

Washington University in St. Louis 2022 Engage Democracy Plan

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Executive Summary

This plan, developed by the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement (Gephardt Institute) at Washington University in St. Louis (WashU), lays out a comprehensive voter engagement strategy for 2022 that is driven by data and best practices, builds off pre-existing university systems and platforms, and incorporates both broad and targeted strategies. Although the bulk of this plan pertains to 2022, the skills and knowledge that students will acquire from the programming included in this plan will aid long-term goals of fostering a more civically-minded campus culture at WashU. This plan is intended to serve members of the WashU community in all eight academic schools with a primary focus on engaging undergraduate and graduate students.

This plan complements the work of the Gephardt Institute's Engage Democracy Initiative, which seeks to build upon WashU's demonstrated successes to further shift WashU toward a culture of sustained democratic engagement¹. Informed by research and best practices developed by some of the leading experts in the field, our Engage Democracy Initiative will work to institutionalize civic learning and democratic engagement throughout WashU, making it pervasive throughout the curricular and co-curricular fabric of the university and removing technical barriers to participating in democracy for all WashU community members. The Engage Democracy team and other Gephardt Institute staff members and partners will partner with the campus community to implement each part of this plan throughout the upcoming academic year.

Leadership

At WashU, the Gephardt Institute provides the leadership and coordination of civic learning and democratic engagement for the campus using a multi-faceted approach. The institute's mission is to foster a vibrant culture of civic engagement throughout WashU, realized by engaged citizens, scholarship, and partnerships that advance the collective good. Because the university's reach spans from local to global, it is vital that we equip the WashU community for lifelong civic engagement at local, national, and international levels.

The goals of the Gephardt Institute are to:

1. Educate students for life-long engaged citizenship
2. Catalyze partnerships that respond to community needs and priorities
3. Infuse civic engagement throughout the Washington University experience

In 2018, the Gephardt Institute launched the Engage Democracy Initiative, which strategically aligned current and pilot programs to infuse civic learning and democratic engagement throughout the student

¹ It is important to note that the institute, along with general higher education consensus, defines democratic engagement as participation in political processes, including voting in elections, interacting with elected officials, and building knowledge and skills for lifelong political engagement. The institute's democratic engagement work is strictly non-partisan.



experience. While these programs are key, the initiative also gives us the ability to be responsive to emergent civic opportunities.

Engage Democracy Team

To implement this plan, the Gephardt Institute has built a core team of professional and student staff to lead key components of the initiative:

Professional Staff

- **Alannah Glickman (starting March 2022)**, Associate Director for Civic Engagement, will lead the Engage Democracy team, providing vision and managing the oversight and coordination across the initiative in alignment with the institute’s vision, mission, values and goals.
- **Louis Damani Jones** is the Voter Engagement Coordinator and a 2021 graduate of WashU’s Master of Social Work program. As a member of our professional staff, Louis will lead implementation of many of the strategies related to voter engagement and lead our WashU Votes student volunteers.
- **Nick Zevely**, Marketing and Communications Manager
- **Lara Caldie**, Marketing and Communications Coordinator
- **Colleen Smyth**, Student Engagement Coordinator
- **Shannon Burke-Kranzberg**, Chief of Staff and Associate Director

Student Staff

- **Bethany Copeland**, Gephardt Fellow (graduate student)
- **Ishmael Kodjoe-Tadekah**, Gephardt Evaluation, Assessment, and Research (GEAR) Assistant (graduate student)
- **Rose Shapiro**, Engage Democracy Assistant (graduate student)
- **Jonah Zacks**, Engage Democracy Assistant (undergraduate student)
- TBD, second Gephardt Fellow (graduate student)

Beyond this core team, the entire Gephardt Institute staff are vital to carrying out our goals of infusing civic engagement throughout WashU.

Engage Democracy Steering Committee

The Engage Democracy Steering Committee meets quarterly and is composed of faculty, staff, and students who serve as champions for democratic engagement across campus. Members provide feedback on strategies and open new avenues to further our reach. While the committee is broadly open to the campus community, we also strategically invite key university partners who can help institutionalize civic learning and democratic engagement. We form work groups to address emerging needs. For example, in the coming year we anticipate a post-election work group to coordinate services, create programming, and develop communications, regardless of electoral outcomes. The following offices and departments are represented as part of our committee work and sustained partnerships. We will continue to identify new committee representatives and partnerships in the year ahead.

- Office of the Chancellor



- Office of the Provost
- Office of Government and Community Relations
- University Marketing and Communications
- Academy for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- University Centers and Institutes
 - Danforth Center on Religion and Politics
 - Institute for Public Health
 - Clark-Fox Policy Institute
- Division of Student Affairs, with representatives from:
 - Residential Life
 - First Year Center
 - Campus Life
 - Center for Diversity & Inclusion
 - Athletics
- Academic Departments
 - Biology (Arts & Sciences)
 - Engineering (McKelvey School)
 - History (Arts & Sciences)
 - Political Science (Arts & Sciences)
 - Psychology (Arts & Sciences)
 - Medicine
 - Romance Languages (Arts & Sciences)
 - Sociology (Arts & Sciences)
 - Social Work (Brown School)
 - Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies (Arts & Sciences)
- University Libraries
- Student Union (undergraduate student government)
- Congress of the South 40 (residential student government)
- Graduate Student Senate
- Graduate Professional Council

In addition to these stakeholders who advise and engage in committee work, we also work with other campus offices to reduce barriers to student engagement. The Office of the Registrar ensures there is a link to voter registration available on the university course registration site, and makes it more prominent during major deadlines. We also coordinate with Mail Services to communicate with students who receive voter ID cards at addresses where they no longer reside. This allows us to send tailored messages to encourage both graduate as well as students who have moved to new locations to update or re-register at their new addresses.

National and Regional Partnerships

WashU partners with a number of regional and national organizations to support civic learning and democratic engagement efforts for our campus. These partnerships are vital as they are one tool for helping us to leverage the importance of infusing civic learning and democratic engagement throughout the university. These partnerships include:



- **ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge** – Since 2016, WashU has been a participant and partner in the ALL IN Campus Challenge, receiving a Bronze campus award in 2016 and Gold in 2018 for excellence in student voter engagement. In 2020, we were awarded the Best Action Plan Award, along with the Gold Seal demonstrating a voting rate between 70-79% of the student body.
- **Civic Influencers/Campus Election and Engagement Project** – Together, we have worked with our regional CEEP director to organize regional bi-state gatherings for faculty, staff and students working on civic learning and democratic engagement efforts across the St. Louis region. During fall 2019 and in 2020, WashU hosted 65 participants from more than a dozen local colleges and universities to share best practices, speak with election administrators, and plan for the academic year.
- **Campus Vote Project/Voter Friendly Campus** – Every cycle since 2016, WashU has received the Voter Friendly Campus designation. Each year, we continue to improve programs with the support of the network to deepen student engagement in elections.
- **Democracy Works/TurboVote** – Since the inception of TurboVote, we have contracted with Democracy Works to provide TurboVote as a tool for the WashU community. In addition to the tool itself, we have worked closely with their team to ensure the tool is meeting our unique local needs.
- **Every Vote Counts** – WashU Votes student leaders work with Every Vote Counts to connect with other student-led efforts at other institutions to share best practices for peer-to-peer engagement.
- **National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement** – Since its launch, WashU has been a participant in Tufts University’s Institute for Democracy & Higher Education study on student voting habits. The reports we receive have been vital for informing our strategies and tactics for targeted student engagement.
- **National Campaigns** – We plan marketing and outreach around national campaigns to raise awareness and engage students. Some of these campaigns include:
 - **National Voter Registration Day** – National Voter Registration Day occurs in September and encourages individuals, groups, and organizations to mobilize resources in a single day for coordinated awareness around voter registration. In 2022, the Gephardt Institute is planning our Civic Action Week around National Voter Registration Day (September 27).
 - **National Vote Early Day** – Vote Early Day is a national effort (originally started by MTV) that occurs the Saturday before Halloween that encourages individuals, groups, and organizations to mobilize resources to educate and empower eligible voters to use state-sanctioned means of voting available prior to Election Day.
 - **National Voter Education Week** – National Voter Education Week is a project of the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition that encourages five days of five specific actions by participating individuals, organizations, and groups. Actions include checking voter registration status, requesting mail-in ballots, making a voter plan, learning what’s on the ballot, and identifying new ways to increase voter engagement.

