



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
LA CROSSE

University of Wisconsin - La Crosse

2024 Campus Action Plan

## **Executive Summary**

The University of Wisconsin – La Crosse (UWL) 2024 Action Plan was created by Campus Vote Projects Democracy Fellows Justin Poley and Alex Wall, with oversight from the Election Engagement Team advisor, Amanda Krafft. We developed this plan during the 2023-2024 Academic Year. This plan outlines our plans for the 2024-2025 Academic Year and establishes future goals regarding institutional changes at UWL for the next 3-5 years.

- In collaboration with University Communications, create a marketing strategy to launch in September 2024.
- For the 2024 Presidential Election, increase voter registration to 80% and the voting rate of eligible students to 70%.
- In collaboration with the City Clerk’s office, host an early voting site on campus for the 2024 election cycle.
- Establish a \$1,500 annual budget for UWL Votes in the 2026 Fiscal Year budget.
- Create a working group with University Centers and Residence Life to support on-campus voting communication and organization.
- Establish a UWL Coalition for Voter Engagement.
- Incorporate civic engagement learning into the First-Year Seminar Common Experience syllabus by Fall 2026.
- Explore establishing Election Day as a day without classes by the 2028 Presidential Election.

The Election Engagement Team will be the primary group facilitating and implementing this plan, working with coalition partners as needed. In March 2024, we met with the Division of Student Affairs Directors, University Centers, and Residence Life to share an overview of the Action Plan and highlighted each of our goals.

## **Leadership**

### ***Community Partnerships:***

- Kristin Hansen, Campus Vote Project, Wisconsin State Coordinator
- Ryan Drysdale, All In Democracy Challenge

- Chris Haskell, League of Women Voters Board Member
- Nikki Elsen, City of La Crosse – La Crosse County Clerk
- Pat Strittmater, Chief Election Inspector for Wards 9 and 10
- Emily Anderson, 5<sup>th</sup> District County Supervisor
- 5<sup>th</sup> District City Council Member (currently vacant)
- Jill Billings, WI 95<sup>th</sup> Assembly Representative
- Brad Pfaff, WI 32<sup>nd</sup> Senator

### ***UWL Partnerships***

- Vitaliano Figueroa, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs
- Stacy Narcotta-Welp, Vice Chancellor of Diversity, and Inclusion
- Ju Kim, Dean - College of Science and Health
- Taggart Brooks, Dean- College of Business Administration
- Karl Kunkel, Dean - College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities
- Marcie Wycoff-Horn, School of Education Dean
- David Kim, Chief Information Officer of ITS (Information Technology Services)
- Kyle Burke, Director of University Centers and Student Engagement
- Lisa Weston, Associate Director of Residence Life
- Ashley Nowak, Director of Center for Transformative Justice
- Lisa Klein, Community Engagement Coordinator
- Allen Hill, UWL Chief of Police
- Adam van Liere, Chair of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration
- Professor Anthony Chergosky of Political Science and Public Administration Department
- Professor Timothy Dale of Political Science and Public Administration Department
- Professor John Kovari of Political Science and Public Administration Department
- Isabel Piarulli, The Racquet Press Executive Editor

The list above includes community and institutional partners who support our efforts and voter engagement at UWL.

*UWL Votes Working Group*

In Spring 2024, we will establish a smaller working group to prove the effectiveness and interest in the coalition. Members of the working group will start by discussing potential collaborations with individuals and organizations in the area. During Summer 2024 we will meet for the first time as a whole group to establish a timeline for Fall 2024 leading up to the November election. The working group will meet twice over the summer and 3-4 times prior to the November election. The following people will be invited to join the UWL Votes Working Group:

- Justin Poley, Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow
- Grace Lundie, Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow
- Katie Berns, Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow
- Avery Manthe, Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow
- Amanda Krafft, University Centers, Program Coordinator for Civic Engagement and Leadership
- Michelle Edge, Residence Life, Coordinator for Operations and Conference Services
- Emma Latus, Student Association, President
- Student Association, Local Affairs Director
- Kaylie Connaughty, University Communications, Web, and Graphic Designer
- Jesimiel Banjiram, Multicultural Student Services, Program Coordinator for Student Leadership
- Kate Lavelle, First Year Seminar Coordinator
- Michelle Rolan, ID Card Specialist, University Centers
- Student Representative, Leaders Igniting Transformation (LIT)

#### *UWL Coalition for Voter Engagement*

The coalition would then meet in the leadup to elections or other large civic events on campus to coordinate messaging and get necessary and useful information out to members of the campus community. This coalition would consist of a mix of student leadership, faculty, administration, and other university groups. We plan to invite these organizations to uplift and empower those who have been historically marginalized.

