



WAKE FOREST
UNIVERSITY

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ALL IN
DEMOCRACY
CHALLENGE
ENGAGEMENT
PLAN

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY'S
OFFICE OF CIVIC & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



OVERVIEW

WAKE FOREST

Wake Forest University is a highly selective, private university in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Often referred to as a “collegiate university”, Wake Forest combines a liberal arts core with innovative professional and graduate programs. The University embraces the teacher-scholar ideal, prizing personal interaction between students and faculty. It is a place where exceptional teaching, fundamental research, discovery, and faculty and students' engagement in the classroom and the laboratory are paramount. The university motto, pro humanitate, inspires an institutional commitment to civic engagement and the development of the whole person- intellectual, moral, spiritual, and physical. While electoral engagement is a cross-campus collaboration, the work is housed in the Office of Civic and Community Engagement.

The Office of Civic and Community Engagement (OCCE) is the hub of community-based activity at Wake Forest University. In the spirit of pro humanitate, we engage community partners, faculty, staff, and students to create meaningful social change. The Office aims to leverage resources, build capacity, and incubate community initiatives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and beyond. Due to the unique positionality of OCCE, the action plan can be implemented within the campus community and the broader Winston-Salem community.

The All in Democracy Challenge Action Plan has been developed by Deb Marke, Associate Director for Democratic Engagement & Justice Programs In the Office Of Civic And Community Engagement. For this action plan, we will use general (2020) to general (2024) election data and goals.

DEACS DECIDE

Deacs Decide is a collaborative, campus-wide political and electoral engagement project comprised of a coalition with representation from students, student affairs, and academic affairs that will implement the 2024 action plan. The overarching goals are to increase voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2024 general elections, particularly in comparison to previous general election cycles. Deacs Decide seeks to provide clarity and information on the ever-changing sociopolitical landscape in North Carolina particularly redistricting and new voter identification laws, empower peer-to-peer leadership and engagement through the Deacs Decide Fellows program, and to develop an engaged and informed campus community.

Deac Decide plans to offer various opportunities to build relationships across differences, examine issues critical to American elections, build competencies for engaged citizenship, and experience American democracy. The groundwork for this plan began in the spring of 2024 and will continue until November 8, 2024.

LEADERSHIP

Shell Sizemore

Director, Women's Center

Gray Lowder

Student Government Representative, Class of 2027

Jaylen Shell

Assistant Director, Intercultural Center

Ashley Hawkins Parham

Director, Office of Wellbeing

Antayzha Wiseman

Assistant Director, LGBTQ+ Center

Marianne Magjuka, Ph.D.

Assistant Vice President for Campus Life and Executive Director, Office of Civic & Community Engagement

Deb Marke

Deacs Decide Director
Associate Director for Democratic Engage & Justice Programs
Office of Civic & Community Engagement

Natalie Borsuk

Deacs Decide Student Co-Director, Class of 2025

James Watson

Deacs Decide Student Co-Director, Class of 2026

Ann Phelps

Director of Programming, Leadership and Character

Hu Womack

Instruction & Outreach Librarian, ZSR Library

Gene Washington

Asst. Director for Residential Care & Conduct

Terry Brock, PhD

Director of CHARG, Research Associate in African American Studies and Cultural Heritage and Preservation Studies

Shana Atkins

Director of Strategic Communications & Marketing for Campus Life

Niecy Myers

Digital Strategist for Campus Life

Tim Wilkinson

Executive Director, Student Engagement

Matt Clifford, Ph.D

Vice president for Campus Life and Dean of Students

Liz Orr

Associate University Chaplain for Spiritual Formation

Lindsay Armon Fields

Student Deputy Director of the WFU Pro Bono Clinics, J.D. Class of 2025

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Forsyth County Board of Elections

Bookmarks

Congress to Campus

North Carolina Engage

DEACS DECIDE FELLOWS

The Deacs Decide Fellowship provides students with the opportunity to directly engage with nonpartisan civic engagement and work on the ground. The Fellows will reach out to their peers; register students to vote; create and distribute educational materials (such as nonpartisan candidate guides); develop programming to help others navigate the ever changing voter laws; and organize and carry out Deacs Decide events. Assisted by a collaborative team of faculty, staff, and student volunteers, the Deacs Decide Fellows will bring their own passion and energy to have a powerful impact on nonpartisan electoral engagement.

