



Whitman College: Democratic Participation Action Plan

Prepared January 2022 by Whitman Votes

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I. Introduction

Whitman College is a small private four-year liberal arts college in Walla Walla, Washington. Whitman's 1,546 students enjoy a 9:1 student-faculty ratio. Founded in 1859 as a seminary, Whitman became non-sectarian in 1883. Whitman seeks to help students “develop their intellectual and creative capacities in a supportive scholarly community that prioritizes student learning within and beyond our classrooms.” Students come from 47 states and 32 countries, many numbering from Washington, who make up 28% of the 2025 class. The five-year graduation rate is 87% and 76% of students receive financial aid. Total domestic ethnic diversity in the class of 2025 is 25%. A majority, 64% of the class of 2025, identify as Caucasian. Whitman Votes acknowledges the continued frustration in the Whitman community towards Whitman's progress in creating an equitable future that works for all students.

Whitman College is located on the traditional Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla homelands. We pay our respect to tribal elders both past and present and extend our respect to all indigenous people today. We honor their stewardship of the land and ecosystem and commit to continuing that important work.

II. Whitman Votes, Whitman College's Chapter of Every Vote Counts

Whitman Votes, founded in 2018, is a non-partisan student-led voter advocacy club. We are a college campus chapter of the national organization Every Vote Counts (EVC). Through EVC, Whitman Votes has access to a nationwide network of colleges and universities, all working to expand voting rights and increase voter turnout. A national student board and an executive board lead EVC's national organization and control grants to chapters.

Genevieve Vogel, Class of 2024, Whitman Votes Co-President

Merry Cockroft, Class of 2024, Whitman Votes Co-President

Kaitlyn Patia, Assistant Professor of Rhetoric, Writing, and Public Discourse & Whitman Votes Advisor

III. Whitman Voting Coalition

The Whitman Voting Coalition is Whitman's working group whose central purpose is to compile the Democratic Participation Action Plan. They are responsible for brainstorming and recruiting others across campus to create actionable goals for democratic participation. Led and informed by student voices and personal experiences, the coalition's mission is to help make voting as

streamlined, active, and exciting as possible for Whitman students. The coalition, which began in fall 2021, meets once per semester and invites individuals from academic affairs, student affairs, and the student body to join. Whitman Votes is responsible for scheduling, setting the agenda, and advertising coalition meetings. A Google form is available for students to send ideas to the Whitman Voting Coalition at any time.

“We want to talk about the current barriers to voting. Transportation to polls or a lack of understanding about voting eligibility and other factors require discussion. We want to be informed by personal experiences from student voters to help make voting as streamlined, active, and exciting as possible.” - Whitman Voting Coalition Newsletter, December 2021

IV. Cross-Campus Communication

Whitman Votes heads outreach to the Whitman community about democratic participation and strives to involve diverse voices. Whitman Votes produces consistent outreach and educational content on Instagram (@whitman_votes) that seeks to engage the Whitman community in meaningful, thoughtful, and constructive content. The following are groups & individuals across campus that Whitman Votes and the Whitman Voting Coalition seek to engage with in order to involve diverse and unique voices.

ASWC, Associated Students of Whitman College

ASWC Diversity and Inclusion Committee

DISCO, Whitman’s Disability and Difference Community

WASA, Whitman African Students Association

BSU, Black Student Union

Club Latinx, Whitman’s Latin student community

PRISM, Whitman’s LGBTQIA+ community and their allies

First Generation Working Class Club

Power and Privilege Symposium

Whitman Debate Team

The Whitman Wire, Whitman College’s student newspaper

Whitman Teaches the Movement, Whitman’s civil rights education outreach program

Kathy Murray, President

Sarah Bolton, Incoming President

Juli Dunn, Senior Associate Dean of Students

John Johnson, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion

Adam Kirtley, Interfaith Chaplain

Susanne Beechey, Associate Professor of Politics & Politics Department Chair

Neal Christopherson, Director of Institutional Research

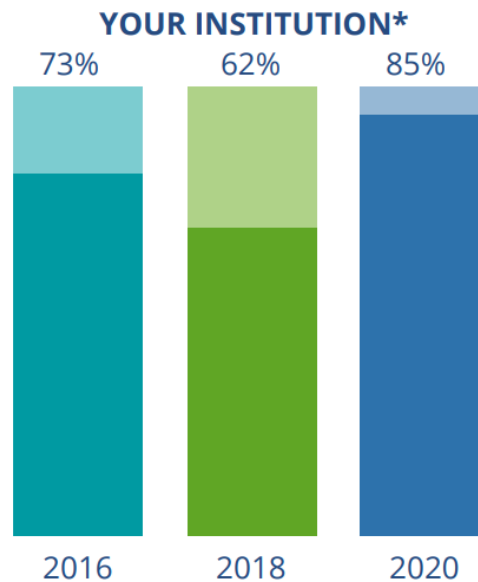
Kazi Joshua, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students
 Noad Leavitt, Director of the Career and Community Engagement Center

