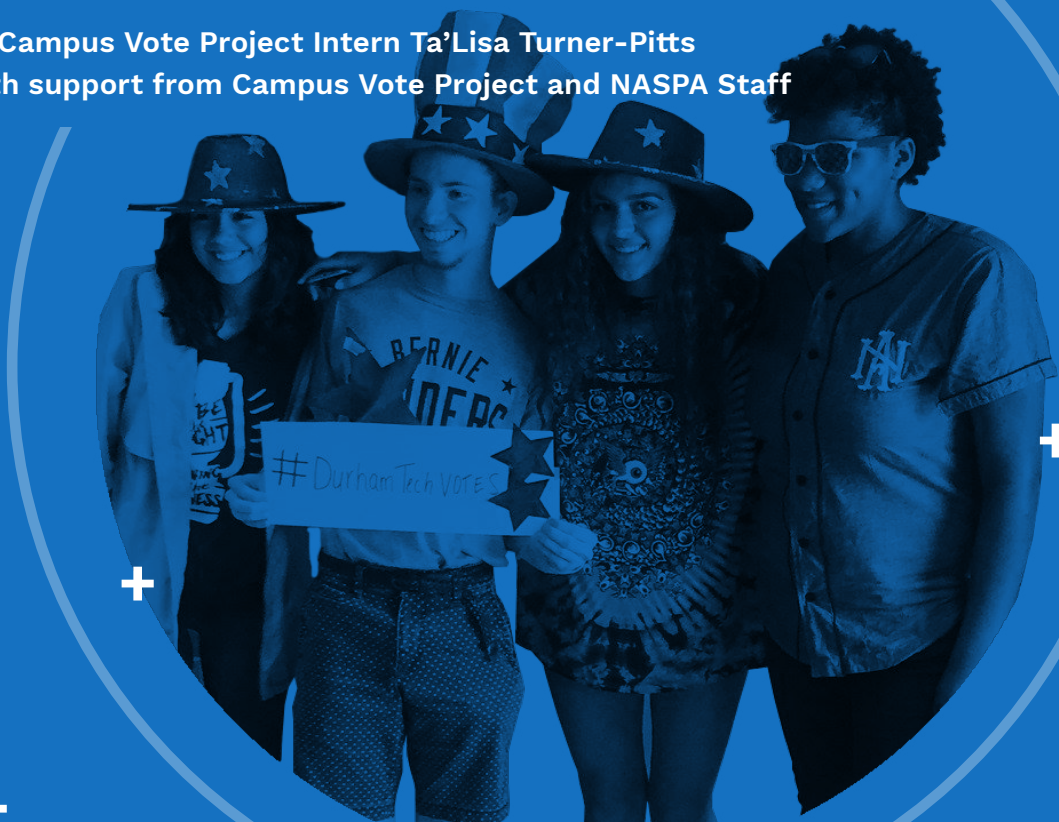


# VOTER FRIENDLY CAMPUS REPORT 2016

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[www.VoterFriendlyCampus.org](http://www.VoterFriendlyCampus.org)  
Prepared in September 2017

**VOTER**  
FRIENDLY  
**CAMPUS**



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Voter Friendly Campus designation program was developed and is run by Campus Vote Project and NASPA.



## **Campus Vote Project**

[www.campusvoteproject.org](http://www.campusvoteproject.org)

In 2012, the Fair Elections Center 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.



## **NASPA Lead Initiative**

[www.naspa.org/constituent-groups/groups/lead-initiative](http://www.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.



## **Voter Friendly Campus Designation Program**

[www.voterfriendlycampus.org](http://www.voterfriendlycampus.org)

The Voter Friendly Campus designation program was started through the partnership of Campus Vote Project and NASPA in 2016. The goal of the program is to help institutions develop plans to coordinate administrators, faculty, and student organizations in civic and electoral engagement.

# ABOUT THE VOTER FRIENDLY CAMPUS DESIGNATION

The Voter Friendly Campus designation program was started through a partnership between Fair Election Center's Campus Vote Project and NASPA's LEAD Initiative in 2016.

This partnership was formed as a tool to support higher education institutions fulfilling the requirements of the Higher Education Act of 1965, which necessitates that institutions distribute voter registration forms to their students. Due to the lack of instructions and guidance regarding this requirement, the Voter Friendly Campus designation process was developed. It was also established in an effort to support the work of the **Students Learn Students Vote** coalition in creating more measurable and manageable guidelines for colleges to follow to create a more voter-friendly campus.