THE STEERING COMMITTEE

To achieve 100% voter participation, everyone needs to feel like they have a role within Deacs Decide. Individuals who express interest in being a part of the committee are welcome to join the team. When they step off the committee for whatever reason- capacity, exiting the University, etc. - we request that they tap or recommend another individual. At all times, we have representatives from Campus Life, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Office of Civic & Community Engagement, and Academic Affairs. We request that the Student Government has representatives on Deacs Decide and let them go about doing that in the way that makes the most sense for them. In addition, the Deacs Decide Fellowship Program was launched in 2019 as a way to intentionally increase peer-to-peer mobilization, which asks students to apply to participate in Deacs Decide. A small panel of faculty, staff, and students interview and select a cohort of fellows. In this way, students are always at the center of Deacs Decide and lead the initiative in key areas: communication, registration and GOTV, programming, academic initiatives, and off-campus engagement.

UNIVERSITY COMMITMENT



Through the 2020 election, commitment and support for democratic engagement increased in visibility from senior administration, student programming, and in the classroom. The President's Office sent out emails about the 2020 election and how students could go out to vote, the University social media shared all Deacs Decide information on voting, voter registration, and absentee ballots across platforms, and University Communications and External Relations was pivotal in developing a campus-wide social media plan on voting, highlighting the success of Deacs Decide, and creating videos and other promotional materials. Additionally securing a polling location was truly a campus-wide effort. Faculty utilized a module on voter registration and voting information in classrooms and there has been a significant increase in classes with a focus on civic and democratic engagement.

In April of 2024, Wake Forest University President Susan R. Wenthe joined 60 other college presidents from institutions across the country to advance higher education's pivotal role in preparing students to be engaged citizens and to uphold free expression on campus. The College Presidents for Civic Preparedness, designed by the presidents and convened by the Institute for Citizens & Scholars, seeks to engage presidents who are dedicated to preparing the next generation of well-informed, productively engaged, and committed citizens; defend free expression, civil discourse, and critical inquiry as essential civic normal and increasing thoughtful engagement and better understanding by students for the effective function of our democracy. The Office of Civic & Community Engagement continues to commit professional staff time to support and engage Deacs Decide. Staff has also engaged with colleagues across the ACC in the DemocrACCy Challenge, discussing best practices, sharing ideas, and supporting the work of election engagement.



context

Wake Forest by the Numbers

9,121

TOTAL ENROLLMENT

Wake Forest is a private, highly selective, four-year university in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. In Fall 2023, the undergraduate enrollment was 5,471, graduate and professional school enrollment was 3,650.

18%

NORTH CAROLINA RESIDENTS

Wake Forest is a national university, drawing undergraduates from the South (50.6%), Northeast (26.4%), Midwest (6.2%), and West (5.9%). About 10.8% come from other countries or territories.

91.5%

PERCENTAGE REGISTERED IN 2020

Voter registration is a strength of election engagement efforts at Wake Forest. During 2020 election, 91.5% of students were registered to vote; however, only 85.6% of registered voters actually voted in 2020.

78.2%

2016 VOTING RATE

78.2% of students voted in the 2020 presidential election. The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) reports a voting rate of 66% for all institutions in 2020. Voted Most Improved Turnout for the ACC, Wake Forest would like to keep the momentum going toward 100% in 2024.