After the first UWL Votes Working Group meeting, invitations will be sent out to students, faculty, and staff to join the UWL Coalition for Voter Engagement. The following people will be invited to join the UWL Coalition for Voter Engagement:

- Members of the UWL Votes Working Group
- Faculty Representative from departments/colleges that are underrepresented in the NSLVE data
- Kim Blum, Athletics Director
- Representatives from Student Organizations that are underrepresented in the NSLVE data
- Isabel Piarulli, The Racquet Press, Executive Editor
- Amanda Abrahamson, Student Life Office, Assistant Dean of Students
- Shealyn McMahon, Murphy Library, Outreach, and Instructional Library Assistant
- Lisa Klein, Community Engagement Coordinator
- Kjerstin Lang, University Communications, Content Marketing Specialist

### **University Commitment**

There are several senior administrators that assist our election team on campus. The Election Engagement Team is supervised by University Centers, specifically the Program Coordinator for Civic Engagement and Leadership, Amanda Krafft. University Centers help secure funding and resources for our programmatic initiatives, access to campus events and locations, and serve as a liaison between the Election Engagement Team and campus and community partners.

UWL emphasizes the importance of voting closer to elections and advertises the on-campus polling location. Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) is not part of the general education curriculum at UWL. Although some basic political science classes are optional for general education, any CLDE is facilitated by individual professors. Our campus coalition has not been active in previous years due to lack of engagement from the preceding election engagement team. To our knowledge, no formal coalition was made before our current initiative. In the Summer of 2024, we plan to revitalize it by structuring it into two main groups. We have decided to slightly adjust how this coalition would look from the initial vision of the coalition.

UWL's Community Engagement Council and other stakeholders developed a [Civic Action Plan for UWL](#) in the academic year of 2020-2021, under the direction of Lisa Klein. The goal of the Civic Action Plan is to strengthen the campus commitment to community engagement and provide guidance to implement action steps to meet institutional goals. One of the goals in this plan is to "initiate strategies that create and promote increased opportunities for students' community engagement that are academically grounded." Currently, this is being completed by accessing Community Engaged Learning (CEL). Starting Fall 2024, Kate Lavelle, First Year Seminar Coordinator, is working with faculty to incorporate CLDE into the First Year Seminar curriculum. This new curriculum is set to start in the 2025-2026 Academic Year.

UWL's new Chancellor, James Beeby, starts in summer 2024 and will sign the ALL IN's Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation. Additionally, Maren Walz, the Chief Communications Officer, will work with the Chancellor's Office, the UWL Votes team, and the La Crosse City Clerk's office to send a campus-wide email from Chancellor Beeby to encourage students, faculty, and staff to vote in the November election.

## **Landscape**

UWL has 9,379 undergraduate students and 935 graduate students. Our student body comes from 36 states, 30 countries, and 79% are Wisconsin residents. The campus lies in a residential section of the city of La Crosse (population 52,680, metro 139,627). The mission of UWL is to provide "a challenging, dynamic, and diverse learning environment in which the entire university community is fully engaged in supporting student success."

### ***Resources:***

We have received a \$1,000 grant from the Campus Vote Project for outreach efforts for the 2024 election cycle. These funds support our on-campus events, allowing us to provide printed materials, buttons, and other incentives to increase student engagement. Additionally, we have received materials to dispense to the student body and community from National Voter Registration Day along with the League of Women Voters providing more materials and members to assist in voter registration drives.

