



# All In Campus Democracy Challenge- Western Washington University

## Executive Summary:

The purpose of the action plan is to create a guideline to follow to increase civic engagement on the Western Washington University Campus. This plan was developed by numerous people including students, staff, and advisors. Our goal is to engage as many students as possible to be civically engaged by registering students to vote, increase awareness for elections, create informative programming, and follow legislation that is happening at all levels of government. This plan will be implemented by the Office of Civic Engagement in the Associated Students of Western Washington University with support from the ASWWU Vice President for Governmental Affairs and Voter Registration Staff. This plan will be implemented by November of 2020.

## 2020 Focus Areas: Leadership, Commitment, Landscape, Strategies

### **Leadership:**

#### *Associated Students of WWU:*

The Office of Civic Engagement consists of 8 student positions. The OCE Director, Legislative Education Assistant Coordinator, Local Issues Coordinator, Voter Engagement and Recruitment Coordinator, Democratic Involvement Coordinator, Director of Legislative Affairs, Elections Coordinator, and OCE



Work Study Assistant work tirelessly to not only execute our current civic engagement plan but also to continue expanding our efforts to reach more students. This office's work is overseen by the ASWWU Vice President for Governmental Affairs who also works on campus wide lobbying efforts.

Western Votes is an organization within the Office of Civic Engagement that carries out all of the voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts for Fall Quarter. The Voter Registration Staff are hired in July and work through the election year and typically consist of six students. During WWU's move-in weekend, one staff member is assigned to each of the six dorm buildings. They typically oversee their location and help assist volunteers. Western Votes has around 20 volunteers just for move in weekend and gains additional volunteers through move-in weekend for the GOTV efforts.

The Legislative Affairs Council is housed within the Associated Students and makes decisions on the student lobby agenda for Western Lobby Day, Western Intersectional Lobby Day, and Local Lobby Day. This council is chaired by the Vice President for Governmental Affairs and includes one representative from: the Ethnic Student Center, Environmental and Sustainability Programs, the Student Advocacy and Identity Resource Center, and the Graduate Student Advocacy Council. It also includes 6-8 Students-at-large, the Local Liaison, the Director of Legislative Affairs, and the Engagement and Recruitment Coordinator. In addition to crafting the Legislative Agendas for ASWWU, this committee is charged with encouraging civic engagement among students, submitting recommendations for the Washington Student Association statewide Legislative Agenda, communicate with elected officials to ensure student perspectives are considered at all levels of government, formulate policy positions for all matters concerning students in higher education for approval by the AS Board of Directors, and review funding proposals and expenditures of the Legislative Action Fund. The Legislative Action Fund is a fund which collects a fee of \$1 per quarter per student to ensure programming opportunities for students to get civically engaged. This fee was proposed and voted on by students.

*Western Washington University:*

The Munro Institute for Civic Education

Housed under the Political Science Department at Western Washington University, Western Washington University's Ralph Munro Institute for Civic Education is devoted to promoting civic literacy within secondary education and the public at large. It offers students, teachers and community members an opportunity to work with professors, activists and political leaders to learn how local, state and national politics develop.



Additionally, the Political Science Department strives to embody and cultivate the habits and skills of clear thought, rigorous analysis, and effective argumentation in writing and speech. We examine politics at all levels: small groups, social and political organizations, towns and cities, economic systems, countries, nations, transnational flows, and the global system. In doing so, we raise critical questions about power and privilege, identity, institutions, justice, citizenship, and civic engagement in order to develop and sustain a nuanced understanding of political life, processes, systems, and dynamics. We embrace a variety of approaches in our research and teaching – qualitative, quantitative, historical, institutional, theoretical, sociological, economic, and legal – and seek to combine conceptual and theoretical analyses with policy and practical orientations. We encourage our students to bring their own perspectives and critical capacities to the classroom, even as they acquire new skills and knowledge to become more intellectually sophisticated and politically engaged members of their communities.

