

## Huskies Vote!

Northern Illinois University (NIU) is committed to developing active, engaged, informed citizens who “become global leaders who work to build a better society.”<sup>1</sup> As such, the university is proud to participate for the first time in the All In Campus Democracy Challenge. The following action plan was developed by a steering committee comprised of faculty, staff, students, administrators and community members who worked in conjunction with dozens of additional members of the university and community. Additionally, four subcommittees have been charged with implementing various aspects of the plan.

The action plan focuses on four areas: general voter information; registration; education; and mobilization.

NIU has the following goals:

- Increase the percentage of students who registered from 72.6% in 2018 to 80% in 2020.
- Increase the percentage of students who voted in the general election from 50.1% in 2016 to 55% in 2020.<sup>2</sup>
- Surpass the mean voter turnout rate for all institutions. NIU did not meet this goal in 2016 or 2018.

### **All In Campus Democracy Challenge Steering Committee**

Chad Glover, Director, Jobs PLUS

Michaela Holtz, Director, Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning

Doug Johnson, DeKalb County Clerk

Meg Junk, Coordinator for Signature Programs and Event Administrator, Student Affairs

Sandy Lopez, Coordinator for Undocumented Student Support, Academic Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Julie Ann O’Connell, Assistant Director, Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies

Victor Owoye, Journalism undergraduate

John Patten, Accounting and Political Science undergraduate

Ian Pearson, Speaker of the Student Senate, Nonprofit and NGO Studies and Political Science undergraduate

Andy Pemberton, Internal Communications, Web and Internal Communications

Matt Streb, Chief of Staff to the President, Professor, Department of Political Science (chair)

Laura Vazquez, Professor, Department of Communication

### **Subcommittee Membership**

#### *Communication*

Taylor Hayden, Associate Director of Digital Content, Institutional Communications

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<sup>1</sup> Northern Illinois University’s “Vision, Mission, and Values” statement. Available at <https://www.niu.edu/at-a-glance/vision-mission-values.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> A comparison to the 2016 turnout rate is more accurate because participation patterns in presidential election years are different than those during midterm elections.

Meg Junk, Coordinator for Signature Programs and Event Administrator, Student Affairs  
Oliver Koriath, Information Technology Lead, Marketing and Creative Services  
Andy Pemberton, Internal Communications, Web and Internal Communications (chair)  
Mariano Spizzirri, Brand Expression Manager, Marketing and Creative Services  
Matt Streb, Chief of Staff to the President, Professor, Department of Political Science  
Sophia Vacardos, Graphic Design Manager, Marketing and Creative Services  
Rachel Xidis, Associate Director, Web and Internal Communications

### *Curriculum*

Ellen Franklin, Associate Director, First-Year Composition  
Chad Glover, Director, Jobs PLUS  
Courtney Gallaher, Associate Professor, Department of Geography  
Janet Hathaway, Associate Dean, College of Visual and Performing Arts  
Michaela Holtz, Director, Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning (co-chair)  
Julie Langer, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration  
Christine Mooney, Barsema Professor of Social Entrepreneurship, Department of Management  
Shanthi Muthusuamy, Associate Professor, Department of Engineering Technology  
Andrea Radasanu, Director, University Honors, Associate Professor, Department of Political  
Science  
Laura Vazquez, Professor, Department of Communication (co-chair)  
Ralph Wheeler, Chair, Department of Chemistry

### *Events*

Ashley Hines, Nonprofit and NGO Studies and Political Science undergraduate  
Meg Junk, Coordinator for Signature Programs and Event Administrator, Student Affairs (chair)  
Matthew Medwecky, Events Coordinator, Holmes Student Center  
John Patten, Accounting and Political Science undergraduate  
Julie Ann O'Connell, Assistant Director, Center for Nonprofit and NGO Studies

