

Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan

SUNY Buffalo State College

May 2020

Executive Summary

SUNY Buffalo State seeks a Voter Friendly Campus designation as additional evidence that signals to our students, faculty, staff, and surrounding community that the college is living out its values as SUNY's urban-engaged institution. In the last two decades, our campus has seen a tremendous shift to expand and live out our community-focused values through curricular and co-curricular experiences, culminating in the establishment of a Civic and Community Engagement Office on the campus.

As part of the Voter Friendly Campus designation process, we have been able to identify goals for civic learning and democratic engagement.

For fall 2020, we have set our top three goals:

- by September 29, 2020, increase the number of students registered to vote by 2% (71% → 73%);
- by November 3, 2020, expand programmatic opportunities that can build students' civic skills;
- by November 3, 2020, increase the voting rate of Buffalo State students from 42% to 50%.

During the spring 2020 semester, SUNY Buffalo State's Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan was developed by a team of staff and students that reviewed current activities and identified gaps. The action plan seeks to create a roadmap for the college to expand civic engagement activities throughout our students' academic and co-curricular experiences. It also aims to deepen institutionalization efforts of civic engagement. In collaboration with our community partners, the college's action plan will be carried out, utilizing resources in Academic Affairs and Students Affairs.

Our Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan activities will begin in summer 2020 and continue until August 2025. Efforts described in the action plan will be implemented in collaboration with many individuals and multiple campus offices, including the Civic and Community Engagement Office and the New York Public Interest Research Group-Buffalo Chapter.

Leadership

In 2017, SUNY Buffalo State's Volunteer and Service-Learning Center, founded in 2003, was renamed the Civic and Community Engagement Office to more accurately reflect the value of our work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement. It was also reorganized in Academic Affairs and the office now reports directly to the Provost.

As an institution designated with the Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement, a founding member of the Anchor Learning Network, and one of the original institutions to create a campus-wide Civic Action Plan through Campus Compact, SUNY Buffalo State is a leader in civic and community

engagement in higher education. Through the Anchor Learning Network and Civic Action Planning Committees of which the CCE is a leader, stakeholders from the campus and community are involved in developing and implementing actions to further civic and community engagement initiatives, including faculty, deans, directors in Student Affairs, Marketing and Communications Office, Institutional Effectiveness Office, Student Accessibility Services, and Academic Affairs. CCE is currently leading campus efforts to ensure students and community members are counted in the 2020 Census, engaging a number of stakeholders, including West Side Promise Neighborhood, Community Academic Center, and Buffalo State's Government Relations Office, Political Science Department, Student Leadership and Engagement Office, and Residence Life. In addition, the CCE has been asked to join the Civic Education Conference Group, being facilitated by the School of Education.

The Voter Friendly Campus Work Group was formed in Spring 2020 to support initiatives underway, especially the Civic Action Plan Implementation Committee's action items. This has ensured that efforts are collaborative and coordinated and they provide a variety of perspectives to be taken into consideration.

Voter Friendly Campus Work Group

Spring 2020 Membership

In Spring 2020, Aurora Schunk, Assistant Director of the Civic and Community Engagement Office (CCE), chaired the work group responsible for creating a Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) Action Plan. The membership of the work group was kept intentionally small as the office positioned the campus to take a new step in its civic engagement initiative and it was seen as a subgroup working on a goal of the campus-wide Civic Action Plan Implementation Committee. That the work group was deliberately kept small was manageable when Covid-19 required dispersion of the campus community.

Membership included

- Aurora Schunk, Assistant Director, Civic and Community Engagement, Academic Affairs – chair
- Tonya Ackley, Associate Director, Civic and Community Engagement, Academic Affairs
- Chleo Carr, undergraduate student, Social Work
- Pedro Fernandez, Program Coordinator, NYPIRG, Student Affairs/Community Group
- Margaret Mitchell, graduate student intern, Higher Education Administration
- Irene Nkrumah, undergraduate student, Business

Student voice was extremely critical to the success and inclusivity of this work group, especially students who had not been active in voter education and mobilization. Their perspectives helped the group better understand the gaps in communication and programming.