The Voter Friendly Campus program helps institutions develop plans and coordinate administrators, faculty, and student organizations in democratic engagement. Participation in this program enables campuses to develop comprehensive voter engagement, education, and turnout plans. It also provides expert-led guidance for higher education institutions to offer programs and services, relevant to their respective states, which enhance the student experience with regard to political engagement. By participating in this program, administrators develop strategies to engage students and set clear goals in advance of upcoming elections.

By participating in the Voter Friendly Campus designation process, institutions are introduced to activities, programs, and services that institutionalize democratic engagement for years to come. This program was based on the belief that incorporating democratic engagement into the collegiate experience creates structure and stability for students as they explore what their political beliefs are, and how they would like to engage in the democratic process.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) report reflects on the program's inaugural designation process. The 84 institutions (out of 94 that started the program) that received the designation for 2017-2018 were selected because of their commitment to promoting democratic engagement on campus. Campuses were required to complete the following steps to receive the designation.

- Submit a statement of intent detailing what they would like to get out of the program
- Write a campus action plan including their coalition, goals, activities, and a timeline
- Carry out democratic engagement work in the fall of 2016
- Submit a final report analyzing their progress, what they would like to improve on their campus, and their plans for 2017

During each step of the process, institutions received feedback from NASPA and Campus Vote Project staff, group and one-on-one opportunities to share practices and ask for help with challenging issues, and communications with reminders, materials, and resources.

This report takes an in-depth look at what inaugural designees accomplished, common barriers, and solutions for improving future democratic engagement activities. After reviewing campuses' democratic engagement plans and their follow-up reports, we sorted tactics according to voter registration, tackling the information deficit, and reducing barriers to voting.

Every designee undertook actions to provide and assist students with voter registration. The report discusses some creative and well-executed examples, however, a major voter registration issue is that very few designees were able scale voter registration efforts to serve the whole student population.

Designees' ability to help students tackle the information deficit that keeps them from fully participating is one of the greatest strengths of the Voter Friendly Campus program. Designees rose to the challenge of their educational mission and this report offers examples of panels, discussions, and debates that provided students with the knowledge and skills necessary for democratic engagement. Scale again was a major issue in this area and greater incorporation of civic learning and democratic engagement in curriculum is needed.

The need to reduce barriers to voting is an area where most tactics need greater individualization from institutions because election laws vary by state. For example, timing and details of

programs will vary for an institution located in a state that conducts all by-mail elections as compared to an institution in a state where voters must go to their designated voting site only on Election Day. A key finding from the program was that developing a working relationship with local election officials helped many institutions avoid problems and helped tailor their efforts to meet their specific student population's needs.

Review of the designees' efforts shows that successful designees used strategies including coalitions, partnerships, diversity, and goal setting to achieve their outcomes.

A key finding of this report is that designees with the most robust coalitions wrote and executed the strongest democratic engagement plans. These coalitions were made up of administrators, faculty, and students. They had schedules for input, delegating responsibilities, and follow-up. Successful coalitions were also able to reach various areas of an institution and benefit from existing campus infrastructure. The most successful coalitions allowed students to undertake leadership roles, without leaving the entire effort to students alone. Greater diversity of students and student organizations facilitated broader reach and innovative coalition efforts. Lastly, robust coalitions were the best positioned to interact with and benefit from partnerships with other organizations such as the League of Women Voters or even state and local governments.

The report concludes by reaffirming where we began. A primary component of the Voter Friendly Campus program was to create structure for supporting institutions in drafting plans that will survive the inevitable matriculation of student leaders and the eventual turnover of administrative and faculty champions. Additionally, the need to set goals and evaluate programs is crucial to improving outcomes.

While, the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) continues to be a one-of-a-kind resource for understanding and utilizing student voter registration and turnout rates to improve civic learning and democratic engagement efforts, we know additional metrics and assessments are necessary. We are especially interested in better understanding a campus' climate for political learning and engagement as we help institutions integrate civic learning and democratic engagement in curricular and co-curricular ways.

We are grateful to all the institutions that dedicated time and effort to create cultures at their institutions and for letting students know they attend a Voter Friendly Campus. We could not have gathered the knowledge and lessons of this report without their steadfast dedication to fulfilling the civic mission of higher education to continually prepare generations of students for empowered civic lives.

# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to inform institutions that received the Voter Friendly Campus designation of their collective strengths and areas for improvement. The report provides tactics for overcoming common barriers many institutions faced and highlights unique ideas. The lessons learned here are of tremendous value to all institutions interested in institutionalizing student democratic engagement efforts and fostering a campus culture of voter participation. Each campus report was read and a rubric created based on common factors. The rubric was designed to include every possible aspect institutions could have incorporated into their action plans. The categories in which the institutions were analyzed were:

- Promoting Voter Registration,
- Reducing Barriers to Voting,
- Tackling the Information Deficit,
- Coalition, Partnerships and Diversity, and
- Planning and Goal Setting.

Each category is separated into highlights, areas for improvement, barriers, and institutional examples.

## **Background**

In 2016, 227 million American citizens were eligible to vote; young people (aged 18–29) made up about 22% of the electorate.<sup>1</sup> However, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), only 50% of young people eligible to vote (24 million) voted in the 2016 presidential election.<sup>2</sup> Only 19.9% of young people (about 13 million) voted in the 2014 midterm election.<sup>3</sup>

The trend of national youth turnout under 50% in presidential election years and dropping to half of that in midterm elections stretches back decades.<sup>4</sup>

Civic learning and democratic engagement have always been central to the mission of higher education, and the low voter turnout in this demographic is a reminder of how important it is to integrate democratic engagement programs on higher education campuses. It is important to encourage discussions and create educational programming that will provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to practice engaged citizenship. Campus Vote Project and NASPA partnered to create the Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) designation to promote institutionalizing civic learning and democratic engagement to prepare students for lives as productive citizens.



# CAMPUS REPORT ASSESSMENT

# PROMOTING VOTER REGISTRATION

## Introduction

Registering students to vote provides a gateway to democratic participation. This category focused on different aspects of voter registration including methods of registration, information on the registration process and how voter registration information was communicated to students.

## Highlights

All the VFC institutions made impressive efforts to promote voter registration to their students. About 80% of VFCs held voter registration drives at large campus events such as orientation and student organization fairs. A little over half of VFCs used some form of social media and email to remind students of useful information on relevant voter registration topics such as where and how to register and deadlines for registration.

## Areas for Improvement

Most institutions excelled in their registration efforts, but an area for improvement is how campuses engage out-of-state students. Few campuses offered information on registering in a state other than the one the institution was located in and follow-up information on absentee voting. Students who move to attend college have the choice to vote at their prior home address or in their campus community. Out-of-state students may want to vote in their home state, so it is important that this option and relevant information is available to them.

### Institution that Excelled in Informing about Absentee Voting

**The University of Miami (Florida):** At their many registration drives and large campus events, the University of Miami would set a table up dedicated to informing out-of-state students about absentee voting. Students could also request an absentee ballot at these tables.

While VFCs range greatly in the amount of out-of-state students they have on campus, one easy way to share information for other states is by directing students to [CVP student voting guides for all 50 states and D.C.](#)

# PROMOTING VOTER REGISTRATION

## Common Barriers in this Area

Many institutions reported having outside groups come to campus to register students. While this is not uncommon, it can raise problems for students if these groups are not well trained, especially in the case of using on-campus addresses for registration that may differ from campus mailing addresses. Local election officials often have a preferred format for these addresses to facilitate processing. We recommend reaching out to your local election officials to figure out the best format for on-campus addresses and ask them to work with you to make voting easier for your students.

### Institution that Overcame this Barrier

**University of North Carolina at Greensboro (North Carolina):** UNC Greensboro created a template voter registration form that was specific to students registering with their on-campus address. When outside organizations came on campus for registration drives, students and staff would give them the UNC Greensboro template registration form so they could accurately assist students registering using an on-campus address.

Institutions also reported that it can be difficult and resource intensive to engage students face to face. Students have many different schedules, and it may not always be feasible for them to come to registration drives or information sessions. Furthermore, commuter campuses have even less opportunity to engage students directly.

### Institution that Overcame this Barrier

**Saint Louis University (Missouri):** Throughout the year, Saint Louis University played messages on television monitors in heavily trafficked buildings on campus such as residence halls and academic and resource buildings. These messages contained information on when and how to register to vote and polling locations.

