

STRENGTHENING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning,
Political Engagement, and Voter Participation Among College Students

SECOND EDITION, AUGUST 2019

About the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition

Colleges and universities are leaders in cultivating generations of informed, engaged community members needed for democracy to thrive. They are designed to educate and develop citizens. With nearly 20 million college students in the United States, institutions of higher education have a responsibility to help their students overcome the structural and psychological obstacles that new voters often face. Additionally, they can instill the importance of democratic participation, which can inspire lifelong participation in our democracy.

Recognizing the importance of getting college students more engaged in our democratic processes, the Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) Coalition was founded in February 2016 to design and advance a shared agenda around student voting and political learning in higher education.

The Students Learn Students Vote Coalition convenes nearly 400 nonpartisan organizations from across the country. Since its founding, the coalition has established a speakers bureau to coordinate programming for higher education leaders, helps to align partner efforts across thousands of higher education institutions, advocates for new policies that support student voters, and established a joint development strategy to capitalize a subgrant fund focused on catalyzing innovation and scaled impact in the field. The SLSV Coalition is coordinated by a team at the young adult advocacy organization Young Invincibles and governed by a rotating advisory board of representatives from coalition partner organizations, higher education institutions and associations, local election officials, and students.

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Foreward

Since the first edition of the Strengthening American Democracy guide was published in the fall of 2017, more than 270 colleges and universities have published campus democratic engagement action plans to support their work to ensure that students are engaged in nonpartisan civic learning, political engagement, and voting. Through this process, we've collectively learned more about the important work of diverse coalitions – on campuses, across campuses, and in regional, state, and national partnerships – in creating opportunities to learn together and to improve democratic practice and culture. The creation of both versions of this resource were developed by members of the Students Learn Student Vote Coalition (SLSV).

The Students Learn Students Vote Coalition was formed in 2015. This coalition comprises nonpartisan organizations dedicated to helping college faculty, staff, and students implement data-driven curricular and co-curricular strategies for increasing civic learning and democratic engagement. With the common mission of ensuring a more representative democracy, the SLSV Coalition partners work in collaboration with institutions of higher education to increase the number of college students participating in local, state, and federal elections.

The SLSV Coalition believes that higher education institutions and personnel have a responsibility to graduate civically informed and democratically active students, yet research shows that less than half of voting eligible college students routinely participate in federal elections. While voting is only one indicator of civic engagement, it is fundamental and measurable. The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) found that 48.3 percent of undergraduate students, at 1,023 higher education institutions, voted in the 2016 presidential election — 11.9 percentage points lower than the national rate among all eligible voters in that election, though 3.2 percentage points higher than in 2012.

We owe it to students, and society, to do a better job. Higher education needs to play a more active role in graduating civically informed and democratically active students— students with the knowledge, skills, and values to solve the country's most pressing problems and who understand that in order to have a strong and truly representative democracy, they need to participate fully.

We hope you find this guide and rubric useful and that they make the work you do with students easier. The guide is intended as a template for developing a campus action plan that meets the needs of your particular institution. The guiding questions in each of the nine sections should help you reflect on current practices and realities and consider potential next steps and ways to drive practice deeper.

The guide was developed based on best practices and informed by our collective experience in higher education and political organizing. We look forward to your feedback and thank you for all that you do to educate the next generation of civically informed and democratically active citizens.

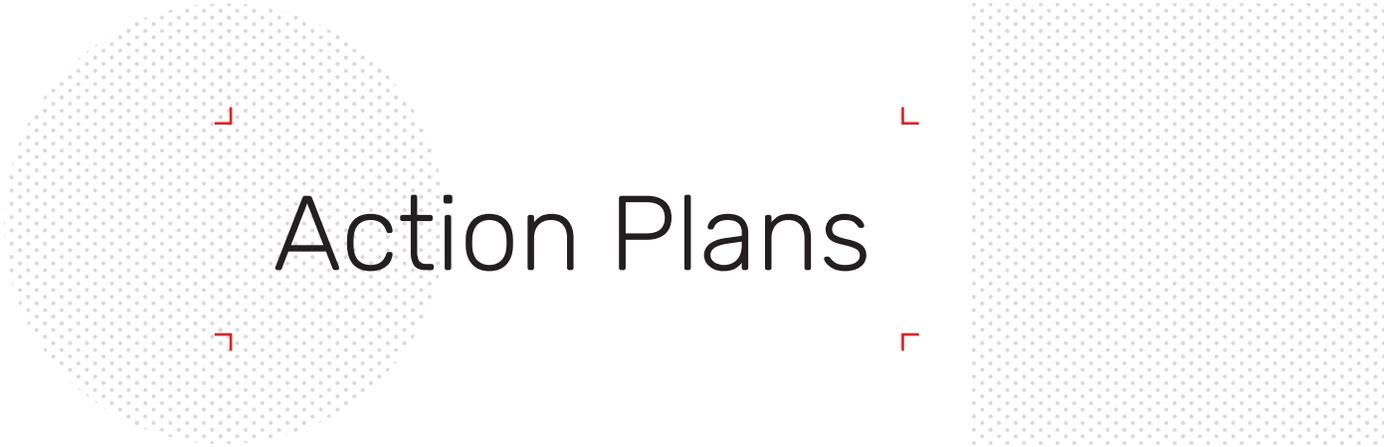
REVISION CO-CHAIRS:

