Engage Democracy Initiative

at Washington University in St. Louis

Washington University in St. Louis

Gephardt Institute for
Civic and Community Engagement

Overview of the Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement

Mission

The Gephardt Institute fosters a vibrant culture of civic engagement throughout Washington University, realized by engaged citizens, scholarship, and partnerships that advance the collective good.

Goals

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

Reinvigorating Higher Education for the Public Good

"Our work is to ensure that higher education is contributing to the health and strength of our democracy....the work of developing the kinds of citizens and communities we need if we are to deliberate together in pursuit of a just, equitable, and sustainable democracy for all."

- Andrew Seligsohn, Campus Compact President

Engage Democracy
Values Stem From Our Founder

"What is at the core of why our democracy functions as well as it does? In the end, it is because of the presence of our citizens, engaged in our governance and in the communities they live in – helping people who need help and being involved in the dialogue that has to go on in a democracy."

"If there was ever a time we needed the Gephardt Institute to produce citizens, it is now. The presence of the Gephardt Institute is more important than it's ever been."

Congressman Richard Gephardt

February 2017

Engage Democracy Overview

The Engage Democracy Initiative aims to infuse the skills and processes for teaching the skills of democracy, and educates students for lifelong engaged citizenship. The initiative includes:

Voter Engagement: Connections to nonpartisan resources, leadership of WashU Votes volunteer efforts, and oversight of the voter registration and engagement activities throughout the year.

Common Ground Grants: Funding up to $1,000 for initiatives that address political polarization and encourage dialogue across difference. Students, faculty, and staff are eligible to apply.

Public Service Fellows: A selective program placing students from WashU's Brown School in positions at St. Louis City Hall or city departments, where they will directly contribute to civic efforts and hone their professional skills.

Engage Democracy Workshops: A series of customizable workshops and curriculum to equip the WashU community with knowledge and skills for engaging in democracy and participating in civic dialogue.

Public Policy: Advising, courses, speaking engagements, and educational opportunities led by a Senior Fellow in Public Policy.

Engage Democracy Initiative Voter Engagement Plan

2018-2020

Washington University in St. Louis
Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement

Target Audience

This Engage Democracy Voter Engagement plan will guide the work of the following:

- The Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement including 15 professional and 23 student staff
- Gephardt Institute's Engage Democracy leads including: the Assistant Director for Student Engagement and Service, the Assistant Director for Civic Engagement Education, the Voter Engagement Coordinator, the Gephardt Fellow, the Senior Fellow in Public Policy, and WashU Votes student volunteers
- Collaborating campus offices and departments including the First Year Center, ResLife, Student Affairs, Graduate Schools, Office for Government and Community Relations, Danforth Center on Religion and Politics, etc.
- Student leaders and groups in Student Union, Graduate Professional Council, Graduate Student Senate, Congress of the South40, WashU Votes volunteers
- Marketing and communication efforts across the university

Approach to Voter Engagement

At Washington University, we believe:

- It is important for students to learn both the process of political participation and engaging in democracy
  - This is not about voting in single elections, it is about creating an identity of being an engaged citizen over a lifetime
- Take a "Politics 365" approach
  - Building from Nancy Thomas's research at the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE), WashU will establish a campus culture that fosters civic discourse and dialogue across difference and that encourages engagement in democracy beyond single elections
- Non-partisan approach
  - We can talk about political engagement AND be inclusive

Voter Engagement Steering Committee

The Gephardt Institute convenes student volunteers, collaborating campus offices and departments, and key staff through a campus-wide Voter Engagement Steering Committee

- The team email list includes 120 people
- Composition includes undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff, and campus administrators
- Members receive information including copies of engagement plans and reports via email, and are invited to quarterly meetings to provide input on strategy, opportunities for collaboration, planning, and monitoring progress
- Identify a subset of Steering Committee members to volunteer with WashU Votes to conduct voter registration, voter education, and implement voter turn out strategies prior to election days
- Identify a subset of Steering Committee members to spearhead and coordinate efforts with academic departments, faculty, and offices

