

All In Campus Democracy Challenge Action Plan
University of the District of Columbia
Academic Year 2024 – 2025

I. Executive Summary

The University of the District of Columbia (UDC) is an urban land grant university, Historically Black College & University (HBCU), and the only public institution of higher education located in the nation’s capital. These unique characteristics are embodied in the University’s mission, vision, history, and identity and are the foundation of its commitment and responsibility to serve the needs of the residents of the District of Columbia. “As a public, historically black, and land-grant institution, the University’s responsibility is to build a diverse generation of competitive, civically engaged scholars and leaders. The University’s Vision is to empower its graduates to be critical and creative thinkers, problem solvers, effective communicators and engaged, service-driven leaders...” (<https://www.udc.edu/about/history-mission/>. UDC’s location in Washington, DC, the most powerful representation of civic engagement and democratic participation, mandates a responsibility and obligation of a leadership role in civic and community engagement activities for both our students and DC residents.

It is within this framework that we are committed to continuing our work regarding All In Campus Democracy Challenge Action Plan for Academic Year 2024-2025.

The All in Campus Democracy Challenge Action Plan is developed upon a foundation of numerous campus and community activities focusing on civic engagements and co-curricular activities aligned with academic programs. The Action Plan outlines our efforts to promote civic learning and democratic engagement on our campuses and throughout our community. The plan presented here details our organization of activities and assessments to support campus wide civic engagement and political participation.

II. Leadership: Campus Leadership/Partners

The goal of the UDC Action Plan as aligned to the All in Campus Democracy Challenge is to support education for active civic engagement and to directly empower our students to participate in the democratic life of the community, nation and global communities. We seek to provide opportunity for our students to learn about the importance of democratic participation, the history of struggle to achieve and expand that participation, and to actively engage in civic activism, voting, and all areas of electoral politics. Although the UDC system consists of two campuses-the DC Community College at 5171 South Dakota Ave NE and the main or Van Ness campus, the action plan will be initiated for implemented only on the Van Ness (main campus) for AY 2024-2025 and will be linked democratic political activity and governance throughout the

District of Columbia. 2024 is a Presidential Election year and UDC Van Ness will serve as a Super Voting Center for the District of Columbia Board of Elections (DCBOE).

To ensure academic support and campus buy-in, the Action plan was developed under the lead of Ms. Doni Russell, Director of Student Outreach and Leadership Development (SOLD). In addition, staff and faculty from the College of Arts and Science (CAS) will participate, including but not limited to Dr. Ashley Daniels (Associate Professor), Dr. Guy Shroyer (Associate Professor), Dr. Amanda Huron, (Assistant Professor) and Professor Paul Tennessee (Visiting Assistant Professor). Other academic entities supportive and interested in the implementation of a civically engaging campus include the Interdisciplinary General Education (IGED) Program, under the leadership of the Director and Assistant Director. This program is responsible for university wide requirements of general education courses, required by all university students. Courses such as Discovery Local/Global/Cultural Diversity, Discovery Civic/Service/Teamwork, and Frontier Exploration & Inquiry Capstone presently embedded strands focusing civic responsibility and engagement and community service. Other important supporters of the Action Plan include the Division of Student Development and Success that is responsible for programs and services to students and includes all student clubs and organizations. Partnering with campus student clubs and organizations is a critical component of our goal of promoting a civically engaged campus and a list of specifically targeted student organizations are identified* in this document.

Working Group

The Action Plan will be implemented by the All in Campus Democracy Challenge Working Group (hereafter referred to as the “Working Group”). The Working Group will convene at the beginning of AY 2024-2025 (3rd week in August 2024) to review Action Plan and plan a calendar of activities for the fall semester. The goal is to convene monthly meetings of the Working Group to insure consistent commitment and collaboration.

Doni Russell will serve as Chair of the All in Campus Democracy Challenge (ACDC) Working Group. Other participants include a representative from the following: Political Science Faculty, UDC Resident *Life (housing)*, UDC Veteran Affairs, *USGA* representative, IGED Assistant Director, CAS representative, School of Business & Public Administration and a minimum of 3 student representatives (to be determined and approved). The Working Group will be open to additional campus representation through both outreach and voluntary participation of individuals and units interested in promoting civic engagement.

The role of the working group will be the overall implementation of the Action Plan during AY 2024-2025. Some of its responsibilities will be, but not limited to:

- Align ACDC and University goals promoting a civically engaged campus.
- Develop and implement a campus wide Action Plan.

