

2024 University of Washington Democratic Engagement Action Plan

Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by the University of Washington's Democracy Dawgs, a campus coalition of faculty, staff, students and community partners working to coordinate efforts to increase student voter and democratic engagement efforts. The purpose of this action plan is to lay out a coordinated strategy to build on prior successes and further increase University of Washington student registration rates going into the 2024 general election cycle. This plan is currently being implemented by members of the Democracy Dawgs coalition and will continue to be implemented through the November 2024 general election season. We aim to continually build upon this plan as the University of Washington works to build a sustainable infrastructure for a campus-wide voter engagement coalition to build an even strong culture of voter and democratic engagement amongst the campus community.

Leadership

The Democracy Dawgs coalition is convened by staff members in Undergraduate Academic Affairs' Community Engagement and Leadership Education (CELE) Center. These staff members include Fran Lo (Executive Director), Maddie Zdeblick (GSA Leadership Education), and a new Program Manager for Student Civic Leadership Development (hiring Fall 2023). Currently, the Democracy Dawgs coalition includes 49 members representing students, faculty, student affairs, community/national organizations and local election offices. The 2022-23 coalition consists of representatives from the following units:

UW administrative units:

- Athletics
- Ethnic Cultural Center, Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity
- First Year Programs
- Libraries
- Office of Regional & Community Relations
- Office of the Ombud
- Student Life
- Undergraduate Academic Affairs
- UW Impact
- CELE Center

UW faculty representatives from various academic departments:

- Anthropology
- Applied Math
- Aquatic and Fishery Sciences
- Evans School of Public Policy & Governance
- Health Metrics, Global Health, Computer Science & Engineering
- Honors Program
- Law School

Community organizations/agencies:

- King County Elections
- Washington Bus

Student organizations:

- ASUW, Office of Government Relations
- ASUW, Legislative Affairs
- Washington Public Interest Research Group (WashPIRG)
- GPSS External Affairs

The Democracy Dawgs coalition is continuing to work on building its membership to ensure that the diverse population of the UW community is represented. We are currently focusing our membership recruitment efforts on students and faculty.

Commitment

The University of Washington is committed to improving democratic engagement. This is evident across the institution from its stated vision, values and mission to the curriculum co-curriculum. One of the core values of the University of Washington, as articulated by the mission and values statement, is to cultivate world citizens:

“We are compassionate and committed to the active pursuit of global engagement and connectedness. We assume leadership roles to make the world a better place through education and research. We embrace our role to foster engaged and responsible citizenship as part of the learning experience of our students, faculty and staff.”

In addition, the UW President, Ana Mari Cauce, has signed on to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation for the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. Democratic engagement as a learning outcome is also integrated in the curriculum and co-curriculum across the institution.

Landscape

In collaboration with the UW's Office of Educational Assessment, the Democracy Dawgs coalition examined the UW's 2020 NSLVE (National Study of Learning Voting and Engagement) report and highlighted the following data analyses that are informing our voter engagement strategy:

- The UW's 2020 voter registration rate was 85%, and the voting rate was 76.7%. There was a 3% decrease in the UW's registration rate compared to 2016 and 9% increase in voting rate compared to 2016. While the UW's voting rates are higher than the national average, we aim to continue increasing the student registration and voting rate.
- Voting rates of white students (85%) was higher compared to students of color: Asian (67%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (83%), Black (70%), Hispanic (73%), Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (71%). Our strategies moving forward include targeted voter engagement efforts with BIPOC student populations.

- The voting rate of UW's 18-21 year olds is 66%, and the rate of UW's 22-24 year olds is 59%. The voting rate increases by age group (66% for 25-29 year olds; 67% for 30-39 year olds; 74% for 40-49 year olds; 91% for 50+).
- The voting rate by academic year was as follows: first year students (65%); second year students (63%); upper level students (67%). A continued emphasis on engaging incoming first year students as well as the broader undergraduate and graduate student population will be important to increase this rate especially with students in the younger age brackets.
- Students in STEM fields (especially Mathematics & Statistics (38%) and Computer & Information Sciences (56%) and Science Technologies (55%) have lower voting rates compared to peers in other fields of study. Our strategies moving forward include targeted voter engagement efforts with students in the STEM fields.