LANDSCAPE

Wake Forest Landscape

Wake Forest University is an inaugural participant in the National Study on Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), a study of voter engagement and turnout based at Tufts University. In 2020, the last Presidential election 91.5% of eligible students were registered to vote, and 85.6% of registered students voted, with an overall voting rate of 78.2% an increase of 30 points from the 2016 presidential election. Wake Forest joined universities across the country in the ALL IN Democracy Challenge and was awarded North Carolina Campus Voting Challenge Most Improved Voter Turnout Award for the State Challenges, DemocrACCy Most Improved Voter Turnout Award for the Athletic Challenges Awards, earned a Gold Seal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and designated a Voter Friendly Campus. The 2020 election was unprecedented in many ways, but the mobilization across campus contributed to this overwhelming success. Deacs Decide hopes to continue to carry this election into this election cycle, despite various barriers impacting student voting such as voter ids and loss of our polling location.



**YOUR ID.
YOUR VOTE.**

All North Carolina voters will need to show a photo ID when voting*.

APPROVED VOTING IDS INCLUDE:

- Deacon OneCard (students only)
- NC Driver's license or state ID from the NCDMV
- U.S. Passport book or U.S. Passport card
- NC voter Photo ID card

If voting by mail in North Carolina you must provide a photocopy of your ID with your absentee ballot.

*If any voter is unable to show photo ID when voting (whether in person or by mail), they may fill out an ID Exception Form and vote their ballot, indicating a permitted exceptions.



**FREE RIDES
TO THE POLLS**



**DEACON STATION SHUTTLE
DEPARTING FROM SHELTER A
MONDAY-FRIDAY, 8 AM-7 PM**



North Carolina Landscape

North Carolina has been at the center of gerrymandering issues, directly impacting Wake Forest University and its surrounding community. In 2019, the Reynolda campus was split into two precincts, making it essential for students to update their voter registration and stay informed about polling location changes. In response, Deacs Decide successfully established an early voting site on the Wake Forest University campus, offering a convenient, accessible location for students, faculty, staff, and the local community. Unfortunately for the 2024 election cycle, we will not have this polling location, even though in 2020, 78.2% of eligible Wake Forest students voted in the Presidential Election, surpassing the national average of 66% by more than 12 percentage points. The 78% mark surpasses Wake Forest's totals in the 2016 Presidential Election when only 48.3% of eligible students cast ballots.

North Carolina has recently implemented new voter identification laws, which add another layer of complexity for student voters and the surrounding community. These laws require voters to present an approved form of ID at the polls, a change that may disproportionately affect marginalized communities, including students, who may not have easy access to the required identification. Wake Forest University is one of several North Carolina universities and colleges where our school ID counts as voter identification.

Deacs Decide is committed to addressing these challenges by providing clear information on the new voter ID requirements, helping students obtain the necessary documentation, and organizing informational sessions to ensure that every eligible voter is prepared. Additionally, efforts will include outreach to marginalized groups, who are often most impacted by such changes, and collaboration with community partners to assist those who may face barriers to compliance with the new voter ID laws.

In the 2020 general election, youth voting in Winston-Salem reflected local and national increased engagement trends. Nationally, youth voter turnout surged in 2020 compared to previous elections, and Winston-Salem followed this trend. While precise local numbers may vary, Forsyth County, where Winston-Salem is located, saw significant mobilization among young voters. Nationwide, about 50% of eligible voters aged 18-24 participated in the 2020 elections a nearly 11% increase from 2016 perhaps motivated around by issues like racial justice, climate change, and healthcare, which spurred higher engagement. In Forsyth County, similar to other regions, voter turnout among White youth tended to be higher than that of African American or Latinx youth, reflecting broader national patterns of electoral participation disparities. The 2020 elections demonstrated a significant push for youth civic engagement, with organizations and universities like Wake Forest playing a critical role in increasing turnout through targeted efforts like Deacs Decide and voter registration drives.