Two undergraduate students were selected to serve on the work group. These students were connected to the campus as work-study, admissions ambassadors, and high-enrollment majors in the School of the Professions. A graduate student in the Higher Education Administration program was brought on to serve as an intern in the CCE to assist with reviewing institutional research and identifying national best practices for the work group. A new campus member was brought in to serve on the committee as well, as

she had experience at a previous higher education institution with deepening civic engagement and currently serves as the CCE associate director, focused on curricular community engagement. Additionally, the program coordinator of the Buffalo State Chapter of the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) joined. The connection with NYPIRG served as a bridge to Student Affairs, student organizations, and several student interns with whom the ideas and work group plans were shared. The NYPIRG connection fueled much of the conversation on voter registration and engagement initiatives, as that has been one of its primary focuses since joining the campus in 1973. Finally, the chair of the work group is the assistant director of the Civic and Community Engagement Office, whose primary focus is on co-curricular community engagement and whose background includes her being a veteran, having earned a degree in History, and having participated in political campaigns and elections.

As we look to the future of integrating civic and democratic engagement more intentionally within our college, we will identify and invite faculty and other academic and student affairs representatives to serve on a committee to oversee this mission in 2020-2021 academic year.

VFC Work Group Role

This work group was tasked with creating an action plan to encourage and engage Buffalo State students to become civic-minded, socially responsible members of the community. The purpose of the VFC action plan is to educate, encourage, and direct students to become civically minded, responsible individuals, and to get students to vote in all elections (city, county, state, and federal).

The VFC Action Plan provides a roadmap for deepening and expanding our institution's civic and community engagement efforts. Work group members are responsible for researching and developing strategies employed at other higher education institutions, identifying strengths and areas of opportunities within current campus civic engagement efforts, and setting short- and long-term goals for the VFC action plan.

Utilizing experiences and research brought to light by the Civic Action Plan and Anchor Learning Network campus committees, the VFC Work Group sought to focus on voter registration, education, and mobilization of the campus.

Commitment

Buffalo State College is a leader in civic and community engagement. Buffalo State is the only comprehensive college in the SUNY system located in a city and it takes its role as citizen and partner seriously. As a result of its deep and broad civic engagement efforts, Buffalo State earned Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement in 2015, was awarded the Washington Center Higher Education Civic Engagement Award in 2016, became a founding member of the Anchor Learning Network, was among the first institutions to create a campus-wide Civic Action Plan through Campus Compact, and has been appointed to the President's Community Service Honor Roll eight times. The 2016-2021 Buffalo State Strategic Plan identifies the college as SUNY's urban-engaged campus and emphasizes urban community engagement and diversity as core values to strengthen both the college and the surrounding community.

The college is committed to becoming a leader, both regionally and nationally, in meaningful forms of civic and community engagement that clearly contribute to the public good and create active global citizens who respect diversity and individual difference. This commitment reflects an already robust effort at the college to develop civic-minded programming, curriculum, teaching, research, and community service. Examples include Buffalo State's Civic and Community Engagement Office, Community Academic Center, Professional Development Schools, Anne Frank Project, Great Lakes Center, Monroe Fordham Regional History Center, Anchor Learning Network, and Educational Pipelines Initiative Office. These civic and community engagement efforts exemplify the institution's commitment to the public purposes of higher education through reciprocal partnerships, meaningful examination of student preparation for active citizenship, and deep student learning.

The college has a long-standing tradition and commitment to act to improve the community through collaboration, reciprocal relationships, and community-building. Since 2003, the Volunteer and Service-Learning Center, now Civic and Community Engagement Office (CCE), has assisted faculty integrating community engagement/service-learning experiences in their course curriculum. With the Volunteer and Service-Learning Center's 2017 reorganization and mission expansion, efforts have been undertaken to develop civic learning and democratic engagement across the campus.

The CCE oversees curricular community engagement/service-learning courses, assisting faculty with pedagogical training, partnership development, and logistics to ensure high-quality, reciprocal partnerships are the basis of student civic learning. In 2018-2019, 2,113 students enrolled in 144 community engagement/service-learning courses across the campus. Co-curricular civic engagement is also housed within the office and it has engaged an additional 3,000 Buffalo State students in 2018-2019. Long-standing co-curricular civic engagement has taken the form of coordinating annual community service days, volunteer opportunities, and a student-led Alternative Break service experience. Since 2017 and the expansion of the civic mission of the office, the CCE has

- developed a Student Civic Leadership Board to facilitate the development of student-led civic and community engagement experiences for the campus;
- facilitated the Complete Count Committee to educate and engage students, faculty/staff, and community members around the 2020 Census;
- grown a partnership with the campus chapter of New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) to collaborate on civic engagement programming, including voter registration, census, and advocacy;
- acquired two AmeriCorps VISTA members to assist with the expansion of civic engagement efforts, including student organization support and implementation of Anchor Learning Network initiatives.