Goals

Short term goals (by 2024 election cycle)

- Register 1,000 students to vote before the November 2024 election (increase from 620 voter registrations in 2020 as recorded by WashPirg)
- Reach 10,000 get out the vote contacts (increase from 7500 contacts in 2020 as recorded by WashPirg)
- Increase registration rate and voting rate by 10% compared to 2018 mid-term election rates: This translates to a goal to achieve a 87.7% registration rate and a 63.1% voting rate in 2022.
- Increase registration and voting rates of BIPOC students and STEM students by 5% compared to 2018 rates.
- Increase number of Democracy Dawgs coalition members from 34-45 and increase number of core active members in the coalition from 15-20. Increase student participation in Democracy Dawgs coalition by increasing core active student members in the coalition from 2 to 5.
- Pass legislation in ASUW Student Senate recognizing the Democracy Dawgs coalition and action plan as the official opinion of the UW student body.
- UW Vote Center at The HUB supports 1,000 voters over 3 days

Long term goals (by 2028 election cycle)

- Voter engagement efforts are institutionalized throughout campus.
- Increase voter registration and voting rates each year, until they are at 95% and 90%, respectively.
- Democracy Dawgs is an established and well-known coalition across campus serving as a hub of voter and democratic engagement efforts.
- Encourage students to engage in civics in other ways besides just through voting (i.e. lobbying, letters to representatives, etc.)

Strategies

The following short-term tactics and long-term strategies will be implemented to help meet our stated goals.

Short-term tactics

Voter Registration tactics:

- Host voter registration drives in front of The HUB and in Red Square
 - These events will be coordinated by WashPIRG New Voters Project and ASUW Office of Government Relations in two of the most central and visible locations on campus
 - One registration drive will take place week of October 7, 2024 (1 week before WA ballots are mailed out)
 - Host registration drives during large events taking place on Red Square (e.g. W Day, Registered Student Organization (RSO) Fair)

- Work with First Year Programs to provide integrated messages around voter registration during Advising & Orientation program for incoming first year students
 - Update voter registration message in Pre-A&O Modules, the required online prep orientation for all incoming first year and transfer students.
 - Conduct training for Orientation Leaders and First Year Interest Group (FIG) leaders about nonpartisan voter registration

- Work with Residential Life colleagues to conduct large scale registration drives
 - Distribute 10,000 postcards with voter registration information in move-in packets in all residence halls
 - Ask all Resident Advisers to put digital version of the voter registration pamphlet on digital screens.
 - Train Resident Advisers on distributing voter registration forms during their first Floor Meeting with residents.
 - Get version of voter registration pamphlet published in the Student Survival coupon book that is hand delivered to all students in residence halls.

- Engage faculty members to encourage students to register to vote
 - Reach out to faculty of the 25 largest STEM courses and ask them to encourage their students to register to vote and include a voter registration slide in their course Canvas page or class session slide deck.
 - Have a faculty coalition member email the AAUP listserv to encourage faculty to remind students to vote
 - Have student leaders ask faculty to speak in their classes to encourage students to register to vote and vote
 - Have faculty share a slide in Canvas and at the beginning of a class session reminding students to register to vote and vote. Means of encouraging this:
 - Send multiple all-faculty emails before the end of spring quarter, during summer break, and at the start of quarter
 - Engage specific Colleges/Schools through specific deans?
 - Get grad student instructors/section leaders involved in to sharing the message
 - Engage student advisers (share posters with advisers; deliver posters to advising suites)
 - Get a voter registration language in the Optional Syllabus Language website: <https://registrar.washington.edu/curriculum/syllabus-guidelines/>

- Update the [Huskies Vote social media toolkit](#) and encourage campus groups to use this shared toolkit to drive voter registration and Get Out the Vote messages

