

Civic Action Plan

2022

West Virginia University



ALL IN Campus
Democracy
Challenge

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Executive Summary

This Civic Action Plan was developed by the WVU Center for Community Engagement (CCE) with help from WVU students, faculty, and community members. The purpose of this action plan is to collaborate and create a strategy to increase student voting rates, informed decision making, and help students form the habits of active and engaged citizenship.

This plan includes opportunities to civically engage with students in the classroom, online, around campus, and in the surrounding greater community. We are eager to connect with fellow institutions, civic organizations, student chapters, and other entities to bring civic engagement and democratic practices to West Virginia University's campus. This plan lays forth groundwork for civic engagement to be practiced in classrooms, organization meetings, and around our campus.

Over the course of the next year, the WVU Civic Action Plan calls to attention **three critical goals:**

One, we will **expand and develop pathways to promote civic responsibility and the integrity of information gathering.** Provide awareness and action opportunities, bringing community members and issues to campus via panels and workshops, working with the library to promote informed voting and including unique perspectives, cultures, histories and voting logistics.

Two, the plan will begin to **incorporate civic responsibility in our students' purpose throughout their time at WVU.** Included in this is the emphasis on social action and access to information.

Three, the University will **build off our 2012 and 2016 NSLVE reports to increase voter registration and voter turnout amongst the WVU community.**

Leadership

WVU commits to the development of relationships with the student body, our university's faculty and staff, and various campus partners. The Center for Community Engagement plans to connect with service-based student organizations, student government, S-designated courses and instructors, and local organizations to expand our leadership team for the **2024 Civic Action Plan**. Our Center has a unique dynamic that allows different staff members to build relationships across the campus and greater surrounding community.

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Commitment

Civic engagement is an essential element of both WVU's mission as a land-grant institution and the Center's mission to "[maximize] experiential learning opportunities across campus that teach diverse undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to become engaged citizens, leaders, and scholars."

WVU is committed to providing an open-minded learning environment for students across all political ideologies. **Registration – Education – Participation - Inclusivity is our path to civic awareness.** We demonstrate this by engaging in national challenges such as *Big XII Voting Challenge*, and *ALL IN Voting Challenge*.

Relationships developed through the Center for Community Engagement will allow the WVU community to effectively and efficiently implement civic engagement strategies, collect feedback from stakeholders, and communicate openly between leadership of different departments.

Statement of Nonpartisanship

The Center for Community Engagement and West Virginia University is committed to providing an open-minded nonpartisan learning environment for all students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders. The University does not support or oppose candidates for public office nor take a stand for or against any political party.

Campus Landscape

Land Acknowledgement

The West Virginia University system, with campuses across West Virginia, resides on land that includes ancestral territories of the many Indigenous peoples including Shawnee, Lenape (Delaware), Haudenosaunee (Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, Tuscarora) and Cherokee.

In acknowledging this, we recognize and appreciate those Indigenous nations whose territories we are living and working on. Indigenous peoples have been of the land currently known as West Virginia since time immemorial.

It is important that we understand both the context that has brought our University community to reside here, on this land, and our place within this long history. By acknowledging this we endeavor to always seek the truth about who we have been, who we are now and who we can become.

Curriculum

WVU is composed of 3 different campuses (Beckley, Keyser, and Morgantown), with its Morgantown campus being the main campus with 14 different colleges offering 355 majors. There are 20+ service-learning designated courses through the CCE. Over 26,000 students attend WVU each year with incoming classes yielding over 7,000 students. There are many opportunities for students to get civically engaged through coursework in the Department of Public Administration and Department of Political Science.