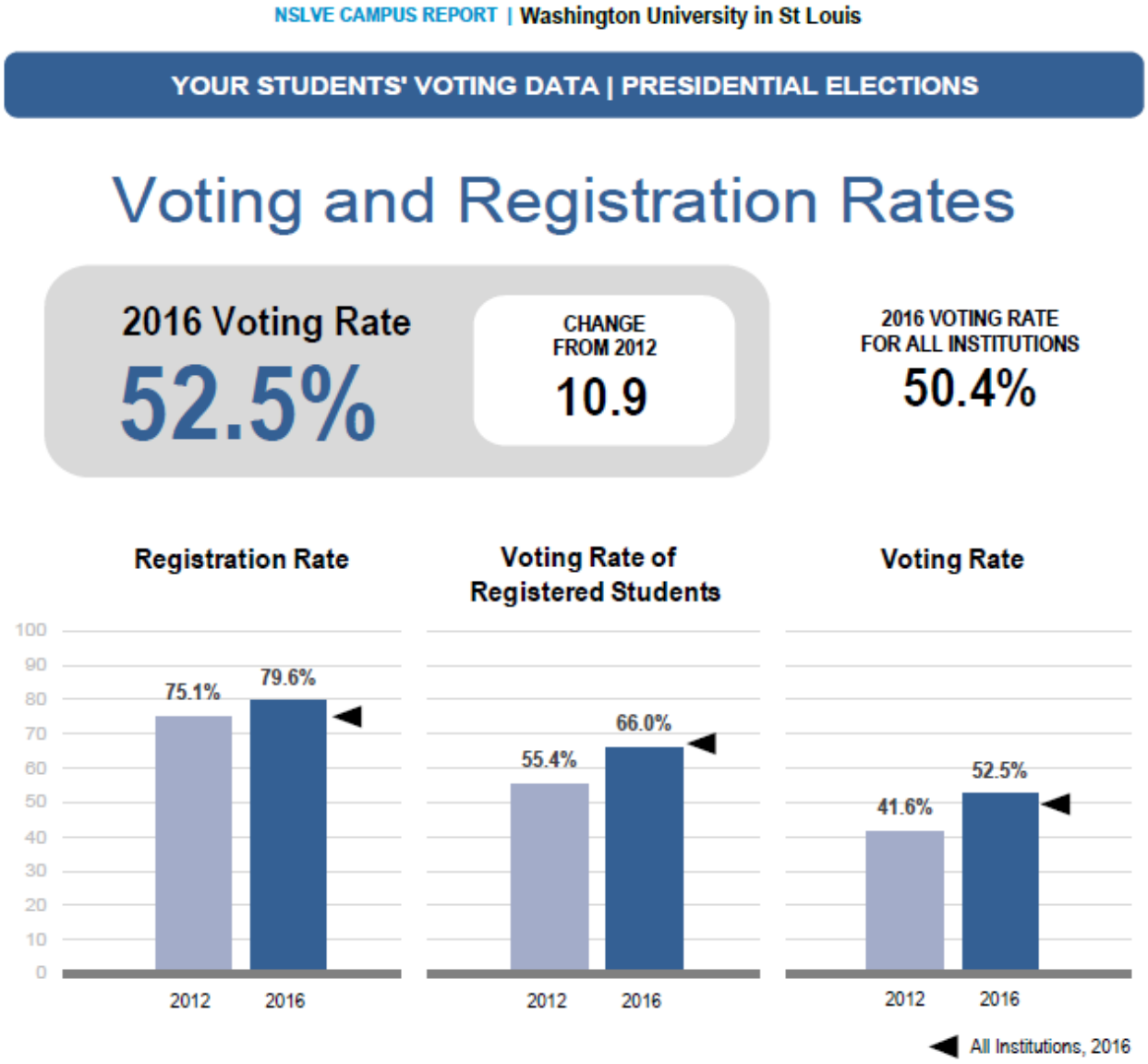
WashU Votes Implements Voter Registration and Voter Turn Out Efforts

- All programing and information related to volunteering, voter registration, and engagement carries the WashU Votes logo shown below
- https://gephardtinstitute.wustl.edu/voter-registration/ is the centralized portal for voter registration, events, programming, and election day information
- WashU Votes originated as a collaboration between Campus Life, Public Affairs, Student Union, Graduate Professional Council, and Gephardt Institute when WashU hosted the Presidential Debate in 2016- currently Gephardt leads the group