- Include link to StudentVote.org in these messages
- UW Athletics effort
 - Set up voter registration booth at a home football game in fall 2022
 - Establish connection with All in Coaches Challenge
- Competitions with Greek Life to register the most sorority/fraternity members
 - Fraternity and Sorority houses are a huge community at the UW, and engaging them would bring up our registration levels a lot
- Voter registration boxes
 - Establish voter registration boxes in the Ethnic Cultural Center, the Q center, and the D Center
- National Voter Registration Day table
 - Even though the UW quarter begins on 9/28/22, setting up a voter registration drive on National Voter Registration Day (9/20/22) will create some momentum that will allow us to continue to register large numbers of people in the first couple of weeks of the Fall Quarter. (did via Dawg Daze)
- PAC-12 All In Challenge
 - Participate in this friendly competition to create stronger sense of urgency around voter registration that will encourage students to get involved as volunteers, or at least register to vote
- Integrate voting related messages in mass communication channels
 - Establish and implement an annual communication sequencing calendar, including:
 - Social media coverage of National Voter Registration Day, the WA deadline to register to vote, and election day
 - Presence in the Student Life Pawket Guide (biweekly newsletter that goes out to all students)
 - Presence in UW Today and UW Campus Insider (faculty and staff newsletters) to encourage faculty and staff to communicate with their students about the importance of democratic participation
 - Explore possibility of sending text message reminders to vote to UW students and faculty on election day
 - Explore possibility of a TikTok takeover by UW faculty encouraging students to vote
 - Update voter registration language in mandatory pre-course enrollment screens
 - Send mass email from student body president or university administrators to provide information about how to register to vote and important deadlines
- Reaching out to high school students to encourage voter registration earlier
 - Reach out to social studies and civics teacher/faculty to visit 5 Seattle Public High Schools in person doing in class visits to educate young voters and distribute registration forms
 - Goal of collecting 30 voter registration forms per volunteer per school visit

Education tactics

- Coordinate an educational event in October 2024 to raise awareness of general election candidates and issues in collaboration with an on campus partner such as the Ethnic Cultural Center (ECC). For example, we may:
 - Host a candidate forum for candidates in local elections on campus, possibly as part of Dawg Daze
 - Include information for students about using Democracy Vouchers
 - Coordinate with a Political Science or Law and Social Justice professor to promote the event
 - Distribute postcards with voting information and Democracy Dawgs stickers
 - Provide a hybrid option, but encourage in person attendance by providing food and other incentives
 - Partner with Common Power (<http://cpfuture.org>) to put on an event addressing voter engagement amongst BIPOC and STEM student communities
 - Collaborate with student groups (i.e., ASUW) to promote attendance
 - Explore collaborations with Civic Health Project (<https://www.civichealthproject.org/higher-ed-and-free-speech/>), Citizen University, and the League of Women Voters
- Publicize and maintain UW's Huskies Vote (<https://cele.uw.edu/students/huskies-vote/>) webpage with up-to-date information on:
 - Voter registration
 - 2024 deadlines
 - When and where to vote on campus
 - Information about how to research candidates and make a voting plan, including links to an updated non-partisan guide from the UW Libraries
 - Voter accessibility resources
 - A faculty toolkit with resources for faculty to promote democratic engagement in their classrooms and on their online Canvas pages
 - An outreach toolkit with social media assets
 - Resources for non-voters (<https://www.thelovevote.org/>)
 - Our current action plan
 - Information to demystify position roles and responsibilities on the upcoming ballot

Get Out the Vote tactics

- Coordinate poster campaigns around campus and social media campaigns
- Engage faculty members to encourage students to vote
 - Reach out to faculty of the 25 largest STEM courses and ask them to encourage their students to vote
- Set up tables in strategic places on campus to remind students to vote
 - Like our voter registration tables, these tables will be fun ways to increase voter engagement and serve as a resource to anyone confused about how/when to vote

- Get Out the Vote Phone/Text Banks
 - We will contact students using Pledge to Vote cards to ask them if they have turned in their ballots/if they have a plan to, and also answer any questions they may have around voting.

Long-term strategies

To build an even stronger culture of voter and democratic engagement at the University of Washington, we are seeking to institutionalize these efforts into the fabric of the campus. This involves building an established and representative Democracy Dawgs coalition and continuing to integrate messages around voter and democratic engagement into existing channels. In addition, coordinating efforts around education.

- Bring a Class C resolution to Faculty Senate to call on senate to make efforts to encourage students to vote
- Strengthen connections and coordination between ASUW and WashPIRG, the two largest student voter engagement efforts at the UW

Reporting

This plan will be used by the Democracy Dawgs coalition to drive our work and will also be shared with key campus administrative players to be sure that we are being held accountable with what we aim to do. In addition, we will work to get the UW's NSLVE reports and this Action Plan published on the public-facing Huskies Vote website.

Evaluation

We will continuously reflect upon and evaluate the effectiveness of this action plan's tactics and strategies during Democracy Dawgs coalition meetings. We will build in a regular time to examine NSVLE report data to inform our continual plan improvements.

- Assess effectiveness of short-term strategies:
 - Ask UW IT how many students clicked on 'yes, I want to register to vote' on pre-registration screen
 - Find out open rate for all-student email
 - StudentVote.org tracks voter registration numbers
- Explore long term evaluation options:
 - Meet with King County Elections staff to understand what data exists