





# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**



### **Voter Friendly Campus Designation Program**

### 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. The program operates and designates campuses as Voter Friendly on a two year cycle. Follow us on Twitter @VFCampus

MANDING

### **Campus Vote Project**



### 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 Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

### **NASPA**

NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education is the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability of the student affairs profession. Founded in 1919, NASPA comprises more than 15,000 members in all 50 states, 25 countries, and 8 U.S. Territories. Through high-quality professional development, strong policy advocacy, and substantive research to inform practice, NASPA meets the diverse needs and invests in realizing the potential of all its members under the guiding principles of integrity, innovation, inclusion, and inquiry.

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North Carolina A&T State University (NC)

Central Lakes College (MN)

Rollins College (FL)

University of Wisconsin - Madison (WI)

Grand Valley State University (MI)

Missouri Western State University (MO)

Florida Atlantic University (FL)

Community College of Philadelphia (PA)

University of Mary Washington (VA)

Fort Valley State University (GA)

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Northern Michigan University (MI)

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### ABOUT THE VOTER FRIENDLY CAMPUS PROGRAM

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

This partnership was formed as a tool to support campus 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 in an effort to further the work of the Students Learn Students Vote coalition in creating more measurable and manageable guidelines for institutions to follow in order to create a more voter-friendly campus.

The goal of the Voter Friendly Campus program is to help institutions develop plans to coordinate administrators, faculty, and student organizations in civic and electoral engagement.

The Voter Friendly Campus designation helps administrators develop a strategy to engage students and set clear goals so a path can be created in advance of upcoming elections. These activities can be institutionalized for years to come, keeping students engaged as they enter, and move through their time at school.

Over the course of the program we've seen immense growth, nearly tripling the amount of designated campuses within three iterations.

### First Cohort - 2016

83 campuses completed the first iteration of the Voter Friendly Campus designation from 23 states. Just four folks did the review of all of the campus plan and final reports and drafted the first overarching Voter Friendly Campus Report...

### Second Cohort - 2018

123 campuses designated after the midterm election. Youth and student turnout nearly double the previous mid-term election.

#### Third Cohort - 2020

A record 235 campuses representing 37 states and the District of Columbia earned the designation for 2021-2022. This designation cohort represents a wide range of two-year, four-year, public, private, rural, and urban campuses. Notably, the list of designated institutions includes many Minority Serving Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Despite a year of changing almost every thing to an online format, and educating many first time voters about new vote-by-mail process these institutions kept their commitment to student voter education and engagement. The program ultimately served over 3.4 million students. Which no doubt had a hand in the record voter turnout we saw in 2020.

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 2020 Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) report reflects on the program's second designation process. The 235 institutions that received the designation for 2019-2020 were chosen because of their commitment to promoting democratic engagement at their college or university. Participating institutions of higher education were required to complete four steps to receive the designation.

### Step 1: Submit a Statement of Interest (Early Spring Semester)

Statements of Interest detail current democratic engagement efforts at their institution, what the institution hopes to accomplish through the Voter Friendly Campus designation process, and identifying key points of contact.

### Step 2: Write a Democratic Engagement Action Plan (Late Spring Semester)

In line with the Students Learn Students Vote coalition, we encourage institutions to utilize <u>Strengthening American</u> <u>Democracy: A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rates Among College Students.</u>(1)

## Step 3: Demonstrate Commitment to Democratic Engagement (Fall Semester)

The VFC designation program encourages institutions to utilize the energy and

momentum in the months leading up to elections to engage students in the democratic process in four pillars of democratic engagement: voter registration, voter education, voter turnout, and developing students as voter advocates.

### Step 4: Submit a Follow-up Report and Analysis (January, the Following Year)

It is critical that institutions take the time to analyze the effectiveness of programs they carried out leading up to the election. The reports also require participating campuses to explain how they will continue their work into the next year for year-round engagement.

### Step 5: Announcement of Designations (Mid Spring Semester, the Following Year)

Each institution that completed steps 1 through 4 receives an electronic toolkit to promote their designation and celebrate their achievement.

NASPA and Campus Vote Project staff provide feedback to institutions through the process. We offer both group and one-on-one opportunities to share promising practices and ask for help with any difficulties they may be facing, which many certainly were in 2020. Institutions also receive monthly communications with important reminders and opportunities. Our webinars and resources are made available in the Resources section of the Voter Friendly Campus website. >>>

This report takes an in-depth look at what current designees have accomplished, common barriers, and solutions for improving future democratic engagement activities. After reviewing all the campuses' democratic engagement plans and their follow-up reports we decided to add sections about the unique 2020 landscape and the need to make a major shift to the virtual world during an unprecedented global pandemic along with our previous key areas of focus: Leadership, Goal Setting, and Evaluating Strategies and Tactics.

The 2016 VFC report (2) focused on evaluating strategies and tactics about how campuses approached voter registration, tackling the information deficit, and reducing barriers to voting. The 2018 VFC report (3) emphasized leadership and goal setting, taking a big picture look at what IHEs are doing to institutionalize their democratic engagement efforts, consider equity and inclusivity in their process, and think longterm in their programming.

Now, the 2020 VFC report tackles the need for contingency planning to make sure the next unexpected crisis is not unaccounted and unplanned for. Much like the year itself, the 2020 report is all about overcoming enormous challenges and making changes to ensure the progress of democracy.

The Voter Friendly Campus team is extremely thankful of all the institutions that stepped up and dedicated their time and efforts to create cultures of civic engagement at their institutions, despite the difficulties they faced in doing so in 2020. We are grateful for their commitment to the Voter Friendly Campus program and their work which allows us to attain the knowledge and lessons for this report through which we hope to empower more institutions to help their students reach their full civic potential.

<sup>(3) 2018</sup> Voter Friendly Campus Report. To learn more visit: www.voterfriendlycampus.org/resources



<sup>(2) 2016</sup> Voter Friendly Campus Report. To learn more visit: www.voterfriendlycampus.org/resources

# >>> 2020 LANDSCAPE

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be a very demanding obstacle to full voter engagement on college campuses, despite these challenges, a record 235 institutions received Voter Friendly Campus designations, valid through the 2022 midterm elections. Largely in response to the pandemic, vote-by-mail became more popular than ever, and almost certainly contributed to extremely high turnout levels among young adult voters.

