

Webster University Action Plan to Increase Voter Engagement, Civic Learning, and Voter Turnout

Executive Summary

This action plan has been developed to help support Webster University's mission of transforming students for global citizenship and individual excellence through an action-oriented network of faculty, staff, and students which foster environments for civic and political engagement.

The Webster University "WebsterVOTES" action plan, developed by members of the Webster community, namely Jennifer Stewart, Director of the Office of Student Engagement, and Sarah Hill, student and Campus Election Engagement Project Fellow, has been drafted for the upcoming 2020 elections. The purpose of this plan is to increase student engagement in elections and election-related activities, while also keeping in mind the health and safety of our students, staff, and faculty during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

As Webster University has multiple extended campus locations, both nationally and globally, this plan enacts goals to increase civic participation and learning (e.g. registering to vote and voting) across all Webster campuses. The implementation of the "WebsterVOTES" Task Force composed of Webster students, faculty/staff, and administration will allow a coordinated effort to increase voter engagement within the entire Webster community.

Leadership

The WebsterVOTES Task Force is composed of many campus partners with a variety of offices for campus collaboration efforts regarding goals for increasing civic engagement and voter turnout. There are several permanent members of the WebsterVOTES Task Force, as well as rotating members as well across a variety of offices.

Permanent Members

Jennifer Stewart, Director of the Office of Student Engagement

Sarah Hill, Campus Election Engagement Project Fellow, Student

TBD, Campus Activities Graduate Assistant Graduate Assistant

Jenny Starkey, Director of Community Engagement

Vincent Flewellen, Chief Diversity Officer

Webster University College Democrats, Student Organization

Webster University Campus Conservatives, Student Organization

Bruce Umbaugh, Faculty Member College of Arts & Sciences

Rotating Members

Faculty, History, Politics and International Relations Department

Representative, Office of Housing & Residential Life

Representative, Multicultural Center & International Student Affairs

Representative, Office of Study Abroad

Representative, Global Marketing and Communications

Commitment

Through the Office of Student Engagement and the WebsterVOTES initiative, we provide our global campus population with voter registration, voter education and democratic engagement programs and also serve as a clearinghouse and centralized voice in promoting voter education efforts throughout the campus network. We aim particularly to collaborate with experts in academic departments to integrate with opportunities provided in the classroom setting.

Webster University's Mission: *Webster University, a worldwide institution, ensures high quality learning experiences that transform students for global citizenship and individual excellence.*

As one of its core values, Webster University values *global citizenship*. Webster University commits to this value "by educating a diverse population locally, nationally, and internationally, acting responsibly toward the environment to foster a sustainable future, and strengthening the communities we serve."

These values and priorities set in place align with the action plan, providing an environment for the entire Webster University community to engage in both on and off campus partnerships and become global and civically engaged citizens, aligning with the core mission and values of Webster University.

During these current times, it is also important to account for the health and safety of the Webster University community. This action plan correlates with our commitment to our values and mission, as well as providing voters access to information and any election changes during the coronavirus pandemic.

Landscape

With its home campus in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, [Webster University](#) comprises an action-oriented global network of faculty, staff, students and alumni who forge powerful bonds with each other and with their communities around the globe. Founded in 1915, Webster is a private non-profit university with students studying at campus locations in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa and in a robust learning environment online. The university is committed to ensuring high-quality learning experiences that transform students for global citizenship and individual excellence. Highlights of a Webster education include:

- Students experience an ideal, student-centered environment with small classes and personalized learning
- Students attend from across the United States and from more than 100 countries
- Diversity and inclusion are core values
- Global feature in academic programs. Globalized curriculum is our distinctive hallmark
- Every student experiences a global learning component
- Every student is exposed to a worldwide network of fellow students who live, work and study around the U.S., Europe, Africa and Asia

As reported by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), included below is the demographics outlined by undergraduate and graduate students at Webster University.

Undergraduate Domestic Headcount by Race/Ethnicity		
Race/Ethnicity	Headcount	% of Total
African American	638	17.2%
American Indian	8	0.2%
Asian American	108	2.9%
Hispanic	218	5.9%
Pacific Islander	3	0.1%
Two or more races	122	3.3%
White	2204	59.6%
Non-resident alien	22	0.6%
Unknown	378	10.2%
Total	3701	100.0%

Graduate Domestic Headcount by Race/Ethnicity		
Race/Ethnicity	Headcount	% of Total
African American	5903	40.6%
American Indian	57	0.4%
Asian American	477	3.3%
Hispanic	1224	8.4%
Pacific Islander	44	0.3%
Two or more races	309	2.1%
White	5655	38.9%
Non-resident alien	35	0.2%
Unknown	829	5.7%
Total	14533	100.0%

Goals

Increasing voter engagement, civic engagement, and voter turnout compile the general goals of the “WebsterVOTES” action plan for 2020-2021. With the 2020 elections approaching, we have compiled both short and long-term goals as part of our mission and effort to support civic engagement within the Webster University community.

Goal One: To earn the designation of [“Voter Friendly Campus”](#) for 2020-2021

Earning the designation of “Voter Friendly Campus” will help develop Webster University develop even more strategies to engage students in civic and political engagement. The strategies and plans created from this designation will be a part of the Webster University community for years to come, engaging students in many aspects of civic engagement.

