



# WSU Campus Plan 2020

*Political Engagement Coalition*



**WEBER STATE**  
UNIVERSITY



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# Weber State University's Political Engagement Coalition

## Mission

*The Weber State University Political Engagement Coalition examines and supports WSU student political learning and participation in democracy.*

## Vision

*The political learning environment of Weber State University fosters an atmosphere of mutual concern, goodwill, and respect for this campus community.*

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*The Political Engagement Coalition was created because of a report generated by a joint project of researchers at AASCU's American Democracy Project and the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education at Tufts University. Researchers evaluated WSU's political campus climate around student political learning and engagement in democracy and found some strengths and weaknesses in the many facets at WSU. In response to this report, the co-chairs for the project at WSU recruited stakeholders from various entities on and off campus who could help strengthen its programs and relationships, but also address the identified weaknesses. This campus plan puts these efforts into action and makes a long-term commitment to civic engagement at Weber State University.*

## Executive Summary

Weber State University has a 30+ member Political Engagement Coalition (PEC), which meets quarterly to discuss, assess and plan political engagement on campus. The PEC developed this action plan and is responsible for its implementation and the assessment of its work. This action plan allows the university to be thoughtful about its plans for politically engaging its students. We identify gaps in our efforts and plan to address them. Generally, the PEC sees itself as working for a politically engaged campus climate, so the bulk of the work is done with students, faculty, and staff in mind and activities are available on campus.

Weber State University promotes inclusivity, which means embracing and valuing the diversity of its campus members\*. This value aligns with the university's broader mission to encourage freedom of expression and strengthen our diversity\*\*. This plan, developed and implemented by the PEC, ties to these broader institutional norms and values by placing a premium on political diversity\*\*\*.

Given an assessment conducted by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education in 2018, Weber State University makes a conscientious effort every year to meet the needs of its community. Whether those needs are in voter education, voter mobilization, or more generally in citizenship skills, the PEC plans programming to address those needs. This plan covers the 2020 election cycle, which began in 2019, but will overlap with Weber State's Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 semesters. Thus, this action plan serves the long-term goals of creating a welcoming environment for all kinds of political speech and also focuses on specific short-term goals across the campus for the 2020-2021 academic year.

The PEC is a clearinghouse of political engagement on campus and will engage in assessing the work that is happening across campus. But the action plan will be implemented in a relatively decentralized way as we partner with various divisions and programs. We will assess our efforts and update our plan for the 2022 election cycle. In this capacity, we will be working every year specifically on what needs to be addressed on campus. Generally, the PEC lives in the Diversity Office, which coordinates the efforts. Specifically, the PEC will focus on the tools of good citizenship (how to get involved, how to dialogue about uncomfortable topics) every year.

\*WSU Inclusivity Statement: [weber.edu/DiversityOffice/inclusivitystatement.html](http://weber.edu/DiversityOffice/inclusivitystatement.html)

\*\*Diversity Office Mission Statement: [weber.edu/DiversityOffice/missionstatement.html](http://weber.edu/DiversityOffice/missionstatement.html)

\*\*\*Political Engagement website: [weber.edu/DiversityOffice/politicalengagement.html](http://weber.edu/DiversityOffice/politicalengagement.html)



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# Leadership

The Political Engagement Coalition reports to the Assistant to the President for Diversity/Chief Diversity Officer in the Office of the President.

## Co-coordinators:

Teresa Martinez	<i>Center for Community Engaged Learning</i>
Leah Murray	<i>Department of Political Science</i>

