



# William Paterson University Democratic Engagement Action Plan: Post Fall 2020 Presidential Elections through 2023

*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 Dr. H. Mark Ellis, Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice; and Director, American Democracy Project to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at William Paterson University. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over Post Fall 2020 Presidential Elections through 2023, on and around our campus in Wayne, New Jersey.

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

- Faculty
- Civic/Political/Community Engagement Center
- Student Affairs Staff
- Academic Affairs Staff

The mission of our initiative is:

- The American Democracy Project (ADP) is a multi-campus initiative that seeks to create intellectual and experiential civic engagement opportunities for undergraduates enrolled at public institutions of higher learning. ADP is a project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), The New York Times, and the Carnegie

Foundation. The goal of the project is to produce graduates who understand and are committed to engaging in meaningful actions as democratic citizens.

## William Paterson University's ADP and Civic Engagement Events Action Plan 2021-2023

Note: When reporting our campus data later in this report document link, numbers that are reported as raw numbers appear as percentages by your system and are intended to be actual numbers for those categories and not percentages.

Since Spring 2021, William Paterson University's American Democracy Project (ADP) has been planning for the Fall 2022 Midterm Elections and what will follow leading up to the Fall 2024 Presidential Elections. Our campus team includes partnerships with Academic Affairs, Student Development, Campus Activities and Leadership, the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, the Cheng Library, and the Department of Political Science, Legal and Urban Studies.

The purpose of our work is to develop well-informed students who understand and participate in civic engagement while practicing their rights, roles and responsibilities as action-oriented citizens in our democracy with the intent of social betterment for all.

Our initiatives bring our campus community together around our shared work of civic engagement so that we will work collaboratively to offer a wide range of activities, lectures, and programs to excite our students about the power of their voices, their visions, and their votes. We aim for our students to realize their strength in shaping the world that they want to live in and the one that they want the next generation to inherit.

Due to on-going institutional restructuring over the past three years, the position for the Director of the American Democracy Project at William Paterson University is no longer offered as an on-load or over-load administrative assignment. This faculty individual now coordinates these activities as a part of service expectations for the University. Given growing class sizes and more faculty responsibilities, we have to recalibrate our programming and plan strategically. In addition, with the Office of Campus Activities and Leadership also down four full-time staff members who used to do much of this work, the University is currently discussing how best to move forward with our campus ADP and Civic Engagement work while keeping our momentum.

Please see below for what we are planning for Spring 2023. During the Spring 2023 semester, our committee will have a better idea of what our new division of Enrollment Management will look like and what it will include along with how this newly redesigned unit will work in tandem with Academic Affairs and Student Development to infuse and streamline our ADP and Civic Engagement programming into the University's co-curricular programs where students begin immediate participation in these activities from admissions and continue to participate in them until they graduate. At the end of our Institution's restructuring plan, which should be completed by the end of the Spring 2023 semester, we will have a better sense of our resources and will

plan accordingly as we approach the 2024 Presidential Elections. We will continue to educate our students on the importance of all elections including campus elections and the elections of local organizations and governments.

In Fall 2023, drawing from our campus expertise, we will present and co-sponsor a campus-wide series of events on issues ranging from climate change, to closing the achievement gap in higher education, to on-going criminal justice reform, to human rights, to access to healthcare, to the work of BLM, to immigration, to LGBTQIA+ rights, and to our on-going campus work on decolonization our Institution. This work fosters the creation of a campus culture that provides an atmosphere of belonging, diversity, equity, and inclusion. These and other pressing issues are always on the ballot and need to be constantly interrogated, interrupted, dismantled, and discussed as we educated our community to make informed decisions when voting.

William Paterson University American Democracy Project (ADP) Goals 2021-2023:

William Paterson University's American Democracy Project (ADP) and Civic Engagement aim to:

1. Bring all campus stakeholders together to educate our community in understanding political processes, issues, and events;
2. Educate our campus community on issues impacting the world, America, and local communities;
3. Educate our campus community on: voter registration, deadlines and options to registering and voting; that all elections matters including campus elections, local and state elections, and midterm elections; knowing the issues and candidates on ballots; and to recognize the power of citizens' voices, and that every vote counts and every vote matters;
4. Link our programming to the University's Core Curriculum (UCC) Area 5: Civic Engagement; and to
5. Develop assessment measures to evaluate the efficacy of our on-going and future work.