Student Organizations

WVU has over 400 official student organizations, with many being civically engaged. Some of these organizations and hopeful partnerships include *ACLU of WVU, Black Law Students Association, College Democrats, Graduate and Professional Student Senate, Labor Law Society, Model United Nations, Mountaineer Mentors, Mountaineers for Recovery, Movement for People's Democracy WVU, Residence Hall Association, Student Association of Public Administrators, Student Government Association, and UN-PAC WVU.*

Demographic Makeup

Per 2020 statistics, the enrolled student population at WVU is 80% white, 3.92% Hispanic or Latino, 3.8% Two or More Races, 3.71% Black or African American, 2.23% Asian, 0.141% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.0723% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders. This includes both full-

time and part-time students as well as undergraduate and professional students. 51% of students identify as male while 49% of students identify as female.

Looking Ahead

The 2022 Midterm Elections bring an interesting landscape to the WVU community. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, we expect WVU community members to increase in-person voter turnout compared to 2020, although being a midterm year these numbers could prove different.

Being an entirely new Center with entirely new staff, the department is excited to work with students and leverage student organizations to register, education, and participate students during the 2022 general election (primary elections have passed by the time this action plan was created). The Center is also looking for avenues of engagement for faculty, staff, and the larger WVU community. These may include debates, panel discussions, registration drives, and more.

Potential partners include:

G. Corey Farris, Dean of Students	Reed College of Media
Dr. Jorge Atilas, Dean of Extension	WVU School of Medicine
WVU School of Public Health	WVU Faculty Senate
College of Creative Arts	WVU Staff Senate
WVU Student Government Association	College Democrats
WVU Foundation	College Republicans
WVU Graduate Student Government	WVU Greek Life
WVU NAACP	WVU Appalachian Advocacy
Daily Athenaeum	Office of Residence Life
WVU President's Office	

Goals

In order to achieve the three overarching goals laid forth in the executive summary, a combination of short term and long term goals are identified and presented in this section. The short term goals are set to be achieved before the 2022 general election, and the long term goals are set to be achieved within the next decade.

Short-Term Goals

- Provide 10 on-campus voter registration opportunities for students, faculty, and staff for the 2022 general election.
- Work with Monongalia County Clerk and the WV-ACLU to set up voting booths on campus on election day.
- Receive designation as a Voter Friendly Campus through NASPA and the Campus Vote Project.
- Compose a webpage for students to register to vote, update their voter registration information, and access resources about voting.
- Share ways that international students can understand and support the U.S. Elections.
- Register 1,000 students on campus before October 18th, 2022 (WV voter registration deadline).

Long-Term Goals

- Institutionalize voter registration opportunities in freshmen and transfer student first year experiences.
- Provide research on why civic engagement is important, and strategies to implement civic engagement in the classroom, the faculty and staff.

- Achieve 80% voter registration and 60% voter participation for all eligible WVU students, faculty, and staff.

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

Based on 2012 and 2016 NSLVE data, voting rates at WVU were 36.1% and 43.7% respectively (Figure 1). These rates are lower than the national average, which were 46.9% in 2012 and 50.4% in 2016. Looking further in the data, 58.4/50.9% (2012/2016) voted in-person and only 21.6/22.1% voted absentee (Figure 2). With around half of WVU’s student population being from out of state, this low absentee rate could be an explanation for WVU’s lower voter turnout.

