

# CAMPUS VOTER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

## 2020-2021

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civic Engagement is engrained into the culture at Frostburg State University (FSU) and is one of the institutions strategic priorities. As part of this effort, the Office of Civic Engagement (OCE) works to foster active citizenship amongst the student body through co-curricular activities and curricular partnerships. A key component of the OCE mission is to engage students in the democratic process including voting. Frostburg State University's Campus Voter Engagement Plan was developed and is implemented by the Office of Civic Engagement to guide its efforts in increasing student knowledge and participation in the voting process. The OCE efforts in implementing this plan will be guided by the Democratic Engagement Advisory Group.

The OCE efforts over the past 4 years have led to improved voting rates among the student body. In 2016, NSLVE data shows that student turnout rose by 9.6% to 55.7% earning the institution the Bronze Seal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. Additionally, during the 2018 mid-term elections, voter turnout was 38.4%, a 20.1% increase from the 2012 mid-term elections. The OCE efforts will continue to build on its strengths and partnerships in 2020 with efforts will focus on education, ballot access, registration, and student turnout.

### GOALS

#### SHORT TERM

- Increase Student Registration to 90%
- Increase student voting rate by 5% from 2016 to 61% in 2020 (NSLVE)
- Receive All IN Democracy Challenge Silver Seal
- Increased student confidence in the voting process
- Increased Student Organization participation in democratic engagement education programming
- Increased voter turnout for identified low turnout majors based on NSLVE data: Biological Sciences (45.8%) & Computer and Information Sciences (38.8%)

#### LONG TERM

- Implement an on-campus polling location
- Continued increase of student registration and turnout in National and local elections

- Integration of Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement into the Introduction to Higher Education curriculum for first-year students.

## COMMITMENT & LANDSCAPE

Frostburg State University is one of twelve institutions in the University System of Maryland and is located in the Appalachian region of Western Maryland with many of its students coming from the greater Baltimore/DC area. FSU serves one of the most diverse student bodies in the system and has the highest minority population outside of the traditional HBCU's. The local region faces challenges including increased poverty, limited public transportation, and reduced resources. FSU strives to engage students in the local community through volunteerism and national service to combat local issues while offering impactful experiences to our students.

The division of Student Affairs at Frostburg State University's mission is to provide opportunities for meaningful engagement to enhance personal and professional growth within supportive and inclusive environments, transforming students into leaders prepared for our complex and changing global society. In line with this mission, the office of Civic Engagement is dedicated to fostering active citizenship and strives to build citizen leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As active citizens, students educate themselves about, and become involved in, their local, national, and global communities. Through political engagement, community organizing and inclusivity, these active citizen leaders are enabled to combat public concerns at their core and strengthen their greater community.

This commitment has been strengthened by our more recent emphasis on experiential learning. Our work has also been guided by National Campus Compact, the Corporation for National and Community Service, NASPA's Civic Learning & Democratic Engagement initiative, the American Democracy Project, and the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative. The overarching theme of our Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement initiative is to foster informed and engaged citizen leaders within their community. Our goals are achieved through our four pillars of Civic Engagement: Democratic Engagement, Volunteerism, Service-learning, and National Service. Through these four programmatic components, we work to engage student in their community; educate them on the political process, and foster life-long involvement as citizen leaders.

## LEADERSHIP

Frostburg State University engages individuals and groups both on and off campus to support our Voter Engagement and education efforts. On campus the Democratic Engagement Advisory Group works together to strategically plan on-going democratic engagement efforts and programming including specific efforts focused on voter engagement. In addition to this group, each election year, the office of civic engagement convenes a Voter Engagement Committee to help organize resources, plan events, find guest speakers, and develop marketing strategies to engage students in the voting process. The group will begins meeting on a monthly basis in July leading up to the election. Finally, the University works with multiple State and National partners to ensure the use of best practices, to identify resources, and to report on our efforts.

## DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

- Dr. Artie Travis, Vice President for Student Affairs
- William Mandicott, Assistant VP for Student & Community Involvement
- Patrick O'Brien, Director of Civic Engagement

- Timothy Magrath, Political Science Professor and Director of J. Glenn Beall Institute for Public Affairs
- Robert Cooper, Director – Student Activities and Fraternity & Sorority Life
- Noah DeMichele, President – Student Government Association
- Melissa Martz, Graphic Designer & Social Marketing Team Coordinator

## VOTER ENGAGEMENT TEAM

Participants in this group regularly consist of representatives from organizations such as:

- Office of Civic Engagement
- J. Glenn Beall Institute for Public Affairs
- Allegany County Board of Elections
- Women’s Action Coalition
- NAACP
- Student Government Association
- Voter Engagement Student Employees
- FSU Faculty & Staff
- Lewis J. Ort Library Staff
- Student Organizations
  - National General Assembly
  - College Democrats
  - College Republicans
  - Other

## NATIONAL PARTNERS

[ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#)

[Ask Every Student](#)

[Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic](#)

[Campus Vote Project](#)

[NASPA Civic Learning & Democratic Engagement LEAD Initiative](#)

[TurboVote](#)

## STRATEGIES

### VOTER ENGAGEMENT STUDENT STAFF

With funding support from the Frostburg State University Foundation, two Voter Engagement Student Staff will be hired for the fall semester to help with voter education, registration, and marketing. These two students will host voter registration tables, work with our Social Marketing Team to develop a series of social marketing campaigns and present voter information in classes and at student organization meetings.

## VOTER REGISTRATION

### TURBOVOTE

FSU partners with [TurboVote](#) to offer students an online platform for all of their voting needs no matter where they are registered to vote. TurboVote helps students register to vote, obtain absentee ballots and offers email and text message reminders about upcoming elections, polling locations, and other important voter information.

### VOTER INFORMATION TABLES

During the 2020 Fall Semester the office of Civic Engagement with help from the Voter Engagement Student Staff host weekly voter information tables in the Student Union, the Lane University Center. At these tables, students can learn more about the voting process, register to vote, obtain absentee ballots, find polling locations, and information about election day activities.

### NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY

On September 22<sup>nd</sup> FSU will National Voter Registration Day on campus. Activities for the day include an email from President Ronald Nowaczyk, a social marketing campaign, voter registration & absentee ballot activities in the Lane University Center and more. Partners for this event include the Office of Civic Engagement, the Allegany County Board of Elections, the Student Government Association, and student organizations.

### OFFICE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT WALK INS

OCE staff act as an ongoing resource for voter information for students. All staff will be trained in the most up to date information and regulations on voter registration, absentee ballots, polling locations, and more. Any student at FSU can come into the OCE and receive assistance with their voting needs anytime during regular business hours.

## VOTER EDUCATION

### TIMES TALK THURSDAYS

As part of its efforts to increase student awareness and education in current events, FSU has purchased a campus wide subscription to the New York Times. This subscription has allowed the OCE in partnership with the J. Glenn Beall Institute for Public Affairs to host bi-weekly Times Talk Thursday Events. Every other week, students, faculty and staff meet at lunch time to discuss a current topic focused around an important topic and/or politics. A student, staff, or faculty member picks a recent NYT article to act as the basis of discussion. These discussions allow for students to voice their opinions, learn the opinions of others, and take part in a rigorous discussion about the topic for the week.

### TOWN HALL MEETINGS

In collaboration with the J. Glenn Beall Institute of Public Affairs and the Student Government Association, the OCE hosts three Town Hall Meetings every semester for large group discussion. Each town hall has an overarching

theme, but topics of discussion is left up to the students who participate. For the Fall 2020 semester, the themes for these town halls will focus on the upcoming election. The first town hall will be focused on local issues, the second, on national issues, and the third will act as a candidates' forum, where students can come to discuss who they are supporting, and why they believe that candidate is the best suited for the position.

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## CANDIDATE & BALLOT EDUCATION

To ensure students are confident when they go to vote, the OCE will host a special information table during the two weeks leading up to the election. At this table, students can obtain sample ballots from every county in MD along with some adjacent counties in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. There will also be information on how to find details on candidates' platforms for multiple issues.

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## DEBATE WATCH PARTIES

The OCE hosts watch parties for all of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential debates in the student lounge of the Lane University center. Student organizations are encouraged to co-sponsor the event and take part in leading discussions during breaks and at the close of the debate.

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## CONSTITUTION DAY

In partnership with the Ort Library and the J. Glenn Beall Institute for Public Affairs, and the OCE, FSU hosts constitution day every year. Events include voter registration information, constitution trivia, free pocket constitutions, and a knowledgeable historical figure actor. Past events have included Ben Franklin and George Washington.

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## BALLOT ACCESS

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## TURBOVOTE REMINDERS

Students can sign up with TurboVote to receive reminders and information on polling locations, registration and absentee ballot deadlines, and election day information.

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## ABSENTEE BALLOTS

With many students registered at their permanent address in other counties in MD or other states, FSU focuses on educating students on the absentee ballot process and assisting students in obtaining and turning in their absentee ballots.

