

# Emporia State University

## Campus Plan:

### Civic Engagement Partnerships - Voter Registration, Education, and Voting

#### Background

We have been part of the American Democracy Project (ADP) since its inception and our campus audit at the time revealed less than 10 percent of our students registered to vote. Since then we have participated in several ADP initiatives related to elections and our campus culture has changed. Although the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) revealed considerable progress in 2012 and 2016 elections. From all publicly available information, it looks like we had the highest voting rate of in Kansas. We realize that previous success does not ensure future patterns. The following information from the NSLVE 2012 and 2016 reports may provide some historical perspective:

| <b>NSLVE ESU Data</b>                   | <b>2012</b>  | <b>2016</b>  |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Registration Rate</b>                | <b>77.7%</b> | <b>77.9%</b> |
| <b>Voting Rate of Registered Voters</b> | <b>59.7%</b> | <b>67.8%</b> |
| <b>Voting Rate of the population</b>    | <b>46.4%</b> | <b>52.8%</b> |

It is important to understand the NSLVE footnote related to eligible voters because ESU has had a relatively large share of ineligible voters (e.g., international, undocumented, and other students), especially among undergraduates. The footnote reads:

*\*\* Your students' data broken down by age at the time of the election. To provide more accurate voting rates, students ineligible to vote because they were too young, students whose age data was not reported to the Clearinghouse, as well as records that were FERPA blocked are removed from this table.*

*Please note that we are not able to adjust these voting rates by removing non-resident aliens, resident aliens or undocumented students."*

#### Past experiments with voter registration

We were one of the campuses that participated in an experiment/study conducted by Elizabeth Bennion and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts about a decade ago. From that study we learned to be more effective with social media, especially in e-mail messages; timing, author(s), and complementarities with other messages make a difference.

We have participated several in other ADP voter registration initiatives and learned from each; however, the Kansas-specific voter registration requirements (e.g., proof of citizenship) have changed and thus we have had to pivot our approach. The following link highlights some of these challenges:

<http://www.cjonline.com/news/local/state-government/2017-05-04/lawsuits-over-kansas-voter-registration-law-remain-track>

Generally, without going into excessive detail, our efforts and experiments have helped us to recognize that partnerships make a significant difference, especially with trust of election officials and to some extent with students. We are committed to these relationships at least for the next election cycle.

## Plans

We have two major events to register voters:

Our kickoff event for the fall is August 20, 2018, which close proximity with the beginning of the fall semester. We will have students, faculty, and partners from the League of Women Voters, and Loud Light working together to register and reregister students at the all-university block party. This high-energy event brings large groups of students.

Loud Light is an amazing partner; they have high-energy recruiting techniques that helped our students and faculty energize young voters. They have impressive technology. For example, they bring their own wireless hub and seven devices to expedite voter registration in crowds. Students can mingle, engage, and register voters quickly and efficiently. <https://www.loudlight.org/>

Following a week with voter registration tables in the Memorial Union led by our student government, we collaborated with Loud Light again on October 4, 2018 to have a final push to increase voter registration before the deadline. This time, we ordered hundreds of dollars of fresh, hot pizza and offered it to students to help register voters (*including themselves*). This ensured that our international students were able to be part of the culture. Loud Light paid for the pizzas through a grant.

Voter education is tricky because we want to ensure our efforts do not suggest a partisan bias. Class discussion is probably the most effective.

Emporia is a relatively small community and almost anyone can drive to any place in the community with 10 to 15 minutes. Compared with other places, this is likely short. However, we do not have a polling place on campus and our past efforts to be a designated voting place have been unsuccessful. Offering rides to polling places on Election Day is our last effort.

We look forward to working with partners, especially All IN. We have worked with Jen Domagal-Goldman since she began at ADP and we look forward to her creativity and knowledge of our campus and the challenges we face in Kansas with repeated attempts to create restrictive election laws in Kansas.