Student Learn Students Vote – Our WashU Votes student leaders have joined this national coalition of student voting leaders from around the country to share best practices and ways to engage students of all



demographics.

Regionally, we have worked with the League of Women Voters to disseminate voter guides to students and direct students to their ballot resources. We have also coordinated with the Center for Social Development's Voter Access Initiative at WashU's Brown School as well as the Missouri Voter Protection Coalition to engage students in their efforts related to voting rights and accessibility that span beyond WashU. Finally, we partner closely with the St. Louis County Board of Elections leadership to host an on-campus polling location for students and faculty who live in our residential colleges and on-campus apartments, recruit poll workers who are familiar with campus culture, and correct errors on voter registration forms.

Commitment

At WashU, the Gephardt Institute is responsible for carrying out the university's plan for civic learning and democratic engagement. During the 2018-2019 academic year, the Gephardt Institute launched our Engage Democracy Initiative, a comprehensive strategy to prepare WashU students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for meaningful participation in our democracy. This work is supported by our Chancellor, who in 2020 signed on to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation² through the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. That year, our university reached a student turnout rate of 70.8%, an 8.4% increase from 2016². When we surveyed students about their engagement with the Gephardt Institute during the 2020 election season, we found a statistically significant percentage of Washington University students surveyed (75%) interacted with Gephardt Institute through events, workshops, online resources, or other forms of engagement. For students surveyed, the Gephardt Institute was among the top three sources of information on elections, polling higher than parents, political parties, or news media, among others. Those same surveyed students indicated extremely high satisfaction the on campus polling location at Washington University – over 90% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their interactions with our poll workers. While our voting rates continue to trend upward, we are committed to continuous progress to ensure civic learning and democratic engagement are deeply infused throughout the WashU experience.

As we look to the 2022-23 academic year and the next phase of the Engage Democracy Initiative, the Gephardt Institute will continue to build upon this success and strengthen our ability to shift toward a culture of sustained democratic engagement. This engagement will be defined by both increasing the voting rates of students and building the knowledge and skills of the WashU community for lifelong political engagement that continues well beyond Election Day. We are committed to taking "Politics 365"³ to the next level. To reach and activate all parts of our campus community in the democratic process, we need to enhance our existing Engage Democracy Initiative programs with a focus on institutionalizing democratic engagement. This means investing in a long-term strategy to deepen key

² <https://www.allinchallenge.org/higher-education-presidents-commitment-to-full-student-voter-participation/>

³ Politics 365: Fostering Campus Climates for Student Political Learning and Engagement: <https://tischcollege.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/Politics%20365.pdf>



partnerships that allow us to infuse a culture of democratic engagement across both academic and co-curricular spaces at WashU.

Landscape

Currently, WashU does not have overall campus learning outcomes related to civic learning and democratic engagement. The university is set to complete its strategic plan in May 2022, and we anticipate there will be some recommendations around undergraduate and graduate student learning outcomes that include civic learning and democratic engagement.

In March 2021, the Gephardt Institute released our own strategic plan, which includes a strategic priority to *Develop and foster pathways for civic engagement education and involvement for all Washington University students*. Through this priority, one of the tactics will be creating a campus-wide student pathways work group that will develop campus-wide learning outcomes for civic learning and democratic engagement. This work will begin in 2022 and will connect civic learning and democratic engagement to the curricular and co-curricular outcomes for the institution.

Successes

Over the last few general and midterm election cycles, WashU has seen an increase in voting rates among students, exceeding the voting rate among all institutions participating in NSLVE. During the 2016 presidential election, the WashU student voting rate was 52.5%, a 10.9 percentage point increase from our 2012 voting rate, and 2.1% above the voting rate for all participating institutions. The increase was even more apparent across the last two midterm elections. In 2018, the WashU student voting rate was 41.8%, a 25.9 percentage point increase from our 2014 voting rate, and 2.7% above the voting rate for all participating institutions. One of the greatest factors in these large increases in turnout was related to establishing an on-campus polling location that served all Missouri-voting students living in residential colleges and apartments in two major areas of campus. 2020 represented the highest turnout and registration rate on record for Washington University 82.9% of voting eligible students registered, and 85.4% of registered students voted. Overall, 70.8% of eligible students voted, significantly higher than the institutional average of 66% nationwide, and an 8.4 percentage point increase over our institutional voting rate in 2016.

Another strength is that WashU boasts a wide variety of student-run and department-run programs that focus on engaging students in the political and non-political processes of making a difference in their communities. In turn, these programs and activities foster a greater environment of civic and democratic engagement on campus. These initiatives include:

- Nearly **150 student organizations** provide opportunities for student civic engagement through Student Union, WashU's student government, which provides financial support for civic engagement opportunities.
- The **Danforth Center for Religion and Politics** hosts speakers throughout the year for the WashU community to engage in learning at the intersection of religion and politics. The event series has featured lectures, panels, and films and is "an open venue for fostering rigorous



scholarship and informing broad academic and public communities about the intersections of religion and U.S. politics.”³

- **The Clark-Fox Policy Institute** is a social and economic justice-oriented policy think tank that focuses on children, youth, and the adults that care for them. Clark-Fox is often host for policy discussions across Washington University’s campus.
- Similarly, the university convenes the **Assembly Series** that brings leaders from around the world that focus on a broad range of fields. Past speakers have included diverse thought leaders, academics, and artists like Eleanor Roosevelt, William Julius Wilson, and Parker Palmer.⁴ These speakers expose students to different points of view around topics related to civic learning and democratic engagement.
- Students regularly participate in **protests and movements** at the university and with local organizations. Student organized around the Ferguson Uprisings, Title IX and sexual assault, wage increases and free childcare for campus workers, and support for first generation and low income students.

The Gephardt Institute also offers numerous ways for students to engage on campus and in the St. Louis community. Some of our initiatives include:

- We host an annual **Civic and Community Engagement Fair** featuring student organizations to connect first-year students with opportunities for involvement in community service, social action, political, and related civic groups.
- The **Graduate Impact Forum** is a new programmatic effort to build civic skills, improve civic knowledge, and catalyze civic engagement among graduate and professional students at Washington University.
- **WashU Votes** is a student-run program through the institute’s Engage Democracy Initiative that provides voter education, registration, and engagement throughout the academic year for students.
- Annually, we partner with the School of Law to host a **Constitution Day** event, which exposes students to the past and current implications of the role of the Constitution in the United States.
- The **Engage Democracy Initiative** hosts a number of workshops every semester designed to provide civic education for students.

Overall, WashU has had success as measured by increasing student voting rates and cross-campus initiatives that provide spaces and opportunities for students to engage with political and other civic processes through a variety of platforms.

Barriers

Although WashU has come a long way in our commitments to civic learning and democratic engagement, we face a number of barriers. Given the decentralized nature of our institution, much of the

³ <https://rap.wustl.edu/about/>

⁴ <https://assemblyseries.wustl.edu/past-speakers/>



directive comes from deans of each of our eight schools. Schools set their own learning outcomes and priorities. When academic schools and administrative units do operationalize civic engagement, it happens in a way that is often specific to particular academic disciplines. For example, the Sam Fox School for Design and Visual Arts has an Office for Socially Engaged Practice that focuses on the specific context and priorities of their faculty and students. This results in inconsistencies across schools, we do not yet have the infrastructure necessary to comprehensively know where civic learning and democratic engagement exists throughout the university. This lack of infrastructure was among one of the major points of feedback in WashU's 2020 application for the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement, which was unsuccessful. Contributing to the creation and coordination of this infrastructure is one of the major strategic priorities named in the Gephardt Institute's new strategic plan and is an emerging priority in the forthcoming university strategic plan.

As it relates to courses, there is currently no process for officially designating community engaged courses. Although the Gephardt Institute is working to increase the number of courses that connect with the community in concert with the university's strategic priority (the St. Louis Initiative), there is still a long way to go to fully integrate civic learning and democratic engagement into courses across the WashU campus. One way we are working to increase election content in courses is through an online faculty elections toolkit we launched in 2020, which included resources such as sample language to add to syllabi, PowerPoint slides to show in class, and success stories from other universities. With this toolkit, we hope to increase the number of courses that engage with elections in some way.