### *Voter Registration*

Blanca Barreda, Nursing undergraduate  
Doug Johnson, DeKalb County Clerk  
Lynne Kunde, DeKalb County Clerk's Office, Election Judge Supervisor  
Kira Lavizzo, Health and Human Sciences undergraduate  
Sandy Lopez, Coordinator for Undocumented Student Support, Academic Equity, Diversity,  
and Inclusion (chair)  
Victor Owwoeye, Journalism undergraduate  
Ian Pearson, Speaker of the Student Senate, Nonprofit and NGO Studies and Political Science  
undergraduate  
Adriana Aguilar Perez, Sociology undergraduate  
Mark Pietrowski, Associate Director, Continuing Professional Education, DeKalb County  
Board, Chair  
Luz Rodriquez, Counseling and Higher Education graduate student  
Diana Sanchez, Biology undergraduate  
Stephanie Salazar, Health and Human Sciences undergraduate  
Rubi Salgado, Nonprofit and NGO Studies undergraduate

Scot Schraufnagel, Chair, Department of Political Science

### **Additional Campus and Community Partners**

Academic Advising Center  
Career Services  
Center for Black Studies  
CHANCE  
DeKalb County League of Women Voters  
Disability Resource Center  
Division of Enrollment Management, Marketing, and Communications  
Division of Information Technology  
Division of Student Affairs  
Financial Aid and Scholarship Office  
Fraternity and Sorority Life  
Gender and Sexuality Resource Center  
Office of the Ombudsperson  
Office of Student Conduct  
Office of the President  
Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning  
Recreation Services  
Residence Hall Association  
Student-Athlete Academic Support Services  
Student Government Association  
University Honors  
University Libraries

The following actions already have been implemented or will take place during in anticipation of the March Illinois Democratic and Republican primaries and the November general election. This action plan is considered a living, breathing document. Although this is the final plan that will be submitted in advance of the All In Campus Democracy Challenge December 2019 deadline, the plan will continually be updated and adapted to help NIU meet its goals.

### **General Voter Information**

- Launched a new Huskies Vote website (<https://www.niu.edu/huskies-vote/index.shtml>) that provides a link to allow students to register to vote and answers frequently asked questions. It also includes information on registration, links to Illinois Board of Elections and DeKalb County Clerk websites, links to candidate websites and a calendar of voter information/registration events.
  - The website will be linked to various university websites, including those for our voter registration partners (see below).
- Develop a communication and marketing plan to be implemented in January/February 2020

- Media interviews (e.g., *Northern Star*, *Daily Chronicle*, WNIJ, on the Democracy Challenge).
  - [https://northernstar.info/news/administration-encourages-political-engagement-at-luncheon/article\\_8707acae-04e4-11ea-a5f2-7b3bb8647c1c.html](https://northernstar.info/news/administration-encourages-political-engagement-at-luncheon/article_8707acae-04e4-11ea-a5f2-7b3bb8647c1c.html)
- NIU Today story.
  - [https://www.niutoday.info/2019/12/02/niu-launches-all-in-democracy-challenge/?utm\\_source=PoliteMail&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=NIU+Today+-+December+3%2c+2019&utm\\_campaign=NIU+Today](https://www.niutoday.info/2019/12/02/niu-launches-all-in-democracy-challenge/?utm_source=PoliteMail&utm_medium=email&utm_content=NIU+Today+-+December+3%2c+2019&utm_campaign=NIU+Today)
- Use of campus digital signage.
- Presentations on the plan:
  - University Council
  - Student Senate
  - Presidential Commission on the Status of Women
  - Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC)
  - Management team from the Division of Student Affairs
  - Student Experience Team
  - College communications professionals
- Use of #HuskiesVote on social media.
- Discussion with 65 English 103 and English 203 instructors about incorporating the Challenge into the classes' curricula.
- Discussion with 29 Communications 100 instructors and teaching assistants about incorporating the Challenge into the classes' curricula.
- Created and implemented a survey to help the university capture all civic engagement initiatives and document student participation ([https://niu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0wkr12yr09GFWG9](https://niu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0wkr12yr09GFWG9)).
  - Faculty were asked to what kinds of activities they do in courses that are a part of an effort to increase students' awareness and their social responsibility regarding civic engagement and to highlight modules, activities, lectures and videos that are used to achieve these goals.
  - This information will be made available on the Huskies Vote website and via a Blackboard Module to help other faculty develop ideas about promoting civic engagement effectively in their classrooms.