V. Landscape

Whitman is home to students from voting districts across the country, however many are from the state of Washington. Students tend to be interested in local, regional, and state politics. Whitman Votes has found it beneficial to use this interest in designing programming, like by hosting a debate in the fall 2021 for Walla Walla city council via Zoom. Members of the Walla Walla community and students were encouraged to attend. Whitman Votes worked in collaboration with the Whitman Debate Team, the Rhetoric Department, and Whitman Teaches the Movement. In effort to increase inclusion, ASL interpretation was provided. The debate had options for a student in-person watch party, hosted at Reid Campus Center, or for people to tune-in through Zoom.

VI. NSLVE Data

Whitman College Student Voting Rates



The Voting Rate is the percentage of eligible students who voted on Election Day. The voting rate is also the product of the registration and yield rates.

In 2020, students identifying as Asian had the lowest rate of voting at 35% and students identifying as Black had the second lowest rate of voting at 42%. Continuing from recent years, female students voted at a higher rate than male students. In 2020, the voting rate for men was 70% and 81% for women.

VII. Goals for Democratic Participation

We seek to keep our voting rate above 80% as we make progress towards having all students registered (91.3% in 2020) also vote when it gets to election day. We seek to improve voting among minority identifying students along with supporting first generation & working-class students. The Whitman Voting Coalition seeks to refine its understanding of barriers to voting by conducting a micro survey on Whitman students.

The Whitman Voting Coalition has sought to make all goals S.M.A.R.T.I.E. (specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic, time-bound, inclusive, and equitable). They should dually be renewable for replication by future Whitman Votes and Whitman Voting Coalition members. Finally, goals should be made accountable with identifiable leadership from either an administrator, club, or combination.

Time Frame	Goal	Leadership
August 2022	Move-in days voter registration guide	Juli Dunn
August 2022	Make voter registration part of orientation	Juli Dunn
Ongoing, by 2023	Notifications about voter registrations and elections	President's Office
Ongoing, by 2023	Whitman College statement for democratic participation featured on website	President's Office
Ongoing, by 2023	Civic holidays in school calendar and in Whitman Today newsletter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - September 20, 2022, National Voter Registration Day - Friday, October 28, 2022, Vote Early Day - Monday, November 7, 2022 Election Hero Day 	President's Office
May 2022	Welcome packet to incoming	Whitman Votes

	president from Whitman Votes describing progress, hopes for future, and appeal for collaboration	
2022	Submit request to first-year seminar faculty leadership to consider the education of democratic participation in content for first year students	Whitman Votes
Ongoing, by 2022	Advocate for the Wire to publish a voter guide, election related content, and results for local elections	Whitman Votes
2023	Seek advertising space in the Wire (\$4 per column in. 2021)	Whitman Votes
2023	Seek advertising on KDUB radio	Whitman Votes
August, 2022	Seek to organize an email newsletter to foster a campus discourse on elections and the value of democracy	Whitman Votes
2022	Enhance the Whitman Votes website to provide better voting education to out-of-state students	Whitman Votes
Spring 2022	Conduct micro survey on reasons students may not vote and request distribution help from affinity groups	Whitman Votes

VII. Evaluation Methods

The Whitman Voting Coalition will convene at least once per semester to evaluate progress and adjust goals in the Whitman College: Democratic Participation Action Plan. In addition, Whitman Votes will stay in constant communication with Noah Leavitt as its main contact into the Whitman College administration. Should the action plan fail to be satisfactory, Whitman Votes will request to convene a meeting with Whitman College administrators, including the college president, in order to gain more resources and investment from the college.

Sources

<https://www.whitman.edu/about>

<https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/whitman-college/whitman-college-nslve-report-2020/>

<https://www.whitman.edu/about/mission-constitution-and-bylaws>

<https://www.whitman.edu/admission-and-aid/learn-more-about-whitman/class-profile>

<https://www.evcnational.org/>