## Membership (WSU Faculty, Staff, Students & Community Members):

Adrienne Andrews	<i>Office of the President</i>
Betty Sawyer	<i>Access and Diversity</i>
Chris Millard	<i>Governmental Relations</i>
Patrick Tadlock	<i>Center for Community Engaged Learning</i>
Meagan Thunell	<i>Athletics</i>
Mike Vaughan	<i>Economics Department</i>
Becky Gesteland	<i>Center for Community Engaged Learning</i>
Laurie Huntington	<i>Davis Campus</i>
Shelly Jackson	<i>Davis County Elections Office</i>
Andrea Hernandez	<i>Diversity &amp; Inclusive Programs</i>
Luke Fernandez	<i>Department of Computer Science</i>
Dan Hubler	<i>Child and Family Studies</i>
Rieneke Holman	<i>Annie Taylor Dee School of Nursing</i>
Lauren Busby	<i>Housing and Residence Life</i>
Heather Chapman	<i>Office of Institutional Research</i>
Brad Howell	<i>Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Institute</i>
Wendy Holliday	<i>Stewart Library</i>
Diana Meiser	<i>Stewart Library</i>
Gary Johnson	<i>Department of Political Science</i>
Richard Price	<i>Department of Political Science</i>
Jon Marshall	<i>Department of Zoology</i>
Michael Hernandez	<i>Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences</i>
Sheldon Cheshire	<i>Student Involvement and Leadership</i>
Robert Hunter	<i>Walker Institute of Politics and Public Service</i>
Ryan Cowley	<i>Weber County Elections Office</i>
Alex Dutro-Maeda	<i>Women's Center</i>
Taylor Knuth	<i>University Advancement</i>
Carla Trentelman	<i>Department of Sociology</i>
Terri McCulloch	<i>League of Women Voters</i>
Jeremy Harvey	<i>Academic Technology Services</i>
Julio Otay	<i>Student</i>
Abe Vazquez	<i>Student</i>
Hannah Olsen	<i>Student</i>

## About the Makeup of the Coalition

The PEC has made a concerted effort to find kindred spirits who care about the work of making our campus a politically diverse and welcoming place. As we host events, we recruit people to our membership. We have made sure we have people who care, but who also represent a wide diversity of stakeholders and political ideologies. Depending on the event or the need, different people's strengths and connections get mobilized. For example, we have a large contingent of students who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. We were made aware in the IDHE assessment that these students do not always politically interconnect with students who are not members of that church. As a result, we have a representative from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Institute to help us ensure we do better in that regard. For another example, Heather Chapman from the Office of Institutional Research, has access to all the data Weber State University uses to assess itself. She also has the capacity to understand what that data is telling us. Her specific contribution is to help us understand what we know. We look forward to what every person on this team can contribute.

In addition, our University President, Brad Mortensen, absolutely supports the work. For example, we were told that faculty and staff felt like they could not be involved in politics or speak to their state legislators. The PEC asked President Mortensen if he would send someone from the Advancement Office to talk about the issue. President Mortensen came himself and spoke for an hour about how the University interacts with the State Legislature: what helps and what hinders the efforts. This action added legitimacy to the PEC's work and to the larger political conversation on campus. Another example from the assessment indicated that, politically, students did not feel welcome on campus. We realized this was an issue of diversity and inclusivity. We reached out to our Chief Diversity Officer, Adrienne Andrews, to discuss the implications of this result. She allowed us to move our work into her office, tasking a worker in her space to help with website management as we got our coalition up and running. These are just two examples of how senior administrators are very supportive of the work that we are doing on campus.

## Commitment to Civic Engagement

Weber State University is committed to civic engagement, as is evident in its mission statement\*. The university understands itself as having three themes, one of which is community. In this regard, the institution and its leadership demonstrate commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. However, there is no explicit statement of democratic engagement or political engagement. That commitment is demonstrated through the placement of the PEC in the Office of the Chief Diversity Officer. It is also demonstrated through the placement of Democratic Engagement as a pillar in the Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL). Community-engaged learning is a pervasive part of the institutional culture: courses are designated as community-engaged learning courses; many student groups (athletes, honors students, club and organization members) require students to conduct community service as part of their membership; and students can be involved with their community through several teams, which include but are not limited to: American Democracy Project, Alternative Breaks, Community Research, internships, etc. However, most of this work is dedicated to community service or service-learning. In the case of general education\*\*, the institution requires a signature assignment that may include community-based learning outcomes. As with the co-curricular work of the CCEL and Student Affairs, this work tends to lean heavier toward community service. When democratic engagement is done on campus, generally it uses the umbrella of community engagement which allows us to connect directly to organizations and to the mission statement.

The institution's civic learning outcomes are reflected in this rubric\*\*\*; however, our Office of Institutional Research reports that no one is reporting the usage if they use the rubric. Currently, there is not a process in place to use the rubric at the university at this time.

In 2016 and 2017, Weber State University distributed the Civic Engagement module from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to its first-year and senior students. The report informed the university of some gaps, which were to improve civic engagement on campus from the first-year experience and retain civic engagement through graduation for students. The PEC plans on streamlining assessment to ensure it educates areas to include civic engagement as a way to assess their programs. In addition to participating in the NSSE report, WSU has participated in the NSLVE report since its inception in 2014 to report our voter turnout and registration percentages.

