

**Civic Engagement Action Plan**  
**The University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point**  
**2024–2025**

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## **Executive Summary**

The following civic engagement action plan will be for the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) consists of three campuses in Stevens Point, Wisconsin; Wausau, Wisconsin; and Marshfield, Wisconsin. While this action plan will guide civic engagement efforts on all three campuses, it is of note that most in-person work is done on the Stevens Point campus, while virtual work is distributed to all three campuses.

In 2021, the group Pointers Vote Coalition (PVC) was started as the sole non-partisan student voting group on campus. To this day, PVC serves as the primary conduit for civic engagement and voting for students on campus through efforts including

- Voter registration and education
- Campus engagement
- Voter empowerment
- Civic institutionalization and the removal of procedural/structural student voting barriers
- The completion of this action plan

While we hope to implement this action plan to help further the effort of PVC, PVC no longer works alone. Throughout this action plan you will see ideas from and references related to a variety of campus organizations including but not limited to Black Student Union, Latino Student Union (LSA), Student Government Association (SGA), the Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA), the UWSP Chancellor's Office, and the Multicultural Resource Center. Together with these organizations, PVC is able to make a larger impact and be more inclusive. Therefore, while this plan may be written and primarily implemented by members of PVC, it is meant to be reflective and applicable to all stakeholders on our campus.

The ideas contained within are part of an ongoing effort on our campus to support student voices in a way that is data driven, well-planned, equitable, and intentional. Just like making a plan to vote will make students more likely to vote, making a plan to help others will make us more successful in doing so. The ideas within will be both short-term and long-term, defining the next several years of our efforts, as we see them today. However, we also acknowledge the quick pace of change that is common in our 21st-century society. For this reason, this plan can be amended as needed to make our efforts most successful. The dates within are guidelines for our implementation and should be taken as such, but may also be used to measure how far we have come and how successful our efforts have been.

Thank you for embarking on this journey with us and others. Together we can plan and learn about how to best make voices heard for those who may be or have been underrepresented. We believe this action plan, along with several hundred others across the nation, are one big step in the direction of making our government representative of our society.

## **Leadership**

Our working group consists primarily of the student organization Pointers Vote Coalition (PVC), which includes Campus Vote Project (CVP) Democracy Fellows Ryleigh Guelig, Kailli Mikkonen, CVP Student Advisory Board Chair and Wisconsin Representative Roy Thorson, and Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF) Ambassadors Zack Young and Katelynn Gauger. Our group works in conjunction with various members on campus including university staff and executives, other student organizations, and professors and professionals. More specifically, the working group includes but is not limited to:

- Chancellor Gibson Chief of Staff Legislative Liaison, Rob Manzke
- Chair of the Political Science Department, Dr. Jennifer Collins
- Black Student Union
- Latino Student Union
- The Gender and Sexuality Alliance
- The Student Government Association
- Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Al Thompson
- Leaders Igniting Transformation
- The Multicultural Resource Center and its respective organizations

With the above groups, we are able to have different views represented from different groups of people, including a diverse group of students as well as the opinions of upper administration. These different views provide us unique strengths, relative to each party, that allow us to be successful. For example, having access to administrators in the chancellor's office allows us to impact university wide policy. Rob Manzke has the ability to influence how our campus institutionalizes civic engagement.

Our coalition also receives help and recognition from community and national organizations including:

- Campus Vote Project (CVP)
- The Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF)
- All IN Campus Democracy Challenge
- League of Women Voters

The Pointers Vote Coalition receives funding from CVP and AGF, which allows our organization to put on events that are vital to engaging our campus and community and allowing them to be more informed voters. Additionally, CVP and AGF provide internship positions which compensate our student leaders for their time and effort in making our campus accessible to student voters.

This is not to say our working group and coalition is content with our various number of stakeholders. Rather, our organization is always excited to expand and work with other stakeholders on campus or around our community. We fully understand this necessary task. Because of this, we intend on reaching out to our local elections office prior to the next election cycle. We wish to do this, as this can encourage students and community members to vote by streamlining the process and removing barriers. PVC also looks forward to the opportunity of engaging more student organizations as we work and plan events in preparation of the 2024 presidential election. These events will allow us the opportunity to bring new people/organizations into our coalition who we have yet to interact with.