We also recommend working with faculty themselves to present or arrange times when administrators or students can provide short presentations about voting and provide registration forms to a class.

# PROMOTING VOTER REGISTRATION

## Campus Spotlight

### ROLLINS COLLEGE - (FLORIDA)

Rollins had an extensive physical campaign that included signs and banners. The coalition created lawn signs and door tags for on-campus dormitories. The lawn signs had dates for voter education programming and also important election dates and deadlines, such as the deadline to register to vote, dates for registration drives and dates for early voting. The lawns signs served as a semester-long reminder about voter registration and upcoming events.



# TACKLING THE INFORMATION DEFICIT

## Introduction

This category focused on voter education; offering students important information on the ballot, the election, candidates, political topics and the voting itself so they are prepared and informed when it is time to cast a ballot. Campuses used a variety of methods to distribute information to their students including events, social media, websites and in-class engagement.

## Highlights

Overall, institutions did well in this category and almost all VFCs created voter education programming. The most popular types of programming were panel discussions on political issues and debate watch parties. About half of institutions created a voter website, a social media page dedicated to voter registration/information, or used an already established school website to disseminate information. For example, in place of a traditional voter information website, the University at North Carolina Pembroke created a Facebook page that included voter ID policies, polling locations and frequent updates.

## Areas for Improvement

Overall, institutions can work to better incorporate voter education into classroom curricula. It is just as important to engage students in the classroom, as it is to engage them outside of the classroom.

### **Institution that Excelled in Incorporating Voter Education into the Curriculum**

**Mount Ida College (Massachusetts):** Mount Ida conducted 10 classroom workshops in which students discussed the voting process and various political issues. Some workshops were conducted as presentations while others were open dialogue. The coalition is currently working on training more students to lead these workshops so they can reach a broader audience.

# TACKLING THE INFORMATION DEFICIT

Institutions can also work to better engage their surrounding community. Outside engagement can be done through opening events to the general public and partnering with local election officials and local organizations.

## **Institution that Excelled in Engaging the Broader Community**

**Piedmont Virginia Community College (Virginia):** A team of political science students assisted in the planning of a Fifth Congressional District Debate. Students at Piedmont Virginia proctored the second half of the debate. It was televised on a local news station and was streamed live on the Internet. The students were also allowed to vote on the questions the panelists were asked. Three hundred community members attended.

## **Common Barriers in this Area**

Institutions with limited residential student populations reported having difficult times engaging students outside of the classroom. While it is important to engage students outside of the classroom, campuses can focus on making efforts inside the classroom, so they are able to reach as many students as possible.

## **Institution that Overcame this Barrier**

**The University of Alaska Anchorage (Alaska):** The University of Alaska Anchorage is a commuter campus and to better engage their students, COMM 111 classes collected voting information from credible sources and created brochures for distribution. These brochures included information on Alaska's voter ID policy, how to find polling locations, and voting statistics in the state of Alaska. They also hosted voter registration stations and held trivia games in the COMM 111 classes.

# TACKLING THE INFORMATION DEFICIT

Institutions with voter education programming reported seeing the same faces and not being able to reach the broader student body. Political events generally only reach a certain audience on campus. Finding ways to engage different fields of study in the democratic process can be critical for creating a voter-friendly campus.

## Institution that Overcame this Barrier

**Grand Valley State University (Michigan):** Grand Valley's music department held a concert and their classics department held a Shakespeare performance at which students could register and learn important voting information. This ensured their efforts reached different demographics of students. This idea can be expanded to include sporting events, fraternity and sorority events and other arts programs to reach even more audiences.

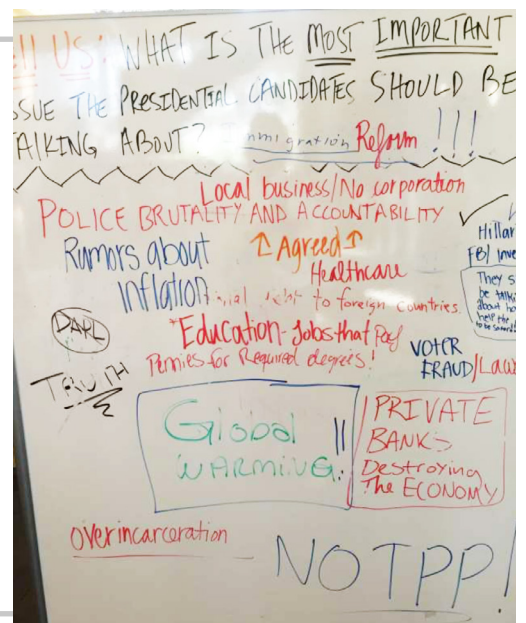
Institutions reported students who did not identify with the same political party or political ideology as the perceived majority of other students did not feel comfortable participating in events or discussions. If there is not enough diverse programming or classroom engagement, certain demographic or ideological groups on campus may not feel comfortable participating and certain information may not reach them. The [Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts](#) has a multitude of resources available that help address this issue.

