

Wilberforce University Campus Vote Project Grant Proposal

Executive Summary

Wilberforce University is the oldest private HBCU, located in rural Ohio, established in 1856. For decades, this campus has been the grounds for civic engagement and social equity, even before the terminology became popular. Partnering with the Campus Vote Project will allow us to raise awareness, educate, and prepare those in this community to be *Ballot Ready*. Our campus plan, designed by both students and staff, will encourage involvement and advocacy for voter registration, absentee ballots, candidate and issue education, and volunteerism.

Campus stakeholders will utilize our small, intimate, campus environment to communicate the importance of participating in the democratic process. HBCU's are hubs for impact when we use our collect voices for good. Our plan will focus on this effort. This work will start in September 2022 and be active throughout the academic year, which ends in May 2023. Civic engagement does not stop with elections.

Leadership

We have gathered several stakeholders to activate this initiative. The committee consists of the following:

Dr. Parris Carter, Vice President for Student Engagement and Success
Jalen Dickerson, Assistant Director of Student Activities
Alexander Murphy, Student Government Association President
Sianna Carr, Sophomore Class President
Zariah Norman, Freshman Class President
Tonyah Washington, Senior NPHC Representative

Commitment

The University has already partnered with the LINKS Organization to provide voter registration education. In the spring, we hosted a "Meet the Candidates" program for the local school board election. We have entered into a partnership with a US Congressman to implement a Center for Social Equity and Justice. This is just some of the work that demonstrates our commitment to fostering a democratic society, through the lens of education.

Landscape

We currently have students from thirty-two states, with different socia-economic backgrounds and interest. 72% of our students are considered First Generation Students, with over 80% of our students being Pell eligible. This data provides an outlook on why it is critical for our students to be involved in the democratic process. To understand issues affecting our communities is necessary for one to make change through a vote. This project will assist us in creating a campus of awareness and action.

Goals

For all eligible student voters, we have a goal of registering 320 students, which is approximately 65% of our campus population. Another goal is to get approximately seventy students to volunteer in some capacity. This would be 15% of the population was even more engagement. Lastly, to increase the interest and conversation around worldly matters on our campus through this initiative.

Strategy

We have a few large-scale events approaching, we would add a voter registration component. The Student Government Association will hold office hours, specifically for voter registration. We will invite the LINKS to come back to campus, create a Mental Health Program, with food and social outlets, to get students engaged.

We have a relationship with the Xenia Mayors office, so will use this opportunity to co-sponsor a “Get Ballot Ready” Event.

Market through promotional items, like a “AT WU... WE VOTE” campaign. T shirts, face masks, and flyers.

We will contract transportation to and from the poll locations.

Evaluation

Our Office of Institutional Effectiveness will collect data from the initiatives, to create a report for Student Government to share with students. Post-election, this will be used to generate a better understanding of the importance of a vote. The data on our campus engagement would also be included in the summary of overall campus climate perception from students.

Lastly, campus and civic engagement is an important variable in the social equity conversation. The new Center for Equity and Social Justice will use this data as well, for campus and beyond community conversations.