Through these partnerships, we have created and will create a working group that will be able to further aid individual communities to create a more voter friendly and educated campus. In doing so, we are able to not only empower each and every college voter, but also those individuals who perform this work. By having a close knit group of individuals, we are better able to communicate regarding efforts and ensure that all students/administrators contribute to our goals. We are all able to learn from each other, thus ensuring that our efforts extend past the time in which any single individual performs this work.

## **Commitment**

The University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point (UWSP) demonstrates a strong emphasis on advancing civic learning and engagement, even if these themes aren't explicitly stated in our curriculum or co-curriculum. However, upon inspection and examination of the university's mission statements and previous action plans, they reveal an unmistakable commitment to these fundamental principles. Commitments can be seen through university provided resources, which includes voter information on the UWSP website and voter ID options. Other such resources, created by the Pointers Vote Coalition, include a Voting 101 Canvas page that students can join, which provides a comprehensive overview of information regarding voting.

UWSP's academic teachings have a profound dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion within our courses. The General Education Program mandates students to enroll in courses fulfilling requirements in U.S. diversity, global awareness, and environmental responsibility. Additionally, students are required to complete a human cultures and sciences course, spanning arts, humanities, historical perspectives, natural sciences, and social sciences. These courses provide students with vital critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and communication skills necessary to engage in their community, thus reflecting the university's commitment to instilling knowledge and sense of responsibility within our world.

This dedication can also be seen through our extracurricular landscape. In 2020, UWSP Shared Governance voted to name Election Day as "Election Day: Day of Civic Engagement" on the university calendar. While this designation doesn't mandate that professors cancel classes on Election Day, it encourages faculty to afford students flexibility in exercising their right to vote. As well, student organizations also have initiatives to support students. For example, the Student Government Association hires a Get Out to Vote intern during every major election year for voter outreach efforts. Members of the Pointers Vote Coalition, with aid from admission and community members, table in front of the polling location providing valuable information to voters in real time.

This emphasis on preparing students through a UWSP education can be seen through the university mission and vision statements:

*Vision:* "The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point will continue to be recognized for developing, supporting and educating students and citizens to constructively engage in local, regional and global communities."

*Mission:* "UW-Stevens Point is to provide programs that help communities become more vibrant, healthy, prosperous, and sustainable... UW-Stevens Point put special emphasis on promoting inclusivity, advancing human wellness, providing excellent academic support resources, offering

extensive study abroad and international programs, and providing a robust array of UW- Stevens Point programs.”

Additionally, several different UWSP programs have vision statements which discuss civic engagement. For example, the School of Behavioral and Social Sciences, which includes Political Science, Sociology, Psychology, and Geography/Geology, references citizenship in its vision statement, which reads:

“The School strives to train ethical professionals who provide vital leadership and services to our communities, as well as to cultivate an ethos of civic engagement and responsibility at the local, national, and global levels.”

Through these vision statements, it’s clear UWSP finds civic engagement and voting as important parts of a college student’s journey. However, it’s also clear more needs to be done. The administration, with support from PVC, SGA, and CVP, is looking to update the student ID to be voter compliant, which would be a significant step toward eliminating institutional roadblocks some student voters may have. Pointers Vote Coalition has also provided opportunities for both administration and professors to educate students on the democratic process and how to engage through the aforementioned Canvas module and in class presentations. Support from faculty and staff, both implicit and explicit, allow the work of PVC to be broadcast throughout our university, on social media and in classrooms. Through these combined efforts between students, faculty, and staff, our university will become a place where voting is not only possible, but encouraged and supported.

## **Landscape**

The University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (UWSP) stands as an institution with a commitment to community engagement, citizenship, and civic learning. This section provides an in-depth analysis of the current landscape of the college including our initiatives, challenges, and goals that are unique to the school.