Jennifer Domagal-Goldman

Executive Director, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
Civic Nation

Stephanie King

Director of Civic Engagement and Knowledge
Community Initiatives
NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher
Education



Action Plans

Introduction

This is a guide designed to help faculty, staff, students, and other campus stakeholders write strong action plans to increase nonpartisan civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation on college and university campuses. It provides a framework for developing and documenting institutional goals and strategies for fostering a civic ethos on campus and institutionalizing elements of democratic engagement into the curriculum and cocurriculum that persists regardless of election cycles. This guide is not meant to be prescriptive and should be adapted to your institutional context.

Completing the action planning process can help an institution assess current efforts, set short-term and long-term goals, plan and implement strategies and tactics, assess progress towards goals, and continuously work to improve democratic engagement efforts. This work can and should be collaborative and occur in a team setting. Depending on the campus, this may be accomplished in a committee, coalition, task force, or working group. The hope is that through this process, the institution will be able to garner additional support and resources, change culture, improve systems and policies, build lasting capacity, and ultimately institutionalize efforts.

This second edition of the guide also includes, for the first time, a self-assessment rubric. The rubric is designed to help campuses evaluate the depth and quality of their action plan across the nine suggested categories. Institutions are encouraged to use the rubric as a step in a continuous improvement process as they institutionalize democratic engagement.

It is strongly suggested that completed action plans be shared on the institution's website, along with campus National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) reports. Together, these demonstrate an institution's belief in transparency and its commitment to broadening and deepening civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation.

The Action Planning Process

An action plan is a roadmap that documents specific strategies for starting new programs and initiatives, or improving existing ones. It takes goals and breaks them down into steps so that desired results can be achieved. It is a documented strategy to meet objectives, as well as to increase efficiency and accountability. Action planning is the process used to develop and document the action plan.

The following steps are a guide for carrying out the action planning process in general. These steps can be used for any initiative and should be amended to work within an institution's culture and surrounding community.

1

ASSIGN LEADER(S)

Action planning is a group exercise, not an individual task. For best results, choose a leader to facilitate the process. The leader may be internal, though an external facilitator can provide a neutral voice in discussions.

2

ASSEMBLE A TEAM AND DEVELOP A TIMELINE

A team helps establish a collective vision. Assemble a diverse team representing appropriate constituent groups, internal and external. Those involved should have clear expectations of their roles.

3

ASSESS CURRENT WORK AND OUTCOMES

Knowing what is already occurring, and to what extent, allows for discovering strengths and areas for improvement.

4

SET GOALS

Goal setting provides a roadmap to achieving desired results.

5

PLAN WORK

Strategically planning activities assists in accomplishing goals. Intentionally design activities to achieve goals.

6

DOCUMENT PLAN

An action plan captures the goals and activities in writing.

7

IMPLEMENT PLAN

Mobilize resources and execute actions.

8

ASSESS PROGRESS TOWARDS GOALS

A plan may take a few years to complete; therefore, it should be reviewed at least yearly to ensure that progress towards goals is being made. Use data to analyze the impact of activities and determine next steps.

9

REVIEW THE PLAN

Reviewing the plan allows for making adjustments along the way if progress is not being made towards goals. If change was successful, how can it be expanded? If change was not successful, what adjustments should be made? Revise the plan to ensure effectiveness.

10

REPEAT

Continuous improvement is a process that requires frequent review to ensure desired goals are achieved.

Guiding Principles

These principles should be kept in mind as the institution develops its action plan. A strong action plan, designed to increase civic learning and democratic engagement among college students should be:



COMPREHENSIVE

Strategies and tactics should focus on local, state, and federal elections; include election and non-election related programming; and be nonpartisan. Strategies and tactics should focus on registering, educating, and turning out eligible students; and engaging all students in civic learning and the democratic process.

CONTINUOUS

Strategies and tactics should occur every semester or term of every year, not just during an election cycle.

INTEGRATED

Strategies and tactics should be curricular and cocurricular.

INTENTIONAL

Goals, strategies, and tactics should be informed by data and evidence-based research.

PERVASIVE

Strategies and tactics should occur across campus and reach all students.

DEEP

Strategies and tactics should not be marginal or add-ons. They should be embedded in the curriculum and co-curriculum of the campus and tied to the institution's learning outcomes.

INNOVATIVE

Strategies and tactics should improve existing efforts and include new and original ideas.