## Institutions that Overcame this Barrier

### Kennesaw State University (Georgia) and South Mountain Community College (Arizona):

Kennesaw State and South Mountain created Democracy Walls, which are walls in heavily trafficked buildings on campus that are decorated and allow students to write their thoughts and opinions on a multitude of political topics. This allowed students with differing ideologies to feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and have engage in civil discourse.

\*While the Democracy Walls were a success, we recommend trying to take this further to develop political discussion as commonplace across campus and as a dialogue where students feel prepared to participate in.

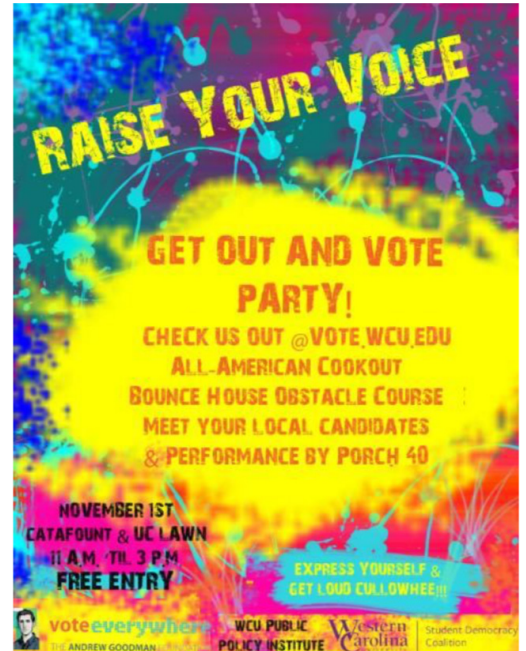


# TACKLING THE INFORMATION DEFICIT

## Campus Spotlight

### WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY - NORTH CAROLINA

Western Carolina University (North Carolina): Western Carolina held a voter festival called Raise Your Voice. A popular local band played, there was free food, an inflatable obstacle course and 12 candidates for local and state offices were there to answer questions from students. This campus was also an early voting site and over 400 students were able to vote at the festival.



Flyer for Western Carolina's carnival

### WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS - MISSOURI

Washington University held an event called Light Up Brookings where they lit up their main library to announce a countdown to a debate on campus and had a pop-up tent with free food, music, activities and photo booths.



Washington University in St. Louis lit up its library.



# REDUCING BARRIERS TO VOTING

## Introduction

Once students have successfully navigated the registration process and learned about the candidates and issues, they still must overcome numerous challenges related to accessing the ballot and voting. These vary greatly across states but can include anything from accessing a polling location to having proper voter ID. We recommend becoming familiar with election laws in your state so you can better understand what might be barriers for your students. We are available to have a CVP staff member or [Fair Elections Center](#) attorney discuss these issues with your campus, especially when there are changes in the law.

## Highlights

Nearly every VFC helped students get to voting sites on Election Day through vehicle transportation, march to the polls, chalk paths, signs, get out the vote parties, or on-campus polling locations. Most institutions established working relationships with local election officials, which address issues for student voters before they occur.

## Areas for Improvement

One of the most important things an institution can do to reduce barriers to voting is foster a working relationship with local election officials. A working relationship with local election officials allows for better communication on required documentation for students to prove residency or identification (in certain states), such as zero balance utility bills or signed student IDs.

Communication with local election officials can also help address issues before they become a problem. Additionally, building a relationship with the local elections office is a great first step in working to secure an on-campus voting site. Getting an early voting or polling location on-campus increases access and raises awareness for students around all elections. If institutions can't offer a polling location on campus, they should consider offering transportation to offsite locations (or connect students with organizations that do) and excusing students from class on Election Day.

