

WASHINGTON STATE  UNIVERSITY



Fall 2022 Democratic Engagement Action Plan

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Executive Summary

Washington State University (WSU) is a public research and land-grant university that was founded in Pullman, Washington in 1890. As a land-grant institution, WSU is dedicated to strengthening communities across the state and developing civic-minded students and alumni who will continue their service to society throughout their lives. WSU has earned the Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification from 2008 through 2025, the National President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll five times, designated as a Voter Friendly Campus after the 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections, recognized as a Gold Seal Campus in the 2018 and 2020 ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, and became a NASPA LEAD Institution in 2019.

This Democratic Engagement Action Plan for the Fall 2022 election serves not only to engage students in the democratic process, but to institutionalize civic learning and democratic engagement at WSU going forward. The WSU Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) will take the lead on WSU's democratic engagement efforts and the implementation of this action plan to strengthen WSU's commitment to democratic engagement and enhance student participation in our democracy. Additionally, this action plan will serve as a framework for WSU staff to work with students as colleagues to implement the plan utilizing new and existing partnerships.

Leadership

The Cougs Vote Coalition consists of students, staff, faculty, and community members who are interested in increasing student democratic engagement at WSU. The Coalition is diverse and inclusive of representation from different parts of campus, including student leadership, representation from different perspectives and areas of expertise, trusted leaders and organizations who support communities that are historically underrepresented in democracy, and leaders who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus into our work. The Coalition will meet bi-monthly beginning in summer and will serve as a steering committee to develop methods and events to engage WSU students in the democratic process.

- Ben Calabretta, Associate Director, WSU Center for Civic Engagement
- Andria Donnenwerth, Student Involvement Manager, WSU Global
- Sandy Jamison, Whitman County Auditor
- Dave Jones, Student Engagement Coordinator, WSU Center for Civic Engagement
- Sandra Kelly, Community Projects Coordinator, WSU Center for Civic Engagement
- Shelby McKay, Assistant Director of Student-Athlete Development, WSU Athletics
- Ashley Morehouse, Leadership Programs, WSU Student Involvement
- Lorena O'English, Social Sciences Librarian, WSU Libraries
- Deb Olsen, Pullman League of Women Voters
- Sarah Page, Assistant Director, WSU Student Affairs Marketing

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- Kevin Townsend, Marketing Coordinator, WSU Student Affairs Marketing
- TBD student, ASWSU Pullman Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs
- TBD student, WSU GPSA Vice-President of Legislative Affairs
- TBD student, ASWSU Everett Director of Legislative Affairs
- TBD student, ASWSU Global Director of Legislative Affairs
- TBD student, ASWSU Spokane Director of Legislative Affairs
- TBD student, ASWSU Tri-Cities Director of Legislative Affairs
- TBD student, ASWSU Vancouver Director of Legislative Affairs

Commitment

WSU has demonstrated a commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement, stating in the strategic plan that WSU “will be a national leader in advancing the quality of life, economic development, sustainability, and equity through meaningful engagement in discovery, education, and service with partners throughout the state, nation and world.”

WSU’s president has also committed to civic learning and democratic engagement through the ALL In Campus Democracy Challenge Presidents Commitment.

Landscape

According to the Tufts University National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) report, WSU students voted at a higher rate than the voting rate average for all institutions in the 2012, 2016, and 2020 presidential elections. In the 2020 election, WSU students voted at a rate of 72.8%, up from 51.6% in 2016. This followed a similar increase in the voting rates for the midterm elections, which increased from 18.7% in 2014 to 41.5% in 2018. Significant energy, both in the national landscape and on campus, led to these recent increases in WSU student voting rates, and at WSU, we want to capitalize on this energy to further imbed democratic engagement into the culture moving forward.

Students at WSU have a history of activism and culture of engagement that is still active, though an emphasis on civic learning and democratic engagement that could be increased. Historically, we’ve seen and experienced:

- Voter registration and education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
- Campus leaders promoting voting
- Civic Holiday events (such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day)
- On campus Student Voting Engagement Hubs
- Protests / rallies / walkouts
- Signage promoting Election Day

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- Political speakers & forums for deliberative dialogues

Based on Fall '21 data, the total student enrollment at WSU was 29,843, comprised of:

- 81.4% undergraduate students and 18.6% graduate & professional students
- 54.3% women and 45.7% men
- 77.5% in-state students

With most of WSU's students being registered in the state of Washington, which utilizes vote-by-mail, there is still room for improvement. Through the Cougs Vote Coalition, students, staff, faculty, and the community will co-create a student-driven culture of democratic engagement throughout the WSU system of six campuses.

Public institutions in Washington are required to host a Student Engagement Hub, an official voting center to increase access to information and voting for students. Each WSU campus hosts a Student Engagement Hub. Washington is a vote-by-mail state, but these hubs allow for in-person voter registration and voting through election day, which is especially important for WSU students who live on campus but may be registered elsewhere. The Hubs will be required for every general election going forward and will further institutionalize voting and democratic engagement at WSU campuses.

Goals

The goals for this democratic engagement action plan are for the fall 2022:

- Increase voter registration rates and voting rates of WSU students above 2018 midterm election levels through co-created democratic engagement opportunities of deliberative dialogue, community engagement, and voter registration efforts.
- Increase voting rates among multicultural and other underrepresented students through intentional partnerships and collaboration with departments and organizations that directly serve these students.
- Plan and implement Student Engagement Hubs at each of the WSU campuses to increase student access to voter information and student voter turnout.
- Institutionalize democratic engagement at WSU using best practices like residence hall move-in voter registration, enrollment holds, and on-campus voting centers.