The New York Public Interest Research Group ([NYPIRG](#)) is New York State's largest student-directed consumer, environmental, and government reform organization. They are a nonpartisan, not-for-profit group established to advance policy reforms while training college students and other New Yorkers to be advocates. Since 1973, NYPIRG has played the key role in fighting for more than 150 public interest laws and executive orders. NYPIRG's college campus chapters provide much of NYPIRG's energy, resources, and activism. Each campus chapter consists of a full-time staff organizer and a large core of active

students. Students at NYPIRG chapters work on projects that both support NYPIRG's statewide agenda and local issues.

Since the inauguration of President Conway-Turner in Fall 2014, her leadership has been instrumental at ensuring the civic engagement and social responsibility missions of the college are institutionalized. Three such examples include the institutionalization of the Civic Action Plan, Bengals Dare to Care Day annual day of community service, and the impetus to apply for the Voter Friendly Campus designation.

In fall 2016, President Conway-Turner appointed a Civic Action Plan Committee to develop a five-year action plan identifying four priority areas where the college could strengthen civic and community engagement efforts across campus and in the community, where we can improve and better communicate our work, and where we can expand and deepen the public purposes of the college. Currently in year two of implementation, these priority areas of the Civic Action Plan are

1. developing a shared language and culture;
2. broadening community input and deepening community impact;
3. enhancing supports for faculty, staff, and students;
4. coordinating civic and community engagement.

While civic learning and democratic engagement are visible throughout the entirety of the Civic Action Plan, priority #1, expanding on-campus culture as an urban-engaged institution provides support for the application for the Voter Friendly Campus designation. It states that “we aim to build a dynamic culture at Buffalo State that includes graduating students with a deep intellectual foundation in the liberal arts alongside a sense of civic literacy, creating meaningful partnerships, and leveraging our resources to contribute to a more just, sustainable, and participatory democracy from the local to the global.” Specific goals that include the activities outlined in this Voter Friendly Action Plan are

- expand on programs to educate the campus on community-based issues, equity, social justice, democracy, and reciprocity of partnerships through campus-wide events and activities, such as a civic engagement speaker series, common readings, civic engagement book clubs, and lunch discussions;
- work with student organizations, clubs, fraternities, and sororities and their staff advisors and overseeing offices to expand on and co-create mutually respectful and reciprocal partnerships, particularly for non-WNY students, in order to better understand the local community and their role as engaged citizens.

While the Voter Friendly Campus work group was not a president-appointed committee, the Civic Action Plan's Implementation Committee is. Regarding the Voter Friendly Campus initiative as a subset of the Civic Action Plan allows for the process to ensure outcomes of the Voter Friendly Campus Action are measured and met. In addition, in January 2019, the New York State governor signed into law a SUNY Election Law, mandating each SUNY campus to disseminate election participation information and create an annual campus-level reporting on dissemination efforts. Each SUNY institution must submit a report to the State Board of Elections that includes:

- efforts of the institution to register voters in the preceding calendar year and the number of students registered as a result of those efforts;

- efforts or recommendations the institution plans to implement to improve access to voter registration and absentee ballot voting for students at the institution.

Building upon the work and commitment within the Buffalo State Civic Action Plan, Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement, and Anchor Learning Network, the Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan will build upon and deepen our civic engagement work. The goals set forth in the action plan will create a more purposeful structure and give added intentionality to engaging students in civic learning and democratic engagement, while furthering the strategic and public purpose of the college.

Landscape

Utilizing National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data, SUNY Buffalo State has a lower voting rate than peer institutions. In 2018's mid-term election, the voting rate of students was 30.4%, compared to 39.3% of public masters institutions. Since much of the student demographic data has not been reported by the institution, it is difficult to ascertain the political climate and democratic engagement of the campus' students and to identify where the gaps in registration, education, and mobilization might be. Much of the data is cited as "unknown," such as the voting method, education-level, and class year.

In terms of voter registration, we saw an increase in the number of students who registered to vote in 2018, compared to 2014. Those Buffalo State students who were registered, voted in 2018 (72%) at a much higher rate than in 2014 (68.8%). The voting rate of registered students increased from 19.7% in 2014 to 42.2% in 2018. The voting rate also increased by 16.8 percentage points from 13.6% in 2014 to 30.4% in 2018.

