



Wilkes University 2022 Democratic Engagement Action Plan
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Executive Summary:

This nonpartisan democratic engagement action plan was developed by Wilkes University in Northeastern Pennsylvania for the 2022 election. The purpose of this action plan is to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter registration, education, and turnout in the 2022 midterm election. The goals for Wilkes University for the 2022 election are: provide a robust educational presence, encourage students to research candidates and voter processes by providing non-partisan sources, provide information to quell voter misinformation, register students to vote specifically locally, and streamline national partnerships into the total offering of civic engagement offerings and opportunities. This current plan will evolve over time to encompass student government representation and a more student-centric focus to alleviate barriers to student turnout.

Leadership:

Voter education and engagement is primarily coordinated through the civic engagement office with heavy collaboration with the political science department

Our leadership team includes the following:

Brian Bogert- Director of Institutional Research
Megan Boone Valkenburg - Civic Engagement Coordinator
James Conroy- Action Together NEPA
Dr. Greg Cant- Wilkes University President
Gabrielle D'Amico- Associate VP of marketing communications
Dr. Kyle Kreider- Professor/Chair Political Science
Rhonda Lambert- League of Women Voters
Dr. Ben Toll- Assistant Professor of Political Science

Commitment:

Presidential Commitment:

Wilkes University has been a signatory to the Higher Education Presidents' Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation since 2022.

Civic and community engagement is woven into the fabric of Wilkes University. Dr. Cant's endorsement of the All IN Democracy Challenge is the first step into institutionalizing civic engagement practices across campus.

Wilkes University Mission

To continue the Wilkes tradition of liberally educating our students for lifelong learning and success in a constantly evolving and multicultural world through a commitment to individualized attention, exceptional teaching, scholarship and academic excellence, while continuing the university's commitment to community engagement.

Our Vision

Wilkes University will provide exceptional educational experiences that transform students and develop innovations through scholarly activities that lead to national recognition and shape the world around us.

Our Values

Mentorship

Nurturing individuals to understand and act on their abilities while challenging them to achieve great things.

Scholarship

Advancing knowledge through discovery and research to better educate our constituents.

Diversity

Embracing differences and uniqueness through sincerity, awareness, inclusion and sensitivity.

Innovation

Promoting creative scholarly activities, programs, ideas and sustainable practices.

Community

Appreciating and collaborating with mutual respect to foster a sense of belonging.

Office of Civic Engagement Mission

The Civic Engagement Office at Wilkes University supports and enhances the academic, personal and professional development of students, staff and faculty of Wilkes University by coordinating service and leadership experiences across campus. The Civic Engagement Office serves as the epicenter for leveraging capacity building resources amongst campus and local, national and global community partners.

Vision Statement

The Civic Engagement Office of Wilkes University will fulfill its mission with a commitment to professionalism, an example of servant leadership, and an emphasis on

human relationships. Through dedication to continual growth, the Office will enable Wilkes University to remain a leader and model of civic engagement on all levels: locally, nationally, and globally. By providing resources and support for service initiatives, the practice of life-long service, and contribute to the development of thoughtful, invested, civically minded, self-aware individuals.

Statement of Values

The principle values that guide the Civic Engagement Office of Wilkes University in fulfilling its mission include:

- Personal Development
- Servant Leadership
- Experiential Learning
- Social Justice
- Action
- Advocacy
- Collaboration
- Team Work
- Creativity
- Confidence
- Self-knowledge
- Risk-taking
- Gratitude

Current Campus-Wide practices

At the beginning of every semester, concentrating in the Fall during Welcome Week events, voter registration and election information is distributed via the Dean of Students and Civic Engagement Office via our campus-wide Today@Wilkes news announcements and via personal email. Voter Registration opportunities and forms are provided leading up to National Voter Registration Day and community service volunteer fairs.

Landscape:

Wilkes University is a private 4-year institution and joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in Fri Jul 14 1905 00:00:00 GMT-0500 (Eastern Daylight Time).

Our campus demographic and voting data:

Wilkes University has 4781 students. Insert more data about in-state vs. out-of-state, residential vs commuter, and demographic breakdowns by age, race, etc. Of those 4781, 2243 (47%) are undergraduate, with the remaining 53% enrolled in graduate or first-professional programs. Of the undergraduates, approximately 73% are

from in-state, with the remaining 27% split between out-of-state (21.5%) and international (5.5%).

Among the graduate and first-professional students, 74% are from in-state, 25% are from out-of-state, and 1% international. The vast majority of graduate students are enrolled online, while undergraduate and first-professional student populations primarily participate in their classes face-to-face on campus.

Approximately 40% of full-time undergraduate students live on-campus. Ninety-two percent (92%) of undergraduate students, and 99% of first-professional (pharmacy) students are age 24 or younger. Approximately 95% of the graduate student population are between the ages of 25 and 64.

Wilkes University also enrolls a sizable proportion of first-generation college students (neither parent earned a bachelor's degree), typically about 45% of incoming first-year classes. Approximately 38% of the first-year class received a Pell grant.

