Community-Based Learning.
- We have a coalition of people representing faculty, staff and students who are positioned to implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have ways in which we communicate voting information to our students, including social media, campus media, and, in Fall 2022, Motivote (Osprey Vote) and the Ask Every Student Canvas module.
- We use the resources readily available to develop and implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus, efforts which have been supported by funding from Student Government, College of Arts and Sciences, and the Center for Community-Based Learning. We use GivePulse, branded as OspreyImpact, to offer and track engagement opportunities.
- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan.



- We have working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement, including the League of Women Voters, Civic Influencers, and Campus Vote Project.

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

- Increase and formalize voter registration efforts/programs for students;
- Create a digital home for civic engagement opportunities by Fall, 2022, with the launch of the new UNF website and Motivote branded as Osprey Vote;
- Model and/or encourage civil discourse on voting generally and specific ballot initiatives.

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

- Secure approval for a polling place on campus for the 2024 election (for early voting and election-day voting);
- Create a physical home for civic engagement opportunities, dedicated office space on campus;
- Increase the number of courses that offer a civic engagement component and establish a tracking and assessment mechanism to capture data on these courses.

## V. Strategy

Below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months and years. These efforts would launch in Fall 2022, although much of the preliminary work has begun.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** in the **short term** (within the next year):

- Implement Motivate, branded as Osprey Vote, to support student democratic engagement:
  - Incentivize democratic engagement
  - Provide voting registration and deadline information
  - Publicize local democratic engagement opportunities
  - Engage student groups in team competition around civic engagement
  - Launch the student-developed Osprey Vote marketing campaign
- Create open discussions about issues and how voting is connected to them, using events such as “Popcorn and Politics,” especially during the Fall semester, and prior to the midterm election.
- Invite and sponsor community partners (e.g., the League of Women Voters) to promote voter registration at Market Days, UNF’s weekly open-air event.
- Programming co-sponsored by the Center for Community-Based Learning and interns from our civic education partners, Florida Student PIRG, Civic Influencers, and Campus Vote Project.
- Increase opportunities in and out of the classroom to engage students in civil discourse and dialogue.
- Offer 70 courses that address civic engagement spread across the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Education and Human Services, Brooks College of Health and Coggin College of Business.
- Join the Students Learn Student Vote Coalition.
- Continue UNF’s membership with Campus Compact.

These are tactics that we **plan to do** in the **short term**:

- Host a Unify Challenge College Bowl to increase democratic engagement-focused civil discourse among students;
- Publicize on and off-campus volunteer opportunities for students interested in working for a political campaign (partisan + non-partisan);
- Enlist Spinnaker Media for regular coverage of civic engagement opportunities, such as the Osprey Vote launch, voter registration deadlines, etc.;
- Provide the Ask Every Student Canvas module to faculty for distribution to students;
- Establish a baseline of voter data utilizing NSLVE, which UNF has recently joined, so that we can track civic participation;
- Dedicate a portion of available Federal Work Study activities;
- Provide basic education around what it means to be civically engaged beyond just voting
  - Produce social media content introducing basic terms and examples
  - Host tabling events where students can ask questions and receive information about voting

- Identify additional student organizations and other agencies already on campus that can help us increase our outreach;
- Create a digital space on campus for civic education.

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **short term**:

- Place a democratic engagement header/link on the My Wings landing page for students;
- Add a script about Osprey Vote to the hold message for campus phones;
- Invite coaches for athletic teams to sign on to the ALL IN Challenge Coaches Challenge
- Elicit support from Athletic Director Nick Morrow for an initiative/challenge through the Atlantic Sun Conference
- Partner with Student Government and African American Faculty and Staff Association to bring back #SWOOPIntoVote, a social media campaign, and the UNF Voting Squad, the former name for a group of any UNF member who voted in an election;
- Create online and physical pamphlets/flyers with voting and registration information to distribute throughout campus (i.e., student organizations, advising services, orientation, UNF Newsletter, and Osprey Update);
- Ask our new president to commit to the ALL IN Presidents' Commitment;
- Add Osprey Vote printed material in first-year package.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** for the **long term** (beyond the next year):

- Participate in NSLVE with the aim of establishing baseline information;
- Offer additional coursework that addresses civic literacy and engagement

These are tactics that we **want to do** in the **long term**:

- Develop a year-round calendar for civic education with tie-ins to major campus initiatives (e.g., Homecoming, Orientation) and recognition months (e.g., Black History Month, Women's History Month);
- Increase opportunities in and out of the classroom to engage students in civil discourse and dialogue.

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **long term**:

- Publicize on and off-campus volunteer opportunities for students interested in working for a political campaign (partisan + non-partisan);
- Increase offerings of coursework that addresses civic education;
- Host voter registration drives at first-year student and transfer student orientations;
- Help alumni students register to vote once they relocate;
- Add statements regarding civic education to University mission and value statements.
- Create a physical space on campus for civic education;
- Enhance the university's partnership with external civic engagement organizations like Campus Compact:
  - Encourage students to apply for the Newman Civic Fellows program and Ballotpedia Fellows program

- Invite elected representatives/officials to engage in nonpartisan conversations about local, statewide, and national issues
- Socialize voting by hosting on-campus events during election season where students can meet up, socialize, then walk/shuttle to the polls together to vote
- Create a space where students can gather and have open discussions to broaden perspectives about the issues our world is facing and learn how to take effective action to solve them.

## **VI. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)**

We are new participants in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), yet to establish a baseline. However, we intend to utilize NSLVE data to guide revisions and development of our Action Plan.

## **VII. Reporting & Evaluation**

This Action Plan will be shared internally and externally. Internally, this plan will be shared through email to members of our campus coalition and campus administration, including the President and Provost. It will be made available to students through campus media, and faculty and staff will be able to access it through internal newspapers. This Action Plan will be released externally in a public statement and then shared on the University of North Florida website.

The Civic Education Action Plan Steering Committee will collect feedback on this plan through multiple avenues. Post-election surveys will be sent to faculty and students. Frequent regrouping sessions with the campus coalition will also be implemented to allow opportunities to debrief and reflect. Additionally, components of the collected feedback will be integrated into individual campus efforts.

We plan to evaluate our success in several ways. First, by reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for and identifying potential improvements year after year. We will also seek feedback throughout the action planning process by consulting with individuals outside our action planning committee. Lastly, success will be evaluated by revisiting our past goals, identifying which goals were achieved and not, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly.