

UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER
Civic Engagement Campus Action Plan

Fall 2022

Center for Community Engagement

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Committee for Political Engagement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This action plan has been developed by the University of Rochester Center for Community Engagement (CCE) for the Fall 2022 semester. It seeks to increase voter registration and voter turnout rates for the 2022 midterm elections. The action plan also focuses on the development of civic engagement outcomes for undergraduates. It follows the guide, [Strengthening American Democracy](#), published by the Students Learn, Students Vote coalition and the All-In Campus Democracy Challenge.

By engaging with this action plan, students will be able to:

- Understand and communicate their civic identity*
- Engage in controversy with civility
- Develop a greater capacity for empathy, as seen by engaging with and relating to others of different backgrounds*
- Analyze complicated social issues*
- Connect and apply knowledge from coursework to community engagement experiences and vice versa*
- Develop capacity for active participation in a community*

The University of Rochester is a private, tier one research university located in Rochester, NY. The University is made up of several schools and divisions including the School of Arts & Sciences, the Hajim School of Engineering, Eastman School of Music, School of Medicine and Dentistry, School of Nursing, Simon Business School, and the Warner School of Education. While there may be collaboration across these divisions, this action plan places particular emphasis on undergraduate students in the College of Arts, Science, and Engineering (AS&E).

The University's mission is to "learn, discover, heal, create—and make the world ever better." Shared values include equity, leadership, integrity, openness, respect, and accountability. Voter mobilization efforts help to

ensure that all people have a voice in making decisions that impact our communities. While not explicitly addressed in the University's vision and values, the College's co-curricular college competencies are similar to the identified civic engagement learning outcomes: adaptability and resilience, career design and management, critical thinking and problem solving, intercultural and global fluency, leadership, oral and written communication, and teamwork.

This action plan was developed in collaboration with the student-led Committee for Political Engagement (CPE), which is convened by the Center for Community Engagement and includes undergraduate students from AS&E. Other stakeholders from across the University were also invited to participate through a University-wide coalition for civic engagement.

The action plan will begin summer 2022 and proceed through December 2022, at which time stakeholders will assess progress toward the identified goals. The action plan will be reviewed and updated between December 2022 and January 2023.

* Identified using resources from the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement

LEADERSHIP

The working group will be led by:

Glenn Cerosaletti

Assistant Dean of Students and Director,
Center for Community Engagement

Victoria Liverpool

Alumna and Past Chair,
Committee for Political Engagement (2021-2022)
Class of 2022

Payge Vukelic

Student and Chair,
Committee for Political Engagement (2022-2023)
Class of 2024

The strengths of the working group members include: student perspective and voice; student organization and government involvement; campus partnerships network; community partnerships; and institutional knowledge. While under-represented minorities are included in CPE--including in leadership roles--the working group recognizes the importance of advancing civic learning and democratic engagement especially for groups that continue to be marginalized in the US democratic process.

The working group will convene stakeholders in several ways:

Committee for Political Engagement (CPE)

CPE is made up of students varying in class year, academic area, and political ideology. The group is selected through an application and interview process moderated by current members (their peers). Ex officio members include a representative from student government (usually the community

engagement chair), College Democrats, and College Republicans. Additional ex officio members have included Monroe County Election Fellows and representatives of other political student organizations when active. CPE has established processes for leadership selection and transition. There are currently no plans to compensate students or community members.

Coalition for Political Engagement

The Coalition is a University-wide convening of stakeholders passionate about creating a civic engagement culture on campus. The Coalition provides a mechanism for stakeholders whose focus is adjacent to political engagement to make strategic and instrumental contributions to the elaboration and implementation of the campus action plan. These stakeholders include students from other student organizations (not only organizations focused on politics but also awareness, service, cultural, and other organizations, including fraternities and sororities; it may also include non-affiliated students), student affairs staff (particularly student activities, fraternity & sorority affairs, residential life, athletics and recreation), other staff (registrar, information technology, religious and spiritual life,...) and faculty members. The Coalition receives periodic communications and meets at least once per year for goal setting and action planning workshops.

Community Partnerships

CCE and CPE have collaborated closely with the local chapter of the League of Women Voters (LWV). Traditionally, this partnership has included voter registration support provided by the LWV. The University participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement and is an ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge partner. CCE and CPE are also partners with Harvard University's Institute of Politics and have participated in their annual conference.

CCE previously managed a formal partnership between the Monroe County Board of Elections to run a college poll-worker program. Two Election Fellows from each higher education institution (one Democrat and one Republican) would work to recruit a new generation of poll workers. Due to communication and staffing challenges, this program is no longer active. Still, there exists lines of communication and collaboration between the University and the Board of Elections.

The Center for Community Engagement reports to the Dean of Students within the College of Arts, Science, and Engineering, who can advocate on behalf of the efforts of the working group. Its work also benefits from support and advocacy of senior leadership in the office of the provost as well as the University's office of equity and inclusion.

COMMITMENT

The University's [mission, vision, and values](#) do not include a specific commitment to civic and political engagement, but they place a clear emphasis on equity, inclusion, leadership, and "making the world ever better," which collectively support the aims of the campus action plan for political engagement.

The University is currently in the process of elaborating a [strategic plan](#). One of the focal pathways of that planning process is being a university for and with the community, focused on local, regional, national and global partnerships; another focal pathway is turning equity into action. While not explicitly focused on civic learning or political engagement, both of these strategic priorities relate to and support the work of our campus action plan.

University leadership has also shown its support for this work through support of the University's participation in NSLVE and for our partnership with Democracy Works to use the TurboVote platform. The deans in the College of Arts & Science also recently committed to the establishment of a Center for Democracy within the political science department to promote the comparative study of the health of democracy both domestically and internationally. These actions demonstrate commitments to civic and political engagement; more expansive, comprehensive and explicit institutional commitment is an area for future growth.

This is the first effort to elaborate a campus-wide action plan for civic and political engagement. While individual departments or units may have learning outcomes related to civic, democratic, and political learning, there are not yet institution-wide learning outcomes. A hallmark of the undergraduate education at the University is an open curriculum with no general education curriculum, but students instead complete significant work in each of the three primary divisions of study: humanities, social sciences,

and natural sciences, math and engineering. Co-curricular efforts are guided by the College Competencies, as described in the executive summary.

LANDSCAPE

Learning Outcomes: The University does not have over-arching campus learning outcomes, although selected departments may include civic learning and democratic engagement among their priority learning outcomes. This is certainly true for the Center for Community Engagement.

Assessment: The University has participated in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) since 2012 and makes its NSLVE reports publicly available, in addition to promoting them with student, faculty, and administrative leadership. In the most recent election cycle for which data is available, the University's voter registration and participation rates were slightly higher than the average of all institutions that participated in NSLVE, but slightly behind that of the University's peer group. The University has also participated in the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) on a triennial schedule since 2006. This study provides indirect evidence of students' ideological views.

Curricular integration: The University's political science department is well established and respected. Its curricular offerings (majors, minors, certificates) are among those most popular for undergraduate students. The integration of civic learning and democratic engagement into the undergraduate curriculum happens especially there. However, other academic departments, often led by faculty interest, offer courses that include CLDE to a lesser extent. For example, the Program in Dance and Movement has offered several courses that have addressed issues of civic learning and political engagement. More broadly, the Center for Community Engagement supports faculty in developing and delivering

community-engaged courses, which to varying degrees incorporate some aspects of CLDE.

Co-curricular integration: The Center for Community Engagement is the office primarily responsible for promoting CLDE outcomes through its various programs, which encompass both curricular and co-curricular realms. The Center serves as an advocate for student organizations that focus on politics. Selected other student organizations, including fraternities and sororities, occasionally incorporate CLDE in their programming.

Internal barriers to success include:

- General disinterest in political engagement outside students majoring in political science
- Distrust of University intentions with regard to civic and community engagement
- Limited faculty involvement (e.g. excusing students from class to vote, sharing info)
- Class schedules prevent students from voting on Election Day
- Overcommitted student body
- Campus bubble: students are disconnected from current events

External Barriers to success include:

- Deadlines to register to vote
- Students may not understand how to properly complete the voter registration form
- Students changing address for campus housing from year to year may result in their registration expiring
- Not allowing absentee ballots for every election for everyone
- Polling site accessibility: the Election Day polling site is at the University's medical center, a 15-20 minute walk for most students
- Transportation to polling sites

Student demographics (data reflects undergraduate students)

- 28% international students; 44% white, 10% asian, 5% black, 7% hispanic, 4% unknown
- High international student population means a significant portion of student body is ineligible to vote in US elections and to varying degrees may contribute to the lack of interest and engagement
- Almost all students are from outside of the County and so must choose whether to register to vote at the campus address or at their home address
- Most students are from out of state and some may perceive their vote as being more influential if they are from a swing state (e.g. Pennsylvania is the second highest home state for undergraduate students)
- Residential campus: most students live on campus

Assets for success

The following resources are available to help the institution be successful:

- Diverse student body
- The Center for Community Engagement
- The Committee for Political Engagement
- School is generally willing to support civic learning and democratic engagement
- Very involved student body
- TurboVote portal
- Early voting in New York State
- Formal support from Students Association to host a polling site on campus
- Data from NSLVE reports since 2012
- Newly formed Center for Democracy in a well-established department of political science

What additional resources are needed to help the institution be successful?

- Additional support from administrative departments such as transportation, administration

- Further engagement of student leadership of diverse organizations
- Institution-wide promotional approach

GOALS

The University of Rochester envisions a future where political engagement is a part of campus culture and all students contribute to the democratic process.

College Competencies include:

- Adaptability and resiliency
- Career design and management
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Intercultural and global fluency
- Leadership
- Oral and written communication
- Teamwork

Political engagement efforts most directly contribute to critical thinking and problem solving, leadership, and intercultural and global fluency, but contribute to varying degrees toward the development of all of the competencies.

LONG-TERM GOALS

By 2032, the University of Rochester aims to:

- Increase voter registration rates (as measured by NSLVE) to at least 90% of students who are eligible to vote.
- Increase voting participation rates to at least 75% of students eligible to vote.
- Eliminate disparities in voting participation by under-represented minority students eligible to vote (as measured by NSLVE).
- Reduce disparities in voting participation by gender by at least 50% (as measured by NSLVE).
- Reduce disparities in voting participation by areas of study by at least 50% (as measured by NSLVE).

SHORT-TERM GOALS

In the short term, the University of Rochester seeks to:

- Increase student voter registration rates by 10% overall in Fall 2022 as compared to the 2018 mid-term election.
- Increase student voter turnout rates by 10% overall in Fall 2022 as compared to the 2018 mid-term election.
- Increase STEM student voter turnout rates by 10% in Fall 2022.
- Increase Asian student voter turnout rates by 15% in Fall 2022.
- Reach 3,000 TurboVote users by the end of our subscription (2025)
- By 2025, develop and implement an assessment to determine a baseline on the number of students that:
 - feel they can communicate their political identities and values
 - know mechanisms for sharing their thoughts (e.g. voting, writing to representatives, speaking to council,...)
 - feel capable of pursuing these mechanisms for sharing their thoughts.

To accomplish these outcomes, we identified priority areas and set goal outputs:

PROMOTION

- Increase engagement with social media posts
- Increase Instagram followers for the Committee for Political Engagement and Center for Community Engagement accounts
- Develop a sustainable, timely process for publicizing political engagement events

INSTITUTIONALIZATION

- Establish a polling place on campus for 2022 midterm elections
- Include a permanent TurboVote link on BlackBoard
- Routinely register new students to vote during orientation

- Establish a graduate assistantship position to:
 - Liaise between Center for Community Engagement, Committee for Political Engagement, and the new Center for Democracy
 - Further expand the Coalition for Political Engagement

ENGAGEMENT

- Cosponsor each event with a student group or department.
Suggestions may include:
 - Competitions focused on voter registration with fraternities and sororities or a capella groups
- Each semester, cosponsor with two new groups/departments (particularly those that support STEM students, Asian students, and other underrepresented students)
- Host at least one program that includes international students each semester (through Committee for Political Engagement's International Outreach Committee)