WASHU VOTES

Data Driven Planning: Voter Registration

Gephardt Institute used data from the national NSLVE Report, WashU NSLVE reports from 2012, 2014, and 2016, and TurboVote to inform goal setting and strategy for voter registration and turn out



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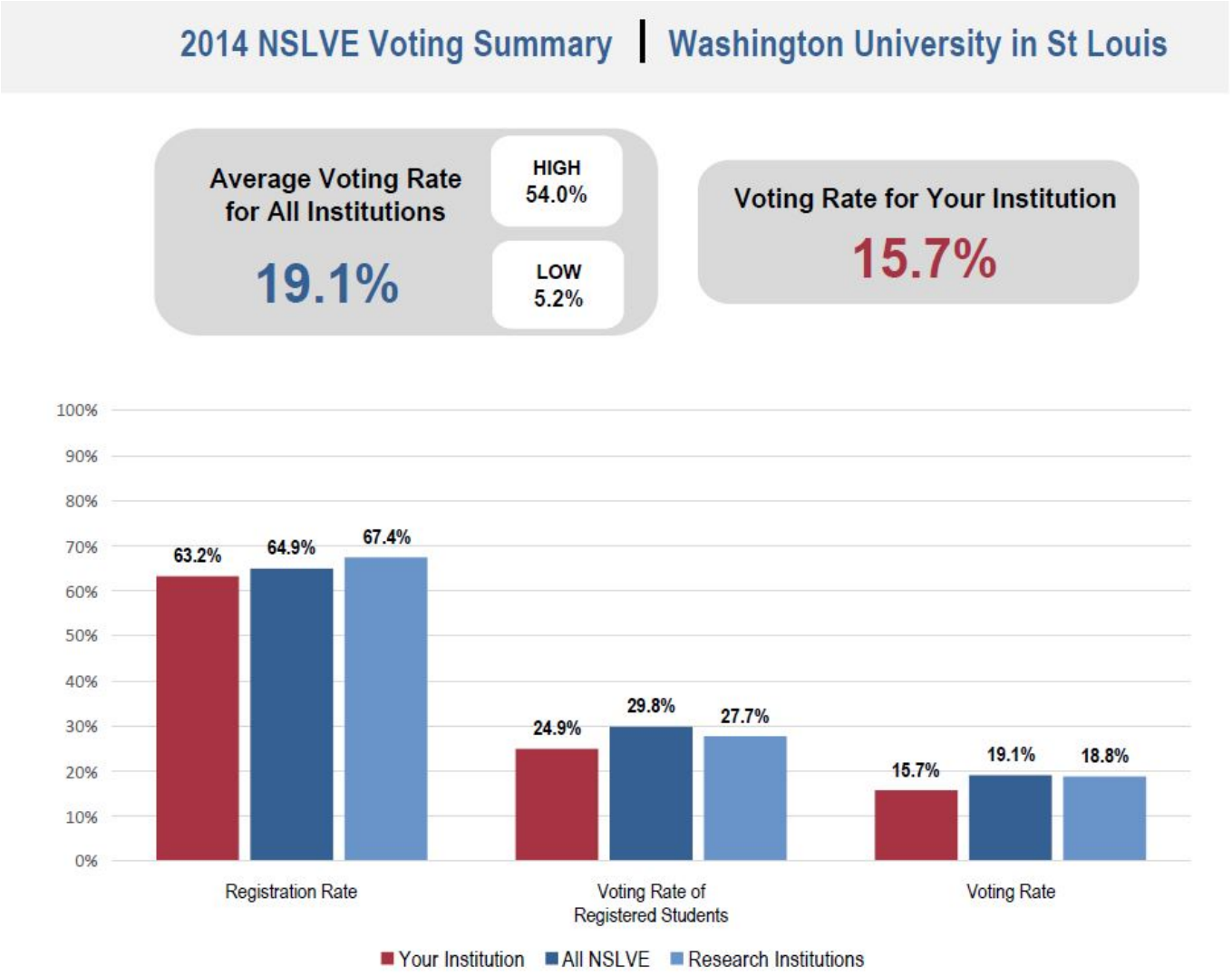