UWSP is a 4-year institution with a total enrollment of 8,135 students in 2021, including diverse and international representation. The university comprises a main campus hosting 7,278 students, with additional branch campuses in Marshfield, Wisconsin and Wausau, Wisconsin. A notable 13% of the student body contributes to the campus's diversity, and 27% of undergraduates received the Pell Grant in the 2020-2021 academic year. 80% of undergraduates benefit from grant or scholarship aid.

UWSP places a strong emphasis on civic learning and democratic engagement, evident in its mission statement:

*“The University of Wisconsin Stevens Point will continue to be recognized for developing, supporting and educating students and citizens to constructively engage in local, regional and global communities.”*

While not explicitly outlined in the curriculum, the university encourages civic engagement through designated Days of Civic Engagement, a civic engagement webpage, and a Canvas module created by Pointers Vote Coalition (PVC). The School of Behavioral and Social Sciences has a special commitment to cultivating civic responsibility in their vision statement:

*“The School strives to train ethical professionals who provide vital leadership and services to our communities, as well as to cultivate an ethos of civic engagement and responsibility at the local, national, and global levels.”*

Despite this initiative, internal and external barriers persist. Resistance to institutionalized civic engagement poses a challenge, as demonstrated by past pushback against proposals to make election days campus holidays. External barriers include complex election and voter ID laws, impacting student voting logistics. PVC aims to address these challenges through strategic initiatives, such as advocating for a voter-compliant student ID and providing guidance on transportation and voter education.

UWSP boasts over 130 registered student organizations, reflecting a diverse range of interests, including political affiliations, environmental concerns, and racial/ethnic diversity. PVC is a key player in this landscape, seeking to unite students across disciplines to promote civic engagement.



The university achieved a silver ranking from the All In Challenge, with a 60% student voting rate in the 2020 election. While proud of these accomplishments, PVC acknowledges room for improvement. Targeting underrepresented groups based on the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) report, the coalition aims to increase voter registration, particularly among students ages 22 to 29 and within specific academic disciplines including philosophy, religious studies, computer science, physical science, history, communication/journalism, and psychology. Challenges include the lack of detailed demographic data in the NSLVE report, hindering targeted outreach to minority groups. Additional challenges include budget cuts from the state government that limit the time and resources available in different departments to help the work of PVC and like-minded student organizations. UWSP is in need of more people and more time to dedicate towards the process of increasing student engagement and civic participation. Nonetheless, we look to build on current successes by expanding our network, enhancing our technological capabilities for communication and survey distribution, and fostering new and existing relationships across campus.

The University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, through the dedication of PVC and collaborative efforts across campus, is on a promising trajectory to institutionalize civic learning and democratic engagement. Overcoming challenges and leveraging existing resources, the university aspires to create a campus culture where every student recognizes the importance of civic participation and actively contributes to shaping their community and beyond.

# **Goals**

## **Long Term Goals**

Pointers Vote Coalition's long term goals focus on the institutionalization of civic engagement in our university. By focusing on making permanent changes, we can ensure our impact lasts beyond the group itself, and turn our university into one that is known for its role in creating students that can participate in democracy and society.

Our long-term goals are as follows:

### **Voting Compliant Student ID**

One of our long term goals is to offer a student ID that is voting compliant in the state of Wisconsin to every student. This is to dismantle barriers for out of state students, students who do not drive, or students who do not have the resources to go through a lengthy DMV process to get an ID. This also helps to simplify the voting process for students, knowing that you have at least one eligible ID that you don't need to check. Earlier this semester, a statute for this goal was written. There were multiple meetings, presentations, and some pushback on the implementation. Recently, UWSP SGA passed this as a resolution that is set to take place in fall of 2024. However, the implementation rode ahead is filled with challenges, so diligent leadership and advocacy will be required in order to implement this goal.

### **Relationships With Other Organizations**

As an organization we have already started to create relationships with other organizations that have civic engagement on their minds. Our hope is to establish communication and collaboration so we can set a longstanding pattern of working together to tackle different issues that arise on campus in an equitable and efficient way. Lending each other our expertise in certain subjects, as well as working together on different events to help set a future precedent, makes sure all students on campus are reached and included in the conversation.