STRATEGY

Goals (Outcomes)	Program (Outputs)	Anticipated Date	Venue	Responsible Person(s)
Increase student voter registration rates by 10%	Conduct early outreach to new students over the summer Run voter registration drive during orientation Programming for NVRD	September 2022	Newsletter & social media Orientation Expo Student Center	CCE + CPE
Increase student voter turnout rates by 10%	Establish campus polling place Consistent messaging regarding absentee voting	October 2022	Goergen Hall Atrium	CPE (VOC) + CCE
Increase STEM student voter turnout rates by 10%	Develop partnerships with key STEM departments Develop partnership with Carlson Science Library + Physics Optics & Astronomy Library	October 2022		CCE + CPE
Increase Asian student voter turnout rates by 15%	Develop partnerships with relevant student organizations	October 2022		CPE (VOC--Blaine)
Develop and implement an assessment instrument	Engage instructor of program evaluation course at the Warner School Develop assessment instruments and questions in consultation with faculty and students	March 2025		CCE
Register 1,400 TurboVote users	Link TurboVote on BlackBoard	November 2022		CPE (VOC chair--Blaine) +

				CCE
Increase social media post engagement by 10%	Promote posts	December 2022		Publicity Chair + CCE communications team
Increase Instagram followers (CPE/CCE)	Targeted outreach to campus groups and departments	December 2022		CPE (Publicity Chair) + CCE communications team
Develop publicity process	Coordinate internal process for Committee for Political Engagement with those used by the Center for Community Engagement	September 2022		CPE Publicity Chair + CCE communications team
Establish graduate assistant position	Negotiate partnership with Center for Democracy; outreach to PSCI faculty and graduate students	September 2022		CCE

REPORTING

Once finalized, the campus action plan will be shared via the following venues:

- CPE meeting
- Campus Coalition for political engagement
- Students Association Senate
- College Deans meeting
- Staff meeting of the CCE
- With leadership of key student organizations, such as political organizations, as well as fraternities and sororities
- Meeting of the Academic Community Engagement Collaborative, a University-wide group focused on advancing community engagement

The plan will also be made public by linking it on the CCE website and the web page for the CPE. The CCE website already includes public access to the University's NSLVE reports.

By sharing the plan with other student, staff, and faculty leaders on campus--and by having engaged them in the process of formulating the plan--we hope to achieve a high level of awareness and engagement among these stakeholders for its implementation.

EVALUATION

Progress toward this plan will be evaluated on an annual basis through updates by the student leadership of CPE and staff from CCE, with input from other stakeholders. In addition, a more systematic, qualitative evaluation will be conducted in 2025 following the 2024 presidential election cycle in order to determine the effectiveness of programming related to political engagement, and the overall campus climate for this aim. The evaluation will be conducted by faculty and students in the Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development in conducting the evaluation. The school offers a certificate in program evaluation and regularly seeks projects for students to undertake in teams or as an individual practicum; such a team conducted an evaluation in spring, 2021, to assess efforts for the 2020 election. Additional faculty and student projects in other departments/programs could build upon these efforts.

The evaluation will gather information to answer the following questions:

- What is the campus climate for political engagement?
- How effective are the programs and efforts that have been undertaken in this area?
- Which efforts were most successful in contributing to shifts in NSLVE and other data?
- What could be done to improve data metrics?
- If voter registration data in NSLVE didn't change much--or actually decreased--can we understand why that is the case and how can we improve on that?

The University has previously compiled relevant data through other evaluation mechanisms. The University attained the Carnegie Classification in Community Engagement in 2020 and will be eligible to re-apply for the 2026 cycle. The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership, in which the University has participated on a

triennial schedule since 2006, also collects some relevant data. The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement will continue to be a vital source of evaluation data. Data will be collected from the NSLVE reports, campus programs, and also through a survey of staff and student collaborators and interviews or focus groups involving at least 20 staff and faculty members and at least 50 students. Questions will focus on the campus climate for political and civic engagement as well as supports and obstacles to political participation. Particular attention will be paid to ensure that the data collection is inclusive of populations historically under-represented and disenfranchised in the US electoral process. The audience of the evaluation will be students, staff, and faculty involved in promoting civic learning and democratic engagement, as well as senior leadership at the institution. The qualitative data collected should provide insight into perceptions and reasons behind the results of NSLVE data, including voting participation rates for diverse groups of students.

In order to advance civic engagement and reach long-term goals, the University needs increased awareness of the data and the efforts among all stakeholders--students, faculty, staff, and community partners--in order to garner the momentum needed to make progress. Additional staff time and budget would be instrumental toward this end.