INCLUSIVE

Campus coalition, goals, strategies and tactics authentically bring traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

EQUITABLE

Goals, strategies, and tactics should focus efforts on and distribute resources to campus populations that have historically engaged in civic learning, democratic engagement, and voter participation at lower levels.

Key Terms

Definitions of frequently used terms are included to provide a common understanding of terminology used within higher education and this document. The SLSV Coalition recognizes that these terms carry different connections and interpretations depending on an institution's context; regardless the goal is to ensure that through this document all parties are informed of the meaning of the words as they are used in the action planning context.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

is any act intended to improve or influence a community through deliberation, collaboration, and reciprocal relationships and community-building.

CIVIC LEARNING

is promoting the education of students for engaged citizenship through democratic participation in their communities, respect and appreciation of diversity, applied learning, and social responsibility.

CURRICULUM

is an academic course of study; the knowledge students are expected to learn in the classroom.

DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

is a combination of promoting the education of students for engaged participation through democratic participation in their communities, respect and appreciation of diversity, applied learning, and social responsibility.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

is civic engagement that involves democratic processes (e.g., when an organization puts a matter to a vote and there is democratic participation).

NATIONAL STUDY OF LEARNING, VOTING, AND ENGAGEMENT (NSLVE)

offers colleges and universities an opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates and, for interested campuses, a closer examination of their campus climate for political learning and engagement and correlations between specific student learning experiences and voting. <https://idhe.tufts.edu/nslve>

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

is civic engagement that emphasizes governmental institutions and/or power (e.g., voting in a local, state, or federal election). Participating in the political process also occurs by making one's own opinions and beliefs known outside of the electoral process (e.g., protesting, campaigning, performing jury duty, running for office, community organizing).

S.M.A.R.T.I.E.

is an acronym used to guide goal setting - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound, Inclusive, and Equitable.

VOTER REGISTRATION

is the process of successfully completing the application to be able to cast a ballot in an election.

VOTER EDUCATION

is the curricular and co-curricular activities offered to students and designed to facilitate civic learning, political engagement, and increase participation in elections.



Template and
Guiding Questions

This section provides a summary of the campus democratic engagement action plan. It should be clear, concise, and allow the reader to easily understand what the campus is doing and why. It distills the plan into just a few paragraphs or pages so that the reader can rapidly become acquainted with the action plan. Consider sketching out an executive summary as a starting point and then revisiting and finalizing as the final step in your action plan development.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Who developed this action plan?
- 2 What is this action plan for and what does it seek to accomplish?
- 3 Where will this action plan be implemented? E.g., Situate this work at an institution including the number of campuses and the state the institution is located in.
- 4 Why was this action plan developed? How does this plan tie to broader institutional norms/values/strategic plans?
- 5 When does this action plan start and end? Is this an action plan focused on the short-term and long-term goals? When will it be updated?
- 6 How will this action plan be implemented? Who's in charge? What unit/office/division will be facilitating the effort?

› The following questions should be addressed in the executive summary.

The leadership section of a campus action plan describes the team that is responsible and accountable for the institution's efforts to increase civic learning and democratic engagement among its students. Designating a leader(s) and establishing a working group that includes a variety of stakeholders increases the likelihood of success, long-term sustainability, and the institutionalization of civic learning and democratic engagement efforts on campus. Including representatives from on-campus departments and student groups, as well as off-campus organizations, ensures efforts are collaborative and coordinated, and that a variety of perspectives are taken into consideration. The working group should reflect your campus and community, with intentional inclusion of diverse voices. Campus coalitions can grow and evolve over time to best meet the civic learning and democratic engagement needs of your institution. The group should strive to build a leadership team over time that is reflective of your campus community including diverse partners. Beyond the recruitment of diverse working group members, it's important to consider and describe how exactly members will be involved in order to leverage their strengths and promote inclusivity as central to your success.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Who are the working group members and how are they involved?
 - a What academic departments and which faculty within academic affairs are involved? (e.g., political science professor(s), fine arts department)
 - b What units within student affairs are involved and which administrators are involved? (e.g., office of new student involvement, director of student life)
 - c Which students and student organizations are involved? (e.g., student government, issue-based student orgs)
 - d What community and/or national (private, nonprofit, government) organizations are involved? (e.g., League of Women Voters, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge)
 - e Is the working group coordinating with the local election office? If so, with whom and how?

GUIDING QUESTIONS, cont.

- 2 Who (individual and/or office) is coordinating and overseeing the institution's work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement?
- 3 What are working group members' unique strengths and, with those in mind, what are their responsibilities?
- 4 If you're not already working together, how will you recruit or select working group members?
- 5 How is the working group inclusive of different campus and community stakeholders?
- 6 Does the working group have the support of upper administrators who can help advocate on behalf of the working group?
- 7 What other offices on campus need to be involved? (e.g., website or portal management, registrar, university relations)
- 8 How often will the working group meet or communicate?