### **Motivote**

Motivote is a voter engagement tool used across campuses to engage students and track that engagement. It sets out checklists, reminders, and includes a bit of competition with a points and prize system. We are in the process of finalizing the website and hope to get students started on the platform at the beginning of spring 2024, however, it will take a while to track any increases in engagement. Additionally, we acknowledge that Motivote will become more successful as more students sign up for the program due to its competitive nature. Therefore, we plan to sign up 200 students for this program prior to the 2024 presidential election, in hopes of encouraging participation among college students, lending a higher voter turnout.

## **Short Term Goals**

The short term goals of Pointers Vote Coalition (PVC) include small events and a social media presence, things that easily get students interested and engaged. PVC looks to implement events that have a small amount of required effort with the largest possible impact to the largest number of students.

### **Small Events**

Hosting small, easy to put together events such as game nights and tabling events featuring swag such as pens, shirts, and stickers allows us to spread our message across campus easily. In preparation for upcoming elections and to support our long-term goals relating to Motivote, we plan to host a minimum of two small events per month during the spring semester of 2024.

### **Social Media**

In the era of the internet, everyone has at least one social media app. This is a quick and easy way to connect with students and community members and advertise our events. Establishing a strong, consistent social media presence costs little to no time or money while reaching hundreds of people. Therefore, we hope to boost our social media following by 20% during the spring semester of 2024.

# **Strategy**

## **Short term Strategy**

To successfully complete the short term goals of Pointers Vote Coalition (PVC) there are a few major event types that bring the most success. These events have had a consistent turnout and allow the mission of the Pointers Vote Coalition to spread across the campus of UWSP in an engaging way.

### **Voter Registration Tabling Events**

This type of event consists of members of the PVC presenting at a table around campus with corresponding information on how people can register to vote or other related topics. It is shown in the NSLVE report that students that register to vote are more likely to carry out their plan and vote. PVC often resorts to this type of event because it is quick to plan and cost effective. The information that is distributed has to be regularly updated, but otherwise this type of event is also easy to maintain. These events typically occur in spaces in the Dreyfus University Center due to the relatively consistent foot traffic, ensuring our efforts to have their maximum potential impact. As a coalition, we have also been invited to a few events where we were also able to table, so in that way new people get access to the information that we provide.

### **Relationship Building Events**

This type of event is not one distinct thing, but a combination of a lot of different things. PVC has taken on a few events that allow us to work closely with other organizations. These organizations help us get a different perspective of civic engagement. We have started a relationship with Leaders Igniting Transformation, Latino Student Alliance, Sigma Delta Rho, Gay-Straight Alliance, and Hmong and Southeast Asian American Club. In the short term, Pointers Vote Coalition hopes to strengthen these relationships so we can become more diverse in the information that we spread, especially as we go into the election year.

### **Social Media**

Social Media is an unavoidable concept in today's day and age. Pointers Vote Coalition has an Instagram and Facebook. One of our Democracy Fellows, Ryleigh Guelig, has taken point on posting regularly and building our community support. As an organization, we use social media as a way to spend information about elections both local and national. This allows us to widely spread information across multiple platforms.

## Long Term Strategy

It is hard to say exactly what UWSP would look like if it was perfect, but PVC would like to see more of its students civically engaged and aware of how their government works. On the surface level it may seem easy to say that we want people to become more aware, but it is not easy to get young people involved in something that they think means nothing to them. As an organization we want to use the relationship that we have been building to gain insight into the minds of people that feel their voice does not matter. In the coming semester we want to continue our relationship building with the multicultural organizations of this campus. We want to allow people in the minority to speak their voice. At the moment this relationship is being built by Kalli Mikkonen and Katelynn Gauger. They are in the works of setting up a forum for the spring that will combine the voice of underrepresented people with a platform to vote for what they believe in. As far as sharing this plan and motive with others, we plan to continue to stay active on social media and grow the Pointers Vote Coalition social media following. We also hope to use our subscription to Motivate to continue to engage people on and around our campus. This is a resource that is new to us so how it will work into our plans exactly is unclear at this time, but we hope that it will help us to grow not only our coalition, but the interest of civic engagement on our campus and the surrounding area.

