



# Wheaton College Democratic Engagement Action Plan: 2022-2023 academic year

*This plan was created using the Votes & Ballots Action Planning Form. We highly recommend editing and expanding upon this draft before submitting for review.*

*Throughout this document, we mention the Strengthening American Democracy Guide as a resource for your review. We encourage you to turn to that resource for guidance and support as you complete your action plan!*

## I. Executive Summary

This action plan was developed by Leonard Breton, Director, Center for Social Justice & Community Impact to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at Wheaton College. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over 2022-2023 academic year, on and around our campus in Norton, Massachusetts.

The following groups will be leading this work at Wheaton College in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize our commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections:

- Undergraduate Students
- Civic/Political/Community Engagement Center
- Student Affairs Staff
- Academic Affairs Staff

The mission of our initiative is:

- Social Responsibility is Wheaton shorthand for civic engagement, specifically informed and inclusive political activism

The Center for Social Justice and Community Impact encourages and supports passionate and informed political activism, creative approaches to social justice work, and respectful bi-partisan dialogue on issues of importance to our community, country and world through speakers, dialogues, film, art and spoken word events, and other programs.

**How can you improve this section?** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Executive Summary* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

## II. Leadership

Leonard Breton | Director, Center for Social Justice & Community Impact will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. They will be supported in this work by:

- Kelly Faulkner, Director of Research & Instruction; Cary Gouldin, Humanities and Student Success Librarian;
- Johanna Mercado, Sciences Liaison & Technologist have been integral partners. They are involved because they are genuinely interested in this work. We combined our efforts to better serve our campus community.

This coalition is diverse and inclusive of:

- Representation from different parts of campus, including student leadership, Representation from different perspectives and areas of expertise, Trusted leaders and organizations who support communities that are historically underrepresented in democracy, Leaders who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus in to our work

Our group plans to meet usually electronically following initial meeting at usually electronically following initial meeting

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Leadership Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

### III. Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrates commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement. We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values. They state, “Distinctive Community Collegial and collaborative Committed to gender equality Inclusive Embracing diversity in all its forms High Standards Academic Excellence Ethical integrity Intellectual freedom Global citizenship Innovative Spirit Rooted in tradition, growing into the future Creating new knowledge/artistic work Adventure and joy of learning Welcoming Challenge”

On campus, we've seen:

- Voter education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
- Campus leaders promoting voting
- 
- Voter registration tables
- 
- 

On campus, we've experienced:

- Voting in student body elections
- Political speakers
- Walks / rides to polls
- 
- Registering to vote
- Civic Holiday events (such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day)
- Deliberative dialogues
- 

We can point to the above institutional commitments to support our work.

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Commitment Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

## IV. Landscape

We do not have access to comprehensive demographic information about our student body at this time.

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Landscape Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

## V. Goals

Before setting our civic learning and democratic engagement goals on campus, we took the following information into consideration.

We know our campus faces following challenges internally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- The voter engagement work on our campus is very siloed within one office.
- We don't have sustainable or consistent funding.
- 
- 
- 

We also know our campus faces the following challenges externally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- We don't have a working relationship with our local election office.
- We don't have working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement.
- 
- The political views of our students do not generally align with our institution's surrounding communities.
- 

With that said, we know our campus has the following strengths when we approach our voter engagement work:

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan mention civic learning and democratic engagement.
- 
- 
- We have ways in which we communicate voting information to our students.
- 
- 
- 
- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan.
-

- 
- 
- 

With this in mind, we have set the three goals that we would like to achieve over the next academic year:

Platinum Campus designation

Have at least 1 faculty member involved in planning and programming

We have also set three goals that we would like to achieve over the next five years:

Diamond Campus designation

Have political science department collaborate in voter registration and programming efforts as a part of their curriculum

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your *Goals Section* includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

## VI. Strategy

Below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months and years.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** in the **short term** (within the next year):

- tabling for voter registration and sharing absentee balloting information

These are tactics that we **plan to do** in the **short term**:

- more student-focused programming on civic engagement (voter suppression, voter history/purpose, etc)

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **short term**:

- 

These are tactics that we **are already doing** for the **long term** (beyond the next year):

- Reestablishment of student intern positions focused on civic engagement; partnership with other departments focused on voter registration efforts

These are tactics that we **want to do** in the **long term**:

- More effectively incorporate faculty into the work we are doing focused on voter registration

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **long term**:

- Integrate civic engagement and responsibilities into the mission and vision of the institution

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your Strategy Section includes everything that you feel should be addressed.



## VII. National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

Our campus has access to our National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data for 2021. In 2021 our registration rate was 87%. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased.

In 2021, our voting rate was 75.7% and our voting rate among registered students was 87%. During this year, our voting rate was higher than the national average.

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your NSLVE section includes everything that you feel should be addressed.

## VIII. Reporting & Evaluation

We plan to share this Action Plan internally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- 
- Email to campus administration
- 
- 

We plan to share this Action Plan externally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Post on the campus website
- 
- 

We will collect feedback on this plan by:

- Sending a post-election survey to students
- Sending a post-election survey to faculty
- Regrouping with campus coalition to debrief and reflect
- Integrating feedback collection into individual campus efforts
- 

We plan to evaluate our success by:

- Reviewing our NSLVE data and looking for improvements year over year
- Seeking out feedback throughout the action planning process from people outside of our action planning team
- Revisiting our goals, identifying goals achieved and not achieved, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly
- 

***How can you improve this section?*** Visit the *Strengthening American Democracy Guide* and review the *Guiding Questions* to ensure your Reporting & Evaluation Section includes everything that you feel should be addressed.