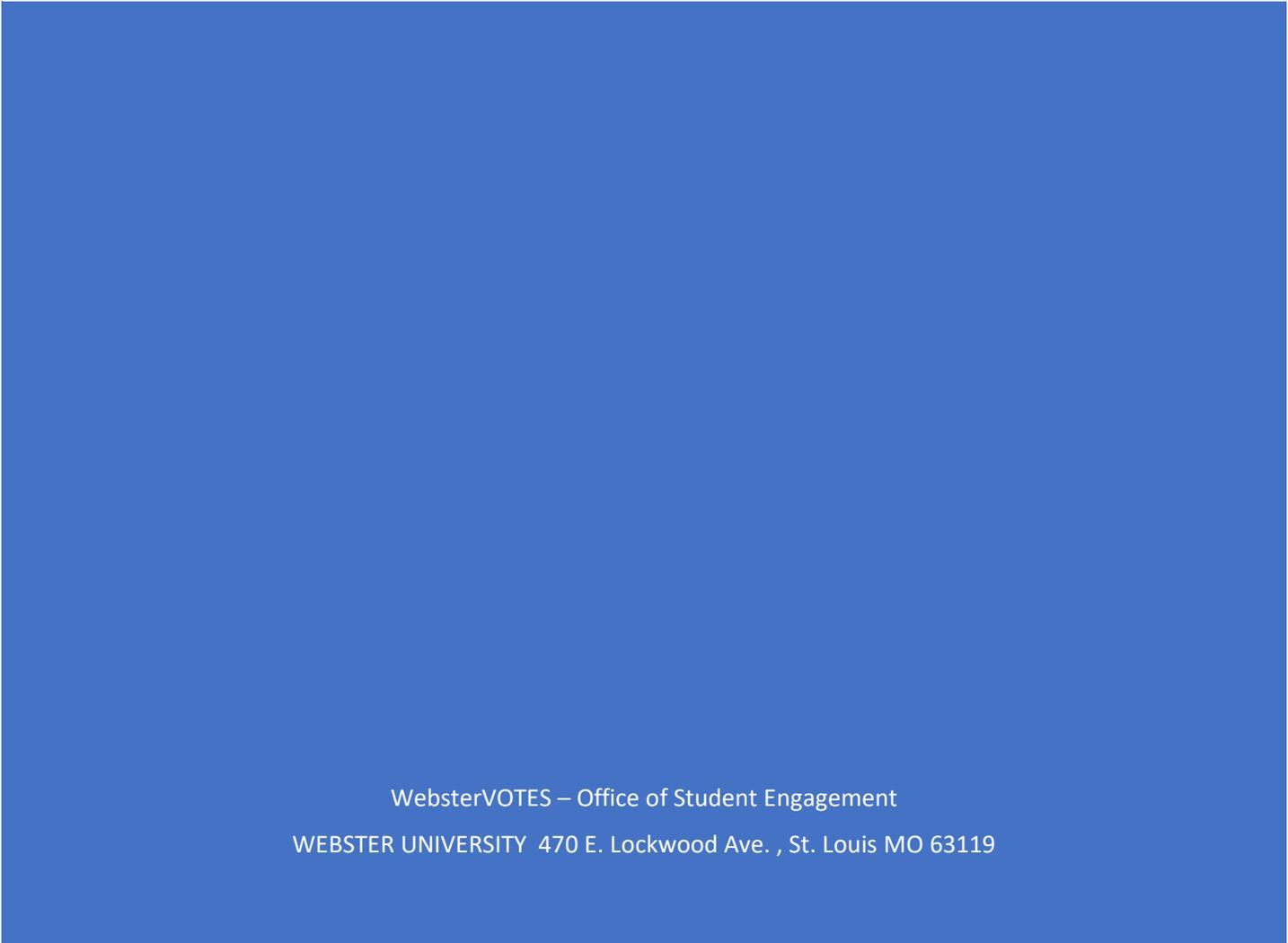




# WEBSTER UNIVERSITY ACTION PLAN FOR VOTER ENGAGEMENT, CIVIC LEARNING, AND VOTER TURNOUT – 2022



WebsterVOTES – Office of Student Engagement

WEBSTER UNIVERSITY 470 E. Lockwood Ave. , St. Louis MO 63119

## **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 builds off of the 2020 Action Plan co-authored by Sarah Hill, student and Campus Election Engagement Project Fellow, and Meredith Bates, summer 2020 intern and candidate for MA in Higher Education Administration from Southern Illinois University – Edwardsville. This plan has been drafted for the 2022 election cycle through January 2023. 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 in relation to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and changes that it has affected on our campus.

