

# University of North Carolina Asheville Action Plan—2020

## Overview<sup>1</sup>

The efforts to register and mobilize voters and to promote democratic engagement on the University of North Carolina Asheville’s campus are supported by a variety of different organizations and offices on campus including (though not limited to): the Student Affairs Division, the Student Government Association (SGA), the Key Center for Community Engaged Learning, the Student Organization Council, and the Political Science Club. The Political Science Club, a student organization, typically takes primary responsibility for planning and executing voter registration and mobilization events, in consultation with these other offices/groups. As part of the All-In Challenge, representatives from each of these organizations (faculty, staff, and student), as well as from multiple academic departments, have agreed to serve on a voter engagement committee to plan, oversee, and coordinate all registration, mobilization, turnout, and other election-oriented activities on UNCA’s campus for the 2020 elections and any elections thereafter.

Our overarching goals, to be discussed in greater detail below, are to increase voter turnout in the 2020 election relative to past presidential elections (especially among the 18-25 year old demographic), to provide easy access to non-partisan candidate and ballot information, to provide information about and clarify confusion over recent election law changes at the state and local level, and to provide greater access to the polls for members of the campus community. We hope to create/foster a culture of engagement on our campus, and, while we are aware this may not be accomplished in a single year or single election cycle, we believe the plan herein described lays out the first steps toward these larger goals. The plan outlined here is also consistent with UNCA’s Strategic Plan, which emphasizes the importance of community engagement as a means to “encourage students to engage in civic leadership and democratic processes.”<sup>2</sup> Further, it is consistent with recently established plans for the future of UNCA, which prioritize amplifying the whole student experience on campus, with the goal of developing our students into active citizens locally and globally.

## Institutional Context

Our goals as a committee and as representatives of various departments, organizations, and offices at UNCA are informed by the the landscape both on and off campus. In particular, our goals are a reflection of the institutional structures around, resources for, and the realities of democratic participation within our campus community and in the state of North Carolina as a whole (especially since we recognize that many of our students are not necessarily Buncombe County voters).

## Campus Overview—NSLVE Results and Campus Trends

UNCA participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), which provides institutions with data on student registration and voting rates.<sup>3</sup> Based on our access to data from the 2012-2018 election cycles<sup>4</sup>, we believe we have a good sense of the potential trends in participation on campus. While the 2012 and 2016 reports, in some ways, speak more directly to our challenge and context for 2020, as they cover presidential election years, we believe that the 2018 report reveals some important information about the activity of our student body that may be applicable to the 2020 cycle, as well.

Based on the accessible data, we believe we should focus on increasing both registration and turnout rates on our campus. In terms of registration, 72% of students were registered in 2012 and that dropped to 68.7% in 2016. Going into 2018, we were worried about this decline, even if slight. However, in 2018, registration rates increased to 75.7%, a 7-point increase from 2016. While we are heartened by this increase and recognize that

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<sup>2</sup><https://strategicplan.unca.edu/strategic-direction-3-community-engagement>

<sup>3</sup>We will be participating again in 2020; we reauthorized our participation prior to the 2018 election cycle.

<sup>4</sup>We have little data on the 2014 results from our campus, due to turnover of staff on campus. All our information from 2014 was provided by comparisons in the 2018 NSLVE report.

registration rates over 75% are high, we believe/hope they can be improved upon. Of those students who are registered, turnout rates were 67.5% in 2012 and 75.3% in 2016. We are hoping to increase that further going into the 2020 election. Between the 2014 and 2018 midterm elections, turnout among registered students increased 24.5%, so we are hoping to capitalize on the growing momentum and engagement of our students in more recent elections.<sup>5</sup> We find these upward trajectories promising but would like all of our registered students to exercise their right to vote. The overall voting rate of students on campus was 48.7% in 2012 and 51.8% in 2016. We are encouraged that over half of our students turned out to vote in 2016 but want to increase those percentages for the election cycles to come. Indeed, there have been some changes to our electoral system at the state and local level that may help bolster our numbers, which will be discussed in more detail.