In the co-curricular space, there is a lack of coordination between different student groups and other organizations seeking to engage students in civic learning events. Although many groups offer these types of events, they occasionally overlap or compete with one another due to lack of coordination. We are working on creating a centralized Election Year Programming calendar and an event tag for election programming events on WashU's online calendar tool.

External to WashU, we are operating in a state within which election administration creates barriers to student participation. Missouri is one of a few states that requires absentee ballots be notarized. While we identified campus notaries, and the Gephardt Institute has notaries on staff, they are not always an easily accessible resource, due to scheduling or physical access. Our coordination is further complicated by the fact that WashU's campus straddles lines of three municipalities, under the jurisdiction of two different Boards of Election. Due to the historically fragmented nature of the St. Louis City and County governmental structure, we have built a successful relationship with the St. Louis County Board of Elections, but have more work to do to build a relationship with the St. Louis City Board of Elections.

Resources

Through the generosity of donors, the Gephardt Institute has successfully fundraised for both programming and staff to advance the Engage Democracy Initiative. Through this fundraising, we have expanded our Voter Engagement Coordinator position from a six-month fellowship to a 12-month full-time benefits eligible position. In addition, through a partnership with the Brown School (Social Work, Public Health, and Social Policy), we receive additional graduate student support. This partnership



provides full tuition for two Brown School students to work as Gephardt Fellows at the institute on this initiative over the course of two years.

Beyond financial and staff resources, we continue to grow our capacity and seek best practices for integrating civic learning and democratic engagement (CLDE) into the academic core of the university, which is one tactic in the academic integration strategic priority of our strategic plan. National partnerships have been vital in this area, however with much of our focus on strategies in the co-curricular space, we continue to search for more resources in this area. Our relationship and regular communication with Congressman Gephardt provides us access to a vast network of people and organizations involved in politics, policy, government, and nonpartisan organizations focused on preserving and strengthening our democracy.

Goals

The Gephardt Institute has broadly identified three long-term goals to drive our civic learning and democratic engagement work at WashU: (1) Institutionalize democratic engagement throughout Washington University, (2) Make civic learning and democratic engagement pervasive throughout the curricular and co-curricular fabric of the university, and (3) Remove technical barriers to student engagement.

Long-Term Goals

To accomplish this, we have set some specific long-term goals to help guide and track progress:

- By 2024, WashU will bring student of color voting rates up to the same rates as white students.
- By 2024, bring graduate student voter turnout and registration to parity with undergraduate student rates.
-
- By 2024, establish at least one voter engagement hub in each of the eight academic schools
- By 2026, WashU will have the assessment and evaluation infrastructure to assess student outcomes for civic learning and democratic engagement.
- By 2028, WashU will increase student voting rates by 15 percentage points over 2016 turnout levels (5% increase each presidential election).
- By 2030, WashU will increase student voting rates by twelve percentage points (4% each election) for midterm elections.
- By 2032, WashU will provide year-round civic learning and democratic engagement education opportunities mapped across students' educational experience.

Short-Term Goals

The following are goals we aim to achieve in the next 1-3 years:

- Increase voter registration rate from 79.9% in 2018 to 83.9% by the 2022 November election
- By 2022, complete 55% of all new voter registrations using TurboVote and track how students get to TurboVote through assigning unique URL and QR codes to different groups and platforms



- In 2022, increase midterm student voter turnout by 4%, going from the 2018 turnout rate of 51.1% to 55.1%
- By 2022, establish academic voter engagement hubs within five of the eight academic schools on campus
- By 2022, involve at least 5 affinity groups into the WashU Votes Campus Network
- By the end of 2022, hold an inaugural meeting of regional college and university partnerships in the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (STLMSA) to further catalyze and encourage voter identity and turnout among students across the region
- By the end of the 22-23 academic year, grant \$5,000 from our Common Ground Grants to address political polarization.
- By the November 2022 election, craft an updated Voter Experience Survey
- By the November 2022 election, create a Graduate Impact Forum evaluation plan
- By the November 2022 election, establish a relationship with the St. Louis City Board of Elections to explore establishing a polling site on campus for St. Louis City residents

Strategy

The Gephardt Institute's key strategies for deepening our democratic engagement work will continue to focus on institutionalizing democratic engagement throughout WashU; infusing civic learning and democratic engagement throughout the curricular and co-curricular fabric of the university; and removing technical barriers to participation. In the interest of fostering and advancing a culture of civic agency oriented towards civic health, the Gephardt Institute is dedicated to taking a “politics 365” approach⁵ and using the 2020 *Election Imperatives*⁶ to ensure civic learning and democratic engagement are hallmarks of WashU. WashU is well positioned to continue to be a national leader in turning students into voters who not only vote, but also identify as engaged citizens who will transform communities.

The following strategy outlines tactics toward our short-term goals in the next one to three years that will be critical to continue the work of building infrastructure for sustained civic learning and democratic engagement infused throughout WashU.

Voter Registration

To meet our short-term voter registration goals, we will employ the following strategies:

1. WashU Votes

- **Summary:** This group of student leaders and campus partners are empowered to support voter registration efforts across the university, catalyze peer interest in voting, and aid in peer civic education. They are integral to implementing activities on key dates during

⁵ Politics 365: Fostering Campus Climates for Student Political Learning and Engagement: <https://tischcollege.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/Politics%20365.pdf>

⁶ Election Imperatives: <https://tufts.app.box.com/v/idhe-election-imperatives-2020>



Civic Action Week, a week long programmatic effort, on behalf of the Gephardt Institute to contribute to a culture of civic engagement on the campus of Washington University. They also work through student group networks to provide tailored presentations and voter registration support to student groups.

- **Strategy:** Equipping a team of students with voter registration capacity is an invaluable approach because members have many more organic connections to other students in the university who they can help register. Further, being registered to vote by one's peer can be more welcoming and less intimidating than being registered to vote by an unfamiliar staff member. Utilizing a peer-to-peer model of engagement also builds civic leadership amongst the WashU Votes members who are students themselves.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator, the Co-Chairs of WashU Votes, the WashU Votes executive board, and the Engage Democracy Assistant will help to plan and run WashU Votes events and TurboVote trainings.

2. Undergraduate Student Groups

- **Summary:** We will create and cultivate the WashU Votes Campus Network, with a goal to recruit five student groups to the network. This coalition of student leaders will work to activate and engage students around elections. WashU Votes students will build and extend relationships with undergraduate student groups throughout campus, and empower them with the resources and training to register their networks to vote, as well as share accurate information about upcoming elections and civic engagement opportunities offered by the Gephardt Institute. Student leaders will actively reach out to schedule presentations with their existing networks. In addition, they will focus on building relationships with affinity student groups to reach minoritized and underserved populations as well as those who face additional barriers to participation as inferred from our NSLVE data. WashU Votes will partner with these groups to co-create election-related programming. To ensure compliance, WashU Votes volunteers will carry much of the voter registration and voting program co-creation with guidance from the Voter Engagement Coordinator. We intend for WashU Votes to provide programming and voter registration drives to participating network partners, with emphasis on student groups of color (in particular Asian American Pacific Islander & Desi American and Latinx students), first-generation students, and students from low-income backgrounds.
- **Strategy:** Using NSLVE data, we will identify populations with lower than average voting rates at our university and partner with student groups that correspond with those populations for presentation and outreach. With this strategy, we hope to register students to vote and identify the barriers that may prevent them from voting. The model of inviting groups to participate in the WashU Votes Campus Network develops deeper relationships with student groups and aids in the development in a “movement” versus “moment” approach to voter engagement coalition building.
- **Implementation:** The WashU Votes outreach chair will be largely responsible for making connections with and co-creating presentations with student group leaders, under advisement from the Voter Engagement Coordinator.