- Promote a campus wide Civic Engagement.
- Plan and coordinate activities.
- Identify external community partners to develop collaborative activities.
- Establish guidelines and process for assessment activities.

The Working Group will review the assessment outcomes of the Action Plan at the end of each academic year and set goals, activities and assessments for the following academic year. Ultimately, goals for each academic year should be an incremental part of a long-term master plan with its own long-term goals.

The Working Group includes pertinent university stakeholders involved with civic engagement and democratic participation. Additionally, outreach and commitment obtained (will be/have) from external stakeholders/partners, who offer a wealth of professional experiences and resources in civic engagement, will serve in various advisory and participatory roles as well as contribute resources and experts in the implementation Action Plan activities. External partners have been contacted and agreed to support our efforts; others will be contacted for resources and/or their expertise. Current external partners are designated by **.

Present & potential external stakeholder's supporters are:

- District of Columbia Board of Elections**
- Offices of the Mayor, City Council**
- Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners
- The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (Black Youth Vote Project)**
- Political Engagement Project, American Democracy Project
- The Andrew Goodman Foundation**
- National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE)**
- DC State Committees –Democratic and Republican Parties
- Non-Profit Vote**
- Campus Vote Project**
- Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement

University-recognized students organizations recruited (will be/ have) for representation on the Working Group, to promote campus wide civic engagement and to perform leadership roles in encouraging attendance and participation in the Action Plan activities. Although there are approximately 30 recognized undergraduate student organizations on campus, only leadership groups, specific discipline related groups and fraternities and sororities will be targeted. These groups are selected because of their large campus representation and presence, mandates of participation in non-partisan political activities or related to specific academic programs. Despite the focus on these specific groups, outreach of a target audience will be all university students. Outreach will (has) focused on the following undergraduate campus organization with

*designating those in support of the activities of the action plan. Other identified student organizations will be invited and encouraged to partner in this effort.

- Undergraduate Student Government Association *
- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
- Student Ambassadors Program*
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc.
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- Political Science Association*
- Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.*
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity
- Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity
- Veteran Student Association*

III. Commitment

The University of the District of Columbia (UDC), as an urban land-grant institution of higher education, the only public university in the District of Columbia and a Historically Black College and University has a legacy of serving the residents of the city. The public purpose of colleges and universities dictates that they act as vital agents and architects of a diverse democracy through their commitment to educating students for responsible citizenship that both deepens their education and improves the quality of civic/community life. Through its mission and role, UDC strives to fulfil this mandate through its educational, advocacy and activist roles in addressing the needs of the DC residents through its three institutional pillars of teaching, scholarship/research and service. By virtue of its very existence and the population it serves, UDC's major role is to offer a high-quality and affordable education to DC residents, international students, first time generation students, and returning citizens. Creating a civically engaged campus environment and educating students to become civically engaged servant leaders are hallmarks of the University's mission and vision and aligned throughout its academic programs.

Today, UDC boasts several partnerships, internships, and community-based initiatives, whose purpose is to advance equity and justice, promote political advocacy and participation within our society and global community. UDC students have participated in local and national political activities from political campaigns to local and national demonstrations and marches, often as an organized entity representing the University. UDC faculty and students have been actively involved social and political movements such the DC Statehood movement, the Living Wage campaign, the March for Our Lives, Women's March, Black Lives Matter and numerous other civically engaged activities. On campus, there have been voter education programs, including the participation in National Voter Registration Day. Another example of the manifestation of this commitment has been official partnership/MOU (inter-agency) between UDC and the District of Columbia Board of Elections (DCBOE). Students are recruited directly by DCBOE at all campuses throughout the academic year for election worker training and employment. It is

mandated in the bi-annual MOU DCBOE will recruit, train and employ a minimum of five students at one of the specific UDC campus voting centers.

The University's commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement is thread throughout its history, Mission, and Vision. This commitment is aligned to the mission and vision of the University organizational structure and communicated as evident in the mission and vision of academic and administrative units. Some examples are:

-College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Mission Statement supports "offering a variety of programs in a cultural and academic environment in which students and faculty may thrive as scholars, teachers, leaders, and activists." The CAS Vision Statement emphasizes "assisting College graduates and community partners with developing and translating solutions locally, domestically, and internationally." CAS Goals include "Educating experientially with a guiding commitment to service, civic engagement, and application of knowledge learned," and CAS learning objectives emphasize a "commitment to civic engagement..."(http://docs.udc.edu/cas/CAS_Mission_vision_goals_objectives.pdf).

-Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences home page emphasizes "preparing scholars for service in local and global communities.... Consistent with the UDC Mission, we educate our students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, applied researchers, and civically engaged servants" (Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences excerpts taken from <https://www.udc.edu/cas/social-behavioral-sciences/>).

-Political Science Program's Mission statement emphasizes as a priority "preparing students for active citizenship by increasing their knowledge of political institutions and governance in local, national, and global communities." The Program's Vision states the centrality of "empowering students through a rigorous academic curriculum that broadens their knowledge of political institutions and processes; instills social consciousness; and encourages public service and civic engagement in the District of Columbia, the nation, and the global community" (<https://www.udc.edu/programs/political-science/>).

-Civic engagement is a core priority of the UDC Interdisciplinary General Education (IGED) Program and on its webpage cites:

The GEP supports UDC's mission to serve the city. As the only public university in us nation's capital, UDC has a special responsibility to the people of the city and to the country. We expect our students not only to excel academically and professionally, but also to become community leaders. With courses that foster ethical awareness, global engagement, and civic responsibility, the GEP challenges students to take responsibility for themselves, participate fully in civic life, and contribute meaningfully to our democracy. (<https://www.udc.edu/general-education/>)

Service and civic engagement is one of seven "strands," or themes, of Interdisciplinary General Education at UDC and is defined as "understanding the importance of civic responsibility; demonstrating the ability to apply civic principles to a collaborative community project. The required Civics General Education course is IGED 280. The course description is given below:

Discovery Service/Civic/Teamwork (3 credits), also known as Discovery Civics are Interdisciplinary General Education courses that give students the opportunity to practice good citizenship. The goal of these courses is teaching students to understand the importance of civic responsibility and demonstrate the ability to engage in teamwork and community service. Students study the role and impact of the institutional structures, powers, and practice of government at all governmental levels. Students learn about the rights, liberties, and intrinsic value of all persons living in a free society. Prereq.: IGED 210”

The student learning objectives for Discovery Civics are:

IGED 280 Discovery Service/ Civic/ Teamwork: Demonstrate knowledge of the political and societal context of a local, regional, national, and/or global problem. Collaboratively design and implement an action plan to address the problem. Evaluate the results of the action plan, both at the societal and individual scale.

All General Education excerpts are from
(http://docs.udc.edu/cas/General_Education_Reform.pdf)

At UDC, educating for civic learning and democratic engagement is a part of our institutional culture. This reflects our history as a historically black, urban land grant institution, public institution, and can be seen in the prioritization of civic learning and democratic engagement that is systematic threaded across the university through General Education requirements, the academic curriculum of the Political Science Program, and the academic requirement of American Government by numerous academic programs such as Social Work, Administration of Justice, Business and others.

The student learning outcomes of both the Civics strand of the IGED Program and the Political Science Program are measured through a regular process of course assessment which takes place at the end of each semester. All General Education and Political Science courses are assessed by the instructors and those assessments are aligned and integrated into higher level assessment reports at Division, College and University levels.

At UDC, educating for civic learning and democratic engagement is threaded throughout co-curricular activities and included in the co-curriculum through student organizations and Honor Societies. Specifically, two student organizations in the Political Science program will be of central importance in participating as part of the Action Plan Working Group: The Political Science Association (*reactivating academic year 2024-2025*) and the Chi Rho Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha (*faculty advisor: Dr. Monique Gamble*). Both student organizations are advised through the Political Science Program.

IV. Landscape

At UDC, civic learning and democratic engagement are overall campus learning outcomes, established through Mission and Vision Statements and student learning objectives stated and implemented at all levels of the University: General Education Program, College of Arts and Sciences, Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences and Political Science Program and other units such as Division of Student Success and Development.

The District of Columbia Board of Elections requires students to take in person courses regarding the electoral process and rules/regulations for the electoral process. Testing is completed following the course, students must successfully pass the exam to work for the DCBOE during election cycles. Assessment data has been and is collected for the Discovery Civics course in the General Education Program and for all courses in the Political Science Program.

Student learning objectives for IGED Discovery Service/Civics/Teamwork include:

-Demonstrate knowledge of the political and societal context of a local, regional, national, and/or global problem.

-Collaboratively design and implement an action plan to address the problem. Evaluate the results of the action plan, both at the societal and individual scale.