#### Karen W. Morse Institute for Leadership

The vision of the Karen W. Morse Institute for Leadership is to create a university-wide leadership development program unlike any other in the nation. The mission asserts to develop graduates who can exercise responsible, ethical, and inclusive leadership in their chosen careers and communities. Through involvement in leadership development, this institute strives to create leaders who embody the notion of “Active Minds, Changing Lives” in our global society.

#### Res-life at WWU

Residence Life at WWU is also a critical part of our campus civic engagement efforts. Residential Advisors send emails that update students about dates and deadlines, organize programming to engage students, and help us mobilize student voters. Each campus residence community has an Inclusive Community Assistant that is in charge of informing students about current events and ensuring that students feel included in their community. This means breaking down barriers for students to critically engage with our ever changing world. In March for the primary elections, Western Votes and an Inclusive Community Assistant partnered together to play civic engagement games and promote the deadlines coming up. This type of program is what we hope to expand on next year.

#### Greater Bellingham Community:



The current Whatcom County Auditor, Diana Bradrick, and past Auditors have been an incredible help in taking down barriers for students to turn in ballots. In the fall, WWU should have a second ballot box set up on campus. This means that we will have one on each side of campus so we can make it easier to vote and our campus has the capacity to collect more ballots every day without the ballot boxes overflowing. The Auditor helped facilitate the process and pick out the location that would reach the most students and be accessible for their office. The Auditor's Office is also an incredible resource for our efforts as they help answer questions for our events and ensure that all of our programming is meeting local, state, and federal laws.

The League of Women's Voters in Bellingham Washington is also an incredible resource to engage students on WWU's campus. In the fall, the LWV and Western Votes partner together to amplify our individual organizations efforts. The LWV helps register students to vote during move-in weekend but are also on campus through the last day to register to vote to reach as many students as possible. Western Votes and the LWV intermingle out staff to be stationed all over campus throughout the school weeks. This not only gives students the opportunity to register to vote but it also serves as a reminder that elections are coming up. When the LWV or Western Votes tables, we often have big posters with upcoming important dates. This way, we can publicize the elections as much as possible. This partnership allows us to have more people engaged in civic engagement work so we can make as big of an impact as possible

### **Commitment:**

*Western Washington University:*

Western Washington University has a commitment to civically engaging students. Western has a strong commitment to the *"pursuit of excellence, in an environment characterized by principles of shared governance, academic freedom and effective engagement"*. Our shared governance model pushes our university to combine university and AS resources to ensure that we are effectively engaging students in campus, local, state, and federal politics. Western's mission statement says that *"Western sees equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity as fundamental principles calling for authentic engagement"*. Equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity are the core principles that Western grounds its work in.

Western Votes and the OCE provide opportunities for students to get involved, informed, and interested in what is happening around us. They seek to provide inclusive spaces where all students can come and get their voices heard. They create programs that help students understand not only how our political



systems function, but also the history of our country and how social justice and politics are intersectional. The AS grounds itself in these core values and ensures that the work its able to do positively impacts students to be engaged and effective critical thinkers.

Associated Students of Western Washington University:

The Associated Students “*is dedicated to ensuring that students are represented in the decisions of the organization and the university.*” The AS does this in a wide variety of ways. Students can apply to sit on university and AS committees that make decisions on the future of the institution, from policy to budget work. LAC is made up of diverse student voices that determine our advocacy efforts every year and create multiple lobbying agendas set by students, for students. The AS also provides an all expense paid trip for over 250 students to lobby their state legislators between the three lobby days the AS puts on. The work that the AS does is also grounded in equity, justice, inclusion, and diversity. When marginalized students wanted do advocate specifically for their needs, Western Intersectional Lobby Day became an incredibly yearly event. Lobbying efforts have expanded greatly at WWU because not only goes it make the legislature more accessible, it also gives students engaged in politics. The AS continuously expands the opportunities that it provides to make sure that students are able to effectively advocate for their needs.

