

## #ALL in Democracy Challenge Campus Voting Plan

### ABSTRACT

The Indiana University South Bend American Democracy Project's **Election 2018 Engagement Series** is designed to create informed voters and engaged citizens. Our event series will kick off with a Constitution Day Celebration on September 17<sup>th</sup> and will continue with a steady stream of events between September 18, 2018, and November 6, 2018. The series includes six key components: voter registration, citizen education and deliberation, non-partisan political debates, non-partisan voter information and candidate guides, poll worker recruitment and training, and a student-focused, non-partisan get-out-the-vote campaign. We will collaborate with organizations across campus to register as many students as possible on National Voter Registration Day and throughout the registration season. Voter registration efforts will include hallway registration tables in buildings across campus, plus registration stations in campus offices, and a classroom-based registration campaign. For the first time ever, we will train residence assistants (RAs) to register students in university housing and to assist with registration events across campus. Constitution Day will also be the kick-off of our Constitution Week series of deliberations on the Bill of Rights. These interactive sessions will feature in-depth deliberation regarding the First Amendment (hate speech on campus), the Second Amendment (guns on campus), and the how the Constitution applies to immigrants (whether naturalized citizens, legal residents, or undocumented workers). This part of our series reflects the fact that pervasive political discussions, a recognition of the privileges of citizenship, and an understanding of what is at stake during election season all contribute to a more engaged electorate. We will also host live candidate debates, debate watch parties, and a non-partisan voter guide to educate both students and the broader community about key issues and where candidates stand. All live debates will include post-debate receptions to provide voters with an opportunity to chat one-on-one with local candidates, while debate watch parties will include pizza, pop, and snacks to encourage attendance and post-debate discussion. In order to provide students with the information they need to follow registration and education with an informed vote, our online voter guide will provide important information to voters regarding issues to consider while evaluating candidates – including verbatim candidate responses to a wide variety of policy questions. In addition, our voter information tables will provide critical updates regarding races and candidates on the ballot, polling locations, and voter ID, while our poll worker training and recruitment program will engage students in administering free and fair elections. Finally, we will work with housing to host a Party to the Polls (and Parade to the Polls) event, complete with signs, t-shirts, buttons, and social media prompts encouraging our students to Parade to the Polls together and to post and share photographs of themselves at the polls using the hashtag #IUSBVOTES. Outcomes will include increased student registration and turnout rates (compared to 2014 as tracked by the NSLVE) and a more educated and politically engaged campus and community. We are excited about our comprehensive plan to register, educate, inform, and mobilize student voters in 2018!

## **PROJECT NARRATIVE**

### **Engagement and Collaboration**

Indiana University South Bend (IUSB) has a busy semester planned in preparation for the upcoming election on November 6<sup>th</sup>. The goal of our 2018 Election Engagement Series is to provide members of the campus community and citizens of St. Joseph County with the information needed to become informed and engaged voters. By partnering with local news outlets and utilizing social media our freely available events and publications have the potential to impact approximately 9,000 students, faculty, and staff at IUSB (iusb.edu), plus an estimated 204,000 adult residents in St. Joseph County (census.gov).

**Voter Registration:** A prerequisite for participation is registration. There are a number of activities planned on the IUSB campus to ensure that everyone in the campus community who wants to register to vote in the election has the opportunity to do so. Our first voter registration event will take place on Constitution Day (9/17/18). We will also celebrate National Voter Registration Day (9/25/18) with an all-campus, one-day registration event. We will have stations set up across campus for students (and others) to check their registration status, register to vote, and receive important voter information. This will be followed by an aggressive week-long, campus-wide Voter Registration Week (10/1/18-10/5/18) to get students registered before the October 9<sup>th</sup> deadline. In doing this work, we will seek support from Titan Productions, the Student Government Association, Alumni Affairs, Housing & Residence Life, the University Bookstore, the Schurz Library, The Gateway, and faculty across campus – who will receive support and training to conduct (or invite trained students to deliver) classroom presentations and registration drives. In addition, various student organizations including the Political Science Club, Latino Student Union, Economic Forum, Black Student Union, Muslim Student Association, Feminist Student Union, and Civil Rights Student Association will help us to reach out to a broad and diverse group of students across campus. The ADP is currently working with Student Housing to train residence assistants and front desk workers to register voters and to plan a “Dorm Storm” during this week to register housing residents to vote. We will utilize posters, chalking, and the daily school newsletter Daily Titan to advertise our Voter Registration Project and remind the IUSB community of the impending registration deadline.