This section describes how the institution demonstrates its commitment to increasing civic learning and democratic engagement. A public institutional commitment is critical for improvement across campus; it signals to all stakeholders that these efforts are significant and long-term. Before action planning begins, it is important for the working group to first explore the motivations for the commitment and context within which it has been made. This process includes identifying how civic learning and democratic engagement are already reflected in existing institutional documents, plans, and culture.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How does the institution and its leadership demonstrate commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement? Is there an explicit, visible commitment on the part of the governing board, president/chancellor, and senior leadership?
 - a Is the commitment communicated within the institution? To whom, specifically, and how?
 - b Is the commitment communicated outside the institution (i.e., to external stakeholders and the general public)? To whom, specifically, and how?
- 2 Is educating for civic learning and democratic engagement a pervasive - part of institutional culture? Is it ongoing, consistent, systematic, and sustainable across programs, departments, and the entire institution? How do you know?
- 3 How is the institution's commitment reflected in existing statements and documents (e.g., mission statement, vision, core values, strategic plan)?
- 4 What are the institution's overall civic, democratic, and/or political learning outcomes? Is there a process in place to ensure that outcomes are measured and met?
- 5 How is educating for civic learning and democratic engagement included in the general education curriculum?
- 6 How is educating for civic learning and democratic engagement included in the co-curriculum?

This section describes the current campus landscape, including climate, programming, and student engagement. A self-assessment of current work and data (e.g., established learning outcomes, assessment data, curricular and cocurricular activities, resources) provides the institution with a comprehensive understanding of current efforts and student engagement with those efforts. It also provides the opportunity for the institution to evaluate those efforts and determine areas of strength and those needing improvement.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Are civic learning and democratic engagement overall campus learning outcomes?
- 2 What does assessment data show about the political climate and democratic engagement on campus? How does this data compare to that of peer institutions?

ASSESSMENT DATA EXAMPLES

› **Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement** bcsse.indiana.edu

BCSSE collects data about entering college students' high school academic and co-curricular experiences, as well as their expectations for participating in educationally purposeful activities during the first college year.

› **National Survey of Student Engagement** nsse.indiana.edu

NSSE annually collects information at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities about first-year and senior students' participation in programs and activities that institutions provide for their learning and personal development. The results provide an estimate of how undergraduates spend their time and what they gain from attending college.

› **The National Inventory for Institutional Infrastructure on Community Engagement (NI³CE)**

<https://www.brown.edu/swearer/niiice>

NI³CE or NIIICE is a free institutional assessment tool to map infrastructure of campuses and community engagement centers vis-à-vis different types of institutions who were successful in completing the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification.

› **Higher Education Research Institute & Cooperative Institutional Research Program** heri.ucla.edu

CIRP is a national longitudinal study of the American higher education system. The CIRP longitudinal program consists of the Freshman Survey (TFS), Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey, Diverse Learning Environments Survey (DLE), and the College Senior Survey (CSS).

› **National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement** idhe.tufts.edu/nslve

NSLVE offers colleges and universities an opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates and, for interested campuses, a closer examination of their campus climate for political learning and engagement, as well as correlations between specific student learning experiences and voting.

› **Community College Survey of Student Engagement** ccsse.org

CCSSE provides information on student engagement. The survey asks questions that assess institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated highly with student learning and student retention.

- 3 How is civic learning and democratic engagement present in the curriculum?

- a In which courses is it taught?
- b In which courses is it listed as a learning outcome?

- 4 How is civic learning and democratic engagement present in the co-curriculum?

- a In which departments is this included?
- b What initiatives, programs, and activities focus on this?

- 5 What internal barriers (e.g., limited funding, staff resistance, lack of leadership) prevent the institution from being successful?

- 6 What external barriers (e.g., election laws, voter ID laws, lack of proximity to polling location) prevent the institution from being successful?

- 7 What resources are available to help the institution be successful?

- 8 What additional resources are needed to help the institution be successful?

This section describes what the institution hopes to achieve. By setting goals, the institution can plan activities to achieve results and assess impact. It is suggested that prior to setting goals, there should be a clear vision of what the institution wants to accomplish and what it wants students to learn. With a clear vision, goals can be set to achieve the desired outcomes. Long-term goals help the institution achieve its vision – what impact does the institution seek to have? Long-term goals should be tied to the institution’s mission and learning outcomes. Short-term goals break long-term goals into manageable parts. Goals should be S.M.A.R.T.I.E. – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound, inclusive, and equitable. Goals should reflect the number of people involved and the resources available.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

LONG-TERM GOALS

- 1 What is the long-term vision the institution hopes to achieve?
- 2 What knowledge, skills, and capacities (learning outcomes) does the institution want students to achieve and graduate with in order to be active and informed?
- 3 What are the outcomes the institution wants to accomplish over the next 10 years?
- 4 Are the goals S.M.A.R.T.I.E. (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound, inclusive, and equitable)?