It is especially important to note that young students of color played a pivotal role in this turnout victory. 2020 was characterized by public demonstrations against police violence and systemic racism, and efforts to suppress or otherwise disenfranchise voters of color were a significant element of this racism at work. Despite these ongoing hurdles, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) recognizes that young voters of color were instrumental in determining presidential election outcomes in a number of key swing states, and young Black organizers in particular produced extremely high participation in the January Georgia Senate runoffs.



We saw the highest turnout ever for an election in this country in 2020, in spite of unprecedented obstacles from the global pandemic, a mix of remote and hybrid learning across campuses, along with the most election law changes across the country in a six month period in my lifetime, all at a time of extreme political polarization and social unrest," said Campus Vote Project National Director Mike Burns.

"Through the Voter Friendly
Campus program we know that
hundreds of colleges and
universities were crucial in making
sure that millions of student
voters had the nonpartisan
information and support they need
to navigate these changes and
successfully have their voices
heard up and down the ballot."



# >>> VIRTUAL EVERYTHING

The first election in this country was held in 1788, and over the course of the following centuries many traditions and standard practices have been developed surrounding voter engagement and outreach. But 2020 was a year like no other, and the global pandemic threw a significant wrench into what had become the game play of election season. Despite the major challenges presented, institutions persevered and took their efforts to the virtual realm in place of traditional, oncampus, in-person engagement.

This has included virtual summits and webinars (often with higher reach than in person events), watch parties for movie screenings, debates, classroom visits now on Zoom, direct messages in place of tabling, and couch parties to engage in texting in lieu of traditional canvassing. To further their impact many institutions upped their digital presence and engaged heavily with social media to reach students.

Institutions branched out to methods beyond simple static posts, such as: videos, podcasts, influencer campaigns, and the use of celebrity power to get the message to their students. Efforts such as these proved to be both pandemic-proof, and beneficial in meeting students where they are at- and often with greater results.



## >>> SPOTLIGHT CAMPUS

### **Cuyahoga Community College**

Ohio | Public 2-Year | Approx. 23,000 Students

How do you approach nonpartisan voter engagement with volunteer or paid student roles in a fully virtual year? At Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C), Government Relations Director Katie Montgomery offered Democracy Fellows, students paid a stipend and supported to be voting rights advocates by Campus Vote Project, a choice - "We can be disappointed that this is not the year you planned on, or we can throw the lid off the box and see where it takes us." The students chose the latter - to great effect.

With the help of a core team of eight, composed of college faculty, staff, and Democracy Fellows, the college grew their year-round Promote the Vote coalition to 80 individuals by year's end, including campus community liaisons, student life directors, and community partners.

Perhaps Tri-C's most impressive endeavor was shifting its annual land-based program - The Voting Experience - to a virtual one. Held each year between Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day, the pop-up voting experience reached 1,300+ students pre-pandemic. It moved online via student created how-to videos on voter registration, absentee voting, and the importance of voting. Highlights included a spoken word piece written/performed by 2020 Democracy Fellow Charese Harrison as well as student conversations with elected officials who won by less than 10 votes.

The videos were recorded socially-distanced, working with the campus media team and the Fellows in various Cleveland locations. They were posted as a YouTube Playlist and shared via the college website and social media.

After viewing the playlist, the County Executive's media team invited Tri-C's Democracy Fellows to appear in a county-wide social media campaign - filmed at iconic outdoor locations, and reaching thousands. A new Faculty Champions (4) program extended the messaging, along with student presentations during Success Week, Welcome Week, and National Student Transfer Week as well as college-wide participation in National Voter Education Week.

Tri-C - Ohio's largest and oldest community college - is nationally ranked in the area of student voter engagement. Serving as an Ask Every Student Codesigner Campus and designated a Voter Friendly Campus, the institution embraces civic engagement as a basic tenet to instill in its students. Through their collective efforts, Tri-C tracked a reach of more than 360,000 for its 2020 Promote the Vote campaign.



What began as an uncertain year transformed into an amazing one," noted Katie. "Across the college, everyone said yes when asked to help. For the Tri-C Democracy Fellows - it was a year of unexpected accomplishments, lifechanging opportunities, and a sense of pride in challenges met."

(4) A faculty champion is a professor or lecturer that is integrating democratic engagement activities into their classes and helping their students engage with their community through voting and other activities. They serve a vital role in engaging students in the democratic process at their institution. This term comes from Ask Every Student. To learn more visit:

https://www.studentvoting.org/integration.



### > CAMPUSES THAT OVERCAME THE VIRTUAL BARRIER

### University of South Carolina, Columbia

South Carolina | Public 4-Year | Approx. 35,000 Students

COVID-19 made it difficult for the University of South Carolina (U of SC), Columbia to connect with students using traditional in-person voter engagement initiatives. Their coalition did not let this deter them however, and took it as an opportunity to innovate. They partnered with U of SC's first-year experience course, "University 101," to inform students about the basics of voting which allowed them to interact with hundreds of new students they would not have reached otherwise.



Emily Zeidman celebrates NVRD (9/22/20)

They also held multiple socially distanced in-person voter registration drives during the fall 2020 semester, using OR codes to allow students to register to vote, request their absentee ballots, find their polling location, and view their sample ballots from their individual phones to limit physical touch during the pandemic.

### St. Norbert College

Wisconsin | Private 4-Year | Approx. 2,100 Students

St. Norbert College's robust civic engagement program is based at its Norman Miller Center for Peace, Justice & Public Understanding. The campus in De Pere, Wisconsin hosts regular events of interest to students and the local community, but COVID precautions meant "going virtual." Seeing an opportunity, the Norman Miller Center expanded its reach and hosted a webinar with Peace is Loud based in New York.