## **Voter Registration**

- Developed voter registration information materials, specifically aimed at students (see Appendix A).
- Established Campus Voter Registration Partners. The following units are Campus Voter Registration Partners:
  - Academic Advising Center
  - Bursar

- Campus Activity Board
- Career Services
- Center for Black Studies
- CHANCE
- Disability Resource Center
- Financial Aid
- Fraternity and Sorority Life
- Gender and Sexuality Resource Center
- Office of the Ombudsperson
- Office of Student Conduct
- Office of Student Engagement and Experiential Learning
- Recreation Services
- Student-Athlete Academic Support Services
- Student Government Association
- University Honors
- University Libraries

To be a Campus Voter Registration Partner, the unit must have done the following:

- Voter registration information brochures need to be made accessible to students in a central location (e.g., lobby, main office). If units have digital signage, the information will be added to the slide rotation.
- Placed a “I can help you register to vote” sign in a visible location.
- At least one staff member from the unit must be trained as a deputy registrar (most had multiple staff members trained).
- Developed a deputy registrar training program.
  - Four training sessions took place in November and December of 2019. More than 40 new deputy registrars were trained.
- Developing voter registration workshops.
  - Several of our academic colleges will hold voter registration workshops where students can ask questions regarding voter registration and register to vote. The workshops will be led by campus employees who were trained as deputy registrars.
  - The Division of Intercollegiate Athletics will hold a voter registration workshop where students can ask questions regarding voter registration and register to vote. The workshops will be led by campus employees who were trained as deputy registrars.
- Events to distribute voter registration information and have online voter registration:
  - Resource Center Open Houses (Fall 2019 and Fall 2020)
  - Campus Meets Community Events (Fall 2019 and Fall 2020)
  - President’s Welcome Picnic (Fall 2020)
  - Open House and Admitted Student Days (throughout 2019 and 2020)
  - Campus Unity Walk (Fall 2019 and Fall 2020)
  - New Student Orientation (Summer 2020)
  - Student Involvement Fair (Fall 2020)

- Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day (Spring 2020)
- Business Passport Program events (all year)
- Academic cultural centers signature events (all year)
- STEM Fest (Fall 2019 and Fall 2020)
- NIU Cares Day (Spring 2020)
- Heritage Month events (all year)
- Diversity Dialogue events (all year)
- Greek 50+1 events (all year)
- NAACP and Soul-Fully Fridays at the Center for Black Studies (all year)
- Academic Diversity Center Open House (Fall 2019 and Fall 2020)
- POWER Retreat (Spring 2020)
- Breaking Barriers Workshops (all year)
- Hungry Huskies (all year)
- CODE trainings (all year)
- Coming Out of the Shadows (Spring 2020)
- Mission Mondays.
  - Mission is our popular live Husky mascot who visits various places on campus each Monday. During the fall and spring semesters, several Mission Mondays will be devoted to voter registration. Mission will have deputy registrars with him who will assist students in registering, and we will promote and document the event on Mission's popular Twitter and Instagram accounts.
- Permanent voter registration kiosk will be placed in the Holmes Student Center and Founders Memorial Library.
- Short videos regarding how to register, why voting matters and other civic engagement topics.
  - The videos will be shared on various university social media accounts and placed on the Huskies Vote! website.
- Table tents with voter registration information placed at residence hall and other campus dining venues.
- Letter from SGA President and Speaker of the Senate to students encouraging voter registration will be sent in January 2020.
- Letter from the Dean of Students in her weekly message to students encouraging voter registration will be sent in January 2020.
- Letter from Provost encouraging faculty to mention voter registration deadlines and importance of voting in their classes will be sent in January 2020.
  - The letter will also include a link for the civic engagement survey referenced above and encourage faculty to complete it.
- Huskies Vote popup banners in various campus locations.

## **Voter Education**

- 2020 Election Lecture and Debate Series.