\*WSU Mission Statement: [weber.edu/universityplanning/Mission\\_and\\_core\\_themes.html](http://weber.edu/universityplanning/Mission_and_core_themes.html)

\*\*WSU General Education: [weber.edu/GenEd/](http://weber.edu/GenEd/)

\*\*\*WSU Civic Learning Outcomes: [weber.edu/ccel/cel-learning-outcomes.html](http://weber.edu/ccel/cel-learning-outcomes.html)



## Landscape

Weber State University's study from IDHE indicated that our institution has the following strengths which could support more political engagement:

- Student-centered environment
- Openness to new teaching methods
- Tradition of shared governance
- Commitment to diversity and inclusion
- Some infrastructure for political learning
- Strong community ties
- Some basic political engagement

Our institution has the following challenges:

- No habits of discussion
- Culture of politeness
- Lack of political learning in the curriculum
- Lack of interest in political issues
- External political pressure
- Strong church influence
- Commuter school
- Separated non-Utah students
- Election challenges
- Little student activism

In certain regards, Weber State University is unique: we have a strong Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints presence on campus and Utah has a history of, and still retains, a strong one-party system, with the Republican Party dominating. In other regards, Weber State University is similar to other institutions: we have a culture of politeness and no habits of discussion.

We need to use the strengths we have to meet the challenges we uniquely face. One of the strengths we have leveraged is our strong ties to the community. We have a close working relationship with the election offices of Weber County and Davis County. Moreover, we have connected our students to these offices. We have installed a ballot box on campus so that people have voting access. Given what we learned, we also included the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Institute leadership in our PEC so that we can better connect our students who are members with our students who are not. We have also moved our work to an office who fully supports this work so we can begin to meet the other challenges of building habits of discussion and placing the work more intentionally in the curriculum.

## Long-term Goals

Weber State University intends to be a place where political discord is handled with respect for the dignity of the people involved. We had a couple of incidents in the past year that demonstrated the flaws in being overly polite. We intend to build a better campus climate of discussion that allows us to address bigger issues more effectively.

The University claims its graduates are “broadly educated, capable and prepared for meaningful careers, graduate and professional schools, and civic engagement.”\* We believe the work the PEC is doing contributes to those claims. We believe that the work of the PEC helps to create these graduates and that, to a certain extent, it is simply a matter of collecting the data to show that we are.

Our long-term goals include:

- Within the next ten years, create and foster a vibrant political campus culture that has the capacity to meet the demands of our republic.
- Educate, register, and mobilize our student voters through highly focused events as well as ongoing efforts.

These efforts will be assessed at each touch-point as well as annually through a campus-wide survey. We will use our IDHE report as a baseline and see how much we grow and address those challenges.

***Our long-term goal is to answer those challenges and demonstrate that we have answered them through these assessments.***

\*WSU Prospective Employees: [weber.edu/prospectiveemployees/wsuooverview.html](http://weber.edu/prospectiveemployees/wsuooverview.html)



***"Promoting civic and political engagement and overall positive involvement in our democracy lies at the heart of WSU. We should continue to exemplify civic engagement in the political process."***

***-WSU President, Brad Mortensen***

## Short-term Goals

To meet our long-term goals, we need to create the tools to measure our progress within the next year. During the highly polarized 2020 election, we want to compare to our focus group results in 2018 to a non-national election year in 2021. Within the next three years, we will have an assessment protocol in place that will allow us to keep on track for our longer-term vision of a vibrant political campus culture.

### Specific short-term goals include:

#### 1. Promote Presence on Campus

- a. Develop a political dialogue toolkit for faculty and staff on campus.
  - i. Create opportunities for administration, faculty and staff to understand the value of political dialogue in and outside of the classroom to utilize effective tools to address political conversations.
- b. Build an interactive Website
  - i. Use the website as a resource and tool for political engagement and dialogue. Go live with website by the end of February 2020.
  - ii. [weber.edu/politicalengagement](http://weber.edu/politicalengagement)

#### 2. Update Student Organization Policy Language

- a. Current WSUSA Clubs & Orgs policy states that “The university prohibits the use of any of its symbols, insignias, or other identifying marks in any political endorsements, campaigns, or elections. Additionally, clubs should not endorse specific political candidates and cannot bring candidates on campus.”
  - i. Work with campus personnel during the spring 2020 semester to understand the policy, then take appropriate steps to update the policy to be more inclusive and in line with First Amendment rights.
  - ii. Conduct a survey of other division policy that seems to be inhibiting free speech and work with appropriate campus personnel to change the language to reflect our more inclusive environment.