3. Direct Student Engagement



- o **Summary:** University campuses provide unique opportunities to engage students due to the primarily residential nature of the experience of most undergraduates. This is particularly true at WashU, where nearly 60% of undergraduate students reside in university-owned, -operated or –affiliated housing. This proximity provides important space for collaboration with university Residential Life partners in expanding peer-to-peer voter engagement efforts. In 2022, the Voter Engagement Coordinator will launch at least two Voter Registration Canvassing Days. These days will consist of undergraduate student volunteers going door-to-door in campus housing to invite students to utilize TurboVote in order to begin the voter registration process on the spot. Student canvassers will also have the opportunity to share important nonpartisan information about the dates of elections and approved resources to learn more about what is on the ballot. These efforts will be supported by weekly or bi-monthly tabling sessions that will provide non-partisan election information, TurboVote information, and voter education resources approved for university use.
- o **Strategy:** Maintaining a constant presence in heavily trafficked areas through tabling provides a consistent opportunity to engage students and be a resource for civic engagement information year around. Canvassing is a fundamental strategy in grassroots political engagement for “going where the people are” and raising awareness of registration status, decreasing access barriers, and engaging students that may have otherwise not been engaged. Participants themselves also gain experience using a transferrable civic skill that is an important part of nearly all political campaigns.
- o **Implementation:** In consultation with WashU Votes student leadership, the Voter Engagement Coordinator will work with Residential Life to set aside certain dates around the 2022 elections and Civic Action Week to canvass Residential Life facilities on campus. The Voter Engagement Coordinator will also work to secure tabling spaces throughout the eight academic schools.

4. Graduate and Professional Student Groups

- o **Summary:** In 2021, the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement piloted a new graduate and professional student engagement mechanism called the Graduate Impact Forum (GIF). The GIF is an institutional programmatic effort to catalyze graduate and professional student civic engagement at WashU, and it provides a means to increase graduate and professional student voter education, registration, and turnout. This holistic method of engagement includes skill building, networking, panel discussions, speakers, and trainings and will be a consistent method to provide ongoing civic education to graduate and professional students on campus. In addition, graduate and professional student groups will be invited to consider joining the WashU Votes Campus Network for trainings on the use of TurboVote, additional support on voter engagement programming suitable for their particular constituency, and the opportunity for programming co-creation if necessary.
- o **Strategy:** Graduate and professional students make up more than half of the Washington University in St. Louis degree-seeking students and have lower registration and turnout compared to undergraduate students. Despite these challenges to engagement, the Gephardt Institute has begun to see success in drawing interest from graduate students



- through the Graduate Impact Forum (GIF). The GIF serves as a method to engage graduate and professional students in a comprehensive, inclusive approach to civic engagement, including voter registration and voter education. Through evaluation, we hope to determine if participation in the GIF improves the civic knowledge, participation in civic behaviors (voting, civic event attendance, etc.), and self-reported civic agency of graduate student participants and catalyzes them to engage other students in their particular academic departments.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator and the Gephardt Fellows for Engage Democracy will work together to expand the potential of the GIF for voter engagement and education efforts. The Voter Engagement Coordinator will coordinate TurboVote trainings for graduate and professional student participants. We will also involve graduate school administrators in order to foster ongoing relationships.

5. Faculty and Academic Departments

- **Summary:** The Gephardt Institute will partner with faculty and staff by reestablishing of voting hubs in academic units, updating our online faculty resource page, and launching Civic Action Week. We will form partnerships with various academic departments to make them voting hubs for students. This entails training faculty and staff members on how to register students through TurboVote, creating department-specific marketing materials encouraging students to register to vote with trackable QR codes to measure impact, providing the departments with resources for supporting students' voting methods of choice (absentee, mail-in, etc.), and answering any questions that arise. In addition, our Civic Action Week programming will provide an opportunity for partnering with faculty in creating faculty-designed events oriented toward expanding civic discourse, catalyzing civic action, and creating a more civic-minded culture at Washington University in St. Louis. We will also expand the current faculty facing landing page on the Gephardt Institute's website with additional resources for faculty members to use in courses to encourage voter registration and turnout. This will include PowerPoint slides with QR codes for voter registration during Civic Action Week and the Missouri deadline to register to vote before the November election, language to integrate into syllabi and introductory emails, and opportunities for professors to request WashU Votes volunteers to come to their class to facilitate a voter registration training. Throughout the year, we plan to expand the use of our faculty tier-level engagement system that provides metrics for faculty evaluation on civic engagement, ranging from low to high engagement.
- **Strategy:** Our engagement efforts will target three categories of academic departments: departmental decrease in voter turnout, relatively low voter turnout in comparison to other departments, and/or strong faculty advocacy on behalf of student civic participation. By targeting these academic departments, we anticipate a strategic focus on aligning voting efforts with academic and curricular support. After setting these initial academic hubs, we will analyze strengths and weaknesses in the hubs and the partnerships to build a stronger program and work toward our goal of having a hub in every academic school by 2024. The faculty resource page will aid professors in integrating voter registration into their classes by providing pre-made voter registration



- materials. Civic Action Week will provide an opportunity for faculty to further engage in connecting their academic work with fostering greater civic, education, agency and participation among Washington University students.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator will work with other key Gephardt Institute staff to create relationships with faculty members in each targeted academic department. The Voter Engagement Coordinator will also coordinate TurboVote trainings and brainstorming sessions with each department, as well as assembling a voter engagement academic hub packet for them. The Provost's office will send an email to all the professors letting them know about the faculty resource website.

6. Campus Administrators & Student Affairs

- **Summary:** We will work with the Registrar, the University Libraries, campus leadership, and Student Affairs to integrate voter registration into institutional platforms as follows:
 - Currently, there is a voter registration link on WebStac, which is the central student services portal. We will collaborate with Campus Life to update the voter registration link on the Washington University Student Group Organizer (WUGO) page, which is the online student organization and campus events platform.
 - We will create a voter registration hub in the university library system. We will partner with the library staff members to train on voter registration and implementing voter education materials for students, including updating the voting resources page.
 - We will work to include campus partners in our voter registration communications strategy. We will coordinate with the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and the Chancellor to send out campus-wide communications discussing the importance of registering to vote, as they have in the past.
 - We will partner with the First Year Center to include information about voter registration in the Fall Move-In Guide, which is distributed to all first-year students.
- **Strategy:** By infusing voter registration and education information on institutional web platforms, students will have multiple points of exposure to engage in the voting process. By working across multiple campus administrators, we will also provide more places students can refer to for voter registration information and support.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator will coordinate the partnership and logistics with the various campus administrators.

Voter Education

We recognize the importance being an informed voter at the ballot box. This requires an intentional strategy for developing civic awareness, knowledge, and skills that can be applied beyond elections. These proposed activities are broader civic learning and democratic engagement opportunities that are relevant to both those who are eligible and those who are ineligible to vote. We are providing various activities and events to give students the opportunity to learn about different stages of voting, including



registering to vote, being informed about the candidates and issues on the ballot, and broader civic engagement skills.

1. Create and disseminate targeted social media content

- **Summary:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator, WashU Votes, and the Gephardt Institute marketing and communications team will work together to create short, fun, and engaging videos that answer frequently asked questions about the process of voting. Content will include important dates to remember in 2022, such as registration deadlines, absentee ballot request deadlines, municipal elections, primaries, and general elections. Content will also break down essential and practical information about mail-in and absentee ballots. There will also be shareable videos that will point students to Washington University-approved, nonpartisan resources to learn more about elections happening locally, regionally, and nationally. Short videos can also include a “Why I Vote” campaign asking Washington University community members why voting is important to them. Longform YouTube videos created previously to explain the use of tools like TurboVote will be updated and remain accessible.
- **Strategy:** Short, shareable videos are an important tool in reaching students at the place they are most active – social media. Over the past decade, short videos that are able to explain complex topics have become a go-to resource for college students. Videos that students can share easier than longer videos or webinars are also important because they encourage students to share content among themselves, empowering their peers with accurate, trustworthy resources that can inform their civic agency.
- **Implementation:** WashU Votes students know best how and where their peers share and engage with information. Currently engaged students will play a critical role in crafting and developing content for use on institutional social media and to disseminate through personal networks. All content will be reviewed for accuracy by the Gephardt Institute’s Voter Engagement Coordinator and Marketing and Communications Manager.

2. Direct students to nonpartisan resources to understand their ballot

- **Summary:** We will continue to recommend that students visit Vote 411, Ballotpedia, and vote.org to get information about the candidates and issues on their ballot.
- **Strategy:** The university prohibits the creation of voter guides, so we will rely on existing online nonpartisan voter guides through reputable non-partisan organizations such as the League of Women Voters. The goal of advertising these resources is to ensure that students are informed about what is on their ballot before Election Day in order to make more informed voting decisions.
- **Implementation:** We will advertise these resources in Gephardt Institute communications and social media platforms, on the WashU Votes website, and during WashU Votes tabling events. These resources will be integrated into communications encouraging individuals to create Election Day voting plans as well.