ACTION PLAN

GOALS
2024

Short Term Goals

- **Increase First-Year Student Voter Registration:** By fall 2024, ensure that 100% of first-year students are provided with voter registration opportunities within the first six weeks of the semester. This will be achieved by partnering with campus orientation and residence life programs, tracking the percentage of registered students, and ensuring equitable access to resources, particularly for students from underrepresented backgrounds.
- **Increase Voter Registration and Turnout by 30%:** By November 2024, increase voter registration and turnout rates by 30% compared to the 2020 general election baseline. This will be measured using NSLVE data, driven by strategic campus-wide campaigns, partnerships with civic organizations, and tailored outreach to underrepresented student groups, including students of color and LGBTQ+ students.
- **University Presidential Commitment:** By fall 2024, secure a public commitment from the university president in support of voter registration and engagement efforts. This commitment will be promoted through university communication channels and will emphasize the importance of inclusive participation, specifically encouraging involvement from diverse student groups.

Long Term Goals

- **Funding for Deacs Decide Fellowship:** By the end of 2024, secure sustainable funding to provide stipends for Deacs Decide Fellows. This will be accomplished through partnerships with civic organizations, grants, and donor outreach. Fellows will be recruited from a diverse pool of students, with a focus on supporting fellows from underrepresented communities, ensuring both financial and leadership development support.
- **Statewide Leadership Development Opportunity** By 2026, host a statewide leadership institute or event aimed at supporting underrepresented communities, including LGBTQ+, religious minorities, and people of color, to pursue roles in political leadership. Participation will be measured by tracking leadership opportunities pursued by attendees post-event. Funding for this event will be secured through partnerships and grants, with a focus on empowering historically marginalized groups to take on leadership roles in civic engagement.



STRATEGY

Voter Registration Opportunities

Target: Achieve 95% voter registration on campus, focusing on underrepresented student groups.

- **Campus-wide Voter Registration Drives:**
 - **Fall 2024 Kickoff Event:** A large voter registration event tied to the Student Involvement Fair to encourage participation.
 - **Tabling at Key Events:** Register students at major campus events, including homecoming, athletic games, and student organization fairs.
 - **Residence Hall Challenges:** Partner with Residence Life for a voter registration challenge among dorms, with prizes for the highest percentage of registered voters.
 - **Online and In-Person Registration Assistance:** Provide digital and in-person resources to guide students through the voter registration process, addressing barriers like absentee voting for out-of-state students.

Outreach

Classroom Visits:

- **Faculty Partnerships:** Collaborate with faculty to conduct brief, 5-minute voter registration presentations during classes, offering students resources and real-time registration assistance.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Work with departments to include discussions on civic engagement and voting in relevant courses, helping students understand the importance of non-partisan participation

Student Organization Outreach:

- **Tailored Outreach:** Work with student organizations to customize voter registration efforts specific to their members' interests. Offer training sessions to organization leaders on how to promote non-partisan voter engagement.
- **Organization Challenges:** Create friendly competition between student organizations to boost voter registration rates and participation, offering recognition and awards to the most engaged groups.

STRATEGY

Deacon Dialogue

- **Purpose:** Create spaces for non-partisan dialogue on political and social issues,
 - 10/01: Dinner & Dialogue: Election Mis & Disinformation
 - 10/03: Dinner & Dialogue: Faith & Politics
 - 10/10: Dinner & Dialogue: Race & Politics
 - 10/22: Congress to Campus with Donna Edwards & Barbara Comstock
 - 11/06: Election Debrief
- Integrate Let's Talk Belonging into these dialogues, emphasizing the connection between belonging and democratic participation.
- Collaborate with the Office of Civic and Community Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion, and Student Government for broad participation.

Civic Holidays & Days of Action

- **Recognize key civic holidays to generate excitement and engagement before the election.**
 - **National Voter Registration Day (September):** Host a campus-wide event with registration stations across campus. Partner with student organizations and faculty to boost participation.
 - **National Voter Education Week (October):** Offer workshops on political literacy, including how to research candidates and understand ballots, led by faculty and student leaders.
 - **Vote Early Day (Late October):** Promote early voting with events, transportation to polling locations, and campus incentives like "I Voted" stations.
 - **Election Hero Day (November):** Recognize poll workers and educate students about their role in democracy. Encourage student poll worker recruitment.