EXAMPLES

- › By 2028, the institution will increase student voting rates by 20 percentage points over 2016 turnout levels, with students of color voting at the same rates as white students.
- › By 2024, add electoral engagement to “First Year 101” class syllabi as a learning objective to the course.
- › By 2024, incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into the general education curriculum.

SHORT-TERM GOALS

- 1 What outcomes does the institution need to reach during the next three years to stay on track to reach its longer-term vision?
- 2 What resources does the institution need to ensure its longer-term vision is within reach?
- 3 Who does the institution need to involve in order to reach its longer-term vision?

EXAMPLES

- › By the fall of 2020, the institution will register 80% of students to vote during orientation.
- › By 2020, the institution will incorporate civic learning and democratic engagement into 25% of courses.
- › By 2020, the institution will institutionalize the practice of the president sending a letter to all students every semester about the importance of being civically engaged and participating in elections.
- › By the end of 2019, the institution will raise \$25,000 from alumni to be used to carry out the tactics in this plan to increase nonpartisan voter engagement.
- › By the end of 2019, the institution will establish a relationship with the local election official and invite them to join our working group.

The strategy section of a campus action plan summarizes how the institution intends to build institutional culture and infrastructure that supports civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation. Put simply, it outlines a strategic plan for this work. A campus's strategy should include a plan for achieving short-term and long-term goals and should consider means of achieving what is laid out in the other segments of your action plan. Developing a strategy should consider various institutional departments, programmatic efforts, and, ultimately, the infusion of a broad civic ethos into the mission of the institution.

Strategy can be infused into the institution's culture and infrastructure through a variety of methods; there is no one methodology for all campuses to follow. For instance, while many campuses are able to quickly articulate a variety of programmatic approaches, (e.g., listing tabling days for voter registration or campus debate watch parties), it is just as important for campuses to be exploring long-term strategy. What resources are needed for the institution to create a cultural shift in which democratic learning and participation become a part of everyday engagement?

In summary, this strategy section should describe shorter-term tactics for improving student voter registration, education, and turnout during the semester of an election (e.g., by including elections in a campus calendar of events). Equally important, however, is to consider and describe long-term strategies for further developing a campus ethos and set of experiences that help students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for full participation in our democracy. Such strategies might consider staffing, curricular offerings, cross-campus collaborations, and ways in which civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation are woven into campus communications and campus-wide events from orientation to convocation and graduation.

SHORT-TERM GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the work? What are the planned activities and initiatives?
- 2 Who is responsible for implementing each planned strategy and tactic?
- 3 Who is the audience for each strategy and tactic? What methods will be used to make strategies and tactics accessible to diverse populations?
- 4 Where will each activity occur on and off campus?
- 5 When will the work happen and what preparations are required beforehand to make it happen?
- 6 Why is each strategy and tactic being implemented and what is the goal for each activity?

LONG-TERM GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How would you describe a campus committed to educating for civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation? What would it look like and how would you know this commitment existed?
- 2 How might your institution deepen capacity and competence related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in tandem with civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation?
- 3 What will it take to build toward this vision of sustained commitment beyond a single election cycle (e.g., resources, curricular offerings, staffing)?
- 4 Where does work need to happen in order to institutionalize this vision (e.g., faculty senate, student government, division of student affairs)? Who is responsible within your working group for catalyzing or leading each effort? One step further, how would you know that this commitment has been institutionalized?
- 5 On what timeline will efforts to enact this vision occur? (Think in terms of years; e.g., in year one your institution will accomplish what? In year two your institution will accomplish what? And so on...).

Run by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University, the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) is a one-of-a-kind service to colleges and universities and a national database for research on student participation in democracy. More than 1,100 U.S. institutions across all fifty states and every institution type participate in NSLVE. For each of these campuses, IDHE provides a free report containing aggregate voter registration and voting rates for their students. With a database of 10 million de-identified records for the 2012, 2014, and 2016 (and soon, 2018) elections, the NSLVE database is a robust research tool. IDHE also produces national, regional, and other comparative analyses as part of its research to advance political learning in higher education.

Participation in NSLVE is free, easy, and protective of student privacy. To join NSLVE for the first time, or to reauthorize your campus before the release of this year's reports on the 2018 election, you must submit a signed authorization form. More information on NSLVE, including FAQ, how the project works, and sample campus reports, can all be found on the IDHE website (<https://idhe.tufts.edu/nslve>).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR UNDERSTANDING AND LEVERAGING YOUR NSLVE DATA

How to Read Your NSLVE Report

This 10 minute primer offers report recipients an overview of what an NSLVE campus report contains and how to interpret the data.

IDHE Report: Using Your NSLVE Reports

Written by IDHE staff, this document is meant to help practitioners brainstorm ways to use NSLVE reports for impact on campus.