By Carnegie Classification

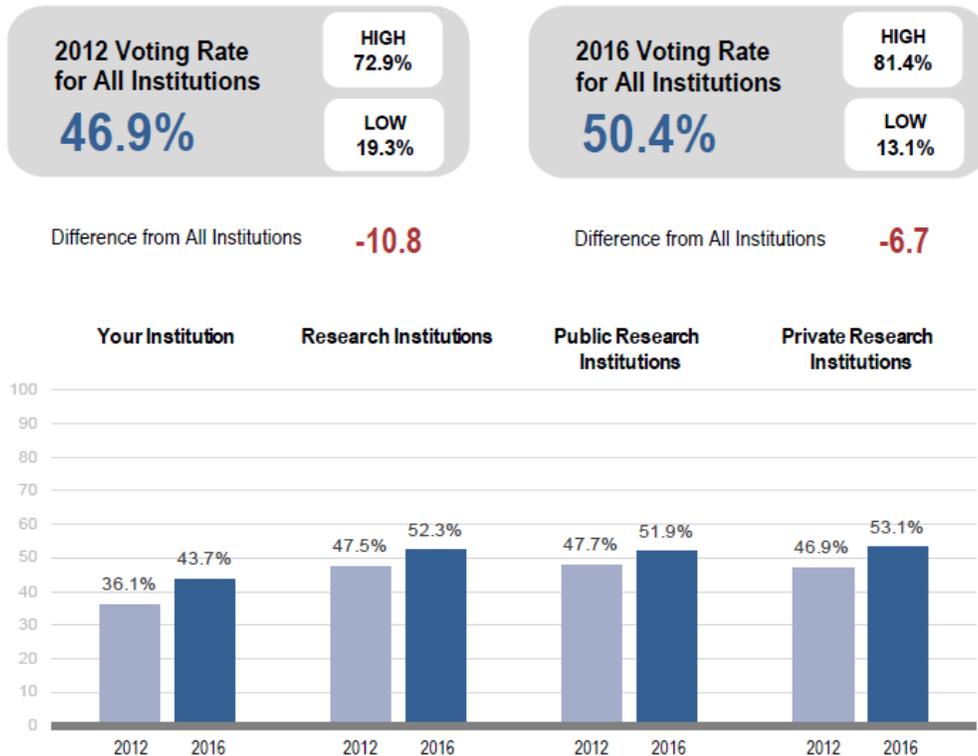


Figure 1. Voter turnout for 2012 and 2016 elections. WVU and all research institutions displayed.

By Voting Method*

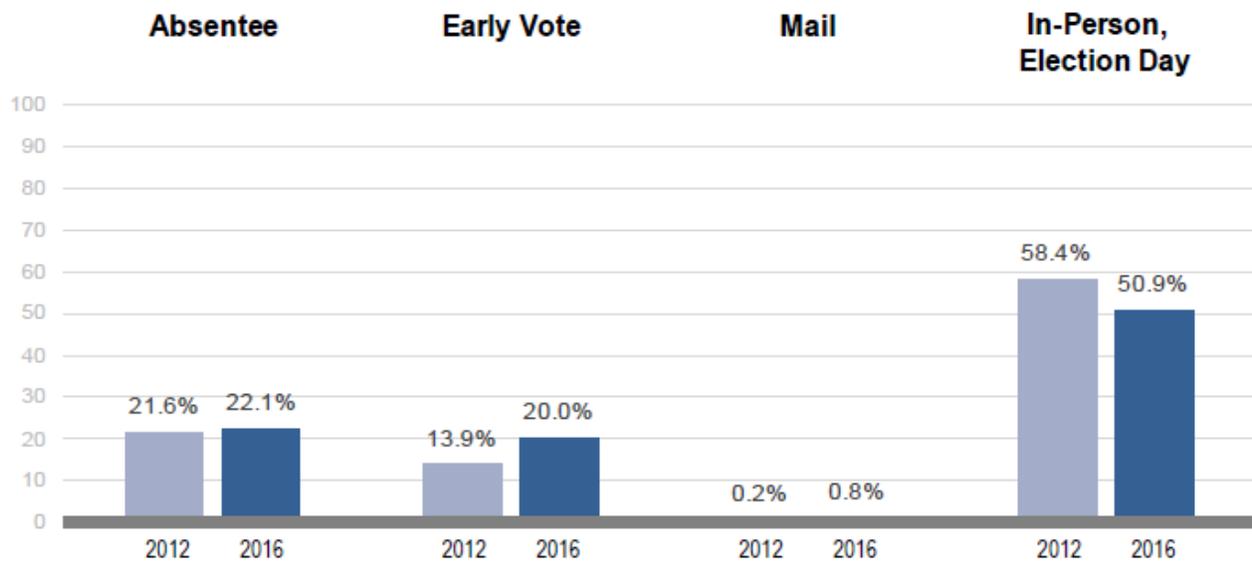


Figure 2. WVU voting methods for the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections.