Although 64% of the total enrolled student population are female, that is largely due to the large graduate student populations in nursing and education. Approximately 52% of the undergraduate and 63% of the first-professional populations are female.

In terms of race/ethnicity, approximately 73% of undergraduate students self-identify as White, followed by Hispanic (8%), International (5.5%), Black (5%), two or more races (3%), and Asian 2.5%). Most of the remaining 3% is comprised of students who did not identify their race (2.9%), with only a few students identifying as either American Indian/Alaska Native or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

About 83% of first-professional (pharmacy) students self-identify as White, followed by Asian (8%), and two or more races (3%). Most of the remaining 6% is comprised of students who did not identify their race (nearly 4%), followed by Hispanic (1.5%) and Black (just over 0.5%).

Nearly 78% of graduate students self-identify as White, followed by Black (11%), Hispanic (4%), Asian (3%), and two or more races (2%). Most of the remaining 2% is comprised of students who did not identify their race, with only a few students identifying as either American Indian/Alaska Native or International.

General Education Learning outcomes

Critical Thinking:

- use critical thinking to recall relevant information accurately, and structure verbal and written message content based on an accepted and coherent organizational pattern;

- paraphrase, synthesize, and analyze information from multiple sources to explain concepts;
- analyze information and apply it to new contexts; and
- utilize information to formulate and support a position.

Diversity Awareness:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the diversity of the local and global communities, including cultural, social, political, and economic differences;
- analyze, evaluate, and assess the impact of differences in race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, native language, sexual orientation, ableism, age, and religion; and
- utilize perspectives of diverse groups when conducting analyses, drawing conclusions, and making decisions.

NSLVE

Wilkes University has not yet authorized the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) so does not yet have campus voter registration and voter turnout data.

YESI

Being situated in the battleground state of Pennsylvania gives Wilkes a unique perspective on national and local elections. Wilkes has been the host to many presidents, gubernatorial, senate, and congressional hopefuls. The YESI has identified Pennsylvania as a key state in the Gubernatorial race (ranked 4th) and Senate race (ranked 7th). According to YESI, Young people rank around the average mark at 16% of the state's population, However, the youth registration rate (69%) is above average. Young people also had above-average voter turnout in both 2018 and 2020; in that most recent election, youth voted for President Biden by a 27 point margin, giving him a net advantage of more than 150,000 youth votes in a race decided by less than 35,000 votes.

Goals:

Our campus democratic engagement goals are:

Short term:

- Use the NSLVE and YESI data to get a better understanding and baseline of where our students are. There is a discrepancy between voter registration and voter turnout rates. According to the NSLVE, the national campus voter turnout rate in 2020 was 66% and the 2020 voter registration rate was 83%. Knowing what contributes to this discrepancy will help inform the tactics needed to ensure young people feel their voice matters, their action makes a difference, they are educated enough to dispel misinformation, and they show up at the polls.
- Wilkes University enjoys many distinctions- Achieving the "Voter Friendly" distinction is a goal for 2024.

Long term:

- Leveraging our board from campus and community experts to develop a strategy for institutionalizing the public good of developing civically competent students. Providing two lunch and learn “meet the candidate” forums.
- Engage the Luzerne board of elections to become part of the coalition by 2024. Specifically to engage college students as student poll workers.

Strategy:

Wilkes University will implement these strategies to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and student voter participation.

A study by Hart, Donnelly, Youniss & Atkins (2007) indicates that youth who are active in their community promote lifelong civic participation. High school students involved in community service are more likely to vote and volunteer in adulthood. The college years are specifically poised to further this engagement with well coordinated activities.

Wilkes University will continue to participate in:

- National Voter Registration Day - 45 students registered to vote for the first time on National Voter Registration Day 2022. Other students were able to update their registration to the campus polling location.
- National Voter Education Week - Announcements went out daily focusing on Voter education. Next year, it is a goal to send out specific faculty announcements to share in class- especially first year foundations.
- Vote Early Day - Celebrate PAs ability to cast early ballots and dispel misinformation about absentee voting.
- Election Hero Day - Celebrate poll workers. This would be the day our local elections board would have a lunch and learn for student poll workers.

Evaluation:

We will evaluate our action plan in the following ways:

Without the NSLVE information we only have information about voter registration. There were 173 voter registrations collected for the 2022 Fall semester. Moving forward voter registration will be collected via a website though [vote.org](https://www.vote.org).

Moving forward we will use the NSLVE information and other assessments from IR to assist in evaluation.

Other metrics will be attendance and survey feedback at voter engagement events and/or club sponsored events.

Reporting:

Our campus action plan will be posted on our campus page on ALL IN’s website <https://allinchallenge.org/campuses/wilkes-university/>.

Our institution has given ALL IN permission to publish our NSLVE reports which are posted on our campus page on ALL IN's website.

Additionally the action plan and initiatives and updates will be posted on the Civic Engagement website, University administration, community partners, both Civic Engagement newsletters, The Beacon (campus newspaper), Wilkes magazine, and possibly the local news/newspapers.