Spring 2023 Events (Planning/Forthcoming)

- 01/2023: Politically Speaking: A Student Town Hall Meeting
- 02/2023: International Politics and Global Affairs (Faculty Presentation)
- 03/2023: Women, Politics, Law, and Criminal Justice Institutions (Faculty Presentation)
- 04/ 2023: Politics and the Economy: How are Americans Effectuated (Faculty Presentation)

- 05/2023: ADP and Civic Engagement Campus Program Assessment Survey
- 05/2023: Pre-Summer Rally: Staying Involved and Identifying Local Civic Engagement Opportunities

#### Fall 2022 Events

Please see Professor Gary Marks' Voting 101 Guide for events.

- Voting 101 Guide:  
<https://guides.wpunj.edu/Voting101>

Please note that students who sign into this Voting 101 Guide are counted as participants in NJ Ballot Bowl. We report the numbers every Friday up to election day. Any student who registers to vote through WP Connect / All In Challenge, are automatically counted for Ballot Bowl.

- 11/30/2022: Decolonizing the Institution: Where We Stand (Faculty Presentation)
- 11/16/2022: Backlash Politics and the Struggle for a Multicultural Democracy (Guest Lecture)
- 10/29/2022: Homecoming Tailgate Party with ADP and Civic Engagement Giveaways (Faculty Tabling)
- 10/27/2022: Voting 101 Interactive Demonstration (Faculty Presentation)
- Voter Registration Tabling Cheng Library and Student Center Fall 2022:

1. 11/03/2022
2. 11/01/2022
3. 10/11/2022
4. 10/06/2022
5. 10/04/2022
6. 09/29/2022
7. 09/27/2022
8. 09/20/2022
9. 09/19/2022
10. 09/15/2022
11. 09/06/2022
12. 09/01/2022

• 10/06/2022: Reproductive Rights (Guest Speaker)

• 09/22/2022: Constitution Day 2022 Event (Guest Speaker)

#### Events Since the Fall 2020 Presidential Elections

• 04/28/2022: Your Vote, Our Future: Why Midterm Elections Matter (Faculty Panel Presentation)

• 04/07/2022: Change the Subject: Documentary Discussion With Film Maker (Guest Presentation)

• 01/28/2022: Dr. Martin Luther King Conference: What Service Means (Guest Presenter and Panel Discussion)

• 11/30/2021: The Political Pulse of a Nation: Where Does America Stand? (Guest Presenters)

• 09/10/2021: Deadline to Register to Vote and Casting a Ballot Campaign (Campus Activities and Cheng Library)

• 09/05/2021: #DoublePell Campaign (Various Campus Offices)

• 04/08/2021: William Paterson University SGA and NJ Election Information Session (Faculty Presentation)

• 04/08/2021: Policing BLM vs. Policing the Insurrection (Faculty Presentation)

• 03/14/2021: Celebrating Women's Achievements (Various Presenters)

• 02/24/2021: Celebrating Democratic Communities (Various Faculty Presenters)

• 02/22/2021: The Role of Science and Government in Managing COVID-19 (Public Service Announcement Video Lectures Created by Faculty)

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7FvXh1TE5E&t=2s>

2. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L\\_Y6A3q7URM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_Y6A3q7URM)

• 02/16/2021: Student-to-Student: How Pioneers Make a Better Tomorrow (Student Presenters)

• 02/05/2021: Is this who we are: Insurrection Teach-In (Various  
Campus Presenters)

• 11/05/2020: Post 2020 Election Dialogue (Guest  
Speaker)

***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

Dr. H. Mark Ellis will be overseeing our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. They will be supported in this work by:

- Professor Gary Marks runs civic engagement programming through the library and is extremely important in doing the week-to-week work. Ms. Donna Minnich Spuhler is the Director of Campus Activities and Leadership and many of our programs are deployed through her office.

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, Administration in the President's Office with expertise in politics and governmental affairs

Our group plans to meet 2-3 times a semester at Via Zoom and usually on a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday

In the event that our leadership leaves campus or is no longer involved in this work, we have a succession plan in place. Professor Gary Marks and Ms. Donna Minnich Spuhler

***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. As stated in our mission statement, We are revising our MS and will include the concept of civic engagement. I am the co-chair of this institutional committee and this is a part of our new strategic plan. We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values. They state, "Existing CORE VALUES At the core of everything the University does, the following five values define its ethos and fundamental beliefs: Academic Excellence As individuals and as an institution, we seek to model and to impart to our students the highest standards of knowledge, inquiry, preparation, academic freedom and integrity, as well as an expanded sense of what an individual can accomplish. Creating Knowledge We strive to expand the boundaries of knowledge and creative expression in and outside of our classrooms. We help students think imaginatively and critically and encourage innovative solutions to social issues, the challenges of ecological sustainability and economic growth and ethical dilemmas confronting our communities, regions, nation and world. Student Success Students are our reason for being. We judge our effectiveness, progress and success in terms of how well we provide a platform for their personal, intellectual and professional development, enabling them to transform their lives and become civically engaged. Diversity We value and promote the expression of all aspects of diversity. We maintain a campus culture that welcomes diversity of personal circumstances and experiences and prepares students to become effective citizens in an increasingly diverse, interdependent and pluralistic society. Citizenship We challenge our students, faculty, staff and alumni to recognize their responsibility to improve the world around them, starting locally and expanding globally. We offer critical expertise to New Jersey and our region, while our scholarship and public engagement address pressing community needs in the region and beyond in keeping with our public mission. Approved by the William Paterson University Board of Trustees March 19, 2012."