However, using NSLVE data, we know that students enrolled in science, mathematics, engineering, criminal justice, human sciences, liberal arts, and business majors all voted at a rate below the campus average of 30.4%. Our part-time students (40.7%) vote at a much higher rate than our full-time students (26.9%). Additionally, our graduate students vote at a higher rate than our undergraduate students (41.4% compared to 27.7%). We also know that age has a critical role in our college's voting rate, as students ages 18-21 vote at a rate of 23.1%, whereas 22-24 year old students vote at a rate of 31.8% and those over the age of 25 vote at a rate of over 41%.

We also know that, other than in the sections where the institution did not report data, education level, and field of study, comparison of 2014 and 2018 mid-term elections has seen an increase in voter registration and rates among Buffalo State students.

Curricular

Civic learning and democratic engagement manifest in the curriculum of SUNY Buffalo State through service-learning pedagogy. This expression of civic and community engagement has been integrated in

institutional curricula since the creation of the Volunteer and Service-Learning Center (VSLC) in 2003. Through the efforts of this office, now Civic and Community Engagement, and committed faculty, over 24,000 students have enrolled in more than 1,300 service-learning courses. Each year, nearly 25% of all Buffalo State students engage in community-engaged learning through academic coursework. Reciprocal relationships and community-building distinguish a Buffalo State graduate.

Through the Anchor Learning Network and Civic Action Planning committees, stakeholders from across the campus and community are involved in further developing and implementing civic and community engagement across the curriculum.

Civic learning and democratic engagement skills are also found in our [institutional learning outcomes](#). Buffalo State adopted a set of institutional learning outcomes (ILO) in 2017. The intent is that these ILOs will be incorporated into the next version of the General Education Program at a date still to be determined, at which time assessment of ILOs will commence.

From the ILOs, civic learning and democratic engagement can be found as part of three out of four outcomes for graduates of Buffalo State:

- I. Cultural fluency [i] - Graduates will be aware of how ideas are shaped by cultures and social norms and be able to engage with ideas different from or in conflict with their own. Students will be aware of cultural, societal, and institutional factors influencing assumptions, prejudices, and privileges.
- II. Urban engagement [ii] - Graduates, leveraging their experiences in Buffalo State's distinctive urban setting, will understand how to interact meaningfully in their communities and possess the skills to be wise, productive, and responsible citizens.
- III. Ethical reasoning [iv] - Graduates will deliberate ethical values and principles and apply them in ambiguous, complex, and controversial contexts. They will be conscientious persons, students, and professionals.

Models for the assessment of ILOs will include:

- Cultural fluency: Miville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (M-GUDS-S) (short form);
- Urban engagement: Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric and Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS-R2);
- Ethical reasoning: Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric and Defining Issues Test 2 (DIT-2).

Co-Curricular

As civic and community engagement has expanded as part of service-learning within the curriculum, civic learning and democratic engagement has been a part of several co-curricular initiatives, including:

- Student Civic Leadership Board (2017-present)
- Citizenship classes to New Americans (2014-present)
- Alternative Break week-long service experiences (2010-present)
- Campus-wide annual community service days (2003-present)

- National Voter Registration Day (1973-present)
- New York Public Interest Research Group student leadership roles (1973-present)

In 2019-2020, with the addition of an associate director in the Civic and Community Engagement Office and the reorganization of responsibilities, new co-curricular civic learning and democratic engagement program initiatives were able to be supported by the assistant director. This included

- formation of a campus and community Complete Count Committee to engage and educate students and West Side community members about the 2020 Census and its role in our lives;
- initiation of a Civic Engagement Week of activities and workshops that engaged Buffalo State students in voter registration, advocacy, activism training, blood donation, and the 2020 census;
- establishment of a partnership with the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance and its Facilitated Self-Assistance tax preparation program to assist students and community members to file their state and federal taxes;
- collaboration with the School of Education, History and Social Studies, Political Science, Erie County, and 1stAmendment 1st Vote to facilitate a civic education conference;
- creation and facilitation of six workshops for students (five virtual during Covid-19) to educate students about voter registration and mobilization, 2020 Census, how volunteers impact nonprofit organizations, activism, how students can impact social issues; and how to coordinate a service project.

In 2020-2021, new civic learning and democratic engagement initiatives will include

- voter Registration (See Strategy.)
- voter Education - (See Strategy.)
- voter Mobilization - (See Strategy.)
- Bengal Stripes Leadership Program – a leadership program based on the Social Change Model which will include citizenship as a focus of the third program level (three workshops) and a civic and community engagement track (three workshops)

Barriers to Success

Internally, the biggest barriers preventing the institution from being successful are tied to budget and staffing. The college has been working for the past three fiscal years to close a \$7 million budget deficit. Recently, with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and its anticipated impacts on the 2020-2021 enrollment, the institution is facing an \$11 million to \$27 million deficit for the year. Financial support of the Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan will not be possible given this fiscal situation and there lies the potential for staffing to be eliminated and responsibilities to be shifted once again in the Civic and Community Engagement office, as well as elsewhere on campus. The CCE does plan to apply for grants to provide some finances to implement Voter Friendly Campus action plan goals.