The event, What's at Stake? Our Democracy. included the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II of Repairers of the Breach and the Poor People's Campaign, award-winning Iranian documentary filmmaker Marjan Safinia, and Sonya Renee Taylor of The Body is Not an Apology. According to Dr. Robert Pyne, director of the Norman Miller Center, the webinar was joined by over 150 viewers from a dozen states, from New York to Hawaii.



Leah Jobe and unidentified students at a Get Out the Vote Drive

While peer-to-peer engagement is important and more difficult campuses and organizations haven't slowed down in their outreach with students across the country, and in many ways we [voter engagement organizations] are collectively more accessible than ever. In addition to these broad digital outreach efforts, we have continued to work with campus partners and student leaders to move formerly in-person engagements into digital spaces. In doing so campuses have become more accessible than ever before, and have been able to incorporate programming that spans geographic barriers.

## **>>>>**

### > LEADERSHIP: COALITIONS AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Creating a large and diverse coalition of individuals and groups working to increase student voter participation is a crucial part of institutionalizing democratic engagement on college campuses. A strong coalition that has the participation of important campus groups will help bring validity and recognition to your efforts, connect you to additional resources and funding to help fuel your work, and prepare you for the unexpected.

When difficult and unexpected circumstances arise, such as a pandemic which forces a transition to a virtual environment and creates budgetary and staffing challenges, a robust coalition can help to ensure your work to increase student voting continues. In 2020, we learned that it is especially important for coalitions to be institutionalized and have succession plans. as sudden shifts like staffing changes, furloughs, and layoffs may mean that formerly active members of your coalition no longer have the ability or capacity to support your work. Institutionalizing your coalition and its succession plan into existing departments or programs on your campus can ensure that when the unexpected happens, the work carries on. To achieve this, campus action plans should have an explicit plan in place for what will happen if there are staffing changes among the individuals or departments which run the coalition, to ensure that in the event of layoffs or furloughs, the coalition is not left without a path forward.

A successful coalition is also one that is diverse and representative of the campus community. This means groups such as student life, academic affairs and faculty, your local elected officials, community and national organizations, and, of course, students, should all be included. Even, and especially, in a virtual environment, the coalition should have regularly scheduled meetings to discuss events that are occurring around the campus. Coalition communications should be sustained, even during years with no statewide elections, through outlets such as Facebook or email, so that coalition members can share their own programming and information with fellow members. The nature of college campuses is high rates of turnover, both among students and staff, and regular communication will help ensure the coalition is aware of this turnover as it happens, rather than learning about it months later and having to rebuild the coalition in the already very busy time before an election.



# **SPOTLIGHT CAMPUS**

### **Clark Atlanta University**

Georgia | Private 4-Year | Approx. 3,300 Students | Historically Black College & University

Clark Atlanta University has been at the forefront of setting historic precedents in the fight for justice and civil rights, being among the first Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBUCs) in Georgia. The year 2020 was Clark Atlanta University's first year establishing clear initiatives towards integrating civic engagement initiatives into their institutional structure. The Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellows in collaboration with Andrew Goodman Foundation Campus Ambassadors worked strategically throughout the Fall 2020 semester in outreach efforts to presidents and elected leadership of key student organizations on campus to coordinate communication efforts for student voter engagement activities.

The students who initiated and led the coalition now named "CAU Votes," identified every leader and organization on campus who made an impact on students, civic-minded or otherwise, and invited them to join together in an effort to create a truly reflective and representative democracy. During a semester that was 100% virtual, students primarily used social media initiatives such as Twitter "Town Halls" and Instagram Live sessions to mobilize and build a 50+ member coalition through the messaging app GroupMe to organize members.

Entering what will be a in-person semester in the Fall of 2021, CAU Votes has created new means to ensure the coalition lives on through another election cycle in Atlanta. In the future, CAU Votes plans to host recurring coalition meetings, create committees dedicated to specific aspects of civic engagement on campus, and engage at minimum 35-40 participating chartered student organizations. The tenacity and ingenuity of the students who are leading these valiant efforts are undoubtedly at the core of CAU Votes' success and will be what allows civic engagement to continue to be an important part of Clark Atlanta University's history.





### > CAMPUSES THAT OVERCAME LEADERSHIP BARRIERS

### **Durham Tech Community College**

North Carolina | Public 2-Year | Approx. 4,100 Students

With fewer resources and a scattered student body due to online-only classes, Durham Technical Community College managed to rise above these barriers and step into innovative solutions centered around voter education fueled by their partnership development. Using the power of social media, the savvy of their Democracy Fellows, and community partners, Durham Tech leaned into the use of Instagram to meet students where they are, creating a culture of engagement that rivaled other far bigger and better-resourced campuses. Collaborating with established organizations, such as You Can Vote, outside the campus to hold events such as NVRD Voter Registration and Voting Basics, Voting Access, and LGBTQIA+ and Voting allowed campus organizers to have a more impactful and wider reach. Moving beyond 2020 Durham Technical Community College looks to include more social media use to educate students, faculty and staff while continuing to promote the benefits of partner relationships. Standing on the foundation of voter education and innovation, this campus is undoubtedly blazing a path for student engagement that others can follow.

### Maryville College

Tennessee | Private 4-Year | Approx. 1,100 Students

Maryville College demonstrated the power of coalition building in their work this year. MC Votes successfully built a core team from a single staff member to a group of relevant stakeholders across campus and the community. This culminated in a mixture of staff, faculty, students, and community partners working together. MC Votes was able to accomplish its goal of recruiting a workstudy student as a Campus Voting Coordinator, allowing the group to accomplish many other hefty registration and education goals. By focusing on building a strong and structured team, setting and sticking to weekly meetings, and inviting all potential partners to the table, MC Votes accomplished an incredible amount in a short period of time. Another strength of the group's work was the variety of partnerships they formed, including a number of sports teams, academic courses, residence halls, and the Student Government Association. Having laid this foundation, MC Votes was able to set impressive goals for the upcoming year, including continuing to build partnerships with an even greater range of diverse student groups.