3. Walk and Talk Wednesday

- **Summary:** Every Wednesday, Gephardt representatives connect with students and campus partners by tabling in Schnucks’ Pavilion in collaboration with a campus office



or student group, providing tailored questions that can guide individual or groups discussion around a civic or community engagement topic.

- **Strategy:** Walk and Talk Wednesdays provide ways to stimulate dialogue and interest around civic and community engagement topics amongst students of diverse backgrounds. Because dialogue is not bound by citizenship, like the process of voting in elections is, Walk and Talk Wednesdays engage students who may not be eligible to participate in other forms of civic engagement.
- **Implementation:** The Student Engagement Coordinator will be the primary organizer of Walk and Talk Wednesday programming.

4. Host debate watch parties

1. **Summary:** We plan to hold at least two debate watch parties with complementary educational programming elements, which will be open to undergraduate and graduate students. These watch parties will be organized around the United States Senate race in the November general election and one of the two United States House of Representative races happening in Missouri's 1st and 2nd congressional districts, where many WashU students will vote. These events will be in collaboration with other university partners, such as Political Science department and the Social Policy Institute, for expert analysis. There will be potential opportunities to host smaller debate watch parties around the Democratic and Republican Senate primary debates and the Democratic and Republican U.S. House of Representative primary debates.
2. **Strategy:** Research has indicated that one of the important reasons that students give for not voting is feeling that they do not have the civic knowledge to vote effectively⁹. Through creating exciting, engaging events that invite students to contextualize elections better, the Gephardt Institute will contribute to a campus civic culture that facilitates dialogue and nuanced conversations on difficult topics.
3. **Implementation:** We will host debate watch parties in conjunction with WashU Votes and the Graduate Impact Forum as well as campus partners like the Danforth Center on Religion and Politics, the Social Policy Institute, the Clark-Fox Policy Institute, and the Political Science Department. The events will primarily occur at the Gephardt Institute's Stix House, but will be planned in collaboration with campus partners. The Engage Democracy Fellows and the Voter Engagement Coordinator will collaborate to coordinate these events.

5. Collaborate with civically-oriented institutes and research centers on campus to provide opportunities for civic education

- **Summary:** We will use current programmatic structures such as the Graduate Impact Forum, as well as the potential for new initiatives, to collaboratively plan at least four civic education events that strengthen voter information literacy, civic skills, and/or knowledge of topics related to voting.
- **Strategy:** An important part of catalyzing civic engagement amongst students is providing opportunities to contextualize the initiatives, candidates, or issues that may appear on the ballot. With a large number of students drawn from other regions domestically and internationally, there is also a need for education about the foundational operations of local, state, regional, and national government.



- **Implementation:** Under the lead of the Chief of Staff and Associate Director for Civic Engagement, the Voter Engagement Coordinator will coordinate civic education opportunities with partners like the Center for Social Development, the Social Policy Institute, Danforth Center for Religion and Politics, the Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity and Equity, the Clark-Fox Policy Institute, and academic schools.

6.

7. Conduct Engage Democracy Workshops

- **Summary:** Engage Democracy Workshops are designed to be nonpartisan, ideologically inclusive, and accessible for people of diverse backgrounds. They aim to deepen participants' understanding of democracy, citizenship, political participation, and their resolve to take action as active citizens at the local, state, and federal levels. The workshops are organized into three categories. The first is Citizen Foundation, which instills a foundational understanding of the American democracy, its founding principles, the values that guide it, and how it functions in 21st century America and abroad. The second is Citizen Tools, which equips participants with a variety of skills, tools, and know-how necessary to deepen engagement with democracy and political landscapes. The final category is Citizen Action, which gives participants a platform to transform their knowledge and skills into collective action, community problem solving, and creating positive change.
- **Strategy:** Through these workshops, we hope to give students a broader understanding of civic engagement and how they can continue being involved beyond voting. This will help contribute to the Politics 365 ethos and create a more civically engaged environment at Washington University.
- **Implementation:** We plan to host workshops for a variety of different student populations including undergraduate, graduate, and international students. The Engage Democracy Civic Engagement Fellow will plan and host these events.

8. Common Ground Grants

- **Summary:** Common Ground Grants are multi-year grants aimed to foster nonpartisan political discussion and learning in the WashU and St. Louis communities. WashU students, faculty, and staff can apply for these grants of up to \$1500 to support events and other strategies for supporting nonpartisan political dialogue.
- **Strategy:** The criteria for the grant come from the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education's Election Imperatives⁷ to ensure that the programs the grant supports are aligned with effective strategies for increasing overall political learning. The multi-year

⁷ Election Imperatives: <https://idhe.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/ElectionImperatives.pdf>

⁹ Graduating Students into Voters Overcoming the Psychological Barriers Faced by Student Voters: A behavioral science approach: [Students_into_Voters.pdf \(ideas42.org\)](https://www.ideas42.org/Students_into_Voters.pdf)



- nature of the grants aims to ensure that programs can continue beyond a one-time event in order to encourage the Politics365 approach and better integrate civic engagement into the culture of WashU.
- **Implementation:** The Student Engagement Coordinator will oversee the administration of these grants.

Voter Turnout

1. Develop both broad and targeted communications strategies to equip students with accurate information no matter where and how they're voting

- **Summary:** We will have a multi-faceted communications strategy as follows:
 - Communications coming directly from the Gephardt Institute will include reminders and instructions for how to register to vote on National Voter Registration Day and Missouri's deadline to register to vote before the presidential election, instructions for how to request an absentee ballot for out-of-state voters, a reminder to make a voter plan for Election Day with information on how to look up one's polling location and what will be on one's ballot, and a final reminder prior to Election Day about the importance of voting.
 - We will work with campus partners by providing them with sample messaging and social media toolkits to spread the word to their students about voting. This will include staff members from our voter engagement academic hubs as well as university administrative officials, such as deans, the Provost, and the Chancellor.
 - The Voter Engagement Coordinator and WashU Votes will host various tabling events throughout the semester across different locations on campus to provide information about registering to vote, making a voter plan, requesting absentee ballots, and more.
 - For more targeted communications, we will work with student group leaders and graduate student leaders to develop culturally relevant and audience-specific messaging to spread the word to their members and peers. After we partner with student groups and graduate students on voting-related programming, we will follow up with periodic communications. These communications will include reminders to register to vote before Missouri's deadline prior to the presidential election, reminders to create a voter plan for Election Day and steps to do so, and a reminder on Election Day about the importance of voting.
 - We will also partner with student governing bodies, such as Student Union, Congress of the South 40, Graduate Student Senate, and Graduate Professional Council, and ask them to send similar communications to their combined 10,000+ constituents.
- **Strategy:** A personalized and targeted communications outreach effort will encourage more individuals to turn out to vote. This will also facilitate peer voting support as student groups are more likely to go to the polls together. Finally, we will communicate to partners in the university community to ensure broad reach of students.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator will work with the Gephardt Institute marketing & communications team to create communication materials on behalf of the institute. The Voter Engagement Coordinator will also work with the other student



groups and campus partners to help write the communications they will be sending out to their student contacts.

2. Increase our equity-minded voter turnout focus

- **Summary:** After analysis of NSLVE data, we will focus specific voter turnout events and efforts toward cultural affinity student groups through co-programming with WashU Votes. WashU Votes leaders will reach out to leaders of student groups with particular attention to student groups that serve primarily Asian and Latinx students. WashU Votes will provide opportunities to partner with these leaders to co-create programming and events targeted at increasing voter turnout for the members of these student groups. WashU Votes will also partner with these student groups throughout the election season to provide them information about key election dates and steps of the voting process for group members who may be unfamiliar with the process.
- **Strategy:** According to NSLVE data, white students at WashU have higher rates of voting than students of color. Although WashU had a campus-wide voting rate of 41.8% in the 2018 election, only 26.3% of Asian students voted and 37.6% of Latinx students voted. In contrast, all other race/ethnicity groups were around or above the 41.8% campus-wide average, but white students had the highest turnout rate. This data is informing our approach for more equitable turnout across the student body.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator and WashU Votes student leaders will work with leaders of the mentioned student groups to develop co-programming focused on voter turnout.