Election Imperatives

Based off of IDHE research, this report is centered on 10 major recommendations for colleges and universities looking to build community and capacity around civic and political learning.

IDHE's Data Portal and Visualizations

For anyone interested in college student political engagement data, this area of the IDHE website allows users to engage directly with NSLVE data. The continuously-updated features on this page highlight everything from national comparisons and regional trends to more granular insights around particular elections.

The IDHE Toolkit

Designed as a living set of resources, the IDHE Toolkit provides a variety of ways for institutions to use NSLVE data and other tools in tandem to promote campus climates for student political learning and engagement.

As part of the reporting process, it is encouraged for campuses to be continually retooling their democratic engagement action plan to ensure the short- and long-term goals set forth in the plan are being met. If the goals change, these updates should be reflected in the plan in real-time.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How will the plan be shared, internally and externally? Please state where the plan will be shared. Keeping in mind to share the report with multiple stakeholders. This could take place by posting the report on your institution's website, sharing during departmental meetings, student organization gatherings, and with community partners.
- 2 Will the plan be made public? If so, how?
- 3 Will the data, such as your institution's NSLVE report, used to inform the plan be made public? If so, how?

This section describes how the democratic action plan and its impact will be evaluated, how the institution will know if it is making progress, and when its goals have been reached. Included in this section should be what information (data) will be collected, as well as how it will be collected, analyzed, and used for improvement. Evaluating the work should be a continual process, so the action plan can be adjusted to reach the institution's goals. Evaluation should not be limited to using data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, though it is a vital resource in measuring student voter behavior for the campus.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- 2 What does the institution want to know and be able to do with the information gathered?
- 3 Who is the audience for the evaluation?
- 4 Who will carry out the evaluation? Is there an Institutional Research office representative involved? Faculty who are already studying related research questions? Student Affairs educators carrying out programmatic and long-term learning assessments?
- 5 When will the evaluation be carried out and completed?
- 6 What impact is already being measured for other related initiatives, like the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement?
- 7 What information (data, evidence) must be collected and how will it be collected? What are the performance measures and indicators of success?
- 8 How will information (data, evidence) be analyzed?
 - a How will the results of the evaluation be shared?
 - b How will the success of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within the plan be evaluated, beyond NSLVE race/ethnicity breakdown information?

EXAMPLES

- › Revisions to the 2020 Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement will include questions about student voting, including goals, outcomes and impacts.
- › Using Attendance records and event evaluation forms to assess how many students, the diversity of students, and the impact of events.
- › A research team of faculty conduct a study to assess the impact of a particular intervention or tactic to increase student voter registration and turnout.
- › Michigan State University's campus coalition includes a research team comprised of faculty from Political Science and Communications that are evaluating the impact of students that receive an in-class presentation on voting and are also encouraged to talk to their roommates about voting.
- › Measuring student learning outcomes in a class where students are given assignment credit for their voter participation work.



Self-Assessment Rubric

To assist campus stakeholders with self-evaluating their institution's democracy engagement work, this rubric was developed to supplement the publication, *Strengthening American Democracy: A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rates among College Students* (Vol. 2)

It is intended to help colleges and universities develop and evaluate their institutional democratic engagement action plans. Action plans are the institution's roadmap to documenting specific strategies for starting new programs and initiatives, or improving existing ones to improve civic learning, political engagement, and voting on their campus.

Language in the rubric can and should be adapted to the language of the individual campus when necessary.

Democratic Engagement Action Plan Rubric

2019

Students Learn Students Vote Coalition
studentslearnstudentsvote.org/resources

DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT = CIVIC LEARNING + POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT + VOTER PARTICIPATION

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POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

is civic engagement that emphasizes governmental institutions and/or power (e.g., voting in a local, state, or federal election). Participating in the political process also occurs by making one's own opinions and beliefs known outside of the electoral process (e.g., protesting, campaigning, performing jury duty, running for office, community organizing).

S.M.A.R.T.I.E.

is an acronym used to guide goal setting - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound, Inclusive, and Equitable.

VOTER EDUCATION

is the curricular and co-curricular activities offered to students and designed to facilitate civic learning, political engagement, and increase participation in elections.

VOTER REGISTRATION

is the process of successfully completing the application to be able to cast a ballot in an election.