### **Landscape:**

*Timeline of past engagement efforts:*

September/October: -

- Voter Registration Drive for students moving into on-campus residences
- Voter Registration at events such as Paint Bellingham Blue, Late-Night at the Rec, Info-fair, etc.
- Class presentations
- Legislative Affairs Council begins

October/November: Get Out the Vote

- Democracy and Donuts ballot printing event



- Ballot printing in Red Square
- Phone banking with the Washington BUS
- Events at the ballot box
- Local candidate forums on campus
- Students are surveyed for the Western Lobby Day Agenda

November/December:

- Legislative Affairs Council continues to write the AS Legislative Agenda
- Legislative Affairs Council helps plan Western Lobby Day and Western Intersectional Lobby Day
- Legislative Affairs Council writes documents on each of the sections for the Legislative Agenda to make it more accessible for students to understand what they are advocating for

January:

- Finalize plans for Western Lobby Day
- Western Lobby Day: January 19-20 -115 students in Olympia Lobbying on the ASWWU Legislative Agenda
- Legislative Affairs Council starts to write the AS Western Intersectional Lobby Day Legislative Agenda

February:

- Western Intersectional Lobby Day planning in finished
- Legislative Affairs Council finishes the AS Western Intersectional Lobby Day Legislative Agenda
- Western Intersectional Lobby Day: February 16-17 - 100 students in Olympia Lobbying on the ASWWU Western Intersectional Lobby Day Agenda

March/April:

- Plan Local Lobby Day for city council and county council officials
- Prepare for the upcoming census



- Booths around campus
- Poster Campaign

April/May:

- Review the year, look for where we can improve, prepare for next year

### *Barriers for Students:*

#### 1. Understanding the system

One of the greatest barriers for students is not fully understanding the system in which they have to move in. The way in which our voting system is set up, there are a lot of dates and deadlines that have to be met. Students need to know where they can register, what dates can they register online, when does voter registration move to in person voter registration only, where can they print ballots, how to print ballots, what papers need to be turned in when they vote, etc.

#### 2. Printing Ballots

In Washington State, voting happens via mail. Since college students are typically very mobile (i.e. moving out of their parents home or moving apartments), ballots can get lost as addresses change. Washington state allows its residents to print their ballot online. While this is a great way to make voting more accessible, most students do not know that this is an option and/or do not know how to.

#### 3. Registering to Vote

In order to vote in any election, one has to register to vote. While it only takes a couple of minutes to do, it can be confusing where to go and how to actually register. Government websites are not the most user friendly and trying to dig through information to figure out how to register can create barriers.

#### 4. Accessible Language



Voter guides, official ballots, written bills, etc are filled with big words that are not accessible. At the events that the OCE and Western Votes put on, the most ask question is: “what does this mean?”. The language that is used can be a huge barrier for students because if they don't know what they are voting for, they might not vote.

## Strategies

Voter registration, Get Out the Vote, Educating Voters, Reducing Barriers, Legislative Advocacy

### **Voter Registration:**

#### *Move-In Weekend*

While students are moving into their dorms in late September, Western Votes will have a combination of trained staff and volunteers stationed at every housing complex to get students to register to vote or update their address. If social distancing laws allow, Western Votes will continue with in person voter registration. If not, informational posters about how to register to vote, why voting is important, upcoming dates/deadlines, and contact information will be slid underneath each resident's door.

Goal: Register 2,000 students

#### *Class Presentations*

After move-in weekend, Western Votes will begin its voter registration outreach to the whole campus. In early September, professors will be contacted and asked if they would be willing to allow a staff member or volunteer to come into their class for the first 5 minutes and register students to vote. If we are unable to go into classrooms because of social distancing laws, we will send each professor a pre-recorded video to project during class that will outline the steps to register to vote.