#### 3. Implement Campus Political Assessment

- a. Create and implement continuous assessment of campus political engagement to determine if we are falling below or improving on our baseline. This will allow us to adjust our methods to meet our needs.

#### 4. Big Sky Votes Initiative

- a. Serve as lead institution for the Big Sky Votes
- b. Plan and host the Big Sky Votes Summit
- c. Be available for 1:1 consultation with colleagues as campus election engagement plans are developed and implemented
- d. Create the logo, toolkit for campus

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*The following strategies on page 10 are short-term opportunities that identify the civic engagement work across the university for the 2020 academic year. This list will be updated on the Political Engagement website as areas continue to create opportunities after 2020.*

# Strategy

Our work is to fully embed political engagement across campus during this presidential election cycle. Different members of our group will be responsible for different events and initiatives. As our PEC represents various groups on campus, they will do planning that is specific to their area and also assist in mobilizing students to attend broader events. In this way, we ensure we are reaching diverse populations with particular attention to those groups we know are feeling alienated on our campus.

Each area will be responsible for implementing the work and then reporting numbers of attendees as well as qualitative feedback. If we want to specifically look at a group involved in any civic engagement program or event, the PEC will create a survey instrument to do so. We will also choose a few events around which to survey the entire campus and compare to a specific subgroup we targeted to see the level of impact of the event. Most events will be connected to the presidential election specifically because we would like to leverage the attention the national election gets to draw students in.

## 2020 Programs & Events

**January through December 2020 (each area is committed to the following)**

### 1. PEC generally

*Primary audience is the campus writ large*

- Promote the use of the civic engagement rubric (maybe with political engagement specificity)
- Figure out a way to capture curricular information better (maybe with a Google form)
- Promote the use of the IDHE report as a baseline
- Present March 2020 findings
- Create and use a form that allows us to collect data on who is hosting what programming for reporting purposes

### 2. Institutional Research

*Primary audience is the campus writ large*

- Creating and deploying an assessment tool that will allow us to measure our progress

### 3. Government Relations

*Primary audience is the campus writ large*

- Create a communications mechanism to help people on campus to learn about what is happening at the state legislature

#### **4. American Democracy Project**

*Primary audience is student body writ large*

- Register voters at tabling events throughout the academic year
- March - Create a women in politics event and an event around familiarizing students with their delegates
- November - Create a Deliberative Dialogue Day

#### **5. Department of Political Science**

*Primary audience is students in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences*

- Spring 2020 - Create a delegate guide in the Political Analysis class to explain how to caucus in Utah, which candidates are running, etc.
  - This product will be shared with student and the community at large

#### **6. Walker Institute of Politics and Public Service**

*Primary audience is all students as well as community members*

- March 31 - Organize a County Republican candidate to meet and greet
- April 1 - Organize a Republican 1st Congressional District and Gubernatorial candidates meet and greet
- Spring - Organize a Real Women Run forum
- Spring - Organize a Walker/Economic Development forum on intergenerational poverty

#### **7. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Institute**

*Primary audience is students who are members of the church*

- March (entire month) - Organize “A Million Meals in March” Utah Food Bank Drive with WSUSA and LDSSA

#### **8. Student Involvement & Leadership**

*Primary audience is student body writ large*

- February 20 - Host a WSUSA Elections Candidates Dinner
- February 25-27 - Host the WSUSA Elections

#### **9. Housing and Residence Life**

*Primary audience is students living in housing, which includes our non-Utah students who we do not feel are politically connected.*

This work will happen in residential buildings on campus

- January 3-5 - Voter registration tabling at check in and absentee ballot training at check in
- March - entire month
  - “A Million Meals in March” Utah Food Bank Drive - WSUSA and LDSSA
  - Institute food drive - opportunity to give community service
- March 3 - Super Tuesday Primary Watch
- July 13-16 - Democratic National Convention Watch
- August 21-23 - Voter registration tabling at check in and absentee ballot training at check in ([vote.org/absentee-voting-rules/](https://vote.org/absentee-voting-rules/))
- August 24-27 - Host a Republican National Convention Watch