# REDUCING BARRIERS TO VOTING

## Institutions that Excelled in Working with Local Election Offices

### James Madison University (Virginia):

Thanks to a productive relationship with the city election board, James Madison University had an on-campus voting site for the first time in 2016. They ensured the polling location was utilized with an extensive Get Out the Vote campaign starting in October and leading up to the election. They also offered transportation to other off-campus polling places for students not registered in the on-campus precinct, disseminated information through social media, and distributed stickers with voting information to the library Starbucks for coffee sleeves.



### Mesa Community College (Arizona):

Mesa Community College was not able to establish an on-campus voting site or offer transportation to polling locations, but the college underwent extensive efforts to reduce barriers to voting on Election Day through other means. Maricopa County has a website where registered voters could find their polling place by entering their address. Volunteers used this site to help students find their correct polling location. If a student didn't have a way to get to the polls, they were connected with organizations that offered transportation such as the local League of Women Voters.

## Common Barriers in this Area

Some institutions reported difficulties engaging large populations of students who decided to vote at their prior residence out-of-state. Institutions had to spend more time when registering out-of-state first-time voters, and faced challenges ensuring that out-of-state voters requested and returned their absentee ballots by the appropriate deadlines.

## Institution that Overcame this Barrier

**Virginia Wesleyan College:** Virginia Wesleyan College promoted absentee voting in unique ways, including a selfie social media campaign. Marlins VOTE made the extra effort to encourage absentee balloting and created a portal on which students could request ballots. The institution worked with students to offer 11 opportunities to take a van to a polling location, as well as three opportunities to walk to the polls.

# REDUCING BARRIERS TO VOTING

## Campus Spotlight

### BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY - NEW YORK

Binghamton University's Center for Civic Engagement set up an "off-campus assistance table" next to the university polling location. The off-campus assistance table assisted the few hundred off-campus students who mistakenly came to campus to vote. The table issued reminder cards with the students' correct polling location and a summary on how to request an affidavit ballot if necessary (affidavit ballots allow voters the opportunity to vote even if their name is not listed at their polling place).



### UNIVERSITY OF UTAH - UTAH

University of Utah secured an on-campus polling location, which dramatically increased voter turnout. Nearly 2,800 votes were cast in the university library. Salt Lake County was part of Utah's same-day voter registration program, so students were able to work with University of Utah's voter engagement coalition to register and vote in one convenient space on Election Day.



# COALITION, PARTNERSHIPS, AND DIVERSITY

## Introduction

Review of the 84 Voter Friendly Campus designees proved that institutions with strong coalitions were able to better perform in all other categories of their democratic engagement efforts. The most crucial factor that separated strong coalitions from average coalitions was fluid integration of various campus stakeholders and existing campus infrastructure, such as stakeholders from academic and student affairs, staff, faculty, and students, including high-level administrative support. Exemplary coalitions combined seamlessly integrated campus stakeholders with local and national organizations – most importantly local election officials.

## Areas for Improvement

Student leadership is an essential part of a strong coalition, because students have a unique perspective on the best ways to reach their peers and can dedicate their time and energy to implement coalition programming. The strongest coalitions had student voices specifically in coalition leadership. As campuses are starting to create dedicated democratic engagement programs, they might find themselves with insufficient resources or coalition members might have other responsibilities preventing them from dedicating the necessary time to democratic engagement work. One way to overcome this barrier is to incorporate student voices in coalition leadership, and work closely with students across the campus who may be able to commit more time to programming.

Most coalitions could have worked more closely with student organizations or included representatives of those organizations in the coalition. Coalitions should be politically neutral, but they are encouraged to work with student political organizations provided they are all given equal opportunity to participate. Coalitions that work closely with student organizations primarily reached out to College Democrats, College Republicans, or other explicitly political student organizations. While these partnerships are a great start to a sustainable and effective democratic engagement program, campuses should look to partner with a greater variety of student organizations. LGBTQ+, racial, religious, and other groups can offer unique perspectives on coalition programming and its ability to reach all students. Moreover, these student organizations often have a demonstrated interest in civics, advocacy, and politics, and they can bring their own partnerships and expertise to the table. Institutions can't hope to reach a diverse population of students if their coalitions are not equally diverse.