Data Driven Planning: Voter Registration

Gephardt staff analyzed trends in student demographics, voter registration rates, and voter turn out to set goals for 2018, and to continue the trend of positive growth

	2012	2016	Change
Total student enrollment	13,641	14,522	881
Age under 18/Unknown	(84)	(59)	
IPEDS estimated non-resident aliens	(2,007)	(2,663)	
FERPA records blocked	(581)	(539)	
Total eligible voters	10,969	11,261	292
Number of students who registered	8,240	8,963	723
Number of students who voted	4,566	5,912	1,346
Registration rate	75.1%	79.6%	4.5
Voting rate of registered students	55.4%	66.0%	10.6
Voting rate	41.6%	52.5%	10.9
Difference from all institutions	-5.3	+2.1	

2018 Voter Registration Goals

- Increase our total eligible student voter registration rate from 79.6% in 2016 to 84% by 2020 during the next presidential election

- Increase the registration rate from 63.2% in 2014 to 68% in 2018 or during mid-term election years

- Complete 50% of all new voter registrations using the online TurboVote platform
  - Of 8,963 students who registered in 2016, 3,227 registered using TurboVote (36%)

Voter Registration Strategy

WashU offers voter registration in partnership with TurboVote, made by the nonpartisan non-profit Democracy Works, to offer online or paper voter registration via Wustl.TurboVote.Org.

The link is distributed through the following:

- Embedded into Webstac, the portal accessed by all students to update contact information and register for courses
- First Year Student publications including Bear Facts, which is distributed to all first year students
- A first day of school email, move-in check lists, and communications leading up to Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day
- 25+ tabling opportunities every fall and at each activity fair
- Presentations for Pre-Orientation, Orientation, Activities Fairs, Resource Fairs, and at the Medical Campus events

TurboVote

Voter Education and Engagement

- Offer resources to students that are non-partisan tools that educate about voter ID laws, voting rights, ballot issues, voting methods, candidates, voter registration, polling place locations, and participation in elections
  - Link to Vote411.org and nonprofitvote.org

- Work with the Gephardt Institute's marketing and communications team for ongoing communication about Engage Democracy Initiative opportunities and events.

- Collaborate with campus partners including the Clark-Fox Policy Institute, Law School, Sam Fox School, Political Science Department, the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics, and Student Affairs to hold Engage Democracy events leading up to mid-term elections in November 2018

- Plan and lead events for Constitution & Citizenship Day and National Voter Registration Day

Data Driven Planning: Voter Turn Out

YOUR STUDENTS' VOTING DATA | PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

By Age Group*

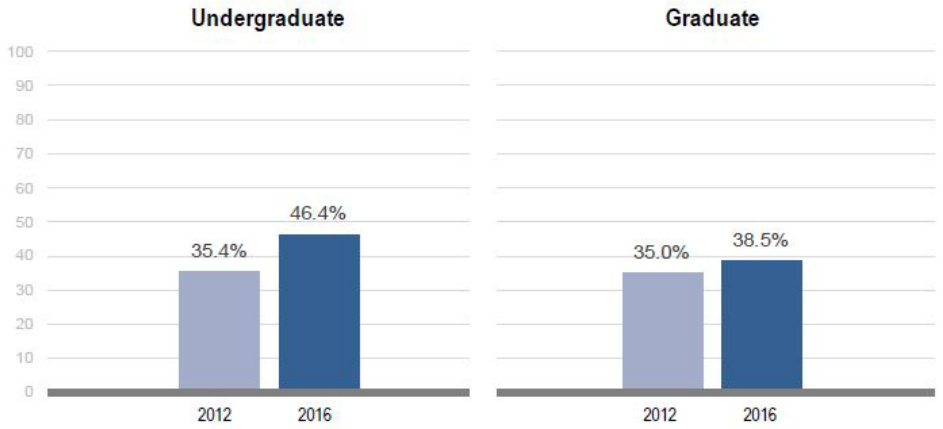
By Voting Method (2016 data)

71.7%	In person, Election Day
19.3%	Absentee
8%	Mail
1.1%	Early Vote

NSLVE CAMPUS REPORT | Washington University in St Louis

YOUR STUDENTS' VOTING DATA | PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