- September 29 - Host a Presidential Debate Watch
- October 7 - Host a Vice-Presidential Debate Watch
- October 15 - Host a Presidential Debate Watch
- October 22 - Host a Presidential Debate Watch
- November 6 - Host an Election Night Watch

#### 10. Women's Center

*Primary audience is student body*

- September - Organize Elect Her  
([runningstart.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Elect-Her.pdf](http://runningstart.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Elect-Her.pdf))

#### 11. Health Professions (Annie Taylor Dee School of Nursing)

*Primary audience is students in the Dumke College of Health Professions*

- Hold a "town meeting" to educate nursing faculty and students on issues pertaining to the nursing profession in our state. Teach nursing faculty and students how to advocate for important health-care related issues and influence public policy.
- Host a legislator to educate nursing faculty and students about the State Board of Nursing oversight of nursing education and the legislation involved to maintain high quality nursing education in our state.

#### 12. Stewart Library

*Primary audience is the campus writ large*

- January 16 - Host a lecture series with Stacy Bernal, author of *The Things We Don't Talk About: A Memoir of Hardships, Healing, and Hope*
- January 18 - Organize the unveiling of the 1887 Time Capsule at Weber County Library Main Branch
- January 23 - Host a Beyond Suffrage Lecture Series with Dr. Cathleen Cahill, professor of history at Penn State; "Who Was a Suffragist? A More Diverse View"
- February 27 - Host a discussion with Naomi Rogers, *Feminist Activism and American Health Politics since 1945*
- March 30 - Host a discussion with Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *First in the Nation? Utah Women in the National Suffrage Movement*
- April 21 - Host a discussion with Katherine Kitterman, *Utah Suffragists*
- September 10 - Host a discussion with Eileen Boris, *Women's Labors as the World's Work: The Transnational Reach of U.S. Labor Feminism*
- September 21 - Host a discussion with Vicki Ruiz, *Class Acts: Latina Feminist Traditions 1900-1930*

## Reporting

As we mobilize activity on campus, we intend to share our campus plan internally. We will also share our plan externally via our website, which we are currently in the process of building.

Our NSLVE report will be made public, as we have done so since its inception. This allows us to have transparency with our work. It also allows the public to see that we are operating in a non-partisan way.

## Evaluation

The PEC will curate information about civic learning and democratic engagement. We will use the rubric, the NSSE data, internal surveys around events, and possible future focus groups to evaluate how our political engagement has grown on campus. Generally, we want to know if more of our people feel politically welcome on campus as well as particularly the subgroups identified by the IDHE report. We will use as one baseline our NSLVE data from 2014 and 2016, which predate the PEC's existence on campus. We will also use the IDHE report as a second baseline, as it also predates the coordination of efforts through the PEC. One audience for our evaluation will be internal so that we can be thoughtful about future planning. A second audience will be the President's Council, members of which submit information for other initiatives, such as Carnegie. The evaluation of our work will inform other civic engagement efforts. Our Office of Institutional Research Representative, Heather Chapman, will guide our efforts in this regard because she has a more holistic understanding of what the University needs to know and which divisions need to know it. We will conduct evaluations on every specific programming event as well as using the larger surveys as biannual touch-points.

## Resources

If you are interested in learning more about the coalition, contact the co-chairs:

**Dr. Leah Murray,**  
*WSU Professor of Political Science*  
lmurray@weber.edu

**Teresa Martinez,**  
*Student Engagement Coordinator in the Center for Community Engaged Learning*  
teresamartinez1@weber.edu

### **Website ([weber.edu/politicalengagement](http://weber.edu/politicalengagement))**

*Future website under construction, but will contain the following:*

- American Democracy Project
- Big Sky Votes
- 2020 Census
- Voter Friendly Campus
- Campus Toolkits
- WSU “In the News”
- WSU National Reports in Political Engagement

**Full ADP-IDHE Report of Weber State University** (*contact co-chairs*)

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*Thank you for your support of and interest in Weber State University’s Political Engagement Coalition. Our campus plan outlines our ongoing efforts to address WSU’s political campus climate. We are committed (long-term) to fostering an atmosphere of mutual concern, goodwill, and respect for this campus community.*



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