Building a diverse and productive coalition requires intentional outreach to campus and student leadership beyond traditionally political-spaces, and doing so will offer meaningful opportunities for input and assist with the successful execution of your goals. A robust coalition can help absorb the shock of personnel transitions and student matriculation, but a crucial best practice is to identify and mentor leaders-in-training prior to emergency situations, so that those individuals are ready to step in and lead the coalition when the unexpected occurs.

# >>> GOAL SETTING & REPORTINGS

Setting goals with the input of different on-campus stakeholders is an incredibly effective way to drive the day-to-day activities of an institution's commitment to democratic engagement on their campus. Goals, and the action plan as a whole, should be reported upon creation, implementation, and completion.

Goals pertaining to democratic engagement should fit into the overall civic mission and objectives of your institution. Objectives should follow the SMARTIE (5) method. As outlined in the "Strengthening American Democracy" action plan template, campuses should consider both long-term goals (where will your campus be in the next 3-5 years) and short-term goals (what needs to get done in the next 6 months or the next year). The VFC program leaders are contributors to the template and believe both shortand long-term goals are critical to making decisions to guide planning and decisionmaking.

Reporting is an integral part of the action planning process, but consistently scored as one of the bottom two sections for most institutions using the templates accompanying rubric. To be able to successfully report on a campus's civic engagement efforts, goals need to be set and a plan for gathering data about the completion of goals should be in at the beginning of the planning process. Reporting should include information on the impact of each action taken, as well as the reach. In order to best navigate the reporting process, campuses should consider how the plan will be shared, internally and externally; if the plan will be shared publicly, and if it will how; as well as if and how the data is used to inform the plan will be made public.

(5) SMARTIE stands for Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable. The concept comes out of The Management Center. To learn more, visit: https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/smartie-goalsworksheet/



# **SPOTLIGHT CAMPUS**

### Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia | Public 4-Year | Approx. 22,000 Students

Even though there were fewer students on campus this year, Virginia Commonwealth University's VCU Votes connected with students using OR codes on posters in typical high traffic areas, such as residence halls, the libraries, and Student Commons. This was one of their key initiatives to provide nonpartisan information about the upcoming election and ensure that people were informed of the voting process. VCU Libraries also played an essential role by creating voting research guides (6). An early October myVCU poll asked students to rate their confidence and knowledge of the voting process. The results showed that 86% of students reported that they were very confident or somewhat confident about their options to cast a ballot with only 8% of students reporting they were unsure or not confident in their knowledge.

VCU Votes had shared voter engagement information with students before the fall semester by partnering with the New Student Orientation. VCU Votes efforts also aligned with VCU's common reading assignment, One Person No Vote: How Voter Suppression is Destroying our Democracy by Carol Anderson. Additionally, Carol Anderson held a virtual talk about her book in October leading up to the presidential election, which further supported the VCU Votes efforts to engage the campus community. VCU Votes believes that the mix of strategies to integrate voting information into existing programs like New Student Orientation, build off the common reading assignment, along with pervasive displays across campus, resulted in the high level of confidence in the survey responses.



Student sharing voting information through VCU Votes.

(6) Virginia Commonwealth University's Voting Research Guides are a part of the VCU Libraries Research Guides. To learn more, visit: https://guides.library.vcu.edu/elections-us



# CAMPUSES THAT OVERCAME GOAL SETTING AND REPORTING BARRIERS

### North Carolina A&T State University

North Carolina | Public 4-Year | Approx. 10,300 Students | Historically Black College & University

A barrier for many campuses and students, COVID-19 hit North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University especially hard during the 2020 school year. With cases on the rise amid the restructuring of classes, students and faculty both had to turn their minds towards creative, solution-based conversations in order to uphold the work of civic engagement. Setting their sights on a "Civic Champions" program, North Carolina A&T administrators and Democracy Fellows sought to increase voter participation and education. Dividing the tasks into subgroups, fellows and members of the campus community worked together to increase access to on-campus voting sites, expand virtual registration, heighten education around absentee voting, host virtual listening sessions and ignite the flame of mobilization campus wide. Accompanied by the implementation of the train-the-trainer based Civic Champions initiative, diverse programing such as the: Aggies Activate 5 Challenge, Get Carded Video Challenge, and Hall Crawl Knob Drop and Pack-a-thon no doubt led to the tenfold increase of voter turnout and education. Additional programmatic successes included: training more than 45 Civic Champions, more than 200 participants throughout the National Voter Registration Day Party, packing 4,000 voter registration support and activation packs and delivering to 3,818 students. Last but not least, Civic Champions text more than 13,000 people during the NC HBCU Couch Party. With the success of these efforts, North Carolina A&T State University looks to continue increasing their goals for the next year, engaging more students, faculty and staff, and leading the pack in HBCU voter engagement, participation, and education.

### **Auraria - Tri-Institution**

Colorado | 2 Public 4-Year, 1 Public 2-Year | Approx. 38,000 Students | Hispanic-Serving Institute

The University of Colorado Denver, Metropolitan State University of Denver, and Community College of Denver are three institutions which operate independently but share a physical campus; together they are referred to as the Auraria campus. In the Fall of 2019, members of the three institutions convened an Auraria Voter Engagement Task Force to coordinate a strategic plan for campus-wide democratic engagement, pool resources, and maximize effort. Some key barriers included significant duplication of efforts and equity gaps, which were addressed in the proposed goals. During 2020, the campus secured a \$14,840 grant from Students Learn Students Vote for voter engagement work, which was used for video production, marketing, and staff salaries. This grant helped strengthen the collaborative planning of the group and enhance equity for those working on voter engagement projects, ultimately resulting in increased voter turnout.

Due to COVID-19, campuses had to reevaluate their goals and how they planned to reach their goals. This meant measuring success in new ways, but still counting more traditional measures as well. For some schools, measurement meant counting social media views, numbers of QR code scans, and YouTube likes. For other schools, measurement meant surveying and interviewing students to understand the impact their programming had on students' understanding of the political process. Reporting the findings of these measurements is a key to the process, as this information is then used to update previous goals and create new goals.