**Citizen Education and Deliberation:** The Institute for Democracy & Higher Education has argued that voter turnout on college campuses reflects a culture of political discussion and deliberation that takes place across campus and throughout the year. Rather than focusing narrowly on activities designed to register and mobilize voters, IDHE researchers urge campuses to create a campus climate in which deliberation and pervasive political discussions are encouraged. We have not yet finalized our plans for a bi-weekly current events deliberation series, but we plan to kick-off our efforts to inspire critical reflection and deliberation about politics through a Constitution Week series of discussion-based public forums including: “Free Speech or Hate Speech: How Do We Protect Speech on College Campuses?” & “Guns on Campus: Increased Safety or Increased Risk?” & “Does the Constitution Apply to Immigrants?” We will also screen the thought-provoking film 13<sup>th</sup> in student housing. The film's title refers to the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment abolishing slavery. It explores the history of race and the criminal justice system in the United States. The film will be preceded by a speaker and followed by

discussion. (We will, of course, encourage students to become active in our political system – including, but not limited to, voting – at all of these events).

**Non-Partisan Campus Debates/Forums:** The IUSB American Democracy Project (ADP) will host a series of candidate forums on campus. To reduce "roll off" and increase voter confidence and participation in "down ballot" races, we will include public forums and debates featuring candidates for school board and local county races. Our forums and debates will feature candidates running in contested races for: county council (at least two districts), South Bend school board, St. Joseph County Sheriff, the Indiana House of Representatives Districts (two districts), the St. Joseph Co. Board of Commissioners (district 1), and the St. Joseph County Probate Judge. Details for up to three (additional) congressional candidate debates (IN-2) are pending. Each debate will require candidates to respond to a series of policy-based questions from the sponsors and the public. Each will be followed by an informal reception, allowing voters to follow-up with candidates one-on-one. We will also host two debate watch parties in the community building of our student housing complex. Members of the campus community (whether residential or commuter students) will be invited to enjoy pizza and soda pop while watching the U.S. Senate candidates debate on a large screen television. These watch parties are very informal by design. They are a way to encourage students to engage in civil discourse regarding one of the most closely watched Senate races in the nation. In addition to our live debates and debate watch parties, we plan an Election Results Watch Party on November 6, 2018. This will allow students to see how the candidates they got to know during the election season performed on Election Day.

**Non-Partisan Candidate Guides and Voter Information Tables:** In order to ensure that citizens have the information needed to cast their votes on (or before) Election Day, the IUSB American Democracy Project will provide voter information at all of our events this Fall. This information includes a list of websites citizens can visit on their own to learn more about the candidates and the key issues of this election. In addition, the ADP will staff voter information tables on three additional occasions specifically to provide voter information such as how to find your polling place, who is on the ballot, what information you need to bring with you on Election Day. The first of these events, called "Trick-or-Vote: It's scary not to know who you want to vote for," will be held on October 31, 2018. This event features Halloween costumes, candy, and Halloween-themed educational materials. The remaining two events will be held on Monday and Tuesday before Election Day. We are also working on an online Vote 411 voter guide featuring candidates' answers to a series of policy questions. The ADP is co-sponsoring this initiative with the League of Women Voters of the South Bend Area and the local newspaper, *The South Bend Tribune*. The ADP and League stepped in when the Tribune's staff was cut, allowing the *Tribune* to publish information about key races without having to conduct their own interviews, thereby benefitting the entire community. An ADP student will take the lead on this voter guide, working under the supervision of ADP Director Dr. Elizabeth Bennion.