# COALITION, PARTNERSHIPS, AND DIVERSITY

## Institution that Overcame this Barrier

**Case Western Reserve University (Ohio):** Case Western Reserve University noted that due to the “decentralized structures in place” on campus and the timing during which the coalition operated, the coalition would be fairly informal. It capitalized on this flexibility to work with an impressive range of campus partners:

Undergraduate Diversity Collaborative  
Model United Nations  
Kelvin Smith Library  
The Feminist Collective  
Student Sustainability Council  
The Observer (University newspaper)  
National Alliance for Mental Health  
National Society for Black Engineers  
African American Society  
LGBT Center  
The Office of Residence Life  
Residence Hall Association  
The Office of Housing  
Office of Student Affairs  
Greek Life  
Social Justice Institute  
The Flora Stone Mather Center for Women  
Office of Multicultural Affairs

Institutions can tap into the wealth of knowledge and resources local and national organizations have to offer to better promote democratic engagement efforts and reach a wider audience. Just like relationships with student organizations, coalitions should be concerned with affording opportunities to be involved to all political persuasions while remaining political neutral, rather than completely nonpartisan.

# COALITION, PARTNERSHIPS, AND DIVERSITY

Institutions did a good job of partnering with national organizations like The League of Women Voters and the Andrew Goodman Foundation, but many neglected what is probably the most important partner: local election officials. As mentioned previously, local election offices can help campuses provide detailed and accurate voting information to their students, and may even be able to send staff to campus programs to provide direct support. A working relationship with local election officials is essential for securing an on-campus polling location, which is a tremendous way to promote voter turnout. After developing a strong working relationship with local election officials, campuses can look to local/state government more broadly.

Coalition organization is particular to each coalition, institution, and their goals. It is up to individual coalitions to determine how often they meet, the division of labor, and choices about organization like the role of subcommittees. Institutions should look at organizational hurdles they faced in 2016 and make the necessary changes to offset or overcome them. Building partnerships with more student organizations, local or national organizations, and different members off campus community will improve democratic engagement programming, but it might stress coalition organization, so coalitions should be prepared to properly incorporate various partners before taking them on. Coalitions should prioritize key relationships within student life and student organizations that allow their work to better engage minority students, who typically have lower voter registration and turnout rates.

## Institution that Overcame this Barrier

### Washington State University (Washington):

Washington State University is home to nearly 30,000 undergraduates across six campuses, which was a massive barrier to coalition organization. Organizers implemented specific contact methods to overcome these barriers.

“[A campus administrator] acted as the primary point of contact for all campuses and managed the website, CougSync shared folder, social media, other marketing, and events from the Center for Democratic Engagement. Starting the semester by holding several planning meetings helped engage and solidify the coalition, while regular email contact, keeping the website up to date, and adding new content to the shared folder as it became available allowed coalition members to stay involved and aware of upcoming activities.”

### WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY STATEWIDE LOCATIONS



# PLANNING AND GOAL SETTING

## Introduction

It is essential that institutions set ambitious yet attainable goals for their democratic engagement programs. Institutions should address all relevant categories of democratic engagement including (but not limited to) voter registration, tackling the information deficit, and reducing barriers to voting. Implementing democratic engagement programming properly can be difficult and time consuming, so it is important to set tangible goals from the beginning, accurately track progress, follow through, and analyze after programs have been completed.

## Highlights

The overwhelming majority of institutions created comprehensive programs that attempted to address all necessary categories of democratic engagement. Most institutions set a number of pre- and post- election goals, but not all goals were specific or measurable. By and large, continuing programming after the election showed commitment to democratic engagement work. Aside from participation in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), which offers institutions detailed information on registration and voting rates, many institutions did not consistently maintain efforts to collect information on voter registrations, the number of students reached by different efforts, or survey students.

## Areas for Improvement

Although nearly every institution set goals for their democratic engagement program, most goals were vague and immeasurable. Institutions should make a habit of setting quantifiable or otherwise measureable goals, take the appropriate steps to track their progress, and are honest and transparent about their ability to meet those goals.

### Institution that Excelled in Goal Setting

**East Tennessee State University (Tennessee):** East Tennessee set the ambitious goal of increasing its registered student population by 50% based on their previous NSLVE data. ETSU also set goals for voter education, and tracked its progress in this category by recording participation numbers at campus events.