### ***Institutionalization:***

- The UWL Student Information System, Wings, provides every student a direct link to the Wisconsin Voter ID Enrollment Verification form which provides proof of residence for all students for voter registration.
- UWL has a webpage dedicated to voter registration and education for students ([uwlax.edu/info/vote](http://uwlax.edu/info/vote)). During the first two weeks of the semester, we hosted a registration tabling with the League of Women Voters at three major campus events (Sample the City and Volunteer Fair, Eagle Fest, and Involvement Fair).
- The Election Engagement Team is listed as a committee under UWL's student organization portal, MyOrgs, which allows our team to access the same benefits as other on-campus organizations, such as marketing events on the campus calendar, reserving on-campus spaces, and ordering catering.
- UWL's Student Union is a polling location for Wards 9 and 10 in La Crosse and provides the opportunity for students living in the residential halls to vote on campus. Starting in Spring 2024, the Cleary Alumni & Friends Center is used as a community early voting site for the City of La Crosse. Since this site is on campus, it provides an accessible option for students to vote early.
- Starting in September 2023, the UWL Votes Office opened in the Center for Organizations, Vision, and Engagement (COVE) on the second floor of the Student Union. This space is used by the Election Engagement Team to host office hours, assist students with voter registration, and prepare for upcoming events.
- UWL's Student ID, known as an Eagle ID, can be used to vote in Wisconsin if students sign their name on the back. Their legal name, photo, issue, and expiration dates are listed on the Eagle ID.

***Programming:***

- Election Day Outreach: On election day, we provide free cookies, lemonade, hot chocolate, and voter information in the Union. Throughout the day, we typically connect with over 400 students and answer any questions about the voting process. We also redirect students to their proper polling location as needed.
- Voter Registration: Starting in Fall 2024, we are partnering with Residence Life to host 3 Voter Registration Drives in the Eagle Mail Center, which is the centralized mail office

for students living on campus. In past years, we have hosted drives in the residence halls and have had a small turnout. By hosting these drives in the Eagle Mail Center, we hope to interact with more students and increase voter registration on campus.

- National Voter Registration Day
  - Voter Registration Drive in the Eagle Mail Center
  - Voter Registration Party in the COVE (Center for Organization, Vision, and Engagement)
- Voter Education Week
  - During Voter Education Week, the Election Engagement Team tables throughout campus with free giveaways and trivia questions.
  - Voter Registration Drive at the Eagle Mail Center
  - During the 2024 Voter Education Week, we are partnering with Eagles @ Nite, the UWL Friday Night Programming, to host a trivia night and voter registration drive.
- Civil Discourse Program: The Civil Discourse Program, a cross-campus initiative, educates on Civil Discourse which can be defined as conversations in where there is a mutual airing of views in a respectful manner. Events hosted by the Civil Discourse Program Committee include panels with educated individuals and roundtable practice with trained facilitators. The goal is for students to learn and practice this important skill and carry it on to conversations in classes, among friends and family, and in their professional careers.

## **Goals**

The Election Engagement Team created 3 long-term and 5 short-term goals using NSLVE data, assessment of previous efforts and engagement, and conversations with campus leadership, the City Clerk, and student representatives from the La Crosse League of Women Voters.

### ***Long-term:***

1. Establish a UWL Coalition for Voter Engagement.
2. Incorporate civic engagement learning into the First-Year Seminar Common Experience syllabus by Fall 2026.