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## PARTNERSHIP WITH BOARD OF ELECTIONS

As student voter turnout has increased over the years, FSU and the Allegany County Board of Elections has worked together to better accommodate students on election day. At the closest polling location to the campus, the county has worked to obtain more provisional ballots, more provisional ballot booths, and developed a two-line system to better accommodate local and provisional voters. During election day, the OCE staff and the polling location stay in touch to help trouble shoot any issues that arise.

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## VOTER SHUTTLES

On election day, the OCE hosts a voter shuttle from a centralized location on campus to the local polling location starting at 7:00 am and running every 15 minutes. Staff stay in communication with the shuttle driver and the local polling location and work to divert drop offs to secondary locations if long lines begin to form, or if issues arise such as voting machines going down, or provisional ballots run low to ensure students have the best voting experience possible.

## ELECTION DAY CELEBRATION

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## STUDENT UNION TRANSFORMATION

On election day with the help of the Lane University Center Centralized Tech Crew the student union is transformed with election day regalia. Red white and blue lighting and balloons are utilized throughout the union, voter shuttle information is prominently posted, and information about the evenings election night viewing party is readily available.

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## WHY I VOTED ACTIVITY

As part of our Election Day celebration, the OCE hosts a table including a democracy wall where students can write statements about why they voted, and what issues are important to them. The table also includes red, white, and blue cookies and “I Voted Absentee” stickers. Students are encouraged to use the hashtag #BobcatsVote for the day.

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## ELECTION NIGHT VIEWING PARTY

The evening of the election, the OCE hosts a viewing party in the ballroom where students can watch the election results live. The event includes lounge style seating, food, a mock voting event, and continuation of the democracy wall.

## COVID-19 CONTINGENCIES

Frostburg State University is actively working to stay up to date on the most recent state and national orders, CDC recommendations, and changes in the voting process. As new information is released, this engagement plan will be adjusted to accommodate our student’s needs. Areas of focus for this effort include but are not limited to:

- Adjusting programming to online platforms to adhere to social distancing guidelines
- An increased focus on obtaining absentee ballots in the event of a vote by mail only requirement.
  - Working with the Allegany County Board of elections to develop a ballot drop off location on campus.
- Increased online and social marketing campaigns and information in the event the University moves to a full or partial online learning format.
- Increased web presence for all voter information.
  - Voting informational videos
  - Virtual Q&A

- Candidate information & Sample Ballots
- Utilization of Bobcat Connect Student Organization Platform & Canvas to promote voter engagement

## EVALUATION, NSLVE, & REPORTING

The OCE will work to evaluate its voter programming and efforts during implementation as well as the final results of University efforts after the election. Evaluation efforts include:

- Post-Surveys and attendance counts at all education focused events
- Tracking of use, voter registration, absentee ballots, and reminders through TurboVote
- Tracking of Voter Registration during National Voter Registration Day
- Involvement in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)
- Tracking of student use of the three local polling locations by the Allegany County Board of Elections

The Campus Voter Engagement Report along with NSLVE Data and evaluation results will be shared with the campus as well as our community partners. Both the FSU Plan and NSLVE Data will be shared publicly on the FSU website, as well as with our national partners including the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and Voter Friendly Campus.

## TIMELINE

**July** First meeting of the Voter Engagement Committee

**August** Voter Engagement Committee Meeting  
31 First Day of Classes

**September** Weekly Voter Registration Tables begin  
Voter Engagement Committee Meeting  
3 Times Talk Thursday  
17 Constitution Day  
17 Times Talk Thursday  
22 National Voter Registration Day  
29 Town Hall Meeting: Local Issues

**October** Weekly Voter Registration Tables  
Voter Engagement Committee Meeting  
Candidate & Sample Ballot Information Tables  
1 Times Talk Thursday  
13 Town Hall Meeting: National Issues  
13 MD Voter Registration Deadline  
15 Times Talk Thursday  
22-29 MD Early Voting  
27 Town Hall Meeting: Candidates Forum

- 29 Times Talk Thursday
- 30 Absentee Ballot Request Deadline (online)

**November**

- Weekly Voter Registration Tables
- Voter Engagement Committee Meeting
- 3 Election Day Events: Voter Shuttle, Why I Voted Activities, Election Night Coverage
  - Note: Voter registration available in person day of election. Absentee Ballots
  - Must be mailed by COB
- 12 Times Talk Thursday

**December**

- Voter Engagement Team Debrief & Review
- Evaluation & Reporting