There is ample opportunity for voter turnout to increase at WVU. Until now, there has been little to no institutional effort to civically engage students or to promote voting on campus. With the strategies set forth in the following section, WVU aims to increase voter turnout in future elections.

Strategy

The following bullets indicate actionable steps the Center will be taking over the next year to implement civic engagement and partner across WVU's campus:

Short-Term Tactics

- Launch *WVU Votes*, a student-led organization focused on voting and registration at WVU.

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- Work with Student Government and other politically focused student organizations to host a forum for the 2022 midterm general election.
 - Table regularly on Downtown and Evansdale campuses to ensure students and community members are informed on and up to date regarding the 2022 midterm general election.
 - Create an *Active Citizenship FAQ* for the “why” behind voting (modeled from the University of Pittsburgh).
 - Work on disseminating WVU’s 2022 NSLVE Report.
 - Participate in Welcome Week activities to interact with and register students.
 - Participate in Big XII Voting Challenge.

Long-Term Strategies

- Utilize student, faculty, and staff email blasts to keep the campus population informed regarding civic holidays and deadlines.
- Work with freshman orientation classes to implement voter registration in the classroom.
- Build and maintain a strong social media presence.
- Work with Faculty Senate to create a syllabus statement regarding voting rights.
- Develop a Civic Advisory Board to manage and facilitate future civic engagement growth at an institutional level.
- Work with Greek Life to incorporate civic engagement.
- Consistently assess this Action Plan and reevaluate goals as needed.
- Collaborate with other institutions working on civic engagement efforts to build our mutual interests and knowledge base of best practices.

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- Promote Social Action Clinic resources to students.
 - Encourage local, state, and federal representatives to institute campus office hours and other methods of engagement for students to ask questions, voice concerns, and talk with their elected officials.

Reporting

Accountability, transparency, and diversity of voices are all essential for a successful system of reporting. The Center will make efforts to include feedback and ideas from students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders of the WVU community on how to better address civic engagement on our campus. Upon completion of internal review this document will be shared with the following entities:

- WVU President's Office
- WVU Office Student Engagement and Leadership
- WVU Office of Student Life
- WVU Office of Greek Life
- WVU Extension Services
- WVU Student Government Association
- All WVU Students, Faculty, and Staff through a combination of U-News, E-News, and other forms of email communication
- All CCE social media platforms and website
- ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
- Other Big XII schools via the *Big XII Voting Challenge*

Reporting, feedback, and suggestions will be completed via surveys, tabling events, and public forums. More information on evaluation is included in the next section.

Evaluation

This Action Plan is the first of its kind from WVU and the CCE, and as such we are committed to comprehensive and continual evaluation of this Action Plan and its contents.

Steps of sustained evaluation and assessment are quantified ahead:

- Build, analyze, and distribute NSLVE data to assess current civic engagement standards at WVU and identify gaps on campus.
- Tracking student attendance and participation at campus events and student organizations.
- Hold frequent tabling events to gauge student interest and abilities to engage.
- Collaborate with local and state election officials to incorporate on-campus voting options and strategies to increase turnout.

Conclusion

West Virginia University and the Center for Community Engagement is committed to advancing the civic engagement culture of our campus and surrounding community. While there is much work to be done to put our University up to standards with other institutions, we are eager to begin working with students, faculty, and the greater population of WVU to make our campus a welcoming community for ideas all over the civic and political spectrum.

As we continue building our campus and culture, we also want to build an Action Plan that incorporates all ideas and goals of our community; as such, this document is fluid and should be treated as a dynamic resource instead of a set-in-stone agenda.