



Civic Engagement Action Plan 2020

“Be the Vote that Shapes the Future”



Prepared by The ALL IN Challenge Committee at Northeastern

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is this action plan for and what does it seek to accomplish?

The purpose of the Civic Engagement Action Plan at Northeastern is to raise awareness, educate, and empower the Northeastern community to enact positive change through social engagement and citizenship. This need for this plan is based on the perception and belief that many students arrive at Northeastern right out of high school, not necessarily aware that they can take an active role in addressing social problems. Through both in-class and out-of-class civic experiences, the Civic Engagement Action Plan seeks to encourage and train students to become conscientious citizens who seek to understand the causes and effects of social and civic issues. Additionally, we would like to see students become active citizens who make it their priority to address and possibly find solutions to the issues in their community and nation.

While election years are the primary emphasis of this work, empowering our students to contribute to the public discourse beyond elections will lead them to further have a positive impact on their communities. We recognize that community college students have numerous talents, fresh ideas, and almost limitless energy, that if not properly channeled could leave a huge void in the civic processes of our communities. Through multiple strategies, the Civic Engagement Action Plan at Northeastern is intended to cultivate a sense of civic-minded thinking among students, including the knowledge, skills and motivation, which will ultimately empower them to make a positive difference in their communities. Increased voting rates will be a result of this kind of civic-mindedness, as students will eventually discover that they are the ones who will make their world a better place.

II. LEADERSHIP

Northeastern joined the **ALL IN** Challenge in early September 2020. The decision to join this challenge was supported and encouraged by Northeastern **President, Dr. Jay Lee**.

Steve Smith, Vice President of Student Services at Northeastern, enrolled Northeastern in the challenge and requested that the following campus leaders be the official working group to develop and oversee the plan.

Dr. Linda Merkl, Vice President of Academic Affairs at Northeastern.

Catheryne Trenkle, Director of Academic Student Support Services and the Monahan Learning Center at Northeastern.

Tim Stahley, Director of Residence Life and Student Activities at Northeastern.

Kodi Johnson, Director of Student Success, Equity, and Inclusion at Northeastern.

Snow Mekelburg, Student Success Specialist at Northeastern.

Garrett Cockroft, Associated Student Government President at Northeastern

Each person listed above plays an integral role in the success of this plan. Dr. Merkl will encourage faculty to make a difference in the lives of students and challenge them to see the real-life relevance of the course material. Faculty teaching skill-based courses such as English and communication could teach these subjects with citizenship skills – skills that can be used to affect a positive change – thus, enhancing the relevance of course material. Professors in biology, sociology and psychology may also find civic engagement valuable for demonstrating the applicability of course material.

The Office of Residence Life and Student Activities, led by Tim Stahley, is a valuable partner in the work of holistically engaging students. Because civic engagement is student engagement, the overlap of these interests during election years can expand to foster voter registration, education and engagement, improve student retention, and enhance their college experience. Tim Stahley will also promote student activities using social media and the Associated Student Government, led by Northeastern’s ASG President, Garrett Cockroft.

Part of Catheryne Trenkle’s position is to supervise the Monahan Learning Center, which includes the Library at Northeastern. Library staff are key stakeholders in cultivating a politically informed student body. At Northeastern, the library is the nucleus of activity for tutoring, computer access, information seeking and socializing. The Library features civic awareness displays featuring ballot initiatives and voter registration information.

Kodi Johnson and Snow Mekelburg both work in the Office of Student Success, Equity, and Inclusion. As effective democratic citizenship requires understanding and tolerating differences, this office has proven to be a valuable partner in co-sponsoring events. These events are geared, in part, toward inspiring first generation and lower income students, especially from minority communities, to persevere through college. Additionally, this Office coordinates the Student Success Seminars for First Year Students. Kodi Johnson and Snow Mekelburg will promote civic engagement and voter registration

during the final week of class for the seminar courses.

Steve Smith, the Vice President of Student Services, will schedule and chair the working team planning meetings and report to the campus about the plans and activities slated for student civic engagement. He will also submit press releases to the community about the ALL IN Challenge and Northeastern's voter registration data.

III. LANDSCAPE

National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement

Since 2012, Northeastern has received campus-specific voter registration and turnout data through the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement. As was the case across the entire study, voter turnout among Northeastern students went up in 2018, compared to the 2014 midterm elections. 2018 NSLVE data indicated a voter turnout rate of 61.5% at Northeastern, with 67.7% of students registered.

Northeastern’s 41.7% voter turnout rate in 2018 was slightly higher than other Associate institutions in the study.

Year	Registration Rate	Voting Rate of Registered Students	Overall Voting Rate of Student Body
2014	59.0 percent	54.5 percent	32.3 percent
2018	67.7 percent	61.5% percent	41.7 percent
CHANGE	+8.7 percent	+7.0 percent	+9.5 percent

Northeastern’s faculty advising model and ratio of full-time faculty allows the institution a unique opportunity for students to make a personal connection with staff and faculty. Students often build a sense of identity based on academic area of study and/or participation in extra-curricular activities. Northeastern will choose to focus on these subsets of students when implementing specific strategies.