**Poll Worker Recruitment & Training:** The American Democracy Project will partner with the St. Joseph County Election Board to present poll worker training session for all county poll workers. We will host four sessions on two dates on campus. Poll worker training will take place from 9:00 A.M. – 1:30 P.M. on October 20<sup>th</sup> and October 27<sup>th</sup>, with two sessions (9:00 – 11:00 and 11:30 – 1:30) each Saturday. The ADP will work diligently to advertise this opportunity to members of our campus

community – especially students – and will encourage our ADP interns, Political Science Club members, and leaders in collaborating clubs and organizations to sign up themselves to serve as poll workers. We will also advertise this opportunity in the Daily Titan, in The Preface (our school newspaper), and at all of our voter registration events.

**Non-Partisan Get-Out-the-Vote Campaigns:** After registering and educating students, we are determined to get them out to the polls! To do this, we will partner with university housing to host a Party to the Polls event. We will host a party in the Community Building of our student housing complex on the Saturday before Election Day. We will make #IUSBVOTES buttons, signs, and t-shirts at the party before proceeding to the County-City Building to cast our ballots (as part of our states absentee-in-person”early voting” program). Students will be able to vote using their housing address after showing an Indiana driver’s license or their student ID. Other (non-residential) students from across St. Joseph County will be invited to enjoy us. We will snap pictures at the polls and encourage all participants to share the photos using the hashtag #IUSBVOTES (plus other associated hashtags, including those related to the ICC CEEP grant program).

**Student Involvement:** American Democracy Project interns and volunteers from the IUSB Political Science Club will be the volunteer core for all events in our Election Engagement Series. We rely on students for ideas as to the format and style of these events. We also rely on the dedicated members of the club (and the ADP interns) to staff our events. For our more informal events, such as the watch parties, the students help plan the menu, decorate the venue and actively participate in discussions with their classmates about the election. For the candidate forums and debates, they play a critical role as question runners, while also serving as greeters, timekeepers, ushers, and reception hosts. However, student involvement begins long before each event takes place, with ADP interns working to create press releases, event programs, event posters, and other materials critical to the success of each event. Students are at the heart of everything we do!

Student involvement also reaches far beyond the ADP interns and members of the Political Science Club. We partner with a wide variety of student organizations and units across campus. Students from multiple clubs and organizations will work with us to register and educate voters (see Voter Registration above). The Student Project Director (CEEP Fellow) will determine the requirements of co-sponsorship and will coordinate student involvement using Sign-Up Genius to solicit, schedule, and track student involvement across campus. The program will also be used to send reminders to all student volunteers, as well as a follow-up participant survey at the end of the event series.

Finally, the American Democracy Project encourages students to become involved in local politics in a manner that matches their personal beliefs and values. We not only engage students in a wide variety of non-partisan activities on campus but also encourage them to get engaged in real-world political campaigns. To facilitate this, we will work with local political parties and campaigns from all affiliations to help them recruit interns into their organizations. The Department of Political Science has arranged for the student to receive academic credit for this work.

## **Marketing and Outreach**

The American Democracy Project utilizes a website and Facebook page to keep people on campus and in the community up-to-date on all events. We also use posters, press releases, and posts to the all-campus electronic bulletin board (the Daily Titan) to market our events. On campus, student volunteers use sidewalk chalk to advertise upcoming events. This approach has been very successful, generating strong attendance and solid media coverage of ADP events, especially our Constitution Day activities and candidate forums which generate dozens of media stories each semester. We also reach out to people by email, using a list we have compiled through sign-up sheets at past events. The success of this approach to marketing and outreach is illustrated by the robust attendance at last semesters' televised primary candidate debates (e.g., 450 people at a congressional candidate debate on our South Bend campus, 380 people at a congressional candidate debate in Elkhart, and 320 people at a Meet the Candidates forum we hosted at the local library). We look forward to including the ICC and CCEP logos on all printed posters, brochures, and other marketing materials and encourage the ICC to "like" us on Facebook to see post-event photos of all of our grant-funded events.

## **Campus and Community Benefit**

One goal of higher education is to educate citizens for democracy. Further, this goal is the primary purpose – and benefit – of our Election Engagement Program. The immediate benefits of the program to campus will be higher levels of enthusiasm, interest, registration, education, and mobilization surrounding the 2018 midterm election. In terms of measurable program objectives, we seek an increased registration and turnout rate for students on our campus. We participated in the 2014 and 2016 NSLVE study and will be able to compare our 2018 results to past results using the NSLVE data.