In addition, our campus has mentioned civic learning and democratic engagement in their strategic plan, stating Our Strategic Plan is almost finalized and will be approved by our board soon and will have the concepts of civic engagement included under one of the key pillars of this new strategic plan. We also have had a senior leader commit to civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.

On campus, we've seen:

- Voter education resources
- Political clubs or student organizations
- Campus leaders promoting voting
- On campus polling place
- Voter registration tables
- Protests / rallies / walkouts
- Signage promoting Election Day
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On campus, we've experienced:

- Voting in student body elections



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

The following tables provide a brief overview of the landscape of our campus. This information is based on data collected from Fall 2022 when our total student enrollment was 9,070.

**Enrollment Data:**

Undergraduate	Graduate	Full Time	Part Time
6,604.00%	2,466.00%	3,312.00%	5,758.00%

In-State	Out-of-State	International Students	On-Campus Residents	Commuter
8,506.00%	519.00%	143.00%	1,236.00%	7,834.00%

**Gender Demographics:**

Men	Women	Non-Binary	Transgender
3,174.00%	5,888.00%	0.00%	0.00%

**Age:**

18-21	22-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50+
3,442.00%	1,834.00%	1,434.00%	1,397.00%	646.00%	317.00%

**Racial Demographics:**

Asian	American Indian / Alaska Native	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	2 or More Races
725.00%	5.00%	1,588.00%	2,761.00%	10.00%	3,416.00%	267.00%

Our institution has also utilized the following data gathering tools:

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- National Survey of Student Engagement
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They help to inform our institution's civic learning and democratic engagement efforts by This is used to set KPI's, develop student programming, and to offer academic curricular offerings in Civic Engagement requirement in General Education: University Core Curriculum.

***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:

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- We don't have sustainable or consistent funding.
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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.
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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 someone whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have a coalition of people who are positioned to implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have processes in place for registering large percentages of our students.
- We have ways in which we communicate voting information to our students.
- We use the resources readily available to develop and implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
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- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan.

- We are able to engage student leaders for the leadership of our initiative.
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With this in mind, we have set the three goals that we would like to achieve over the next academic year:

Please see our Action Plan submitted on page one.

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

1. Include students in program development and campus activity offerings;
2. Assess program efficacy of Civic Engagement graduation requirement;
3. Include more local community organizations as partners in our campus programming;
4. Secure crowd-funding or other revenue streams for our programs/events; and
5. Cohort goals for voter registration, voter turnout, and voter education: (1st year student pledge; 2nd year student pledge; 3rd year student pledge; 4th year student pledge; and graduate student pledge): What is each cohort's commitment to voter education, registration, voter turnout, civic engagement/paying it forward? We would like to include a unit of study in our First-Year Seminar called: Will Power 101.

***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):

- Unsure how to answer: Please see our Action Plan on page 1.

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

- Unsure how to answer: Please see our Action Plan on page 1.

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

- Unsure how to answer: Please see our Action Plan on page 1.

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

- Unsure how to answer: Please see our Action Plan on page 1.

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

- Unsure how to answer: Please see our Action Plan on page 1.

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

- Unsure how to answer: Please see our Action Plan on page 1.

***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 2019. In 2019 our registration rate was 76.6. In comparison to the data from four years prior in our NSLVE report, this rate increased.

In 2019, our voting rate was 40.3 and our voting rate among registered students was 52.6. During this year, our voting rate was higher than the national average.

In our NSLVE report, we had racial data for the following groups:

- Asian
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- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- 2 or More Races

For the racial groups that have recent voter turnout data, we saw the following groups increase in voter turnout compared to four years ago.

- Asian
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- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- 2 or More Races

All departments showed an increase.

***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 members of our campus coalition
- Email to campus administration
- Email to the President
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We plan to share this Action Plan externally when it is complete by taking the following actions:

- Post on the campus website
- Release in a public statement
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We will collect feedback on this plan by:

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