Since the inception of PVC in 2021, we have seen significant increases in the focus and time committed towards increasing civic engagement. However, UWSP still lacks a full-time staff member to support civic engagement, which makes the work harder to do. PVC focuses on continuous improvement on student events. We regularly plan and execute events that we believe students will be interested in to ensure that our effort has its maximum impact. Therefore, it's short term event that PVC holds becomes one step towards embedding our efforts relating to civic engagement into institutional culture.

With that said, PVC also focuses on one or two long-term projects that address institutional and/or structural barriers to student voting. This currently involves editing the UWSP student ID to be voting compliant. These long-term projects require a great deal more work, but also ensure that our work extends beyond a given election cycle and focuses on larger, more comprehensive issues. In doing such projects, PVC continues to foster an environment committed to educating people on civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation.

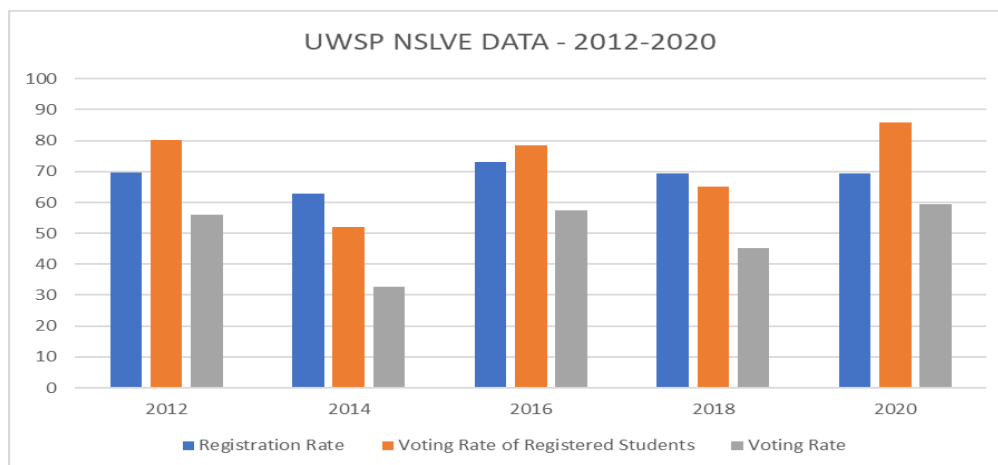
## NSLVE as a Resource for Colleges

University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (UWSP) has been participating in NSLVE since at least 2012. In recent years, NSLVE Reports for our campus have been shared with our campus leadership, Common Council, student government, and the Pointers Vote Coalition.

It is evident from the graph below that our voting rate (gray column) has seen a consistent increase from one presidential election year to another and from 2014 to 2018 in terms of off year elections. We are gratified by this, but also understand that our campus still has work to do to increase the rate of student voting above and beyond the national average. For example, our 2020 voting rate was 59.5%. This is the highest voter turnout rate for our campus for every election since 2012. However, it was significantly lower than the 2020 voting rate for all NSLVE participating institutions of 66%.

The data reveals that especially for presidential election years, those students who are registered to vote turnout in high numbers. Therefore, an important part of our strategy must continue to focus on registering students to vote. In terms of midterm elections, we saw an increase in the registration rate from 2014 to 2018 as well as significant increases in terms of voter turnout both of registered voters and the overall voting rate. This is a positive trend that we can continue to build on in terms of getting students registered and interested in voting in both presidential elections, midterms, and even for state and local races. We have been working consistently to educate our campus about the importance of voting, not just in presidential elections but in all elections.