Strategy

WSU is comprised of six campuses, and democratic engagement is coordinated system wide through Cougs Vote. Cougs Vote is an ongoing campaign that significantly ramps up for midterm and general elections. The goal is to provide information to students and others about voter registration, provides opportunities for deliberative dialogue, works

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toward increased voter education, works to make ballot access easy for students, and strives to increase voter turnout. Cougs Vote helps partners collaborate, align efforts system-wide, and provides a variety of branded materials that all partners can access and use when promoting their events. The following stakeholders have expressed their intent to participate in 2022.

Student Organizations

The work of the Cougs Vote Coalition will be student driven and student focused, making their work a priority, and doing everything to support their engagement in the Cougs Vote effort. Student government and organizations include, but are not limited to:

- Associated Students of Washington State University (ASWSU) of the six campuses
 - Pullman, Vancouver, Tri-Cities, Spokane, Everett, & Global
- Graduate and Professional Students Association (GPSA)
- WSU Health Sciences (Spokane) Civic Engagement Council
- ASWSU Issues & Forums Committee,
- Student Government Council (statewide)
- The Daily Evergreen (student newspaper)
- Registered Student Organizations, including, but not limited to Black Student Union, Political Science Club, Young Democrats, College Republicans, Young Libertarians

Community/External Partners

Community members will act as local democratic engagement experts and support for on campus programming, including training student volunteers and campus staff, providing voter information, hosting public forums, and collaborating with students.

- Pullman League of Women Voters
- League of Women Voters of Washington
- Whitman County Auditor's Office
- Washington Secretary of State Office
- Pac-12 Votes

Campus Partners

Partners on campus will work with students in developing events or support WSU's overall democratic engagement plan.

- The Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service
- WSU Athletic Department
- Student Affairs Marketing
- Multicultural Student Services
- Women's Resource Center
- Service-Learning Faculty & Instructors

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- Office of the Provost
- WSU Libraries
- Office of Student Involvement
- Residence Life
- Compton Union Building

Implementation

The Cougs Vote Coalition will meet in Spring 2022 to begin planning, but will begin more intentionally in July, with regular bi-weekly meetings through November. Below are key dates identified to schedule around that is also flexible in order to work with students to empower them and implement their ideas to get more students engaged.

- **July:** Student Government Council statewide meeting
- **August 13-20:** WSU Week of Welcome & Residence Hall Move-In
- **September 17:** Constitution Day
- **September 20:** National Voter Registration Day
- **October 3-7:** National Voter Education Week
- **October 21:** Start of the 18-day voting period & ballots mailed in Washington
- **October 28:** National Vote Early Day
- **October 31:** Online and mail voter registration deadline in Washington
- **November 7-8:** Student Voting Engagement Hubs on WSU campuses
- **November 8:** Deadline for in-person voter registration (at Hubs)
- **November 8:** General Midterm Election

Strategies utilized through the Cougs Vote campaign includes the following aspects:

- Website (cce.wsu.edu/cougsvote) that includes the following components to assist students with navigating the voting and election process:
 - Voter registration and instructions for the state of Washington, and links to guides for other states, that include upcoming deadlines, how to register to vote, how to vote, and how to request and submit absentee ballots.
 - NSLVE Data Reports and WSU's Democratic Engagement Plan
 - WSU Cougs Vote Library Guide
 - Links to several nonpartisan or bipartisan sites or apps to help students research politicians, issues, and initiatives
- Social media will be used in the following ways to promote Cougs Vote:
 - The CCE will be promoting all election related events on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (all @WSUCCE).
 - The hashtag #CougsVote will be emphasized for all partners to use on their own voting related social media posts.
- Event Support:
 - Cougs Vote logos, designs, and t-shirt options
 - Partnership development with campus and community organizations to foster collaboration
 - Event and marketing ideas

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Reporting

WSU's Fall 2022 Democratic Engagement Action Plan and NSLVE reports for WSU student registration and voting rates over the past eight years will be publicly available on the Cougs Vote website. Additionally, these documents will be available on the ALL-IN Campus Democracy Challenge website, which will be linked on the Cougs Vote website. Finally, the Fall 2022 Democratic Engagement Action Plan will be sent to all members of the Cougs Vote Coalition and WSU administration.

Assessment

It is important for WSU to examine its success with the Cougs Vote campaign. The following measures will determine the campaign's success at increasing student democratic engagement and voting:

- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting short and long-term goals accordingly
- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year
- ALL In Campus Democracy Challenge recognition seals

The Cougs Vote Coalition will revisit the goals of this plan throughout the fall 2022 election as a form of ongoing assessment. Post-election, the group will debrief the entire campaign using the goals as an indicator of success.

The NSLVE Report data will directly show if WSU saw an increase in voter registration and voting from the 2018 midterm election to the 2022 midterm election. An increase in these rates would indicate that the Cougs Vote Coalition succeeded in increasing student democratic engagement.

Recognition through the ALL IN Challenge, and specifically the Pac-12 Conference Challenge, will serve as an indicator for success in relation to institutional peers and overall democratic engagement nationally.