Externally, the college has sought the ability to take on the role of polling site. While the proposal to serve as a polling location was supported by multiple campus stakeholders, including the president, the proposal has been deadlocked at the Erie County Board of Elections. Having the opportunity to serve as a

polling location would impact more than 2,000 students who live on campus and in the neighborhood immediately surrounding the campus, demonstrating evidence on Election Day or Early Voting period that the college is committed to its value of civic and community engagement.

Resources

Resources that are available to assist the institution in being successful to impact the Voter Friendly Campus action plan goals include:

- New York Public Interest Research Group partnership
- Campus Compact membership
- NSLVE data
- voter registration and engagement tools provided by the American Democracy Project, NASPA, Democracy Works, Students Learn Students Vote, and +1 to the Polls
- availability of students to serve as interns in civic learning and democratic engagement initiatives
- a campus office devoted to developing students as active citizens (Civic and Community Engagement Office)
- existing appointed committees and their strategic plans (Civic Action Plan Committee, Anchor Learning Network Committee)

Additional resources needed to be developed or accessed to help the institution be successful include

- partnerships across multiple academic and Student Affairs units
- partnerships with the Student Political Society and other student organizations
- partnerships with the Political Science Department
- partnership with Erie County Board of Elections
- partnerships with community nonpartisan groups, such as the League of Women Voters, Buffalo Urban League, etc.
- grants and external funding to ensure that initiatives can be carried out.

Goals

Short-Term Goals

- By September 29, 2020, increase the number of students registered to vote by 2% (71% → 73%), measured by NLSVE data in Spring 2021.
- By November 3, 2020, expand programmatic opportunities where students can build civic skills, measured by comparing fall 2020 programs to 2019-2020 academic year programs.
- By November 3, 2020, increase the voting rate of Buffalo State students from 42% to 50%, measured by data from NSLVE in spring 2021.
- By January 2021, investigate and submit a formal request to Institutional Research regarding the submission of critical student information to clearinghouse so NSLVE data will be more robust and assist with future planning.

- By May 2021, work with Admissions/Registrar/Institutional Research to identify what percentage of our students are eligible to vote (based on citizenship) to help guide future civic engagement planning.
- By August 2021, form the membership of a new work group with campus representation to increase communication and develop a year-long voter education/civic engagement plan that engages both voting and non-voting students in 2021-2022 in anticipation of 2022 mid-term elections.
- By August 2022, develop a communication plan to map out how to incorporate civic engagement education and mobilization into the entire academic year.
- By August 2022, increase access to voter education resources on campus department websites or other digital platforms to include information about candidates; issues; advocacy; policy/ballot measures, civic action, etc.

Long-Term Goals

Over the long-term, the institution seeks to educate and mobilize student voters, knowing that voting at a young age is habit-forming and part of active citizenship. By engaging students in civic learning and democratic engagement on the curricular and co-curricular levels, students will achieve and practice the institutional learning outcomes of cultural fluency, urban engagement, and ethical reasoning. The college seeks to graduate students who are

- able to engage with ideas that are different from or are in conflict with their own;
- aware of factors that influence assumptions, prejudices, and privileges;
- able to understand how to meaningfully interact in their communities;
- possessing of the skills to be wise, productive, and responsible citizens;
- applying their values and principles in ambiguous, complex, and controversial contexts.

As there are many Buffalo State students who are immigrants, refugees, and undocumented, a long-term goal of the institution's Voter Friendly Campus Work Group is to ensure that all students, regardless of citizenship status, are able to learn how they can amplify their voice and engage in civic and democratic engagement while in college and after graduation. We seek to create opportunities for these students to be able to learn about the political process and civic life, and to teach them the skills to advocate for and work in collaboration with their peers who can access the polls.

The long-term goals of the Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan carry the institution to 2025, which coincides with a similar timeline for the Civic Action Plan. This date will allow for the potential for the action plan to be incorporated and adjusted as a new college strategic plan is implemented after 2021.