Goal Two: To increase voter registration rate by at least 10% (89% or greater)

To increase voter registration, this plan incorporates strategies of voter registration and voter education. This goal will be met with registration drive planning and considerations of the impact the current coronavirus pandemic may have on voter registration and turnout.

Goal Three: Increase voter rate to at least 70% for the Presidential Election in November 2020

We believe this goal could be met using strategies outline, including social media campaigns, registration drives, voter education initiatives, and a multitude of other “WebsterVOTES” initiatives outlined in the strategy section.

National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

The Webster University 2018 Voter Registration rate was 54.7%. Voting patterns were fairly steady across major, age, and academic department populations throughout our campuses. Thus, we will be increasing all of our voter engagement with institutional and educational efforts in equal strength across all areas. Included is a brief overview of our NSLVE data from the NSLVE 2014-2018 Data Report.

	2014	2018	Change
Total student enrollment	14,362	9,732 ↓	-4,630
Age under 18/Unknown	(16)	(11)	
IPEDS estimated non-resident aliens	(303)	(254)	
FERPA records blocked	(31)	(27)	
Total eligible voters	14,012	9,440 ↓	-4,572
Number of students who registered	10,015	7,479 ↓	-2,536
Number of students who voted	4,769	5,163 ↑	394
Registration rate	71.5%	79.2% ↑	7.8
Voting rate of registered students	47.6%	69.0% ↑	21.4
Voting rate	34.0%	54.7% ↑	20.7
Difference from all institutions	+14.3	+15.6	

Strategy

Our strategy is broken into three categories: Institutional, Fall, and Spring. All of these strategies include ways to increase voter registration, voter education, and turnout. Aligning with Webster University's mission to transform students as global citizens, the following activities and curriculum create an institution enhancing civic engagement.

Institutional

1. All voter education and civic engagement related initiatives will be promoted through the "WebsterVOTES" branded social media and website.
2. WebsterVOTES will look at our Study Abroad communications around voting and create a one-page Overseas Voter Information Guide for students who will be living outside of the U.S. during election periods. Notifications will be sent out to study abroad students periodically to remind them of upcoming voting deadlines.
3. WebsterVOTES will work with the Office of First Year Experience to incorporate voter registration into summer advising and registration days for newly enrolling first-time freshman students. This will target over 90% of new freshman students.
4. WebsterVOTES will work towards the Voter Friendly Campus designation to further publicize campus accomplishments related to civic engagement.

Spring 2020

1. WebsterVOTES will partner with an external organization to have a voter registration table at our bi-annual involvement fair. WebsterVOTES will also have sign-ups for student volunteers willing to assist with election-related events and outreach.
2. A focus on absentee-ballot completion will begin in January 2020; the Missouri Primary will occur during our Spring Break and many will need to register as absentee voters for that day. Two to three registration events will be held and include information about absentee voting, the location of polling places and other important information, before the March 2020 primary. (Most tables will have a notary present!)
3. Flyers with voting information and the new on-campus polling location will be placed around campus.
4. The Dean of Students Office will send emails to all current students network-wide with information regarding primary voting. Email will be sent prior to registration deadline.
5. One debate watch party will be held in conjunction with Webster College Democrats and Webster University Conservatives. Voter registration cards and polling information will be made available to students during this event.
6. A Primary Election watch party will be hosted.

Fall 2020

1. WebsterVOTES will partner with an external organization to have a voter registration table at our bi-annual involvement fair.
2. WebsterVOTES will also have signups for student volunteers willing to assist with election-related events and outreach.
3. Three or more voter registration tables will be held. Non-partisan candidate guides and polling location information will be handed out.
4. A 'Know Your Voter Rights' event will be held on September 17, 2020 in conjunction with Constitution Day.
5. A Voter Registration event and social media campaign will be held in conjunction with National Voter Registration Day on September 24, 2020
6. Flyers with voting information and the new on-campus polling location will be placed around campus.
7. The Dean of Students Office will send an email all current students network-wide prior to the voter registration deadline with information regarding voter registration.
8. Debate Watch Parties will be co-hosted with Webster College Democrats and Webster University Conservatives during each of the Presidential and Vice-President Debates. Voter registration cards and polling information will be made available to students during these events.
9. Flyers and social media outreach one week before the election.
10. Absentee Ballot Collection will occur on and before the Missouri absentee ballot deadline. Notaries will be present at these events to notarize ballots in line with Missouri state law.
11. Donut Forget to Vote and other reminder events the day before the elections.
12. Election-Day Events:
 - Varying stations around campus directing to on-campus polling location
 - Election Day hotline: one or more individual(s) will monitor the WebsterVOTES Facebook to answer election related questions
 - Mock election (to encourage international student participation)
 - Election Night Watch Party
7. Post-election conversations will be conducted with faculty/staff, students, and potentially community leaders or organizations.

Reporting and Evaluation

Reporting and evaluation efforts will allow Webster University to assess its current and future efforts to obtain our outlined goals. Using the data from the 2014-2018 NSLVE Data Report, we will track how our current efforts are helping to support our community and meet our goals.

We plan to have Webster student volunteers report on the attendance at activities and overall success of events, activities and engagement efforts. The WebsterVOTES Task Force will convene periodically to discuss challenges and solutions of our current and future efforts.

Overall success will be determined through results of NSLVE 2020 data, with a plan to report this data using a restructured website currently in the works specifically geared towards “WebsterVOTES” initiatives. This data will be shared both internally with Webster University administration and externally with the ALL IN Challenge.