Having informed and engaged citizens is always a benefit to the community. ISUB's American Democracy Project strives to help create informed voters and engaged citizens. Experience and skills gained by the students in the Political Science Club, whether through volunteering at our various events or through ADP internships, will prepare them to be informed and engaged citizens and civic leaders. (Indeed, many local political candidates, campaign managers, and civic leaders come from the ranks of the Political Science Club and American Democracy Project). Candidates, political parties, media organizations, and local civic groups frequently ask us to host forums and debates; they rely upon us to perform this valuable service. The organization has become a trusted community partner, with the community-at-large relying on the American Democracy Project to provide the information required to stay up-to-date on important political issues, especially during election seasons. We provide valuable infrastructure and resources (including event space and technology) that local civic groups (such as the League of Women Voters) could not afford on their own. We partner with local media to provide detailed candidate information they would struggle to provide. We also take our show "on the road" upon request, and fully expect that the local public library will ask us to host a Meet the Candidates forum at the downtown library as we did during the primary season last spring. (And, in fact, we have already received requests from neighboring counties -- in which some of our students reside -- to help them to host political debates). Our candidate debates, online voter guide, and civic leadership academies are well-known and well-attended by voters across the community. In this way, we provide a valuable service to the community and act as a steward of place.

## Budget Narrative

Food is needed to attract people to the events and to enhance a sense of community. Pizza will attract students to the late night debate watch parties and election night party. Punch, cookies, veggies, and fruits create lovely post-debate receptions that allow voters to socialize informally with candidates (and each other) after candidate forums and debates. Similarly, a Party to the Polls isn't really a party without food! Students who attend the party will work to prepare materials for our Parade to the Polls, but a "work session" won't attract the same number of students or enthusiasm as a party!

Event series brochures and individual event posters are needed to advertise individual events and our event series. Programs are required to help participants to understand the format of each event and the identities of the event participants. (We frequently hear people comment on the "professionalism" of our events after receiving a copy of our event programs). Registration forms and voter information forms are required for our campus and classroom-based registration drives, and our voter information tables. All of this is necessary to run our 2018 Election Engagement Series, but it is expensive, and it strains the budget of a small civics project at a regional public university.

Buttons, signs, and t-shirts are needed to generate enthusiasm among students and attract media coverage, including social media posts, during our voter mobilization activities. The CEEP grant will allow us to realize our vision by providing the food required for our events, giving us the financial ability to provide the marketing materials, events materials, and GOTV decorations and accessories needed to maximize student participation and excitement this election season.

The American Democracy Project has a small events budget. The total estimated cost of our Election Engagement Series exceeds our fall 2018 events budget. Without a grant, it will be very difficult to carry out the series as envisioned, and impossible to take advantage of other opportunities that arise or to host planned community service projects in the spring. An ICC CEEP grant will be *extremely* helpful in allowing us to carry out our planned activities and achieve our fall 2018 goals. Instead of spending our time on fundraising activities, we will be able to devote our energy to mobilizing student voters! Without this grant, it will not be possible to reach as many people as we would like with critical information about the election.

Alternatively, we could eliminate part – or most -- of our food budget. Doing so would have a very negative effect on our ability to attract student voters. For example, hosting debate watch parties or election night parties without pizza is unlikely to draw many students – or to qualify as a party. Hosting debates without reception would diminish citizens' opportunity to talk informally with candidates and make their voices heard. Such changes would diminish our reputation for delivering high quality, professional events. It is this reputation that has caused us to become the leading resource for unbiased political information and candidate forums in our area. The American Democracy Project, working in partnership with the non-partisan Political Science Club and the League of Women Voters of the South Bend Area, provides a much-needed service to our community. To do this, we rely heavily on grants and donations. Our volunteers' efforts and past partnerships with Campus Compact, including two previous CEEP grants, have proven *invaluable* in continuing our political education and engagement work.