- By January 2023, develop a draft structure for a "student ambassador" initiative to allow for peer-to-peer civic engagement.
- By August 2023, identify other data points and assessments that might be used to direct and inform efforts of the Voter Friendly Campus workgroup.
- Beginning August 2023, develop new civic learning and democratic engagement initiatives to build the active citizenship skills of all students, to be inclusive of those students without American citizenship status.

- By January 2024, pending staff responsibilities and funding, launch the “student ambassador” initiative with a team of student leaders to build capacity for student voter engagement for the 2024 election.
- By August 2024, build programming and training that can be provided to resident assistants, Athletics, student organizations, and United Students Government to support the registration, education, and mobilization efforts of the students in their dorms or organizations.
- By September 2024, have a “student ambassador” program of 5-10 students to engage their peers in conversations about civic engagement and mid-term and presidential elections.
- By August 2025, submit grant applications to support and deepen civic learning and democratic engagement work being done at Buffalo State.

Strategy

The strategy to achieve our goals will be similar to successful strategies used previously to institutionalize community engagement/service-learning, by collaborating with members of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and with students. We will continue to build our partnership with NYPIRG, to amplify the work they have implemented on the campus for decades. We will also incorporate our work within the Civic Action Plan and the campus’s Anchor Learning Network’s strategic goals to ensure that the goals outlined in the Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan are complementary to civic engagement initiatives already in progress.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting threats to budget and staffing at the college, we will remain flexible in our strategy, utilizing new methods of delivery and identifying new partnerships. We will build capacity for carrying out the goals of the Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan by applying for grant funds and continuing to utilize NSLVE data and national best practices to deepen the civic learning and democratic engagement of SUNY Buffalo State students.

As an institution, our tactics and activities fall into six goals:

1. Educate students about processes and implications of engagement and non-engagement in civic learning and democratic engagement.
2. Demonstrate the college’s commitment to educating active citizens.
3. Provide support and opportunities for students who want to engage in civic activities.
4. Increase the number of students who are registered to vote.
5. Increase the turnout rate of registered student voters.
6. Create opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement and conversations about civic engagement.

| Intended Outcome | Strategies (2020-2025) | Audience | When | Who | Goal |
|---|--|--|--|--------------------------|--|
| Voter Registration | | | | | |
| Increase visibility of voter registration efforts and peer-to-peer opportunities. | Build voter registration and absentee ballot efforts into New Student Orientation programming | First-Year and Transfer Students | Summer 2020 | CCE | 1; 2; 3 |
| | Create programming/opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction during National Voter Registration Day efforts | Undergraduate Students | September 2020 | NYPIRG/ CCE | 1; 3; 4 |
| | Identify, train, and promote offices/individuals where students can register to vote. Offer further trainings as necessary (ex: absentee ballot process.) *Subject to available on-campus services in Fall 2020 due to Covid-19. This might be delayed or modified until classes can take place on-campus.* | Promote voter registration locations to all students | Fall 2020 and continuous* | CCE/ NYPIRG | 1; 2; 3 |
| | Identify and train faculty/staff in majors where NSLVE data reports low voter turnout | Spring 2021 and continuous | | | |
| | Meet students where they are at (physically) and create opportunities/programming to relate abstract concept of voting to impacts on personal life (in collaboration with other campus offices and student organizations) | Undergraduate students | Fall 2021 and continuous | CCE | 1; 3; 6 |
| | Create virtual or physical "Voter Help Desk" to allow peer-to-peer interaction and support of completing the voter registration process and requesting absentee ballot. | Undergraduate students | Prepare Spring 2022 for Fall 2022 implementation | CCE/ NYPIRG | 3; 6 |
| Promote voter registration | Provide information for students to determine where (location/address) it's best for them to be registered to vote (ie: dorm address vs. home address) | Undergraduate students | Summer 2020 | CCE | 1; 4 |
| | Promote voter registration and share with students the process on multiple mediums (ie: in-person NYPIRG class visits, Blackboard announcements, Daily Bulletin posts, social media posts) | All students | Fall 2020 and continuous | NYPIRG/ CCE | 1; 4; 5 |
| | Send an email to all students to share voter registration information and process | All students | September 2020 | CCE/ Dean of Students | 1; 4 Requirement of SUNY Election Law (Dec. 2019) |
| | Coordinate tabling opportunity for Erie County Board of Elections or other non-partisan organization to assist with voter registration efforts on campus *Subject to available on-campus services in Fall 2021 due to Covid-19* | Undergraduate students | Fall 2021* and continuous | CCE | 1; 4 |