### >>>> EVALUATING STRATEGY AND TACTICS

The Voter Friendly Campus program seeks to help campuses institutionalize their efforts by building diverse coalitions that seek to incorporate democratic engagement across the campus, which includes setting short and long-term goals. We believe that registering and voting is both a stepping stone to a life of civic involvement and a central responsibility of every citizen to maintain a healthy democracy. As such, the Voter Friendly Campus program emphasizes planning to see students through this journey with efforts on voter registration, voter education, voter turnout, and students as voter advocates. After designating each new cohort of Voter Friendly Campuses we use this report to highlight great ideas and efforts across these areas of strategies and tactics.

### **Voter Registration**

A student's excitement and intention to participate in the democratic process by voting can often be cut short close to Election Day when they realize they aren't registered to vote, or are not registered at their current address. In the case of 2020 this often already confusing process was further complicated with last minute changes, both in state laws and in student addresses, due to the pandemic. Institutions worked to stay ahead of the constant adjustments and provide their students with the most accurate and up to date information.



## >>> SPOTLIGHT CAMPUS

### Central Lakes College

Minnesota | Public 2-Year | Approx. 1,800 Students

To avoid this disappointment and confusion for the students on their campus, Central Lakes College's Student Senate took all precautions to remind every student that voter registration is the first step in making their voices heard. This campus contacted every student in multiple ways, including texting every student three times throughout the semester and making additional contact multiple times through classroom announcements. They provided their students with the most accurate and up to date information. Central Lakes College's Student Senate also implemented unique marketing strategies like Cameo videos and a Video Competition titled 'Be a Voter,' a video competition in which students submitted a 30-60 second video encouraging students to vote. The creators of the top three videos for this competition received selected prizes. This marketing effort substantially helped with an increase in voter registration in spite of the challenges presented by the pandemic.



Student Samantha Mrazek, one of the three winners of an online contest encouraging others to vote



### > CAMPUSES THAT OVERCAME LEADERSHIP BARRIERS

### **University of Wisconsin - Madison**

Wisconsin | Public 4-Year | Approx. 30,000 Students

The University of Wisconsin's flagship campus in Madison received special recognition from Students Learn Students Vote for the extraordinary measures they took to provide Voter IDs. In Wisconsin, students who do not have a state-issued ID or US Passport need a special campus ID card to use for voting. This ID is offered typically to students during orientation but due to the pandemic and with buildings and services closed; the campus needed to find a new way to provide students with an ID. This effort was highly collaborative in nature and required the skills and expertise of a number of campus stakeholders. The project brought together key partners from across campus units including the BadgersVote Coalition, the WisCard Office, DoIT, Legal Affairs and the Office of University Relations who worked with the Wisconsin Elections Commission to create an electronic version of the ID. This version allowed students to download and print the ID at home or the library. Administrators Cristina Johnson, Megan Miller, Zachery Holder, and Charlie Pierce also set up voting stations in tents on campus for the fall election, where students could get an ID. These stations, staffed by CVP Democracy Fellows, were near the polling location allowing for students to use the ID to register to vote and vote - all in one place, safely. Nearly 2,800 students took advantage of these options, which the campus will evaluate and improve for future use.

### **Rollins College**

Florida | Private 4-Year | Approx. 2,500 Students

As with many campuses around the country, Rollins College in Florida had big plans to integrate voter registration efforts into orientation to help register first year students. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these plans were derailed when their orientation had to occur virtually and orientation planners were unable to integrate voter registration work into their virtual programming. Rollins College did not let this unexpected change deter their efforts to help register new students, however. They were able to overcome this challenge by hosting voter registration events and challenges through Turbovote in which they registered nearly 400 students. These events included seven different voter registration drives, webinars for first-year students, meet and greet events with local political candidates, and a competition between fraternities and sororities on campus to register the most members.

By any means necessary, our campuses made sure students were able to register to vote, despite a global pandemic. When plans for on campus voter registration at the beginning of the semester didn't pan out, campuses got creative and pivoted to new and unique ways to engage students and register new voters. Many of the methods implemented during a time of crises have proved to be so successful that institutions are considering to refine and replicate them for post COVID registration efforts. In our opinion, this is a major win!

# >>> VOTER EDUCATION

Voter education typically includes a range of activities, from providing details about the voting process to candidate information to hosting deeper political discussions on issues impacting students. In 2020, voter education took on an entirely different feel, as faculty and administrators had to provide voter education on a range of issues, from new rules about early and absentee voting, to campaigns centered on addressing disinformation. In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many campuses had to provide voter education online and in virtual environments due to students learning remotely. Below is how a few institutions approached voter education during a very unusual election cycle.



# >>> SPOTLIGHT CAMPUS

### **Grand Valley State University**

Michigan | Public 4-Year | Approx. 21,000 Students

Grand Valley State University (GVSU) always sets the bar in listening to students and giving them what they need. COVID-19 hit hard on campus, but GVSU pursued partnerships that included the GVSU Student Senate, Office of Student Life, Michigan Secretary of State, Ottawa County and Allendale Township Clerks. GVSU stakeholders successfully coordinated, promoted, and implemented the Allendale Township Satellite Clerk's Office on GVSU's campus during the 2020 election. Through online, hybrid and in-person events and programs, such as National Voter Registration Week, Vote Early Day, Parade to the Polls, GVSU Election Day Celebration, and the Post-Election Dialogue Series, the GVSU team built and sustained momentum around voter registration, voter education, voter turnout and dialogue across difference, throughout and beyond the 2020 election. GVSU representatives have worked closely with national partners through the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition to attend and present at national convenings, and have co-planned national CLDE conferences in partnership with NASPA/ADP/ADP/AACU.

Most recently, as one of three institutional partners, GVSU along with Kent State University and University of Maryland Baltimore County hosted a multi-institution Civic Empowerment Symposium in alignment with the Bringing Theory to Practice Multi-Institution Grant. One of GVSU's most popular and impactful voter education programs at GVSU is Democracy 101 (7). This program has been a vehicle for student-led voter education since 2016.

All of these programs and partnerships contribute to the on-going cultivation of a civic ethos at GVSU. GVSU is leading the way on how this work should be done from a student and administrative perspective. They have all hands on deck to ensure it is being done in an inclusive and equitable manner. GVSU is an example campus and is paving the way for institutionalizing student voter education.