Student learning objectives across Political Science courses pertaining to civic engagement and democratic participation include the following:

- Analyze political and social problems as they relate to processes and structures of political and social systems.
- Analyze racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and other politically based national and international problems and issues in contemporary society.
- Contrast diverse perceptions of politics in the United States and international arena.

Although assessment data has been collected for several years for the relevant courses in General Education and Political Science that data has not yet been collated for the purposes of specifically assessing the political climate and democratic engagement on campus. Therefore, in 2012 UDC executed the agreement to participate in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE). UDC continues to participate with NSLVE to date. NSLVE provides intuitional tailored reports containing students' voting rates. Utilizing NSLVE creates baseline measurements that allow us to assess progress toward participation goals by semester and by academic year, as the All in Democracy plan proceeds.

The Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Division of Student Development & Success, and the Political Science Program routinely produce campus wide events on political issues and elections, but only attendance data collected from these events.

Potential Internal Barriers

There are some potential internal barriers that could impact the accomplishments of the Democracy Challenge Action Plan.

- 1) Coordination of the Working Group - Successful planning, development and implementation of the Action Plan will require coordination across the University. Presently no single unit has the resources or capacity to manage the organization of events, projects and assessments for the entire campus-wide community. Successful ongoing development and implementation of the Action Plan is possible but will require campus-wide coordination through effective leadership from within the Working Group.
- 2) Characteristics of the University and the student population. UDC is a commuter campus. Almost the entire student population commutes to take courses and participate in activities. That means that spending time on campus beyond required course attendance can be challenging. This is especially the case since many of our students have family responsibilities and almost all our students need to work at least one job (some work much more than that) to support themselves and their families; thus, spending time participating in campus co-curricular activities can be challenging for many of our students. For these reasons, organizing for success in developing and implementing an Action Plan will include prioritizing activities in already existing curricular requirements timeframes, wherever feasible, to limit reliance on co-curricular obligations on students. As a traditional, careful planning of events during timeframes when students are on campus and accessible during class periods and obtaining faculty support (periodically during class periods but cognizant of not impacting the same classes by sponsoring events only on certain days/times), have been successful strategies.

In terms of external constraints on the institutional success of our Action Plan, there are, relatively speaking, few barriers to its successful implementation. Washington, DC, is a city with a wealth of professional expertise and resources to support civic engagement and democratic participation. UDC's location in the nation's capital provides an exceptional learning laboratory of unrivaled resources and experiential opportunities for student engagement at the District, federal and international levels. UDC students have direct access to district agencies and government officials, all branches of the federal government, an extraordinary number of non-profit, civil society and international organizations and a world class academic resource base through the regional university consortium.

V. Goals

Long Term Goals

The long-term goals of the Democracy Challenge Action Plan include:

- 1) The institutionalization of course content related to political issues relevant to the residents of the District of Columbia. This would include expanding knowledge-based student learning objectives to include District political issues in the General Education Civics course and History of D.C., and in the Political Science courses such as Black Politics.
- 2) The preceding All in Action plan submitted by UDC included developing a new course focusing on the Government and Politics of the District of Columbia with knowledge-based student learning outcomes and applied community-based research embedded in the course curriculum. POLI 316: DC Politics was created in accordance with our previous plan. This course tracks student data regarding knowledge gained and persistence with degree mapping.
- 3) Utilizing the professional resources and experts in campaigns to develop training workshops and related activities focusing on seeking political office, working on political campaigns or as election officials, and organizing communities for political advocacy and action.
- 4) Political education campaign focusing on voter registration and increasing voter turnout for UDC students residing throughout the metropolitan area of D.C, northern Virginia and Maryland.

Specifically, the learning outcomes to be achieved long term for our students in relation to the Action Plan would include knowledge of local issues, knowledge of the institutions and functions of local government, knowledge of and experience in working in campaigns and elections, skills in registering and helping others to register to vote, and knowledge of and experience with the federal government in its relation to the District of Columbia as a federal city.

Over the next five (5) years the University of the District of Columbia, we would like to achieve significant and measurable progress toward all the goals listed above. The exact level of measured achievement would have to be determined upon accumulating baseline assessment data for campaign and election work, voting registration work, being registered to vote and UDC student voter turnout. The new curriculum and student learning objectives will be implemented by the Political Science program. This provides an opportune period to introduce new courses into the program curriculum.