	2014			2018			Change
	Enrolled	Voted	Rate	Enrolled	Voted	Rate	
Agriculture and Agriculture Operations	97	40	41.2%	92	31	33.7% ↓	-7.5
Business, Management, and Marketing	77	16	20.8%	50	24	48.0% ↑	27.2
Education	37	*	n/a	35	16	45.7%	n/a
Engineering and Engineering Technologies	32	*	n/a	33	*	n/a	n/a
Health Professions	68	19	27.9%	74	24	32.4% ↑	4.5
Law Enforcement, Firefighting, and Protective Services	15	*	n/a	23	*	n/a	n/a
Leisure and Recreational Activities	77	53	68.8%	0	0	n/a	n/a
Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Humanities	926	248	26.8%	653	237	36.3% ↑	9.5
Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians	54	12	22.2%	38	12	31.6% ↑	9.4
Personal and Culinary Services	17	*	n/a	18	*	n/a	n/a
Precision Production	0	0	n/a	21	*	n/a	n/a
Unknown	105	75	71.4%	121	98	81.0% ↑	9.6

IV. Goals

Short Term goals: Be visible, be heard, be involved.

In an ongoing effort to increase student participation and inclusion, we have identified 3 focus areas, to increase our efforts. We believe that student persistence, success and performance improve, when they feel seen, heard and included. We are setting our Civic Campaign goals for the ALL IN Challenge on this basis. First, we want students to SEE that something is taking place on campus. We will designate a central and visible location that we know students will encounter at least once per day. Secondly, we want to give them a voice to feel heard and to inspire those around them. We will utilize hands on visuals and social media platforms that are comfortable and familiar to a broad demographic. Finally, we will encourage them to get involved by hosting activities that allow them to participate safely in group settings and as an individual working towards a common goal: voter participation.

1. Create a central location with easy access to iPad stations to register to vote. This location will also be the hub for students to display their "I vote because..." post-it notes. In creating a visible, one stop station, with voting guides and website instruction, we hope to promote simplicity through the process while supporting and inspiring the student vote.
2. Host the upcoming debates in a large, neutral space, where students can live view the candidates and their positions. Events will be set up based on social distance guidelines but can still create an environment of "coming together." Stations will be at each of the broadcasts so students can register to vote.
3. Promote a social media campaign involving the slogan "Be the vote". Starting with ASG, sports teams and clubs, student volunteers will have their photograph taken holding the sign "Be the vote" and then creating their own sign as to why. Ex: "Be the vote that fights for change." This will be posted to social media with each student challenging 3 peers with the question "what vote will you be". Each post will be hash-tagged with #northeasternvotes and #bethevote. With this challenge starting from a select group of peers, we hope to create a snowball effect of motivation amongst students and the chance to be featured on Northeastern's social media accounts.

Long Term Goals:

1. Develop a Civic Engagement Club from this year's campaign, so that every year we have a level of involvement in elections. Ideally this would become a student run club in conjunction with our social sciences department. With enough participation we could have a community presence, with sponsorship and support from local government.
2. Increase participation throughout academic cohorts. Data taken from 2014 and 2018 showed a broad range of participation percentages across our academic community. Based on average enrollment numbers, if we make a push within individual cohorts by incorporating voter awareness into our small group seminars (AAA 178) and academic departments with a goal of 3% participation increase, we could increase our overall voter turn-out rate.
3. Make first generation student voter involvement a trackable statistic.

V. STRATEGY

ACTION	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	WHERE WILL IT TAKE PLACE	WHEN WILL IT HAPPEN	WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?
What's on the Ballot	Marketing/ Communication	Social Media	October 2020	To cultivate savvy to participate in the election.
Presidential Debate Watch Party	ASG	Various locations (residence halls)	September and October 2020	Provide a neutral location to view the presidential debates and engage in discussion.
Registration Station	Civic Engagement Team	MLC	October 2020-ongoing	To provide technology and support for students that want to register to vote.
Election display in the library	MLC	1 st Floor of the MLC	October 2020	To provide students with information about the election, candidates, how to register and vote, sample ballots and more.
Election and Registration yard signs	ASG	Clock tower and main entrances	October 2020	To raise awareness about voter registration and the upcoming election and offer web resources.

"Be the Vote" Social Media Campaign	Civic Engagement Team	Instagram Snapchat	Fall 2020 semester	Ignite curiosity about voting and democracy.
I Vote Because... display	AAA 178 Instructors	MLC?	October 2020	To create a sense of voting identity for Northeastern students.
Get out the vote party	ASG	Various Locations	Mid-October	To invite students to participate and cultivate their identity as voters.
Mid-term Election	Civic Engagement Team	Various Locations	Mid-term election cycle	Emphasize the importance of mid-term elections and keep the campaign alive.

VI. EVALUATION

The work described in this plan will be evaluated annually, or after each activity. The evaluation will consider the purpose of each strategic action item and activity, as well as the short term and long-term goals set forth in the Goals section of the plan (IV). Based on the evaluations, adjustments to strategies may be made, as necessary.