Leadership, Peer Engagement, & Communications

- **Leverage student leadership to drive engagement.**
 - **Deacs Decide Fellows:** Continue training fellows as ambassadors for civic engagement and non-partisan voter mobilization.
 - **Student Organization Engagement:** Involve Greek Life, athletics, and major organizations in voter registration and civic events. Offer workshops on leadership and non-partisan political engagement.
- **Ongoing Communications and Outreach**
 - **Weekly Civic Spotlight in Newsletters:** Send student-focused newsletters with key civic dates, voter information, and event reminders.
 - **Social Media Campaigns:** Use Instagram, TikTok, and other platforms to share voter registration deadlines and educational content on the importance of non-partisan civic engagement.



Reporting

Through the pandemic, the Office of Civic and Community Engagement has worked diligently to re-vamp and strengthen our communications internally and externally by writing stories and press releases that are released to students, faculty, staff, community partners, and alumni through newsletters. We have also strengthened our relationship with the University's Communications and External Relations team. This partnership has been key in sharing information about our office initiatives, particularly with Deacs Decide. This relationship will be key in disseminating the plan across campus. The Action Plan and NSLVE are always linked on the OCCE website, shared on social media, and shared directly with Deacs Decide Fellows, the Deacs Decide leadership team, and various academic and campus departments.

The action plan is our driving force in executing and planning for the midterms. As we are planning programs, events, and building partners coming back to the goals set in this plan will be key in building a coalition that will assist with the heavy lift of increasing voting rates in the midterms.

Evaluation

Our evaluation and reporting strategy has a few key components:

- Qualitative interviews with Deacs Decide Fellows;
- Program evaluations following every program or event sponsored by Deacs Decide;
- Registration tracker in residential halls and on-campus following registration events;
- NSLVE data-informed campaigns to engage academic departments in Fall 2024

Using a rubric designed by the Office of Civic & Community Engagement, Deacs Decide Fellows will rate their own civic competencies at the beginning and end of the summer experience. Staff will engage fellows in qualitative interviews to better understand their learning and the impact of the fellowship. This information will inform future decisions about the fellowship program.

Beginning in Spring 2022 staff in the Office of Civic & Community Engagement developed and have consistently administered surveys following each program sponsored or co-sponsored by Deacs Decide. Survey questions will include demographic questions, feedback on the quality of the event, and questions about whether participants learned something new, heard a different perspective, and/or identified ways to engage politically. Staff and Deacs Decide Fellows will review this data and make changes to events and programs, as needed.



We will track voter registration numbers from on-campus drives in the Benson University Center and Pit (dining hall). After each weekly session, volunteers will add the number of registrations to the tracker in the Office of Civic & Community Engagement. In addition, Deacs Decide Fellows will engage Resident Assistant (RA) teams in each residence hall to provide a registration tracker in the halls. When students register to vote via dorm storm, those numbers will be updated in the halls on bulletin boards. Deacs Decide fellows will also reach out to nonpartisan civic organizations like You Can Vote, which often register voters on campus, and ask for number totals to add to the tracker. In this way, Deacs Decide fellows will have a sense of voter registration numbers in the fall semester. We will do a check-in after orientation in August, after National Voter Registration Day, and after every two weeks of voter registration tables to gauge numbers and adjust location and strategy as needed.

Finally, we will use NSLVE data from 2016 and 2020 to identify the academic departments in which students have a lower voter turnout. We will approach faculty in these departments to develop targeted approaches to engage students in the department. For example, students in the social sciences (e.g. political science, anthropology, sociology) had a voting rate of 23.7 percent. Given the explicit curricular focus on understanding cultures, societies, and politics in these disciplines, this is a staggeringly low rate of voter turnout. We might employ a social norming campaign with posters in the buildings where courses are taught, an accountability buddy system, and/or direct class discussion. These tailored approaches will be recorded and reviewed with 2022 NSLVE data.