3. WashU Votes website updates

- **Summary:** We will update the WashU Votes website as follows:
 - Add links to the Campus Vote Project's state-by-state guides
 - Add a section with an interactive map advertising different academic hubs and campus partners who have been trained in voter registration and voter support.
 - Add a centralized calendar of election events including on-campus election-related events and important voter deadlines.
 - Add a section for general voter support and next steps after registering to vote, including how to verify your registration, resources for seeing what is on your ballot, and directions for checking where your polling place is.
 - Add a section for students to express interest in getting involved with WashU Votes and/or other election initiatives.
- **Strategy:** By adding these resources to the WashU Votes webpage, we will create a centralized resource hub for voter resources that campus partners and student groups can share with their populations as a resource to utilize throughout the election season for any voting-related questions.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Fellow will work with the Gephardt marketing and communications team to update the WashU Votes website.

4. Celebrate Civic Action Week



- **Summary:** In 2022, the Gephardt Institute will host the first in-person Civic Action Week at Washington University. During Civic Action Week, the institute will host a series of events across the university with the aim of galvanizing a comprehensive, inclusive approach to civic engagement. Key events will include National Voter Registration Day, which will include a full day presence on campus oriented toward increasing voter registration across the university.
- **Strategy:** These events will increase the celebratory atmosphere on campus around voting and registering to vote. They will also be highly visible events so that students who were unable to previously register to vote can know to come to the events in order to register to vote before the deadline before Election Day.
- **Implementation:** The Student Engagement Coordinator, WashU Votes participants, and other Gephardt Institute staff will plan these events in collaboration with other university partners. The Voter Engagement Coordinator will assist with efforts to coordinate additional events with faculty, student groups, and other Gephardt programmatic efforts.

5. Create a “My First Vote” social media campaign

- **Summary:** The Gephardt Institute will be pushing out a social media campaign in the fall where individuals talk about their experiences during their first time voting with regards to what they were expecting and what it actually looked and felt like.
- **Strategy:** The goal of this campaign is to help normalize individuals’ first time voting experiences. Through this campaign, we are hoping to increase excitement around first-time voters, lessen their anxiety and uncertainty about the process to help turn them out to vote on Election Day.
- **Implementation:** The Gephardt Institute marketing team will help record and publish these videos on our social media. The Voter Engagement Coordinator will help recruit individuals for this campaign in collaboration with the marketing and communications team and WashU Votes .

6. Support absentee voting

- **Summary:** A large percentage of our campus population votes out-of-state, so we will provide multiple resources about absentee voting. They are as follows:
 - We will work with the registrar’s office to compile information about students’ home states to send targeted information about voting in Missouri or in their home state if they choose to vote absentee.
 - We will provide educational resources about how to vote absentee and the steps in the process as part of the targeted communications we send.
 - Throughout the year, we will provide free postage and envelopes for students to mail in absentee ballot request forms.
 - We will have the Voter Engagement Coordinator and WashU Votes volunteers visible at tabling events all across campus, and these volunteers will be trained on how to provide support for out-of-state elections and absentee voting.
 - Once students receive their absentee ballots and are ready to vote, we will host absentee voter parties to celebrate their voting. At a minimum, this party will include a notary, “I Voted” stickers, snacks, and a photo booth.



- **Strategy:** The goal of working with the registrar’s office is to provide students with more targeted and pertinent information about voting in Missouri and their home state so they have more clarity on their options and the steps to take to vote in either place. Absentee educational resources will help address uncertainty about the absentee voting process. The absentee voting parties will make absentee voting easier for students by centralizing absentee voting resources. The “I Voted” stickers, snacks, and photo booth help to promote a positive atmosphere on our campus surrounding voting and civic engagement, even if individuals are not voting in person on Election Day. This helps students be more excited about voting and feel as though they are part of a campus culture that celebrates voting and civic engagement.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Fellow will communicate with the registrar’s office and coordinate the absentee voting parties. The parties will be hosted at various academic schools across campus to increase participation from students in all schools, at both graduate and undergraduate levels.

7. Collaborate with Residential Life

- **Summary:** In addition to training RA’s, our partnership with Residential Life will include the following:
 - We will include language that reminds students to update their voter registration in the email that Residential Life sends updating students on their new housing assignment and campus mailing address for the 2022-2023 school year.
 - We will put information about registering to vote in the welcome bags that Residential Life puts on every first-year student’s bed on move-in day.
 - We will table at various Residential Life move-in events. For first-year student move-in day, we will have one centralized table near the residential halls for registering students to vote and providing voting-related information. For upperclassmen move-in day, we will have WashU Votes volunteers directly inside of each residential college registering individuals to vote as they pick up their room keys.
- **Strategy:** Through this partnership with Residential Life, we hope to increase voter turnout by making connections with students at the very beginning of the academic year and getting them registered to vote and in our system right away. That way, we can follow up with reminders as Election Day approaches. It will also help contribute to the increasing the campus culture around voting from the very beginning of the school year.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Fellow will coordinate these projects with Residential Life throughout the summer so that they are ready to be executed when students return in the fall. The programming will take place in Residential Life spaces.

8. Provide faculty and staff with resources for their classes through the Faculty Voter Engagement Network

- **Summary:** We plan to increase the promotion of faculty resources for use in their classes. These resources will include PowerPoint slides to show in class on National Voter Registration Day, the Missouri voter registration deadline, and Election Day; access to WashU Votes volunteers to give voter registration presentations in class; and



support in connecting the election and its implications to course material. Through our partnership with the Provost's Office and the Syllabi Resources they provide to all faculty, we will encourage professors not to have exams or large assignments due on Election Day or the day after Election Day; extend students grace if they are late to class on Election Day due to voting; and/or provide alternatives to attending class in person on Election Day altogether.

- **Strategy:** One best practice for getting more students to vote is to have professors make a connection between voting and class content. By integrating encouragement to vote into the course through PowerPoint slides on important dates and connecting the class material to election implications, we hope to turn more students out to vote. In addition, in some elections, WashU students have faced a barrier to voting with long lines at the on-campus polling place on Election Day. By working with professors to make their classes more accommodating to voting, we hope to lessen this barrier.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator, along with other Gephardt Institute staff, will strengthen and expand relationships with faculty through providing resources, information, and voter engagement support in order to increase our Faculty Voter Engagement Network, our list of faculty and academic departments committed to integrating voter engagement into their course materials.

Election Day Voter Turnout

We will build on the momentum created by voter education and turnout events prior to Election Day through initiatives intended to make voting as appealing and efficient as possible for WashU students.

1. Continue the omnipresent celebratory atmosphere that students can't avoid

- **Summary:** We will have a Party at the Polls outside of the on-campus polling center. This party will include student group performances, warm beverages, a photo booth, giveaways, and snacks. It will also have relevant voting information and resources for individuals voting.
- **Strategy:** This party will help students celebrate their identity as voters and their decision to vote on Election Day. This will contribute to creating a campus culture that supports voting and democratic participation.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator will plan and execute this party with support from WashU Votes volunteers and other staff members at the Gephardt Institute to staff the party throughout the day on Election Day.

2. Work with the St. Louis County Board of Elections to plan for 2022 elections

- **Summary:** We will collaborate with the St. Louis County Board of Elections (BOE) to build on past successes with having an on-campus polling location. We plan to work with the BOE to strategize how to decrease the wait time for voters at this polling place on Election Day, ideally through continued use of our WaitWhile app that we piloted successfully in 2020.



- **Strategy:** By working to make voting faster and more efficient for students, we hope to increase voter turnout. Having a polling place on campus makes voting more accessible and convenient for students as well.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator will work with the BOE, as well as other university representatives and stakeholders, to coordinate and implement these efforts.