By Education Level*



	2012			2016			
	Enrolled	Voted	Rate	Enrolled	Voted	Rate	Change
Undergraduate	6,988	2,471	**35.4%**	6,998	3,244	**46.4%**	11.0
Graduate	5,984	2,093	**35.0%**	6,923	2,668	**38.5%**	3.6

Voter Turn Out Goals

- Host an absentee voter celebration for 200 students and cover the cost of postage for the 19.3% of students who mail in ballots
- Increase the voting rate from 15.7% (2014) to 20% in the 2018 midterm election
- Maintain the 2012 voting rate of 95% for those living on in campus dorms on the Northside and voting in Missouri, and 85% for those living on campus in the South 40 and voting in Missouri during Presidential Election years

Voter Turn Out Strategy

- Charge the Voter Engagement Steering Committee to plan and implement a voter turn out strategy for upcoming elections that emphasizes voting as a part of a student's identity, and that creates a positive atmosphere of engagement leading up to and on Election Days

- Work with the office of Government and Community Relations to host an on-campus polling place in the Athletic Center, conveniently serving on campus residents

- Work with the Gephardt Institute marketing and communications team to implement a digital, print and social media strategy to increase voter turn out leading up to Election Days. Include maps of local polling places that correspond to student housing

Voter Turn Out Strategies

- Send communications to 100% of students through an email from a key university administrator leading up to election day
- Work with the *Student Life* newspaper and WashU's magazine *The Record* to publish at least 3 stories encouraging participation in the democratic process and reporting on WashU student engagement levels
- Work with faculty to make announcements in class encouraging voter registration and participation in elections
- Distribute information about the state voter ID laws when students register in Missouri using TurboVote and in advance of election days to decrease students voting provisionally or not voting at all on election days

Election Day Reminder View this email in your browser

Washington University in St. Louis
Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement

Make Your Vote Count

November 7 is Election Day! Washington University encourages all of our students over the age of 18, as well as faculty, staff, and alumni, to participate in the democratic process by exercising the right to vote if eligible.

Do you have a plan? Vote 411 is a nonpartisan site for identifying your polling place, learning about what will be on local ballots, and researching candidates and issues. To learn more about specific laws and to access resources on voting, visit NonprofitVote.org and use the "Voting in Your State" tool.

For more information about events and resources related to voter engagement this fall, please email WashUVotes@wustl.edu or visit gephardtinstitute.wustl.edu/vote. To register as a voter in the next election or change your address, visit Wustl.Turbovote.org.

Timeline for Implementation

- Phase 1: Build the Voter Engagement Steering Committee and WashU Votes teams, solicit input for the Voter Engagement Plan
  - March- May
- Phase 2: Offer communication reminders for voter registration and participation in spring elections
  - January- April
- Phase 3: Connect with campus partners to plan fall events, establish plan to host a polling place, prepare election and fall communications
  - May-August
- Phase 4: Promote opportunities including WashU Votes, the Engage Democracy Initiative, and Voter Registration
  - August 7th – October 12th
- Phase 5: Activate voter turn out messages and strategies
  - October 12th- November 6th
- Phase 6: Debrief results and envision the future
  - November 7th – December
- Phase 7: Repeat the Cycle for Voter Engagement Planning

Data Sources for Assessment

- WashU participates in the National Study on Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE)
- St. Louis County Board of Elections provides the university with data regarding students who register with their university address and who votes in the on-campus polling location
- TurboVote produces reports on voter registration
- PULSE survey data from 2013, 2015, and 2017
- Gephardt Institute implemented Civic-Minded Graduate surveys
- Attendance and survey responses for participants in Engage Democracy workshops, events, and panels

Evaluation and Ongoing Planning

The Gephardt Institute staff will:

- Head the process of synthesizing voter registration data from TurboVote and election data from NSLVE reports to measure 2018 outcomes and progress towards goals
- Share data with key Voter Engagement Steering Committee stakeholders, university leaders, and WashU Votes volunteers
- Solicit feedback from key partners including St. Louis County Board of Elections, faculty involved with Voter Engagement events, and the Common Ground Grant committee to continuously improve efforts
- Evaluate specific initiatives, strategies, and activities for effectiveness and provide recommendations for change
- Document and author reports related to Engage Democracy

Point of Contact

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Engaged Citizens, Strong Communities
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