# PLANNING AND GOAL SETTING

Institutions can better utilize NSLVE reports to individualize their democratic engagement programming. NSLVE reports provide information on voter registration and voter turnout rates, as well as breakdowns of this information by field of study, race and ethnicity, and voting method. This information is a tremendous resource for campuses to tailor engagement programming to their specific needs.

## Institution that Excelled in Making Use of their NSLVE Report

**Winthrop University (South Carolina):** Winthrop University used a previous NSLVE report to focus on information about absentee voting, which was a very common voting method for its students and also one of the most confusing. Some students didn't realize they had to travel to the county they were registered in to vote. Other students confused registration deadlines with absentee deadlines. In response, Winthrop University focused heavily on absentee voting and tracked student attendance at its informational events – totaling more than 2,800 students and over 50 events.

Institutions can also make more of an effort to maintain program data on voter registration, event attendance, volunteer hours, hours tabled, and other relevant information.

## Institution that Excelled in Data Collection

**Rochester Institute of Technology (New York):** A central component of RIT's democratic engagement program was comprehensive data collection and student surveying. RIT tracked TurboVote registrations, website visits, and student attendance at events. RIT also sent a number of surveys to a large sample for feedback on what students learned, what aspects of the program were most important, and other helpful feedback. All of the information collected was broken down by demography to determine over- and under-representation of particular groups of students on campus.



# PLANNING AND GOAL SETTING

## Campus Spotlight

### LYNCHBURG COLLEGE - VIRGINIA

Lynchburg College faced funding constraints that limited their ability to survey students to the extent they had hoped, but they were still able to take the extra step and reach out to their student body to collect helpful democratic engagement information. Students were asked what they think is the most effective way to get voter registration and election information to their peers. They were also asked which campus events they participated in, allowing the college to better gauge the reach of its programming and improve it.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, institutions actively engaged in the Voter Friendly Campus designation process and provided robust information regarding voter registration, education, and turnout. There were some areas of improvement noted by numerous institutions: institutions could dedicate more time to creating goals, on- and off-campus partnerships could be strengthened, and more civic engagement opportunities within the classroom could be created.

Despite these shortcomings, it is evident that the institutions collectively put in an effort to create strong coalitions to create sustainable, comprehensive action plans. From these action plans came excellent nonpartisan voter education programming, voter registration drives, increased access to the ballot, and social media campaigns that helped engage students on platforms they frequently use.

Institutions are also working to engage students outside of elections and institutionalize their action plans, which is a vital part of the VFC designation program. Institutions can utilize this report to follow the example of other institutions to overcome barriers they face, to focus on the identified weaknesses, and to think of ways to overall strengthen their program. The Voter Friendly Campus designation was a learning process in its first year and institutions can now create stronger action plans based on the foundation set forth in the inaugural year of the program.

CVP and NASPA are dedicated to using the lessons learned from the 2016 VFC program to enhance and grow the 2018 program. The Voter Friendly Campus report is the first of multiple resources meant address gaps and will be followed by “Institutionalizing Voter Engagement: A Guide” to help campuses (such as yours) take the next step in institutionalizing democratic engagement work. We aim to identify 150 institutions to participate in 2018 to earn the designation for the 2019-2020 cycle.

## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> “Electorate Profiles: Selected Characteristics of the Citizen, 18 and older Population,” census.gov, October 27, 2016 [www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/electorate-profiles-2016.html](http://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/electorate-profiles-2016.html)

<sup>2</sup> “An Estimated 24 Million Young People Voted in 2016 Election,” CIRCLE.org, November 9, 2016, [www.civicyouth.org/an-estimated-24-million-young-people-vote-in-2016-election/](http://www.civicyouth.org/an-estimated-24-million-young-people-vote-in-2016-election/)

<sup>3</sup> “2014 Youth Turnout and Youth Registration Rates Lowest Ever Recorded; Changes Essential in 2016,” CIRCLE.org, accessed July 26, 2017, [www.civicyouth.org/2014-youth-turnout-and-youth-registration-rates-lowest-ever-recorded-changes-essential-in-2016/](http://www.civicyouth.org/2014-youth-turnout-and-youth-registration-rates-lowest-ever-recorded-changes-essential-in-2016/)

<sup>4</sup> “Voting Rates by Age,” census.gov, May 10, 2017, [www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/electorate-profiles-2016.html](http://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/electorate-profiles-2016.html)