3. **Work to establish relationship with St. Louis City Board of Elections for 2022 elections and beyond**

- **Summary:** The population of Washington University that resides in the state of Missouri is primarily located in both St. Louis County and St. Louis City. Historically, election coordination efforts have primarily taken place solely with the St. Louis County Board of Elections due to the location of Washington University’s main campus and residential colleges being primarily situated within St. Louis County boundaries. Our university’s Medical Campus is entirely situated within the city boundaries, and many undergraduate and graduate/professional students live in the City of St. Louis. This year would be an advantageous opportunity to explore a working relationship with the City of St. Louis for election coordination, given its acquisition of new voting technology that will allow city voters to vote at any polling location in the city, similar to St. Louis County.
- **Strategy:** The Gephardt Institute is tasked with advancing civic engagement of the entire student population of Washington University in St. Louis, particularly by empowering access to voting. Exploring the possibility of a St. Louis City polling location on Washington University property would expand convenient options for voting amongst those we serve.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator, in collaboration with university partners in the Office of Government and Community Relations, will explore the possibility of a St. Louis City polling location at one or more of Washington University’s properties in the City of St. Louis, including the Medical Campus and University housing.

Post-Election Plans

After Election Day, we want to ensure students are still connected to politics and understand the implications of the election. We also want to ensure that there are spaces for students to process and learn from the election results, no matter the outcomes.

1. **Coordinate a post-election work group**

- **Summary:** We will reconvene staff and faculty members from a variety of different units—including Student Affairs, University Marketing & Communications, the Academy for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, representatives from every academic school, the Provost’s Office, and the Chancellor’s Office—to participate in a post-election work group. This work group will form separate committees to assess resources created in the 2020 election season and plan activities and communications that may include the following areas: university-wide communications plan, student mental health and wellbeing, academic analysis, deliberative dialogue spaces, and student activism.



From this work group, we will prepare resources, programs, and communications, no matter the election outcomes, to continue to support and engage students beyond voting and the November election.

- **Strategy:** By tapping into the expertise of many campus partners, we aim to be proactive in creating holistic programming and support response for students, no matter the outcome of the November election. This will help students process the election and ensure that they are involved in politics and recognize how politics impact their lives beyond just voting on Election Day.
- **Implementation:** The full group will be convened at least four times by our Associate Director for Civic Engagement, with support from the institute's director. Committees will determine their own meeting cadence based on the group's charge.

2. Support post-election analysis podcast programming

- **Summary:** Using the “This Civic Moment” and “American Democracy Lab” podcasts of the Gephardt Institute, we will bring together subject-matter experts to analyze and contextualize the outcomes of November elections and initiatives.
- **Strategy:** Post-election analysis is a means to illustrate the impact and role that democratic decision-making plays in relation to policy, public narratives, and the lives of a society's citizens. As a medium of information exchange, podcasts are becoming increasingly popular, accessible ways to contribute to public discourse in the 21st century.
- **Implementation:** The Voter Engagement Coordinator, the Engage Democracy Fellows, and the marketing and communications team will work collaboratively to secure podcast guests, record content, and disseminate the podcast after the election.

3. Follow up with voters

- **Summary:** Throughout the 2022 voter registration season and events, we will track the students who we directly help register to vote. After the election, we will send out our Voter Experience survey. We piloted this tool in 2020 to gauge students' experiences with WashU Votes and other Gephardt Initiatives and how they contributed to their overall election and voting experience.
- **Strategy:** By telling students that we will be following up with them about their voting experience after the election, we will be giving them an extra layer of accountability that will hopefully mobilize them to turn out to vote. We will also be able to use the data from this survey to improve programming for future election cycles.
- **Implementation:** Throughout the semester, WashU Votes student leaders will keep track of who they have assisted through their events and let those individuals know that we will be following up with them after the election. The Voter Engagement Coordinator will work with Gephardt's evaluation team to develop the post-election survey.

Deepening Partnerships for Infusion of Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement across WashU

Much of the success of the Gephardt Institute's Engage Democracy Initiative to date is due to the cultivation of intentional partnerships with campus units that have a broad reach among members of the campus community. Throughout the plan so far, we have referenced several critical partners for delivering Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) programming and initiatives. In giving



attention to these partnerships, the institute has been able to take the approach of meeting students where they are. While this past year has focused on building those relationships, they have also opened opportunities to more deeply embed the Gephardt Institute’s work into existing structures that have the ability to reach the large numbers of students the Gephardt Institute has reached. The following highlights some additional partnerships and tactics for deeper infusion of democratic engagement into the WashU experience.

First Year Engagement

In past years, the Gephardt Institute deepened civic engagement education and exposure to Engage Democracy workshops through the redesign process of the Bear Beginnings Orientation program that was led by the First Year Center. The Gephardt Institute leads a civic engagement program called *Engage STL* for 225-300 first year students, representing approximately 13% of the new student class, which was implemented over three days before classes begin in August. This intensive three-day program integrated curriculum and exposure to information, skills, and resources that support students to register as voters, dialogue across different political ideologies, and understand the opportunities they will have to take civic action. The program is marketed and implemented under the leadership and administrative structure of the First Year Center and Campus Life. As part of our comprehensive evaluation efforts, the students were tracked throughout their WashU experience to better understand their levels of engagement, growth, and the impact of the program relative to the general WashU student population.

The Gephardt Institute will also continue first-year student engagement and outreach during the “First Forty” days of school by offering communications through *Bear Facts*, a publication that is distributed to all students, their parents and families, and continuing to implement the robust series of voter registration drives through the fall. Additionally, the Parent and Family newsletter provides a means of inspiring conversation between students and families about civic engagement, elections, and voting.

Infusing democratic engagement in the year-round experience

In addition to focus on first-year students, we intend to make democratic engagement pervasive in the WashU experience in increasingly substantial ways:

Civic and Community Engagement Fair. In 2018, the Gephardt Institute was successful in integrating political and social action groups into the fair for the first time after offering a Community Service Fair for 19 years, expanding the fair to include 30 new student groups. We recognize that we can go further with this to reach those student groups that are not accustomed to participating in the fair, and have chosen to integrate this event into our broader “Civic Action Week.” This will require a bigger budget to accommodate more groups, more publicity, and staff time to intentionally recruit those groups that may not have been represented in the past, including those that represent the diversity of political ideologies at WashU. Beyond the fair, this will also open doors to partnerships with political groups to recruit students who may not have otherwise seen themselves involved in the Gephardt Institute, and to recruit a more diverse student volunteer base for WashU Votes.



Timeline

The following timeline describes plans for each phase of our strategy:

Month	Activity
Ongoing (Jan.2022- December 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WashU Votes voter registration and relationship building with WashU student groups and voting groups on other campuses - Relationship building and programming with graduate and professional student groups - Providing non-partisan resources for students to understand their ballot - Weekly/bi-weekly tabling on campus - Engage Democracy workshops - Common Ground Grants - Elections-related communications from both the Gephardt Institute and campus partners - Expanding faculty engagement through the Faculty Voter Engagement Network and Academic Hubs - Expanding student group partnership through the WashU Votes Campus Network
Jan. – March. 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Start building relationships for academic hubs and with campus partners - Co-create plans with WashU Votes for Spring 2022 and Fall 2022 for undergraduate and student group engagement - Begin to co-create voter education video series pending WashU Votes support - Plan for “This Civic Moment” voter engagement integration possibilities with Gephardt Fellow - Plan municipal election/ballot initiative programming - Co-create plans with Engage Democracy Fellow for Graduate Impact Forum and graduate student engagement - Examine messaging, potential programming for municipal elections in April - Finalize updated communications strategy - “Missouri 2022 Legislative Update” event planning - Discussions with Student Union about integrating midterm year programming into their work
April – May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send targeted emails to academic departments we want to make into hubs - Start relationship building with the library for voting programming and becoming a voting hub in the fall - Begin voter education video series - Plan opportunities for partnership with Student Union - “Missouri 2022 Legislative Session Update” event execution - Municipal Elections programming - Consultations with professors about integrating election content into their classes - Update materials and the website for tools for professors to use in their classes to encourage voting - Send message to Provost’s office to send to professors about the voting materials available - Outreach for Post-Election Work Group



June – July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-create events with campus partners - Update the WashU Votes website with more educational materials - Work with registrar’s office to get information on individuals’ home states - Work with St. Louis County Board of Elections to coordinate less wait time at the on-campus polling location - Outreach to St. Louis City Board of Elections
August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Train academic hubs - Train the library hub - Democratic and Republican primary debates - Voter registration and voting information at residential move-in days - Convene Post-Election Work Group
September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential campus college Republican and college Democrat debate - “Contextualizing the Vote” series with campus partners - Civic Action Week, including Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day - Outreach and planning for student “Why I Vote” video series - Plan and recruit for “My First Vote” social media campaign
October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host Senate and House candidates debate watch parties - “Contextualizing the Vote” series with campus partners - Canvas the Campus event - “I’m a Voter” video series - Push for students to create a voter plan“ - My First Vote” social media campaign goes live
November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Election Day communications from campus partners - Party at the Polls event - Host an on-campus polling location - Sponsor the post-election analysis event - Send post-election survey to voters - Implement Post-Election Work Group Plans
December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue surveying voters
January – May 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze data from 2022 and strategically plan for the future

Reporting

A condensed version of this plan will be developed and shared among our Engage Democracy Steering Committee members and made available for them to disseminate. It will also be publicly available on our website for a variety of stakeholders including students, staff, faculty, and community partners to



access. We also plan to have our director share the plan with senior university leaders and our National Advisory Council.