Democratic Engagement Action Plan Rubric

2019

	4 Established	3 Progressing	2 Emerging	1 Undeveloped
<p>Executive Summary Overview of the action plan explains: 1) Who developed it 2) The purpose of the plan 3) Where the plan will be implemented 4) The goal(s) of the plan 5) The intended duration of the plan 6) How the plan will be implemented.</p>	Overview of action plan includes responses to all 6 of the suggested guiding questions.	Overview of action plan includes responses to 4-5 of the suggested guiding questions.	Overview of action plan includes responses to 1-3 of the suggested guiding questions.	Overview of action plan is not included.
<p>Leadership Description, including names and titles, of the leadership coalition responsible for improving democratic engagement. 5 categories of participation are encouraged: 1) students 2) faculty 3) student affairs 4) community/national organizations 5) local elections office coordination.</p>	A leadership team of all relevant stakeholders (across 5 categories) exists. The team includes academic affairs, student affairs, and students; as well as community partners and/or the local election office. The team includes diverse and marginalized communities.	A leadership team with many relevant stakeholders (across 3-4 categories) exists AND an effort is made to include diverse and marginalized communities.	A leadership team with a few relevant stakeholders (across 1-2 categories) exists, OR is in the process of being formed.	A leadership team has not yet been formed AND plans to develop one are not specified.
<p>Commitment Description of institutional commitment to improving democratic engagement.</p>	According to the plan, institutional commitment is visible and widely communicated - internally and externally. It is woven into the culture of the institution and is clearly reflected in the institution's mission, learning outcomes, curriculum, and co-curriculum.	According to the plan, institutional commitment is explicit, but is marginal - it is not woven into the culture of the institution, and appears in silos.	Institutional commitment is implied in the plan, but it is not explicitly described.	Institutional commitment is not apparent in the action plan.
<p>Landscape Analysis of student data, campus climate, and current institutional efforts for improving democratic engagement.</p>	The plan communicates a comprehensive understanding of its students, campus efforts, and climate; AND is using this information to inform its strategy.	The plan communicates an understanding of either its students, campus efforts, and/or climate; and may be using this information to inform its strategy.	The plan communicates that a landscape analysis is being developed.	The plan does not communicate that a landscape analysis exists or is being developed.
<p>Goals Description of institutional short-term (e.g., by next election) and long-term (e.g., in next decade or two election cycles) desired democratic engagement results.</p>	Short-term and long-term democratic engagement goals are described. Goals are also S.M.A.R.T.I.E.: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound, Inclusive, and Equitable.	Short-term AND long-term democratic engagement goals are described.	Only short-term OR long-term democratic engagement goals are described.	Neither, short-term nor long-term democratic engagement goals are described.
<p>National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) Free report providing campuses with their actual student registration and voting rates.</p>	Summary AND detailed (e.g., demographic) NSLVE data are described and specific goals based on these data are set.	Either summary OR detailed (e.g., demographic) NSLVE data are described and general voting goals are set.	Participation in NSLVE is mentioned.	Participation in NSLVE is not mentioned.
<p>Strategy Description of institutional efforts to reach desired democratic engagement results.</p>	Strategy includes short-term tactics and long-term strategies. Tactics include a description of multiple voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout activities. Long-term strategies seek to make civic learning and democratic engagement an established part of the institution's curriculum and co-curriculum and go beyond the election.	Strategy includes short-term tactics. Tactics include a description of voter registration, voter education, and voter engagement activities. Activities occur inside and outside the classroom, but are not described as a systematic part of the curriculum or defined as long-term strategies.	Strategy includes short-term tactics. Tactics include description of voter registration, voter education, and/or voter engagement activities, but not all three. Activities predominantly occur outside the classroom. Long-term strategies are not described.	Institutional efforts to reach desired results in terms of voter registration, voter education, and voter engagement are not described.
<p>Reporting Description of institutional efforts to make plans, data, and reports public.</p>	Action plan, data, and reports are shared on campus AND are publicly available.	Two or more of the action plan, data, and reports are shared on campus and/or publicly.	One or more of the action plan, data, and reports is available either on campus or publicly, OR a plan to do so is being developed.	Institutional efforts to share plans, data, and reports OR to make them public are not described.
<p>Evaluation Description of institutional efforts to evaluate the action plan, implementation, efforts, and results.</p>	The evaluation strategy describes how and what information will be collected and analyzed as well as how the results will be used to make improvements. Includes more than just looking at NSLVE data. Evaluation happens before, during, and after plan implementation. Evaluation strategy crosses several categories of participation from the Leadership Section.	The evaluation strategy describes how and what information will be collected and analyzed. Includes more than just looking at NSLVE data. Evaluation happens during and after plan implementation. Evaluation strategy crosses 1 category of participation from the Leadership Section.	The evaluation strategy describes what information will be collected. Evaluation mostly consists of NSLVE breakdown data. Evaluation is limited to post-election information.	Institutional efforts to evaluate the action plan, implementation, efforts, and results are not described.