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) primarily at the main campus in Webster Groves, however, many components are applicable to the worldwide network. 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 and is supported through the Office of Student Engagement staff, student employees and funding with additional support provided by grants received.

## **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 committee members will be determined by the position they hold within the university, others will be nominated by those permanent members based on personal interest and those whose strengths best fit the gaps in the established group.

*Permanent Members*

**Jennifer Stewart**, Director of the Office of Student Engagement

**TBD**, Campus Activities Graduate Assistant

**TBD**, Student Government Association Representative

**Vincent Flewellen**, Chief Diversity Officer

**Webster University College Democrats**, Student Organization

**Webster University Campus Conservatives**, Student Organization

**Faculty (Bruce Umbaugh)**, College of Arts & Humanities

*Rotating Members*

**Faculty (Warren Rosenblum)**, History, Politics and International Relations Department

**TBD**, Office of Housing & Residential Life

**Colette Cummings**, Multicultural Center & International Student Affairs

**TBD**, Office of Study Abroad

**TBD**, Global Marketing and Communications

*Other Partners*

**Eric Fey**, Democratic Director, St. Louis County Board of Elections

**Jenny Starkey**, Director of Public Affairs & Engagement, City of Webster Groves

## **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 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.

Beginning in Fall 2020 we partnered with our IT unit to successfully integrate links to voter registration sites on the homepage of the University intranet site as well as a voter education and registration training module launched through our virtual New Student Orientation. Following the 2020 election cycle, the University intranet site became the primary hub for student targeted data. The 2022 focus will be to build out a full WebsterVOTES intranet page supported through the Office of Student Engagement.

WebsterVOTES is supported and promoted on campus by administration, faculty and staff, but there are areas where more concerted efforts can be made. We will pursue the President's and Chancellor's commitment in 2022 and return to in-person meetings and programs in addition to supporting virtual events when appropriate.

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.

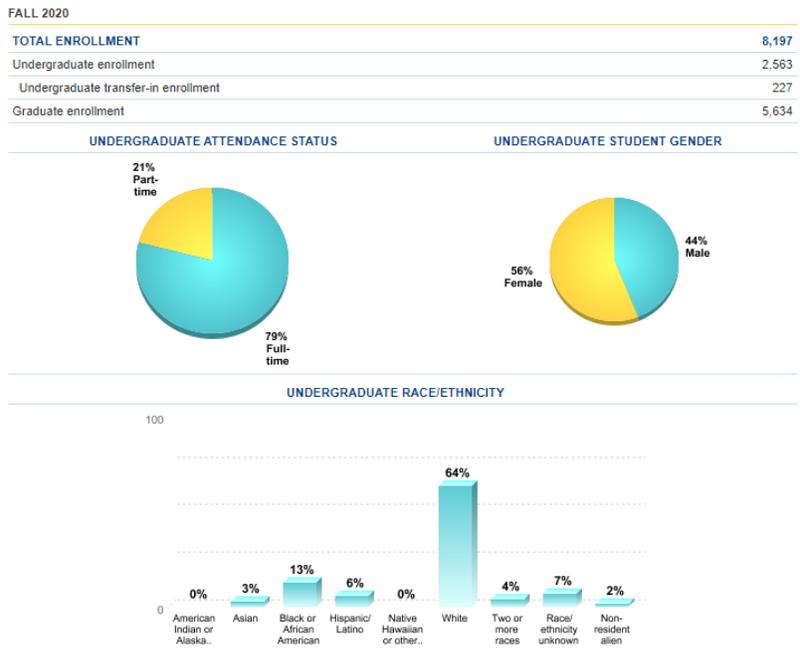
As evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to account for the health and safety of the Webster University community. This action plan correlates with our commitment to our values and mission, as well as providing voters access to information and any election changes that are affected by the ever-changing landscape.

**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 experience includes 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.



Students at Webster University and are quite politically engaged; this can be partly attributed to popular academic degree programs in Political Science, International Relations, Human Rights and Women & Gender Studies. Our liberal arts ideology also lends itself to students who are concerned with civic engagement.

WebsterVOTES has an established history of promoting elections and voter registration through previous partnerships with the Office of Student Engagement, Political Science Department and the (former) Holden Public Policy Forum. The goals of these programs have expanded and changed throughout the years with shifts in campus structure and introduction of the Student Activity Fee. They are trending toward more consistent integrated civic engagement programming through non-election cycles.