- Lecture topics are still being planned, but possible topics include aligning political beliefs with candidates, the importance of voting and the history of political activism at NIU<sup>3</sup>
- Debate topics are still being planned, but possibilities include local candidate debates (e.g., state representative, county board) and a debate on the graduated income tax<sup>4</sup>
- Debate watch parties.
  - Watch parties will be held for one Democratic presidential primary debate before the March primary and one general election debate
  - Faculty will give brief comments before the debate to set the context and lead students in a discussion after the debate
- Donuts and Discussion or Coffee and Conversations.
  - Donuts and Discussion (or Coffee and Conversations, name TBD) will occur on a regular basis, possibly monthly. The events will be set up “tent-style” in a different location each month and focus on one “hot topic.” Students will be invited to come into the space, enjoy the coffee or donuts and engage in civil discourse with other students about their views.
  - This event also will serve as an opportunity to talk with students about NIU’s policies and procedures around Freedom of Expression.
  - Topics are still being identified, but possible topics include immigration, abortion, gay marriage, gun control laws and First Amendment rights.
- Funding for undergraduate research through the Student Engagement Fund.
  - Undergraduate students and faculty will be able to apply for funding supporting undergraduate research that has a clear connection to civic life. Funding will be able to support compensation for student (up \$1,200 per semester) and expenses related to the project (up to \$2,500). Projects will be highlighted during Undergraduate Research and Artistry Day in spring semester.
- Created a one-page document for faculty of do’s and don’ts when talking about the importance of voting in class (see Appendix B).
- Information on the importance of voting and how to do so will be added to the curriculum in UNIV 101 and UNIV 201, classes designed to help students adjust to NIU and develop the skills necessary to succeed in college and beyond.
- A book on the importance of voting (or a related topic) will be considered for the Common Read in the future.
  - All first-year composition courses and, moving forward, all Communications 100 sections will use the Common Read as a required part of the curriculum.
- JobsPLUS event in the spring with current elected officials and candidates for office where students applied interviewing and active listening skills to learn more about what the officials/candidates did in their roles, what issues the offices/boards were engaged in

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<sup>3</sup> 2020 is NIU’s 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. This event will be held in conjunction with the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.

<sup>4</sup> Illinois voters will decide in November 2020 on whether to implement a graduated income tax.

and more information about the background of the officials/candidates and what they did outside of elected office.

- Work with *Northern Star* to encourage local candidates to interview.

### **Mobilization (March and November)**

- Huskies Vote! buttons will be handed out at all Democracy Challenge events.
- Special “I Voted” Huskie stickers for student voters in campus polling precincts.
- Students sign “I Pledge to Vote” posters in the Holmes Student Center, Founders Memorial Library and other places around campus.
- Planning a Rock the Vote event for the general election.
- November early voting initiative:
  - Social media campaign
  - Tabling in Holmes Student Center and Founders Memorial Library
- Voter information center in the Barsema Alumni and Visitors Center and the Holmes Student Center on election day
  - Huskie Service Scholars will help students determine their appropriate voter location and answer questions

## Appendix A: Voter Registration Materials



[go.niu.edu/Huskies-Vote](https://go.niu.edu/Huskies-Vote)



Northern Illinois  
University



**HUSKIES  
VOTE**  
2020  
Election

A graphic on the right side of the lower section, identical to the top banner, featuring the "Huskies Vote 2020 Election" logo and the slogan "Your voice. Your vote." on a red and blue sunburst background with white stars.