| Voter Education | | | | | |
|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Create and promote accessible and digital resources for voter education. | Link websites on CCE webpage where students can search for information about candidates, polling location, early voting, advocacy, etc. | All students | Fall 2020 | CCE | 1; 5 |
| | Create, upload, and promote 5-10-minute videos about parts of the voting process (ie: registration, absentee ballot, looking up candidate info, finding your polling location, early voting) | All students | Spring 2021 | CCE | 1; 2; 3; 4; 5 |
| | Build programming and training that can be provided to resident assistants, athletics, student organizations, and United Students Government to support the registration, education, and mobilization efforts of the students in their dorms or organizations. | Student leaders | August 2024 | Work Group | 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6 |
| Educate on issues and candidates | Host issue forum or to educate about ballot measures and state-wide issues | Undergraduate students | Fall 2021 | NYPIRG | 1; 2; 5 |
| | Create and distribute general election summaries to students with information about candidate platforms (hardcopy, digital download, etc.) | All students | Create in Summer 2022 for Fall 2022 | CCE intern | 1; 2; 5 |
| Engage all students | Create “Bengal Voting Boxes” and place in various campus offices (or in a virtual space if remote) to allow students who are not able to vote (international students, non-citizens, students who choose not to participate in the election) to participate and share their voices about issues that matter to them. | All students | August 2023 and continuous | CCE | 3; 6 |
| Voter Mobilization | | | | | |
| Facilitate voter mobilization efforts | Provide opportunities for students to learn how, apply for, and submit an absentee ballot | All students | Fall 2020 and continuous | CCE/ NYPIRG | 1; 3; 5 |
| | Investigate other opportunities to engage students in voting re: competition with other colleges, departments, etc. for implementation in Fall 2022 | Undergraduate students | Summer 2021 | Work Group | 5 |
| | Raise the profile of the election and voter mobilization with a mobilization week of “events”. This might include in-person or virtual/digital engagement and cover topics such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding My Polling Site Early Voting Sites and access My voting plan Advocacy/policy Banner making | Undergraduate students | Fall 2022 | CCE/ NYPIRG | 1; 2; 3; 5; 6 |
| | Host a “Party at the Polls” | On-campus students | Fall 2024 and every 2 years | NYPIRG/ CCE | 2; 3; 5 |
| Institutionalization of Voter Friendly Campus Efforts | | | | | |
| Improve and utilize NSLVE and institutional data | Investigate and submit a formal request to institutional research regarding the submission of critical student information to the clearinghouse so that NSLVE data can be more robust and assist with future planning | Work Group; broader campus community as needed | January 2021 | CCE | 2; 4; 5 |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|----------------------|---|------------------|
| | Work with admissions/registrar/institutional research to identify what percentage of our students are eligible to vote (based on citizenship) to help guide future civic engagement planning | Work Group; broader campus community as needed | July 2021 | CCE | 2; 4; 5 |
| | Identify other data and reports that can inform civic learning and democratic engagement efforts | Work Group; broader campus community as needed | August 2023 | Work Group | 2; 4; 5 |
| Engage a “Voter Education” Workgroup | Form a work group with campus representation to increase communication and develop a year-long voter education/civic engagement plan that engages both voting and non-voting students in 2021-2022 in anticipation of 2022 mid-term elections. | Student Affairs and Academic Affairs departments | August 2021 | Facilitated by CCE; Work Group | 1; 2; 3 |
| | Develop a communication plan to map out how to infuse civic engagement education and mobilization into the entire academic year | Student Affairs and Academic Affairs departments | August 2022 | Work Group | 1; 2; 3 |
| Create opportunities for peer-to-peer civic engagement | Develop a draft structure for “student ambassador” initiative/opportunity to allow for peer-to-peer civic engagement. Pending staff responsibilities and funding, the “student ambassador” initiative will be in place for pilot in Spring 2023 semester, building to full implementation in Spring 2024 in anticipation of the 2024 election. | Undergraduate students | Pilot in Spring 2023 | Work Group and CCE supervision of pilot | 1; 3; 6 |
| | Identify and develop new civic learning and democratic engagement initiatives to build the active citizenship skills of all students, to be inclusive of those students without American citizenship status. | Undergraduate students | August 2023 | Work Group | 1; 3; 6 |
| Identify resources | Submit grant applications to support and deepen civic learning and democratic engagement work being done at Buffalo State. | Funders | August 2025 | Work Group/ CCE/ NYPIRG | 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6 |
| | Identify resources and best practices to support and deepen civic learning and democratic engagement work | Workgroup | August 2025 | Work Group/ CCE | 1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6 |
| Institutional Support and Engagement | Integrate civic learning and democratic engagement into curricular experiences, including expanding community engagement/service-learning courses, applied learning experiences, etc. | Campus | August 2025 | CCE | 2 |
| | Support and be a part of implementation of Civic Action plan as it relates to civic learning and democratic engagement | Work Group | August 2025 | Work Group | 2 |

Reporting

The Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan will be available and shared with the campus and larger community. The action plan will be forwarded to the provost and president of the SUNY Buffalo State, who have been kept up-to-date during its Spring 2020 formation.