Voter registration laws and voter access at local and statewide levels are an on-going challenge in the state of Missouri. Recently proposed legislation would significantly limit voter access through ID laws and voter registration limitations. WebsterVOTES members will be keeping a close eye on these changes as it will affect how we can manage our programming. Missouri voter laws significantly restrict the ability to cast absentee ballots and require ballot notarization in most circumstances. St. Louis County introduced on-demand ballot printing in 2020 which allows St. Louis County residents much flexibility for voting where they are best able. Lessons learned from these constant changes are to ensure that WebsterVOTES is offering many options for students to learn about Missouri voting processes, providing resources, in-person programming and communicating these updates with our academic partners.

## **Goals**

Increasing voter engagement, civic engagement, and voter turnout compile the general short and long term goals of the “WebsterVOTES” action plan. For the 2020 elections, we compiled both short and long-term goals as part of our mission and effort to support civic engagement within the Webster University community. These goals are included for the 2022 action plan alongside new goals as part of our ongoing efforts

**2020 Goal 1A (short term):** To earn the designation of [“Voter Friendly Campus”](#) for 2021-2022 - **ACHIEVED**

**2020 Goal 1B (long term):** To maintain the [“Voter Friendly Campus”](#) through 2028.

The designation of “Voter Friendly Campus” will help develop Webster University develop even more 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.

To maintain this designation will require continual improvement and review of our program.

**2020 Goal 2A (short term):** To increase voter registration rate by at least 10% (89% or greater) in the 2020 election cycle – **INCREASED BY 3.1% - GOAL NOT MET**

**2020 Goal 2B (long term):** To increase voter registration rate to 100% by 2028.

**2022 Goal 2C (short term):** To increase vote registration rate by at least 1.5% (85% or higher) in the 2022 election cycle.

Although our voter registration rate improved by 3.1% in 2020, we fell short of the goal of the 10% increase. Because 2022 is a midterm election year with historically lower registration and voting rates, we will scale back our goal and aim to increase the rate by 1.5%. We will focus on academic areas that had decreases in registration rates or small increases. We will continue to engage strategies to connect each student to voter registration opportunities during their campus on-boarding processes at New Student Orientation and Registration.

**Goal 3A (short term):** Increase voter rate to at least 70% for the Presidential Election in November 2020 – **INCREASED BY TO 68% VOTER RATE – GOAL NOT MET**

**Goal 3B (long term):** Increase voter rate to at least 75% for the Presidential Election in November 2024

**Goal 3C (short term):** Maintain voter rate of at least 65% for the Midterm Election in November 2022

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. For 2022 we will increase our partnerships with Housing and Residential Life to connect on-campus residents to voting options while increasing voter education programming identifying the importance of participating in the Midterm Election.

**Goal 4A (short term):** Join the Presidents Commitment by getting signatures from both our University Chancellor and President.

By having University leadership participate in the Presidents Commitment, it would make their support visible and public. Known support from leaders in these roles would help to encourage our student population and challenge them to increase participation as well.

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

The Webster University 2020 Voter Registration rate was 68.0%. Voting patterns were fairly steady across major, age, and academic department populations throughout our campuses with a few small decreases based on academic area – we will focus registration efforts with these programs for 2022. Included is a brief overview of our NSLVE data from the NSLVE 2016-2020 Campus Report.

	2016	2018	2020	2016-2020 Change (p.p.)
Total Student Enrollment	11,788	9,723	6,948	↓ -4,840
(Age under 18/Unknown)	-	-	-	-
(IPEDS estimated non-resident aliens)	32	288	154	↑ 121
(FERPA records blocked)	18	27	-	-
(Non-Degree Seeking Students)	-	-	-	-
Total eligible voters	11,737	9,406	6,789	↓ -4,948
Number of students who registered	9,037	7,562	5,669	↓ -3,368
Number of students who voted	6,883	4,871	4,616	↓ -2,267
Registration Rate %	77	80	84	↑ 7
Voting Rate of Registered Students %	76	64	81	↑ 5
Voting Rate %	59	52	68	↑ 9

**Strategy**

Our strategy remains broken into three categories: Institutional, Fall, and Spring. All of these strategies include ways to increase or maintain 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 as the short-term tactics addressing the 2022 election and continuing to move toward our long-term goals.