Short Term Goal

During the period of 2024-2025, the short-term goals of the Democracy Challenge Action Plan would include:

- Institutionalize the Action Plan as an annual activity with consistent working group members and leadership.
- Continue utilization of NSLVE data and reports.
- Review and interpret the activities and assessments of the IGED course, Discovery Service/Civics/Teamwork.
 - Include the recommendation of an Action Plan-related course offerings on District political issues and District government on the agenda of the Political Science Program Review planning calendar.
 - Plan and implement a university wide forum focusing on the 2024 Presidential election; develop survey to evaluate activity.
 - Continue campus wide event focusing on National Voter Registration Day; develop survey to evaluate activity.
 - Prepare year-end assessment of all activities sponsored during AY 2024-2025; and
 - Plan goal-directed activities for academic year 2025-2026.

VI. Strategy

The planned activities can be divided into four categories. First, there are activities concerned with Action Plan coordination and planning by the Working Group. The second category of tasks is the implementation of activities by Working Group members. The third type of activities addresses data collection and assessment. Final activity involves communication and support of Action Plan activities by campus wide stakeholders and community partners.

These tasks will be addressed primarily by the Working Group established to implement the Action Plan. Under the primary leadership of Doni Russell, Director for Student Outreach, Division of Student Success and Development, implementation of activities will be assigned to event leaders from the Working Group and on-campus student organization members, led by the Undergraduate Student Government Association. Data collection and assessment will be conducted by DCBOE and NSLVE. Internal and external communication would be assisted by the CAS representative, who is responsible for coordinating campus-wide public relations and communications.

The work on coordination and planning is for the Working Group and will involve all representatives of the various student organizations. It will be important for students to assume leadership and visible roles in the implementation and promotion of a civically engaged campus. Faculty representatives alongside student participants will conduct assessment related activities. Both campus wide and external community partners will have a vested role in assuring the implementation of Democracy Challenge Action Plan.

In the short term, most of the Action Plan activities described in this proposal will occur on the Van Ness campus of the University. The embedding of service-learning components related to the Action Plan in the Discovery Service/Civics/Teamwork courses will continue to expand

activities in the community for experiential learning projects linked to civic engagement and political participation as mandated by course requirements.

The Working Group will hold its initial planning meeting in September 2024 during the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year. A schedule of activities and assignments will be developed by the Working Group and a timeline for coordinating with campus partners will be established. It is also anticipated that activities focusing on civic engagement will be planned for the spring semester. Maintaining information records of all Action Plan activities will be important and housed in the Office of Student Outreach and Leadership Development.

The purpose of the Working group planning session is to implement the action plan. The Political Science program will assume curriculum related tasks related to the Action Plan. The informational and voter registration events are directed toward the short-term Action Plan goals to increase student civic engagement, voter registration and turnout. The informational work is designed to inform all stakeholders and facilitate their involvement and activity in support of the Action Plan.

VII. Reporting

The Action Plan will be shared internally through reports to administrative and academic units such as the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, Chief Academic Officer, Vice President of the Division of Student Success and Development and other administrative and academic units of interest. Action plan activities will be promoted campus wide and to the DC community through the UDC Facebook, Instagram, EAB/Campus, and YouTube. UDC Office of Communications and other internal campus communication networks will assist. It is anticipated that a webpage specifically for this activity will be established.

VIII. Evaluation

The purpose of the Action Plan evaluation is ultimately to measure both short-term and long-term progress toward the Democracy Challenge goals. The institution wants to know what the results are regarding the fostering of a civically engaged campus. We want to know if the level of civic engagement is increasing among students because of these activities and if so in what areas i.e. content knowledge about voting & political issues, voter registration and turnout, community involvement, etc. In the implementation of the evaluation process, each activity will have an individual or group from the Working Group assigned to the tasks of organizing and overseeing data collection, assessment analysis, and distribution and archiving of evaluation results. Assistance from the Assessment Coordinator, UDC Office of Institutional Research will be sought in necessary to assist in guiding this activity. The evaluation will be carried out in two stages:

first, after data collection from each event or activity, and second at the end of each semester, where assessments would be collated in a semester and Academic Year report.

The type of information to be collected will vary depending on the activity being assessed. Data and information related to the curriculum development goals, as previously noted, will be the primary responsibility of academic faculty in the Political Science program and the IGED programs. For the Action Plan, campus wide activities, attendance and survey data will be collected by members of the Working Group. UDC will continue to participate in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) so that data of UDC students' voter registration and voter turnout/ participation in national elections can be collected. Data collected, analyzed, summarized at the end of each semester and compiled in a report to be shared both internally on campus and with external partners, including government, community-based organizations and the academic community at large.