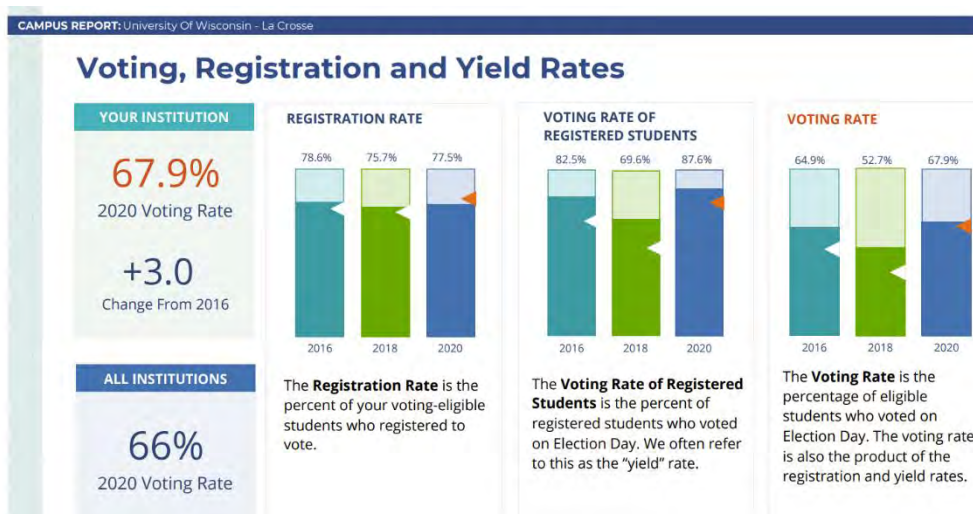


3. Explore establishing Election Day as a day without classes by the 2028 Presidential Election.

**Short-term:**

1. In collaboration with University Communications, create a marketing strategy to launch in September 2024.
2. For the 2024 Presidential Election, increase voter registration to 80% and the voting rate of eligible students to 70%.
3. In collaboration with the City Clerk’s office, host an early voting site on campus for the 2024 election cycle.
4. Establish a \$1,500 annual budget for UWL Votes in the 2026 Fiscal Year Budget (developed in November 2024).
5. Create a working group with University Centers and Residential Life to support on-campus voting communication and organization.

**National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement NSLVE**



As of May 2024, we have not received our 2022 NSLVE Report. In developing our Action Plan, we used the 2020 NSLVE data and voter turnout data from the La Crosse County.

The voting rate of registered students and voting rate both increased from 2016-2020 at UWL. The voting rate increased by 3% and the voting rate of registered students increased by 5.1% However, the registration rate did see a 1.1% decrease. This could be due to a decrease in

overall student enrollment and total number of eligible voters. A notable change we noticed while reviewing our NSLVE data was the voting rate among Hispanic students which experienced a 14% decrease. Hispanic students have had among the lowest voting rates on campus and this report confirms that continuation. There was a significant increase of non-in-person voting by 29% and early voting by 9%, and in-person voting saw a significant decrease of 18%. There was a decrease in voting among individuals aged 40+. Part-time students also saw a decrease in voting by 2%. However, there was a larger increase for graduate students by 5% while undergraduate students saw an increase of 4%. The majors with the lowest voting rates include History, Physical Sciences, and Computer and Information Sciences. Previously the lowest voting rate was seen among Business, Management, and Marketing; Biological and Biomedical Sciences; and Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies. All these fields of study saw an increase of at least 3%. Therefore, our focus this upcoming year will be on increasing the engagement of students who are Hispanic, part-time, age 40+ or enrolled in physical sciences, history, computer, and information science programs. Reaching these students will require us to develop specific programming alongside our campus partners.

During the Spring 2023 election, 1,294 people living on the UWL campus voted compared to only 182 in the April 2022 election. UWL's campus includes city Ward 9 and 10, located between La Crosse and State streets and Campbell Avenue and Lange Drive.

- April 2022, Ward 9 had 78 votes – 12% of registered voters
- April 2023, Ward 9 had 598 votes – 54% of registered voters
- April 2022, Ward 10 had 104 votes – 17% of registered voters
- April 2023, Ward 10 had 696 votes – 59% of registered voters

The data on Wards 9 and 10 provide us with insight on the voter engagement among students living on campus.

During the 2024-2025 Academic Year, we will use our NSLVE data to help us plan events and outreach to certain colleges and student organizations. We hope to give students more opportunities around campus to register to vote and learn about civic engagement. Since the 2020 Presidential Election, Wisconsin has eliminated ballot drop boxes for absentee voting. At UWL, prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, we hosted our “Walk to the Polls” event to encourage

students to drop off their absentee ballots at the City Hall drop box. In the 2020 Presidential election, 3,589 UWL students voted not-in-person and 583 voted early. This very well could be because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, we want to continue working with the City Clerk to provide opportunities for UWL students to vote early or absentee.

## **Strategy**

### ***Long-term:***

Explore establishing Election Day as a day without classes by the 2028 Presidential Election.

- Connect with other UW campuses to discuss the establishment of election day as a day without classes or have shortened classes to ensure students, faculty, and staff can vote. This would include a written proposal for Faculty Senate that incorporates a review of absence policy for students to receive an excused absence and the possibility of no exams on election day.
- Develop a report to propose to the Faculty Senate on researched precedents and other positive examples of election day off increasing voter engagement.
- Work with the Student Association to review proposals and present them to Faculty Senate.
- In Spring 2026, present proposal to Faculty Senate.

Establish a UWL Coalition for Voter Engagement.

- During spring 2025, we will email invitations to potential Coalition members.
- In April 2025, we will host the first UWL Coalition for Voter Engagement meeting to review goals for the group and establish a timeline.
- In October 2025, the Coalition will meet for the second time.
- In January 2026, the Coalition will meet to evaluate voter turnout from the NSLVE data and voter engagement goals forward.