<sup>(7)</sup> Grand Valley State University's Democracy 101: A Series of Critical Conversations is a series of co-curricular lectures, panel discussions and workshops focuses on the idea and practice of democracy. To learn more, visit: https://www.gvsu.edu/service/democracy-101-a-series-of-critical-conversations-181.htm



### > CAMPUSES THAT OVERCAME A BARRIER

### Florida Atlantic University

Florida | Public 4-Year | Approx. 30,000 Students | Hispanic-Serving Institute

With the challenges brought about by the shift to virtual events and learning in 2020, Florida Atlantic University (FAU) focused on implementing voter education into as many events and aspects of campus life as possible. To do this, coalition leaders partnered with faculty who taught Academic Service-Learning courses, which included more than 200 courses across the institution, to put on events and programming to help educate students about voting. Each of these courses includes a "Purposeful Civic Engagement" learning portion, which requires students to engage in semester-long civic engagement projects. Through FAU's work to expand civic engagement and voter education opportunities, participation in and completion of Academic Service-Learning courses increased by over 10% in Fall 2020.

### Missouri Western State University

Missouri | Public 4-Year | Approx. 4,100 Students

COVID-19 presented every campus with difficulties in providing proper voter education in virtual environments. However, last year was as important as ever to make sure that students were informed on a range of issues, including new rules about early and absentee voting. Missouri Western State University's biggest barrier was the inability to educate students on voting through in-person activities. This campus quickly overcame this barrier by sending out non-partisan information throughout the election period to all 4,500 students. This information included details on how to vote, where to vote, absentee processes, mail-in ballot processes, and answers to frequently asked questions.

It is clear that more than ever, voter education was a crucial component of voter engagement during the 2020 election cycle. With many COVID-19 related short notice changes throughout the cycle, affecting everything from registration deadlines to polling locations it was extremely important to provide students with ample quidance. As exemplified by the aforementioned campuses, institutions we work with made great efforts to dispense information to their students. Many campuses went on to provide details on topics beyond the voting process as well, such as: the ballot, the election, candidates and political topics relevant to their location and demographic. Through social media, websites, events, mailers and in-class engagements, campuses did their best to make sure their students were well informed prior to casting their ballots.

# >>> VOTER TURNOUT

Registering students to vote is just one step in the broader process of voter engagement that leads to voter turnout. Following students from voter registration to election day is essential in ensuring that students feel empowered to act once registered. Encouraging voter turnout is an effort that is accomplished in myriad ways by different institutions. But stalwarts of voter turnout efforts on campus, such as caravans to the polls or mass in-person events reminding students to vote on election day, were suddenly upended in the time of COVID-19. When early voting, voting locations and methods of voting were all in flux due to the pandemic, voter turnout was a unique challenge in this election cycle. The idea of normalizing voting behavior in a year that was far from normal was an uphill battle for institutions this election year. Virtual turnout efforts and COVID-safe turnout efforts required innovation on the part of campus professionals and students alike.



# **SPOTLIGHT CAMPUS**

### Community College of Philadelphia

Pennsylvania | Public 2-Year | Approx. 23,000 Students | Predominantly Black Institution

For the first time ever in the history of the Community College of Philadelphia, College President Dr. Donald Guy Generals closed the college for both students and employees to serve as a 'Day of Service' and allow the entire college community to get out the vote, and to volunteer to help others to do the same. The campus coalition, known as #CCPVotes, also held an informative session with the Philadelphia City Commissioner, Omar Sabir, on National Voter Registration Day. Commissioner Sabir went through each step of the voting process including no excuse vote-by-mail which was new in Pennsylvania for 2020. All together, the campus held 43 events that focused on learning to vote in the 2020 general election.

To help increase voter turnout, the coalition provided resources to students about how to get a free Lyft, how to contact Voter Riders, and encouraged them to go to the polls by safely and responsibly coordinating with a 'voting buddy.' There was also a big push to help students to find and use a satellite election office. The campus took it a step further and had information listed on the college's website about voting throughout the semester. The Community College of Philadelphia helped to play a role in the overall turnout in the City of Philadelphia and beyond!



Campus Vote Project Democracy Fellow Ahmad Mitchell (right) and Natalie Monteiro from NextGen, America (left) providing community engagement information to students at the Community College of Philadelphia.



### > CAMPUSES THAT OVERCAME A BARRIER

### **University of Mary Washington**

Virginia | Public 4-Year | Approx. 4,300 Students

University of Mary Washington has multiple off-campus polling locations, one of which is within walking distance (about 2 miles away). Due to COVID-19, UMW was unable to provide transportation to and from the polls on Election Day as usual. Instead, the UMW Votes coalition and CVP Democracy Fellows helped students vote early by leading walks to the early voting center every Wednesday leading up to Election Day. On Election Day, they ensured that students double checked their polling location. Students were also provided with Uber and Lyft codes to safely get to their polling location and cast their vote. UMW has plans to provide transportation to off-campus polling locations in the future and is working on establishing a polling location on campus.



Katie McDaid '23 celebrates Vote Early Day (10/24/20)



### **CAMPUSES THAT OVERCAME A BARRIER**

### **Fort Valley State University**

Georgia | Public 4-Year | Approx. 2,300 Students | Historically Black College & University

One of Fort Valley State University's barriers was not having enough student voter turnout. In spite of the pandemic, they had a 10% increase in student voter turnout on their campus.

To make real, visible, and concrete change at any institution, it is essential to understand the landscape of the campus. In FVSU's first year working alongside Campus Vote Project, it was clear that students and administrators who worked on civic engagement efforts had heard the voices of their students, listened to them, and understood what they needed. This was done by implementing initiatives and programming that aimed to encourage direct conversations with students. Fort Valley's Center for Student Engagement began texting initiatives, virtual registration drives, email blasts, and dorm storms. Student fellows were frequently doing the work of organizing "Think Tanks" where students were prompted with civic minded questions that they could answer via sticky notes on a glass window on campus.