Goal: Go to 30 classrooms and register 300 students

#### *On-Campus Outreach*



In early October, Western Votes will reserve tables in Red Square and/or the Viking Union 3 times a week to promote voter registration. On the table, there will either be voter registration forms to fill out or university computers to register online. There will be flyers at each table with information like how to register to vote, why voting is important, upcoming dates/deadlines, and contact information, etc for students that are on the go.

Goal: Register 200 students

#### *Off-Campus Outreach*

At the Paint Bellingham Blue event, in late September, that hosts thousands of students, university staff, administration, faculty, and community members, Western Votes will be present to help the greater Bellingham Community register to vote.

Goal: Register 200 students

#### *Social Media*

Utilize the Western Votes Instagram and Facebook pages to engage students with registering to vote. The Western Votes Instagram will post information about how to register to vote, absentee ballots and when the deadline is for registering to vote in the upcoming presidential election. Interactive posts will be created to further engage students in voter registration. An interactive post might look like an Instagram poll asking students if they have registered to vote or creating a bingo game. Western Votes will also share their voter registration efforts to keep the community informed on what they are doing to spread the word about voter registration.

Goal: Gain 100 new followers

#### **Get Out the Vote:**

##### *Phone Banking*

Western Votes will hold phone banking sessions in October to encourage community members to either register to vote or to remind them to vote in the upcoming presidential elections. There will be about 2 weeks worth of phone banking sessions. During a phone banking session Western Votes members will



call community members and follow a provided script to ask them the appropriate questions regarding whether they have voted yet.

Goal: Call 500 community members

#### *Dorm Flyering*

Western Votes will create flyers to spread among the dorms on campus to help inform students on how to vote and engage them in the voting process. Flyers will be distributed in the early fall when students have moved into their new rooms.

Goal: Hang flyers on the doors of all resident rooms for the 16 residence halls on campus.

#### *Social Media*

Western Votes is active on both Instagram and Facebook. The Western Votes instagram will post about voting and getting out the vote throughout the elections period to encourage followers to vote in the elections. Information about how to vote and where ballots can be dropped off will be provided. Using social media provides students with the opportunity to engage with Western Votes on a new platform and helps reach students that might not be reached otherwise. Will make interactive posts to further engage students. Will make posts about voter outreach to keep followers informed on what Western Votes is doing during the elections season.

Goal: Gain 100 new followers

#### *Getting a New Ballot Box*

This year Western Votes has a new ballot box that is being installed on campus. Currently there is just a ballot box on our south campus but now there is one being added to our north campus. There will be a ground-breaking ceremony to draw attention to this new ballot box and inform students of this new voter accessibility.

Goal: Increase on-campus voter accessibility and engage 200 students in the ballot box ground-breaking ceremony



#### *Voting Party in Red Square/Virtual Party*

During election week in early November, Western votes will host a voting party in either red square (which is the main campus walking area) or virtually according to Washington state social distancing laws and guidelines. The voting party will encourage students to bring their ballots and drop them off at our mobile ballot box.

Goal: Engage 300 students in the voting party

#### **Voter Education:**

##### *Candidate Forums*

In October the Office of Civic Engagement will put on a series of local candidate forums to help engage students in voter education. The Office of Civic Engagement will reserve a room that is accessible for all student attendees, and invite local and county politicians who are on the upcoming ballot to come and speak. The Associated Students will livestream this event on their Facebook page so that it is accessible for all students, including those who were not able to attend the forums. At the candidate forums, candidates for each position will be asked a series of questions and questions texted in from the audience throughout the forum, to help students learn more about the candidates and their positions.

Goal: Reach 500 students in combined virtual and physical attendance of the event

##### *Debate Watch Parties*

The OCE will host 4 debate watch parties for the presidential debates taking place in September and October. The Office of Civic Engagement will host this event and reserve spaces in accessible classrooms on our campus. The point of these events is to provide students a space to watch and engage with other students about the upcoming Presidential elections. Will have a mobile ballot box at these events to help promote voting in the elections among students.