Because voting data by academic disciplines are disaggregated in the NSLVE report, it is challenging to determine with relevant communities how the data should be interpreted. For this reason, we have made the decision not to make the full report publicly available. Rather, our approach has been to meet with departmental leads to share the report and discuss strategies in person. This is a more appropriate avenue of accountability given WashU campus culture and will be more effective in getting buy-in across campus.

Evaluation

The new logic model for the Engage Democracy Initiative is nearing completion. The purpose of our evaluation effort is to track progress toward the short-term goals for the project. Through these evaluations, the institute wants to understand the growth of students' civic awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitments over time (AKSC). In addition to seeing increases in these areas across the next one to three years, the institute also seeks to demonstrate effective civic education programming for students. Finally, the institute seeks to infuse civic engagement throughout Washington University in St. Louis through partnerships with faculty, academic departments, administrative units, student organizations, senior leadership, and with the St. Louis County and St. Louis City Boards of Elections.

The primary audience for the evaluations are undergraduate and graduate students. We will explore their voter registration, voter turnout, program participation, and increased civic awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitments. The Gephardt Evaluation, Assessment, and Research (GEAR) Team will carry out the evaluations under the leadership of the Evaluation and Assessment Manager. The institute's evaluation strategy is guided by a values-based theory of change for how students gain civic awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitments throughout their time at the university.

Theory of Change

Our theory of change encompasses four levels of civic engagement across the student experience, two of which are transitions that occur during students' WashU experience. Within each of the levels, students engage in increasingly complex activities in which they receive the awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitments for life-long engaged citizenship. Having progressed along this theory of change, students will become civic agents and will engage in a lifelong civic engagement cycle as alumni.

In the *Emerging* level of the theory of change, we focus on building civic awareness, literacy, and possible pathways that students will encounter throughout their time at WashU. Programs and initiatives in this level focuses on outreach and connecting their academic-career pursuits to civic pathways. Building on civic awareness, programs within *Transition 1* focus on students gaining the civic knowledge to make preliminary decisions about civic actions and making meaning of how those actions impact their civic identity and others. We anticipate these first two levels as occurring during students' first and second years at the institution as they are making curricular and co-curricular decisions.

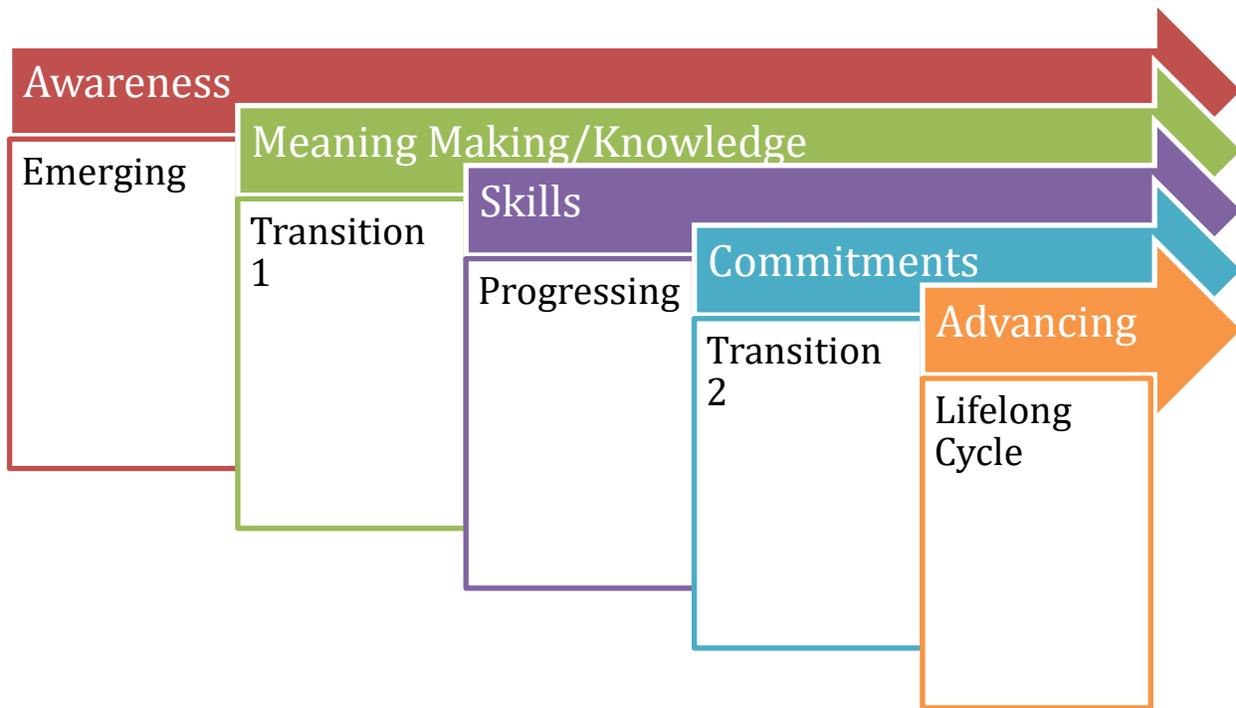


Figure 1: Gephardt Institute Theory of Change for Student Civic Engagement

The final two levels, *Progressing* and *Transition 2*, occur from the second through final year for students. Programs and initiatives within the *Progressing* level contain opportunities for students to gain knowledge and skills to participate in and create opportunities for direct civic action. Through this level, students are moving into making commitments about who they are as civic agents. Programs and initiatives in *Transition 2* cement students’ commitment to civic agency and action, marked by sustained and intentional engagement in the civic lives of their communities. We envision students’ transition to alumni as life-long engagement throughout their lives and as a hallmark of a WashU education. We developed indicators, measures, and outcomes for each of these levels and have mapped them across all Gephardt Institute programs, including the Engage Democracy Initiative.

Engage Democracy Initiative Evaluation Plan

As previously detailed in the “Goals” section, the Gephardt Institute has identified long and short-term goals aimed to guide and track progress for students. The logic model will outline each goal mapped along the theory of change to demonstrate how we intend to fully live into the future of the Engaged Democracy Initiative. The four levels represent the trajectory to foster and maintain a civically minded and action-oriented campus and student body. Outlined in the logic model is performance measure and data source for each activity aligned with the goals of this plan. Primarily, we will use unobtrusive measures – NSLVE data, TurboVote data, internal tracking mechanisms, and website analytics – to evaluate the program effectiveness. Since the 2019-2020 school year, the GEAR team has been developing measures aligned with the institute’s values that will guide the voter follow-up and program evaluations. The GEAR team will analyze the data in the aggregate and then disaggregate data across



demographics to understand how different populations experience the Engage Democracy Initiative. The results of the evaluations will be shared in a report to institute staff, WashU Votes staff, and campus and community partners to show the initiative impact as well as to identify areas for continuous improvement.

Over the past year, the GEAR team has been working to support the institute's emerging theory of change, which seeks to assess undergraduate students' civic awareness, knowledge, skills, and commitments at WashU. This information will enable the Gephardt Institute to determine the baseline of civic engagement and how students' understanding of civic engagement evolves during their time at the university. To build upon this foundation, the Engage Democracy team has the opportunity to examine the role the university plays in helping students cast informed votes and graduate with the tools and motivation to engage in the political process and other civic endeavors once they leave the university.

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