Democracy Fellow Genesis Ivey, John R. Taylor III (Founder, Black Male Initiative of GA), FVSU students and faculty attending a virtual social justice workshop

It was these specific individual interactions that armed students with the information and resources they needed to get to the ballot box. Lack of knowledge and access to transportation were the main diagnosed hurdles for students in participating in the election process at FVSU, so providing crucial information on how to request absentee ballots and change voting addresses were imperative to an easier voting experience for many students. While such direct engagement with one's campus may be a luxury that smaller institutions may have- the way FVSU took action is what truly made the difference. Students and administrators at FVSU saw students on their campus put more energy into encouraging their peers to vote and engaging politically, and responded in a way that would allow them to continue to do so accurately and efficiently.

This election year presented unprecedented challenges to encouraging student voter turnout. With students often living in distant locations and in states with voting rules that were different than in any other previous election, turnout efforts required a lot more work and critical thinking than ever before. In spite of these challenges, students and campus professionals came together to ensure that students were aware of new voting regulations and what they needed to do to "arm themselves" with the information they needed to turn out. As the Community College of Philadelphia demonstrated, some institutions went above and beyond by creating a campus holiday so that students, faculty and staff could navigate the additional challenges of voting amid a pandemic. There are so many successes to celebrate at institutions across the country that managed to increase voter turnout in spite of the challenges that COVID and new voting laws presented. Hopefully some of these innovations such as campus holidays to encourage voting will far outlast the pandemic.

## **STUDENTS AS VOTER ADVOCATES**

It is vitally important that students are empowered to lead voter engagement efforts on campus by designing social media campaigns, doing outreach to peers through their social networks, up to and including engaging in direct conversations with candidates, elected leaders and local election officials. This approach allows students to develop agency and civic skills that will last beyond an election cycle or a college education. Students have been invaluable in helping create campus polling locations and identifying barriers to voter access.

This year in particular, students volunteered to serve as election workers to help fill the need during the pandemic. These student-driven efforts are essential and help campuses ensure that their outreach, registration and education efforts are relevant to their student population.





## >>> CAMPUSES THAT OVERCAME A BARRIER

#### **Northern Michigan University**

Michigan | Public 4-Year | Approx. 6,700 Students

Northern Michigan University may be a smaller campus in Michigan, however, its staff understands the importance of institutionalizing voting for their students. Although they had a barrier of student poll workers having class on Election Day, they created a strong coalition that was able to establish their first satellite city clerk's office on campus. This resource made it possible to register and vote absentee on campus, breaking down barriers of commuting to the polls and accessing the correct information. NMU pushed through this barrier by investing in having NMU student staff approach their peers who had questions and engage them in the voting process. Members of the committee also presented a proposal to the Academic Senate to excuse poll workers from class on Election Day. Although the Senate did not pass the proposal, the committee gained meaningful experience that can shape future efforts to institutionalize civic engagement. Many members of the Senate said that though they would not pass the proposal, the faculty would excuse students individually who were working at the polls. Their resilience stands out and is an example of how regardless of barriers, there are still ways students can advocate for their voting needs on campus and ensure they are met.

### Maryland Institute College of Art

Maryland | Private 4-Year | Approx. 1,700 Students

Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) really understood the importance of students being empowered to lead voter engagement efforts on campus. This can be done in many ways; however, this campus was able to achieve this while also overcoming one of their biggest barriers, which was the campus being closed and fully online due to COVID-19 in the fall. This led to reduced staff/faculty capacity and support on voter related issues. MICA saw this as the perfect opportunity to elevate student voices and creativity to develop new online resources and programming by creating paid student positions to work on voter access and voter advocacy.

## >>> SPOTLIGHT CAMPUS

#### **Tarleton State University**

Texas | Public 4-Year | Approx. 11,300 Students

Tarleton State University has committed to improving the civic learning and democratic engagement of their students. There was a focused effort to elevate student knowledge and engagement on campus. This was done by increasing classroom-based efforts to inform students of the necessity of civic engagement and connecting this information to their real lives. They created the Center for Transformative Learning to foster the work of the students and make connections. They also created a dedicated coordinator position who facilitated communications with the public as well as the greater campus among other efforts. Students were empowered to lead in a variety of ways, including during their Tarleton Town Halls where they researched policy issues, and discussed their issues with policy consultants, experts, and professionals from the surrounding area. Students then formulated action plans. Every fall and spring term, the Texan Debate engages students who are enrolled in communication courses to research current policy issues.

Students participate in a day-long debate event that concludes with an evening debate on the issue. Preparation and research on the debate issue focus on civic learning and democratic engagement. Approximately 800-1000 students participate in Texan Debate each academic year. Tarleton State University also has Legacy Hall, which is a living and learning community for students enrolled in Texas government courses focused on civic learning and democratic engagement.



Students and administratrors gather for the semesterly Tarleton Town Hall

Centering students in voter registration, education and turnout efforts is vitally important to the effectiveness of this work. This year presented an incredible challenge in centering student voices given how many students were learning remotely and not physically present on campus. In addition to being physically dispersed across the country, students were facing a range of other challenges to participating in campus life, such as reliable access to the internet and learning and living in spaces shared with families, among other challenges. As these campus highlights demonstrate, students and staff rose to this challenge. Students found new and innovative ways to reach their peers in a virtual environment and in some cases, found that they could reach more students virtually than they could in-person. This year reinforced the importance of centering students and how providing students with the autonomy to do this work can greatly improve registration, education, and turnout efforts on campus.

## **CONCLUSION**

In what was arguably one of the most challenging years for voter registration, education, and turnout, there are so many successes to celebrate. As noted throughout this report, the challenges to effective voter engagement were significant amid a global pandemic unlike anything anyone had ever experienced. Students and professional staff faced challenges like all virtual campus environments all the way to students living on campus with reduced capacity and working with students in quarantine who wanted to vote. Each of these challenges was met with tenacity and determination by those highlighted throughout this report. Campus Vote Project and NASPA could not be more proud to elevate the accomplishments and innovations of these individuals who enabled student voters to turn out in greater numbers than anticipated during such a challenging time. There are challenges that were faced during this last election cycle that will dissolve as the pandemic abates, but this election cycle also highlighted some persistent challenges to voting that will continue into the future.

