



University of Portland Democratic Engagement Action Plan: 2024-2025 Academic Year

This plan was created using the Votes & Ballots Action Planning Form. We highly recommend editing and expanding upon this draft before submitting for review.

Throughout this document, we mention the Strengthening American Democracy Guide as a resource for your review. We encourage you to turn to that resource for guidance and support as you complete your action plan!

I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by Elizabeth Parkman, Associate Director of Student Engagement to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at University of Portland. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2024-2025 Academic Year, on and around our campus in PORTLAND, Oregon.

The following groups will be leading this work at University of Portland in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections:

- Undergraduate Students
- Faculty
- Civic/Political/Community Engagement Center
- Student Affairs Staff

The mission of our initiative is:

- Vote UP is here to support everyone's right to vote and to provide voter information, resources and events. Our objective is to ensure that all community members have the tools they need to register to vote and the access to information about the upcoming local, statewide, and national elections.

Our action plan is to promote nonpartisan voter registration and education through events and programs, weekly tabling, social media posting, and physical advertising on campus.

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Executive Summary* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

II. Leadership

Elizabeth Parkman, Associate Director of Student Engagement will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. They will be supported in this work by:

- Erin Savoia, Social Justice Program Manager
- Anne Santiago, Associate Professor Political Science
- Colin Stewart, Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs
- Stephanie Vasquez, Associated Student Body Vice President

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, Leaders who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus in to our work

Our group plans to meet Once per month at TBD/St.Mary's

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Leadership Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

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 state, "The University of Portland, an independently governed Catholic university guided by the Congregation of Holy Cross, addresses significant questions of human concern through disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies of the arts, sciences, and humanities and through studies in majors and professional programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. As a diverse community of scholars dedicated to excellence and innovation, we pursue teaching and learning, faith and formation, service and leadership in the classroom, residence halls, and the world. Because we value the development of the whole person, the University honors faith and reason as ways of knowing, promotes ethical reflection, and prepares people who respond to the needs of the world and its human family."

We also have had a senior leader commit to civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.

On campus, we've seen:

- Voter education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
- Campus leaders promoting voting
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- Voter registration tables
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- Signage promoting Election Day
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On campus, we've experienced:

- Voting in student body elections
- Political speakers
- Town halls
- Registering to vote
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- Deliberative dialogues
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The emphasis on civic learning and democratic engagement could be increased.

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Commitment Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

IV. Landscape

We do not have access to comprehensive demographic information about our student body at this time.

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Landscape Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

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

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- We don't have someone whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
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- We don't have processes in place for registering large percentages of our students.
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- We don't have sustainable or consistent funding.
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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.
- We don't have working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement.
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With that said, we know our campus has the following strengths when we approach our voter engagement work:

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- We have a coalition of people who are positioned to implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
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- The voter engagement work on our campus is distributed throughout many offices and areas of expertise.
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- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan.
- We are able to engage student leaders for the leadership of our initiative.

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

1. Create a one-sheet or simple document with resources for out of state voting and registration.
2. Develop at least one partnership with a community organization invested in civic learning and/or democratic engagement.
3. Work with the Civil Rights Immersion students to plan a campus event about issues they learned about while participating in the immersion.

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

1. Embed within the university bureaucracy an office or individual responsible for political and community engagement
2. Develop more funding for civic engagement on campus.

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Goals Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

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):

- -Developed a civic engagement working group and created a deliberative dialogues program, Constructive and Sustained Dialogues.
- -Developed two federal work study positions for student workers to promote non-partisan voter education.
- -Hosted/hosting civic engagement events on campus such as bringing speakers to campus, a film screening, and presidential and vp debate watch parties.
- -Partnering with student groups to promote voter registration
- -Talking about the election and democratic engagement in class

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

- -Develop more civic engagement programming not based around the election cycle
- -Make resources available to students about voting (including information on absentee voting)

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

- -Collect data on political participation on campus and with that data develop targeted initiatives to increase political participation

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

- -Building support systems and scaffolding for civic engagement on campus -Working with student groups to increase political participation

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

- -Survey students on civic engagement issues that are important to them to create programming - Establish civic engagement traditions on campus

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

- -Develop partnerships with non-partisan, non-governmental organizations dedicated to helping the campus community grow civic engagement

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Strategy Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

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 2022. In 2022 our registration rate was 82.9%. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate decreased.

In 2022, our voting rate was 39.6% and our voting rate among registered students was 47.8%. During this year, our voting rate was higher than the national average.

How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your NSLVE section includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

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
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We plan to share this Action Plan externally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Post on the campus website
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We will collect feedback on this plan by:

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- Regrouping with campus coalition to debrief and reflect
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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 action planning team
- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly
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How can you improve this section? Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Reporting & Evaluation Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.