A digital copy of the action plan will live on the Civic and Community Engagement Office’s website under our [initiatives](#) section. The NSLVE data that helped to inform the goals of the plan will also be shared on this website. The Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan will also be submitted as part of the Civic and Community Engagement’s annual report and Civic Action Plan biennial report. Each member of the Voter Friendly Campus workgroup will also receive a final copy of the report, including New York Public Interest Research Group. Additionally, pieces of the plan will be shared with audiences on our social media and e-newsletter platforms, with links to the entire digital copy of the document.

Evaluation

In late fall 2020, in a collaborative effort of the Civic and Community Engagement (CCE) office and New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), the work outlined in the Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) Action Plan will be evaluated, using a baseline of participation and activities from 2019-2020 voter registration and civic engagement initiatives. Our work to register and mobilize student voters will be evaluated by comparing to voting rates in the 2018 and 2016 elections, taken from NSLVE data.

At this time, the institution seeks to know how many students were registered, educated, and mobilized for the 2020 election. In utilizing the tools and collection methods described in the preceding table, Buffalo State will know if it is making progress toward achieving these goals.

| Goal | Evaluation Tool | Collection Method | How to Use for Improvement |
|--|--|--|--|
| By September 29, increase the number of students registered to vote by 2% (71% → 73%). | NSLVE data | This data is collected and shared by NSLVE. | The VFC work group will use this data to identify: 1) if the goal was met 2) what departments students are registered to vote 3) strategies for improvement based on changing campus demographics and challenges posed by Covid-19 |
| | | In addition, the VFC work group will identify the number of voter registration forms correctly completed, collected, and submitted to board of elections through campus National Voter Registration Day efforts. | |
| By November 3, create and expand opportunities for students to build civic skills. | Compare fall 2020 participation data to 2019-2020 academic year data. | Data will be collected from NYPIRG and CCE events/programing records. | Using the data, we will be able to measure an increase/decrease in the number of participants in civic engagement programs. |
| | A pre- and post-survey will be created and shared with students who attend VFC action plan events to measure impact on student learning. | A self-response survey will be shared with students prior to and after their participation in civic engagement activities and programs in fall 2020. | Through the survey tool we will ask questions regarding student major and other geodemographic characteristics to determine where strengths and weaknesses lie in terms of engagement and make strategies to engage those who are not engaged in these activities. |

| | | | |
|---|------------|---|---|
| By November 3, the voting rate of Buffalo State students will increase from 42% to 50%. | NSLVE data | This data is collected and shared by NSLVE. | The VFC work group will use this data to determine what mobilization efforts may have been effective and determine what strategies should be employed for 2022 efforts. |
|---|------------|---|---|

With this evaluation of fall 2020 efforts, the VFC work group will be able to improve civic and democratic engagement efforts on the campus and achieve the long-term goals identified on the VFC Action Plan in May 2020. Continuous evaluation and process improvement will allow the VFC work group to adjust short- and long-term goals to embed civic engagement and democratic learning into the curricular and co-curricular activities across college departments.

Results of efforts will be shared with the president, provost, on social media, and in the college’s daily bulletin and departmental annual reports, and as part of the SUNY Election Law report. The evaluation of fall 2020 activities will be available on the CCE website, under the [VFC initiative](#) for students, faculty, staff, and community members to access.

Our efforts will be measured using a baseline from 2019-2020 activities for voter registration and civic engagement. Our efforts to register and mobilize student voters will be compared to voting rates in the 2018 and 2016 elections, taken from NSLVE data.

We will know that we have reached our initial Voter Friendly Campus goals when

- the number of students registered to vote increases by 2% (71% → 73%);
- additional opportunities are created and expanded to engage students in experiences where they can build their civic skills and when student engagement in these opportunities increases;
- the voting rate of Buffalo State students increased from 42% to 50% in mid-term and presidential elections.

Overall, the evaluation of this work will be a continual process and the methods employed to achieve Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan goals will be adjusted so that we can meet institutional goals.