We are hoping that when the data for the 2022 election comes out that we will see evidence of continued progress in terms of the percentage of students who are registered to vote and voter turnout. We are also hoping that the 2022 data includes some disaggregated data that can give us greater understanding of how voting rates on our campus compare along race/ethnicity and gender lines. The NSLVE reports have been important in giving us a sense of how civic engagement has evolved on our campus and where we still need to go. Many of the goals, strategies, and resources discussed in this document stem from our analysis and understanding of our NSLVE reports.



## **Reporting**

As Pointers Voters Coalition works to institutionalize our goals, it is necessary that the community is aware of these goals and how they can engage. We plan to share these efforts by:

- Talking with student organizations and individuals with whom we work closely. This includes but is not limited to the Chancellor's Chief of Staff, the head of Political Science Department, and the Common Council.
- Hosting and participating in department meetings and inviting upper administration to work with us.
- Expand our outreach to the city community and students to better address voting barriers in the community. Through digital media including the UW Stevens Point website and the Stevens Point Involvement Network (SPIN) page. With the addition of our increased presence on social media, it will allow us to reach a new demographic of individuals.
- In addition, we publish our NSLVE report through other organizations and the UWSP website. Promoting civic engagement and allowing others to understand how our campus specifically can improve.

## **Evaluation**

Pointers Vote Coalition (PVC) participates in an ad hoc campus-wide committee that coordinates work to promote student voting around election time. This committee includes administrative representatives and student leaders. It was first organized after the 2022 midterm elections with the aim of involving more stakeholders in getting students registered ahead of election day and making sure that our polling sites are properly staffed on election day to assist students with figuring out where their polling place is and the documents they needed to register. As a result of the ongoing work of PVC as well as this committee, elections during spring of 2023 for Wisconsin State Supreme Court and other state and local offices went more smoothly than the 2022 midterm elections. Our Chancellor's Chief of Staff, Rob Manzke, who also meets regularly with PVC, also has a working relationship with our local clerk of courts and the poll workers who staff our campus polling place. This is an example of the way that PVC takes evaluation seriously. After each election, we take stock of what worked well and what things can be improved.

The PVC leadership team believes that it is necessary to frequently evaluate progress and adjust our efforts as needed. In that sense, evaluation is ongoing. PVC officer positions are up for reelection as frequently as every year, and as leadership changes, goals and strategies are also reexamined and adjusted as needed. This action plan may be updated if the leadership team deems it appropriate.

UWSP does not have a center devoted to civic engagement or voting. We do have an Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, but up to this point, they have not been charged with evaluating civic engagement efforts. Instead, PVC and the ad hoc committee mentioned above have largely been responsible for evaluating our efforts and this has been done rather informally. At this point, our campus does not have an institutionalized mechanism for evaluating the results of our civic engagement work, other than receiving data from NSLVE. This is something we will work on furthering in the coming year.

For a starting point, we will certainly be using the NSLVE data. We are currently waiting on the NSLVE data from the 2022 election to assess the progress we have made over the last few years. Comparing the turnout rates from 2022 with previous years will be instructive and hopefully give us a sense of our organization's impact as it was in 2021 that PVC was organized and started operating.

A first measure we will be looking at is whether the overall voting rate went up on our campus compared to 2018. We are hopeful this is the case. We also try to keep track of how many students our interns have registered. PVC has just contracted with Motivote to use their web-based platform as a tool to incentivize students to register and vote. This web-based tool will be helpful in allowing us to see how many students we are reaching based on the number



that sign-up for the service. We are planning to roll this tool out in the spring 2024 semester. At that time we will set goals about how many students we aim to sign-up for the platform. Another piece of data we have is the number of students who have enrolled in our Vote 101 Canvas course. This is a Canvas course that contains information and links with all the information students need to become voters. NSLVE, Motivote, and to a lesser extent, Vote 101, will serve as the main data points to evaluate the effectiveness of our actions.

At the start of the spring semester, PVC will discuss and set some numeric targets for our work this coming year. Then, after the November 2024 election, our group will evaluate the results. We may also reach out to the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness to see if they would be willing to help us think about other evaluation mechanisms and/or share our evaluations with the university and community beyond.