Goal: Reach 100 students in attendance in total among the debate watch parties

#### **Reducing Barriers:**



### *Democracy and Donuts*

In collaboration with the AS Office of Civic Engagement and the Ethnic Student Center a program will be provided to help inform students about voting. This program will remove barriers of inaccessibility due to voter demographics and educate students on the democratic and/or legislative processes that are not made accessible. There will be printing stations available to remove the barrier of getting supplies like envelopes, a printer, pen, etc.

Goal: Help 200 students print their ballot

### *Printing Stations*

In Red Square during the week of voting, the OCE will have laptops and printers available for students to use to print their ballots. The staff at the table will be trained to understand the process of printing a ballot so that if a student comes across any issues, there will be people ready to assist. At these printing stations, there will also be pens and envelopes for students to take if they need.

Goal: Help 500 students print their ballot

### *Multiple Ballot Collecting locations*

There will be the two official ballot box locations at each end of campus. In Red Square, there will be a temporary ballot box that will be staffed with at least two people at all times. Posters with important dates will be held and posters with information like where the ballot box locations are, how to register at the auditor's office, where the auditor's office is, etc. will be handed out.

Goal: Promote the election to increase turnout

### *Voting Empowerment Center*

Senate Bill 6313 says that “each public university must open a nonpartisan student engagement hub which allows students to download exact copies of their ballot. Upon request of the student government, the student engagement hub at a public four-year university must allow voters to register in person and provide ballots and voter registration materials. Student engagement hubs may be open during business hours in the eight days before an election, and up to 8 p.m. on election night. Each university must



contract with the county auditor for the operation of student engagement hubs. State and local voters' pamphlets must list the location of student engagement hubs. SOS may provide grants to county auditors to implement student engagement hubs, subject to appropriations.”

### *All Lobby Days*

The AS puts on three lobby days a year: Western Lobby Day, Western Intersectional Lobby Day, and Local Lobby Day. All three of these events are completely free for students as the AS pays for all transportation, housing, and food costs. All students have to do is sign up and go to one training. This breaks down any barriers that students might face in terms of physically getting to the locations, understanding how to lobby, and scheduling meetings with legislators. Everything is done by the VP for Governmental Affairs, the Board Assistant for Lobby Days, and the Office of Civic Engagement.

### *Accessible Language*

In collaboration with the Ralph Munro Institute on Civic Education, the AS Office of Civic Engagement will provide programs which remove the barriers of elitist and inaccessible language and educate students on the democratic and/or legislative processes which exist in ways which are easier to understand by the majority of students.

## **Legislative Advocacy**

### *Western Lobby Days*

This Lobby Day advocates for things that all students feel passionately about. Around 115 students meet with almost all of the Washington Legislators to advocate on an agenda that is set by students for students. Western Students are surveyed and asked about what topics they want to lobby for. After that, LAC will begin for research and construct an agenda around the most popular answers in the survey. This gives students an opportunity to help out with lobby days in a small or big way. This event is will be held on Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend, January 17th-18th.

### *Western Intersectional Lobby Day*



This Lobby Day is put together by the Ethnic Student Center, Environmental and Sustainability Programs, and the Student Advocacy and Identity Resource Center. The legislative agenda for WILD revolves around advocating for marginalized students and environmental protections. Typically, this lobby day has about 100 students attend and when they register, they decide which office they would like to advocate with, the ESC, the ESP, or the SAIRC. This event came to be after students wanted to be able to advocate for more things. The expansion of WLD led to increased student advocacy which we plan to continue in February of next year. This event will be held on February 14th and 15th.

#### *Local Lobby Day*

Local Lobby Day is organized and facilitated by the Local Liaison and the VP for Governmental Affairs. The agenda is created in LAC and includes a variety of issues that students are faced with. We typically get 30 students that attend and meet with members of the Bellingham City Council and Whatcom County Council. This event will be happening in May and this year we are working on expanding this opportunity to more students.