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Nicole Costa

Program and Campus Recruitment Manager
The Andrew Goodman Foundation

Jennifer Domagal-Goldman

Executive Director
ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge

Kelsie George

Civic Engagement Manager
Scholars Strategy Network

Emily Giffin

Campus Partnerships Manager
TurboVote, Democracy Works

Stephanie King

Director of Civic Engagement and Knowledge Community Initiatives
NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

Debi Lombardi

National Program Director
Campus Vote Project, Fair Elections Center

Felice Nudelman

Executive Director
American Democracy Project, AASCU

Kris Pierre

Chair-elect for the ADP Steering Committee
Director of Career Development and Community Partnerships
Northeastern Illinois University

Clarissa Unger

Director of Civic Engagement
Young Invincibles

Dan Xie

Political Director
Student PIRGs

Contributing Organizations



ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE

allinchallenge.org

The ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge believes that more young people need to participate in the electoral process. By recognizing colleges and universities for their commitment to increasing student voting rates, this national awards program encourages institutions to help students form the habits of active and informed citizenship. Hundreds of colleges and universities have joined the Challenge and have committed to making democratic participation a core value on their campuses. Together, they are cultivating generations of engaged citizens who are essential to a healthy democracy.



AMERICAN DEMOCRACY PROJECT

aascu.org/programs/ADP

The American Democracy Project (ADP) is a multi-campus network focused on higher education's role in preparing the next generation of informed, engaged citizens for our democracy. ADP was established in 2003 through a partnership between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and *The New York Times*. Membership is available to all AASCU institutions. The network currently consists of over 250 state colleges and universities and reaches 2.2 million undergraduate students nationwide.



CAMPUS VOTE PROJECT

campusvoteproject.org

In 2012, the Fair Elections Legal Network (FELN) launched Campus Vote Project (CVP) to expand its work around student voting issues. CVP works with universities, community colleges, faculty, students, and election officials to reduce barriers to student voting. Our goal is to help campuses institutionalize reforms that empower students with the information they need to register and vote.



DEMOCRACY WORKS

democracy.works

Democracy Works is a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the idea that voting should fit the way we live. We're a team of software developers, public policy wonks, and civic organizers building the tools needed to upgrade the infrastructure of our democracy and improve the voting experience for voters and election officials alike. TurboVote, our first service, helps voters register, stay registered, and cast a ballot in every election, from municipal to national. Our vision is straightforward: make voting a simple, seamless experience for all Americans so that no one misses an election.



NASPA LEAD INITIATIVE

naspa.org/constituent-groups/groups/lead-initiative

The NASPA Lead Initiative on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (Lead Initiative) comprises a network of NASPA member colleges and universities committed to encouraging and highlighting the work of student affairs in making civic learning and democratic engagement a part of every student's college education.

Contributing Organizations, cont.



SCHOLARS STRATEGY NETWORK

scholars.org

The Scholars Strategy Network is an organization of university-based scholars committed to using research to improve policy and strengthen democracy. With support from SSN staff, scholars use their research to address the legislative and logistical barriers students face in engaging in the democratic process. SSN Student Voting Champions develop and implement campus democratic action plans, build civic engagement coalitions on campuses, integrate civic learning into the curriculum, and work with policymakers to inform legislation



STUDENT PIRGS

studentpirgs.org

Students have the power to shape the future we will inherit. We work with professional staff at colleges and universities to make sure our peers have the skills, opportunities and training they need to create a better, more sustainable future for all of us. Our chapters on 35 campuses provide the training, professional support and resources students need to tackle climate change, protect public health, revitalize our democracy, feed the hungry and more. For over 40 years we've helped students to get organized, mobilized and energized so they can continue to be on the cutting edge of positive change.



THE ANDREW GOODMAN FOUNDATION

andrewgoodman.org

Established to continue the legacy of Andrew Goodman, a civil rights worker murdered by the KKK during Freedom Summer of 1965, The Andrew Goodman Foundation works to make young voices and votes a powerful force in democracy.



YOUNG INVINCIBLES

younginvincibles.org

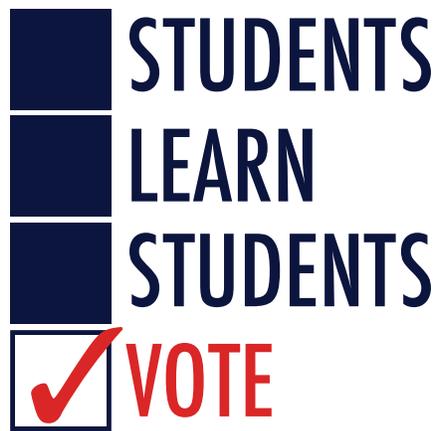
Young Invincibles is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works to expand economic opportunity for young adults through policy analysis, consumer education, and advocacy. With offices in six major cities across the country, its research and organizing experts elevate the voices of young adults in top policy debates and provide solutions to major economic challenges for the next generation.



SCHOOL

schoolhelps.com

School is a purpose-led strategic and creative consultancy for some of the most renowned and emerging brands in the world. They work directly with brand and executive leadership to extract and develop authentic, purposeful strategic visions and creative expressions. They have donated their design and creative services including the creation of the ALL IN Challenge's logo, brand assets, and print materials as well as for this SLSV guide and rubric. Special thanks to Riley Draper, an art director at School, who led the update and design of the second edition of this guide.



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