Incorporate civic engagement learning into the First-Year Seminar Common Experience syllabus by Fall 2026.

- Establish a communication line between the Election Engagement Team and the First-Year Seminar (FYS) Coordinator.
- Invite the FYS Coordinator to be a member of the UWL Votes Working Group.
- After the November 2024 election, meet with the FYS Coordinator to discuss incorporating civic engagement learning into the FYS syllabus.

***Short-term:***

In collaboration with University Communications, create a marketing strategy to launch in September 2024.

- Create a branding guideline for the UWL Votes webpage, Instagram account, and posters based off University Communication's branding guide.
- Develop themed cycles (Voter Checklist, I vote because..., and Ask Every student).
- Create shareable content for Election Day, National Voter Registration Day, Voter Education Week, and campus events.
- Enable an Election Day popup on the UWL website.
- Increase Instagram followers from 400 to 1000 by January 2025.

For the 2024 Presidential Election, increase voter registration to 80% and the voting rate of eligible students to 70%.

- Work with campus partners in low-engagement areas (based on NSLVE data).
- Maintain UWL Votes website.
- Work with Chancellor's office to send an election day reminder email.
- Collaborate with Residence Life to host three voter registration drives in the Eagle Mail Center during September and October 2024.
- Provide opportunities at New Student Orientation (NSO) and Week of Welcome for voter registration.

In collaboration with the City Clerk's office, host an early voting site on campus for the 2024 election cycle.

- Maintain relationship with the La Crosse City Clerk and Lead Election Chiefs by meeting at least once a semester with them.

- Promote early voting options to students through email, social media, and posters.
- During the days with an on-campus early voting site, table in the Student Union and Whitney Dining Center to encourage students to go vote.

Establish a \$1,500 annual budget for UWL Votes in the 2026 Fiscal Year Budget (developed in November 2024).

- Work with University Centers to find unused/underused funds to reallocate to UWL Votes initiatives.
- Create an itemized budget outline to propose to the Director of University Centers and Student Engagement.

Create a working group with University Centers and Residential Life to support on-campus voting communication and organization.

- Meet with partners in University Centers and Residence Life at least once a semester to provide updates on voter registration and voter information prior to elections.
- Provide updated information for the Card Office and Eagle Mail Center prior to each semester and START.

## **Reporting**

While developing our plan, we met with the Division of Student Affairs Directors, University Centers, and representatives from Residence Life. During these meetings we shared an overview of our goals, answered questions, and received feedback and suggestions. Upon completion of this plan, it will be sent to these partners. During Summer 2024, we will begin meeting with the UWL Votes Working Group, where this plan will be shared and reviewed by all group members.

We will share our plan on the UWL Votes website, [www.uwlax.edu/info/vote](http://www.uwlax.edu/info/vote) along with our current NSLVE Report and the report we will receive in January on this plan. We are working with University Communications to write a Campus Connection (weekly UWL e-newsletter) about the Action Plan and sharing it with the UWL community.

## Evaluation

1. **Meetings:** The Election Engagement Team will meet weekly during the academic year. We will meet with our working group once a month to develop a reliable and consistent administrative connection and meet with our voting partners once a semester as needed to advance certain efforts. The Coalition will meet once a semester (or as needed).
2. **Event Reports:** Keep a tally of how many students have been registered at our events by counting the registration forms at the end of the event. We will implement swiping IDs at campus events (ex. Voter Education Week Trivia Night) to get a digital report of those in attendance. Together combine this data to compile total attendance and involvement at events.
3. **NSLVE:** We have a SharePoint that we can put our NSLVE data in to be revisited at the beginning of every semester as we begin our event planning efforts to be sure to include the data findings in reaching the voters that have not historically been engaged. Continue to return to NSLVE data as a resource on how we can plan out long-term planning on-campus to reach unengaged students.
4. **Continuous Evaluation:** Review our Action Plan in the second meeting of the semester with our teams to keep our long-term goals in mind after initial meetings plannings. The Election Engagement Team will check-in about each goal during the first meeting of each month.
5. **After the Election:** After the 2024 Presidential Election, the Election Engagement Team will meet to discuss the voter turnout and review the status of our goals. We will meet with the UWL Votes Working Group to evaluate communication across campus.
6. **Written Evaluation:** Beyond the final report, we will create a written evaluation to share with campus leadership and present our report to the Division of Student Affairs at the beginning of the Spring 2025 semester.