The one constant, however, is that whatever the challenges presented, there will always be campus professionals and students who will partner together to overcome them so that students can exercise their right to vote and participate in the collective democracy that they all deserve.

The Voter Friendly Campus initiative will continue to partner with institutions and those on campus who work tirelessly on voter engagement efforts. We are eager to work with campuses moving forward to continue to break down barriers to student participation in the voting process and to work toward increased access for students to voting processes. The record turnout of young adult voters in 2020 was due entirely to the work of campus professionals and students who met barriers with innovation and whose tireless commitment to voter engagement is at the heart of a healthy democracy.



# LIST OF DESIGNATED VFC CAMPUSES

The following colleges and universities earned the Voter Friendly Campus designation for 2021-2022:

The University of Alabama in Huntsville

Arkansas Tech University

Arizona State University

Mesa Community College

South Mountain Community College

California College of the Arts

Chapman University

College of the Canyons

Los Angeles Pierce College

Mount Saint Mary's University LA

University of San Francisco

Whittier College

Arapahoe Community College

Auraria - Tri Institution

George Washington University

**Barry University** 

Edward Waters College

Florida Atlantic University

Florida Gulf Coast University

Florida International University

Florida State University

Miami Dade College

New College of Florida

Rollins College

Sante Fe College

Seminole State College of Florida

Stetson University

University of Central Florida

University of Miami

University of South Florida

Agnes Scott College

Clark Atlanta University

Clark Atlanta University

Dalton State College

**Emory University** 

Fort Valley State University

Georgia State University

Kennesaw State University

West Georgia

Iowa State Universit

DePaul University

Eastern Illinois University

Illinois State University

McKendree University

Northwestern University

University of Illinois at Chicago

University of Illinois at Springfield

Indiana University - Bloomington

Indiana University - Purdue University

Indianapolis

Independence Community College

Wichita State University

Bellarmine University

Centre College

Boston College

**Boston University** 

Lasell University

Lasell University

Middlesex Community College

Northeastern University

University of Massachusetts - Lowell

Frederick Community College

Frostburg State University

Johns Hopkins University

Maryland Institute College of Art

Morgan State University

**Towson University** 

University of Baltimore

University of Maryland - Baltimore County



University of Maryland - Eastern Shore

Wor-Wic Community College

Bates College

The University of Maine

Central Michigan University

Delta College

Grand Valley State University

Henry Ford College Lake Michigan College Lansing Community College Macomb Community College Michigan State University Mid Michigan College

Northern Michigan University

Oakland University

Saginaw Valley State University University of Michigan - Dearborn University of Michigan- Ann Arbor Washtenaw Community College

Wayne State University Central Lakes College Gustavus Adolphus College Hennepin Technical College Winona State University

Missouri Western State University University of Missouri - St. Louis Washington University in St. Louis

Webster University
Saint Louis University
Mississippi State University

Northeast Mississippi Community College University of Mississippi Main Campus

**Duke University** 

Durham Technical Community College

East Carolina University

Elon University

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical

State University

North Carolina Central University Queens University of Charlotte University of North Carolina Asheville University of North Carolina Charlotte University of North Carolina Greensboro University of North Carolina Pembroke

Wake Forest University

Warren Wilson College Western Carolina University

North Dakota State College of Science

Middlesex County College Montclair State University Ramapo College of New Jersey

Rowan University San Juan College

Truckee Meadows Community College University of Nevada, Las Vegas University of Nevada, Reno

Alfred State College Alfred University Cornell University

Rochester Institute of Technology

Russell Sage College

Siena College

Stony Brook University SUNY Binghamton University SUNY Buffalo State College

SUNY Cortland

SUNY Westchester Community College

Molloy College

Baldwin Wallace University Bowling Green State University Case Western Reserve University

Cleveland State University

Columbus State Community College Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C)

Mount St. Joseph University

Oberlin College Ohio University Otterbein University

Sinclair Community College The Ohio State University University of Cincinnati University of Mount Union Wright State University University of Oklahoma

Pacific University Allegheny College Alvernia University

California University of Pennsylvania

Cedar Crest College Chatham University



Clarion University

Community College of Allegheny County

Community College of Philadelphia

Drexel University

**Duquesne University** 

La Salle University

Lincoln University

Montgomery County Community College

Neumann University

Northampton Community College

Shippensburg University

Susquehanna University

Swarthmore College

Temple University

University of Pennsylvania

University of Pittsburgh

West Chester University of Pennsylvania

Clemson University

University of South Carolina Columbia

University of South Carolina Upstate

Winthrop University

Belmont University

East Tennessee State University

Maryville College

Middle Tennessee State University

Tusculum University

Pellissippi State Community College

**Baylor University** 

Lone Star College - Montgomery

Prairie View A&M University

Southwestern University

Tarleton State University

Tarrant County College - Connect Campus

Tarrant County College - Northwest Campus

Tarrant County College. - Northeast Campus

Tarrant County College - South Campus

Tarrant County College - Southeast Campus

Tarrant County College - Trinity River Campus

Texas A&M International University

Texas A&M University - Central Texas

Texas A&M University - Galveston

Texas A&M University - San Antonio

Texas Lutheran University

Texas State University

Texas Woman's University

University of Houston - Clear Lake

University of North Texas

University of Texas Austin

University of Utah

Weber State University

College of William and Mary

George Mason University

James Madison University

Liberty University

Northern Virginia Community College

Old Dominion University

Piedmont Virginia Community College

Shenandoah University

University of Mary Washington

University of Virginia

Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Tech

Virginia Wesleyan University

Norfolk State University

University of Vermont

Washington State University

Whatcom Community College

Alverno College

Cardinal Stritch University

Carroll University

Carthage College

Marquette University

St. Norbert College

University of Wisconsin - La Crosse

University of Wisconsin - Madison

University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee (UWM)

University of Wisconsin-Superior

University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point

Marshall University

West Virginia University



## NOTES

## NOTES