### **Your voice. Your vote.**

#### **Are you registered to vote in DeKalb County?**

**You'll need the following information to check your voter registration status:**

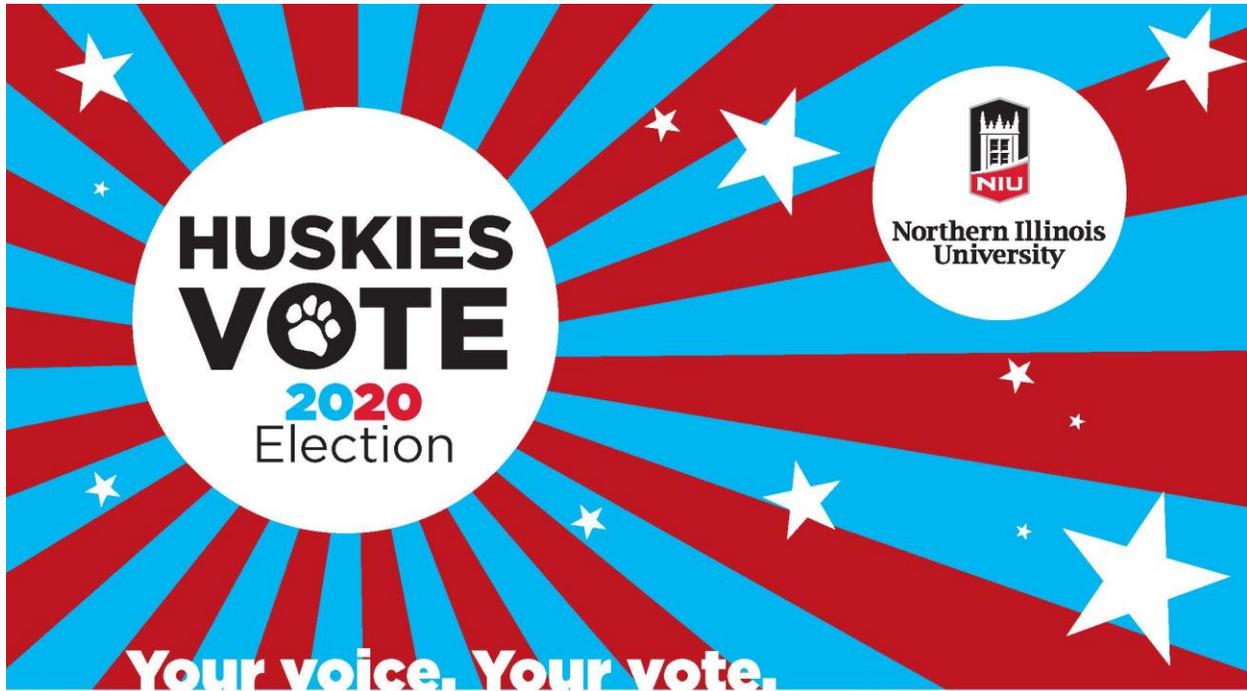
- Five digit ZIP code for where you believe you are registered to vote (DeKalb's ZIP code is 60115).
- Street name and number.
- Your date of birth.

**You'll need the following information to complete online voter registration:**

- Your Illinois driver's license or state ID.
- Issue date of your identification.
- Last four digits of your Social Security number.
- Your date of birth.

**Check your status and register to vote online by visiting:**

[go.niu.edu/Huskies-Vote](https://go.niu.edu/Huskies-Vote)



## **I can help you register to vote.**

Visit [go.niu.edu/Huskies-Vote](https://go.niu.edu/Huskies-Vote) for information about voter registration, the candidates running for office in the 2020 election and civic engagement opportunities on campus.

## Appendix B: All IN Democracy Challenge - Faculty/Staff Information Sheet

NIU is engaged in the [All In Democracy Challenge](#) program that seeks to enhance student involvement in voter education, registration and mobilization. This is a nonpartisan effort and all discussion with students should be framed in terms of civic responsibility. Students should not be encouraged to vote for any particular candidate nor join any party.

**Here are some suggestions for promoting civil discourse on these emotionally laden issues — most of which, unsurprisingly, echo good general classroom practice:**

- Don't feel you need to be a political expert, knowing all the answers with perfect responses.
- Remember that your role is to get students talking and thinking, not to lead them toward a particular political viewpoint or electoral outcome.
- Consider having a couple of students facilitate the conversation with you.
- You may supply information, context and sources for further inquiry, but you are mainly providing an environment where all in the classroom are respected. Let the students take the lead as much as possible. Encourage them to listen, hear each other's perspectives and work to understand the experience that generates these perspectives. These resources might be helpful with incorporating these conversations in your classes: [CEEP Faculty Guide](#), [Living Room Conversations](#), [Allsides](#).
- When discussing where candidates stand on key issues of interest to students, be accurate and fair, whatever your personal views. Feel free to use the following [nonpartisan candidate and issues guides](#).

If students wish to register to vote, they can contact:

- Deputy Registrars at NIU listed on Huskies Vote website (<https://www.niu.edu/huskies-vote/index.shtml>)
- DeKalb County Registrar: 815-895-7147 or email [elections@dekalbcounty.org](mailto:elections@dekalbcounty.org)

If they have a valid Illinois DL or State ID, they can visit the state's website and register to vote online <https://ova.elections.il.gov/>

**The registration period for the online voter registration system will close at 11:59 p.m. March 1, 2020, and will reopen March 19, 2020.**

### TO VOTE IN ILLINOIS

- You must be a United States citizen.
- You must be 17 on or before the date of the Primary Election and turn 18 on or before the date of the General or Consolidated Election.
- You must live in your election precinct at least 30 days prior to Election Day.
- You must not be serving a sentence of confinement in any penal institution as a result of a conviction.
- You may not claim the right to vote anywhere else.