**Institutional**

1. All voter education and civic engagement related initiatives will be promoted through the “WebsterVOTES” branded social media pages and Connections 2.0 (intranet) website to be launched by the Fall 2022 semester
2. WebsterVOTES will create a one-page Oversees Voter Information Guide for students who will be living outside of the U.S. during election periods to be included in Study Abroad orientation programs. Notifications will be sent out to study abroad students periodically to remind them of upcoming voting deadlines.

*Study Abroad programs have restarted after being on hiatus during the first phases of the pandemic. This is an ongoing project carried over from 2020, we will complete the Voter Guide to be included in Study Abroad orientation materials beginning in Fall 2022.*

3. WebsterVOTES continues to work with the Office of First Year Experience to incorporate voter registration into GROW (summer advising and registration days) for newly enrolling first-time freshman students. This will target over 90% of new freshman students. T
4. WebsterVOTES will resubmit the Voter Friendly Campus designation in 2023 to further publicize campus accomplishments related to civic engagement.

### Spring 2022

1. WebsterVOTES sent all Main Campus students an email with information on voter registration, deadlines and absentee ballot completion in February 2022 in preparation for the April 2022 election.
2. We sent a message through Housing and Residential Life to on-campus residents providing them with the nearest polling place information for the April 2022 elections.
3. In partnership with the City of Webster Groves and League of Women Voters we hosted a candidate forum for municipal Mayoral and Alderperson candidates. This was held on campus on March 24, 2022 and promoted to all students.
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. *This message will be sent to all students network-wide in July of 2022.*

### Fall 2022

1. WebsterVOTES will partner with an external organization to have a voter registration table during New Student Orientation and at our bi-annual involvement fair. *This will be the first opportunity to have an external group manage voter registrations on campus in over 2 years. We hope to partner with the League of Women Voters for this initiative.*
2. WebsterVOTES will also have signups for student volunteers willing to assist with election-related events and outreach. *We previously had the benefit of a CEEP fellow working on our campus to help in executing these programs. We will not have a fellow this fall, so will rely heavily on the student volunteers in these roles.*
3. Three or more voter registration tables will be held. Non-partisan candidate guides and polling location information will be distributed. *We will utilize our partnership with Housing and Residential Life to offer a registration opportunity for residents. We will also plan an event for National Voter Registration Day and something similar within a few days of the registration deadline.*

4. A 'Know Your Voter Rights' event will be held the week of September 12 in conjunction with Constitution Day (September 17). *This event will focus on the ongoing changes to voter registration laws and requirements in the state of Missouri.*
5. A Voter Registration event and social media campaign will be held in conjunction with National Voter Registration Day on September 20, 2022. *In addition to the previously mentioned virtual registration booth, WebsterVOTES posted educational information about voter registration on our social media pages.*
6. Flyers with voting information and the new on-campus polling location will be placed around campus. *We utilized social media and campus resources such as new student orientation, the weekly Dean of Students' newsletter and Housing Newsletter to inform students of the polling location changes.*
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 the Missouri Senatorial debates if televised. Voter registration cards and polling information will be made available to students during these events. *Voter registration cards and polling information will be made available to students during this event.*
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:
  - Utilize polling place direction signage to send students from campus housing locations to nearest polling place.
  - Election Day hotline: one or more individual(s) will monitor the WebsterVOTES social media and designate a call-in number to answer election related questions.
  - Mock election - to engage international students and educate them on the US voting process.
  - Coffee Station – distributed coffee and “First Time Voter” buttons to students going to/from the polling place.
  - Election Night Watch Party
13. Get Out the Vote Cameo – a fun way to encourage voting close to election day with a celebrity endorsement.
14. Compiled List of Notaries – WebsterVOTES surveyed faculty and staff at the main campus location to identify all those who are Notary Publics. Those

individuals were listed on our website and shared through social media for students to contact for socially distanced notarization services.

15. Paid Postage – The Office of Student Engagement coordinated with the Mail & Copy Center to provide paid postage for any voter related mailings coming through their system. All mailed absentee applications or ballots through our campus system were sent at no charge to the sender.
16. First Time Voter Buttons – Will distribute “First Time Voter” buttons that were distributed throughout the day at local polling sites and our election day coffee station.
17. 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 2016-2020 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. Because most of the work during 2020 was online we measured our numbers through social media metrics and attendance numbers, we anticipate that 2022 will consist of similar data in addition to qualitative feedback. In the short term we were able to adjust our strategies based on feedback from students and by monitoring the types of questions we were getting.

Overall success will be determined through results of NSLVE 2022 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.