

## 2022 Student Voting Action Plan, University of Northern Iowa

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### **Executive Summary**

UNI has a tradition of being a high turnout campus. For 2022, our plan is to build on our past success in several ways. First and foremost, we intend to broaden our coalition. Second, we plan to target areas of campus that have traditionally had lower levels of turnout. Finally, we plan to increase staffing around voter engagement. Our 2020 efforts began in the summer of 2019 with outreach to various campaigns to attempt to get them on campus, and will extend through Election Day. Our goal for 2020 is 72% turnout. In addition to 2020, we are working to institutionalize our voter engagement efforts so that we can continue this work into the future and make it part of our campus culture.

### **Background and Past work**

In 2018, the American Democracy Project chapter on campus moved to the department of Political Science. We decided that one of our goals was to increase the role of ADP in get out the vote efforts. What we discovered from our old NSLVE reports is that UNI already had very high turnout (67.2% in 2016). A variety of groups were involved in registration and get out the vote efforts, especially NextGen and College Democrats, but there was little coordination among these groups, duplicated efforts, and little institutional support. Additionally, we had concerns that some of these efforts were largely based on particularly motivated students, and in other years, there might not be this kind of leadership. Our plan was to use ADP not to replace other groups, but to help them coordinate their efforts, and to identify and engage student leaders in the process. We united stake holders from a variety of organizations including College Democrats (at this point the College Republicans were in a rebuilding phase and chose not to participate), student government, the political science department, the Black Hawk County Auditor's office (who runs elections), university marketing, and the Student Organizations Coordinator. We dubbed the effort #panthersvote, so that we could have a consistent brand across campus. The provost provided funding for merchandise, activities, etc.

In 2020, we had planned a major ramp up in activities, which largely had to be reconfigured due to COVID 19. We shifted to a largely online strategy when a face to face campaign became untenable. Some highlights of the 2020 campaign included

- Inviting primary candidates to campus prior to the caucuses (most major candidates visited campus)
- A Mock Caucus to show students how they work
- An event to register student athletes
- A series of online video ads

- Providing dorm RAs with voting information
- Providing faculty with PowerPoint slides on registration to include in class
- Early Voting at the Dome
- Proof of Residence in MyUniverse, to navigate new voter ID rules
- Across the board, UNI's turnout Improved in 2020.

	2016	2020
<b>UNI Registraion</b>	<b>89.8</b>	<b>89.1</b>
<b>UNI Turnout among eligible voters</b>	<b>66.7</b>	<b>73.1</b>
<b>UNI Turnout among registered voters</b>	<b>74.6</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Turnout at peer institutions</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>65</b>

- Our registration rate dipped slightly, but turnout among registered voters increased substantially, for an overall improvement of 6.4% from 2016. While our turnout did not improve as much as it did a peer institutions (Public MA granting universities, by the report), this is largely due to our extremely high starting point (We had the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest turnout in the nation in 2016), which limits our room for growth. In context, Iowa's overall turnout was 75.8%. As voters under 30 have the lowest voter turnout rates, this makes our numbers look even more impressive

### **2022- Growing #panthersvote**

We have been continuously working on voter engagement since the 2018 election, and are gearing up to start our big push in the spring and summer of 2020. We were very happy with our 2020 results, particularly given the difficult circumstances of the pandemic. We plan to build on that success for 2022. First, we plan to keep all of the various online programming from 2020. Second, we plan to build a robust face to face program, modeled on and expanding our 2018 work.

### **Broadening the Coalition-**

Our past coalition members are all on board for 2020. Our goal is to expand our partnerships. I have met with the student organizations coordinator to identify which groups to reach out to. While we don't expect most to do a large amount of engagement work, our plan is to get opportunities to speak at their meetings, do voter registration there and potentially pick up a few of their members as volunteers. We are especially interested in bringing in the College Republicans (under new leadership, they are an active organization) and several student groups representing racial and ethnic minorities. We have also partnered with the League of Women Voters on a campus event and plan to continue their involvement. Finally, we are partnered with the Athletic Department, with a goal of getting student athletes involved in #panthersvote. They were very successful in 2020 and we are planning to do it again in 2022.

### **Targeting Low Turnout Majors-**

Our 2018 and 2020 NSLVE reports show several large majors with substantially lower turnout than the campus average. Leisure Studies and Business stand out as having lower than average turnout, and a large number of students. We have reached out to the College of Business about partnering to increase turnout, and will do the same for Leisure Studies. These majors represent our biggest opportunities for increasing turnout. In particular, College of Business is extremely competitive, and they are very interested in working to pull up their numbers.

#### Building up Staffing-

As we did in 2018, we will apply for staffing through the CEEP fellows program. This was a tremendous resource in the last election cycle. This year, the provost's office has funded a Director of Student Engagement position through Northern Iowa Student Government. This position serves as the student coordinator for student voting, and would work on other civic engagement and learning activities between elections. We are also working on securing funding on campus for a few student staff from August to November. The Political Science Department has secured office space and a computer for students in this role.

#### Providing Access-

Iowa allows early voting at satellite locations. In 2020, we had a three days of satellite voting on campus, located at the Dome due to COVID. We plan to do this again for 2022. We plan to go back to rotating these sites as we did in 2018 and getting more days. Additionally, we are working on getting links for voter registration in several web spaces that students use frequently to make it as easy as possible to get registered

#### Activities-

The 2018 speaker series was well received and well attended. We will continue that in 2022. We will also reach out to candidates in the general election to try to get them to do on campus events. Finally, we plan to add some additional fun events in the fall to get students engaged in the process and turn registrations into voters, particularly for National Voter Registration Day in September.