There are some interesting institutional and demographic patterns on campus worth noting, as well. UNCA students seem to overwhelmingly take advantage of early voting opportunities: in 2012, 66.4% of our students who voted did so in the early voting period, 69.6% in 2016, and 56.8% in 2018. This is in comparison to the 22.7%, 17.9%, and 32.4% that voted on election day in 2012, 2016, and 2018 respectively. This is a pattern that we intend to take note of and focus on in our goals for 2020. Further, we also note that a non-negligible percent of our students voted absentee in the past 2 presidential election cycles. Approximately 10%–12% of our voting students voted absentee in between 2012 and 2018.

In terms of demographics, race and ethnicity seem to be important factors in voter turnout on UNCA's campus. In general, students who identify as racial and ethnic minorities tend to have lower turnout rates than do those students who identify as white. The major exception to this trend was among Native American/American Indian students, who turned out at the highest rates of any demographic in 2016, at 64.7%. White student turnout was 52.6%, compared to 44% for Hispanic students, 36.1% for Asian students, 43.7% for black students, and 47% for multiracial students. These trends are important to consider for the goals we are setting.

Age also seems to play a major role in voting on our campus. Turnout steadily increases with the age of our students. In particular, the age range of concern is students that are 18-21, with a turnout rate of 43.3 in 2012 and 40.9 in 2016.<sup>6</sup> Turnout increased significantly for students 22-24, with rates of 46 and 59.6 in 2012 and 2016. In particular, we plan to focus on first-year students to combat some of these trends, something we began for the 2018 election cycle.

## North Carolina Overview—State Voting Data and Patterns

Trends in voting across the state of North Carolina are also relevant to the efforts we make on our campus to increase registration and turnout rates. North Carolina has a controversial history when it comes to voting rights. As recently as 2016, a federal appeals court struck down a state Voter ID law that targeted black voters with “almost surgical precision.”<sup>7</sup> The same law made it more difficult for young voters to register, by barring pre-registration efforts. While the law has since been struck down and is no longer in effect, it has bred a lot of disenchantment with and confusion surrounding the registration and voting process. Then, in 2018, NC voters approved a constitutional amendment to require photo identification for voting purposes, despite the controversy over the original voter ID law passed in 2013. Recently (as of December 31, 2019), a federal court issued an injunction against the new ID requirement.<sup>8</sup> The injunction will remain in place until further order from the court. Thus, it appears that photo identification will not be required in 2020, but this may change. This back-and-forth on the issue has created a lot of uncertainty over the state of election law in the state. Efforts to increase registration and voting on UNCA's campus, then, must be made with this in mind. One of the largest barriers to registration and voting in the state, we believe, is one of information and access.

Some of the voting trends we see on campus seem to be more systemic, as they are also apparent at the state level. While turnout rates in NC are the 11th highest in the country (69 percent in 2016), it is not consistent

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<sup>5</sup>Turnout in 2014 was 32.5%, compared to 57% in 2018

<sup>6</sup>It was 37.3% in 2018

<sup>7</sup><http://electionlawblog.org/wp-content/uploads/nc-4th.pdf>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.wral.com/federal-judge-blocks-voter-id-in-north-carolina/18861700/>

across all segments of society. The demographic with the lowest turnout rates state-wide was voters in the 18-25 age bracket with a 2016 turnout rate of 53% (compared to 60% in 2008 and 55% in 2012). Further, according to Democracy NC, a non-partisan nonprofit in North Carolina that focuses on voter engagement, there was a 7 point gap between white and black voter turnout in 2016 (71% vs 64%); the rate for Hispanic voters was even lower at 58 percent.<sup>9</sup> We believe it is critical to think about the barriers that may be affecting the turnout rates of these groups on campus and in the state writ large when creating our campus action plan.

Another contextual factor at the state level that may affect voting and engagement on our campus is the controversy around NC's partisan gerrymandering. North Carolina was one of the two states whose districts were being litigated in the 2019 Supreme Court case *Rucho v. Common Cause* (Maryland was the other state). In that case, the Supreme Court declared that issues of partisan gerrymandering are political questions and thus outside the purview of federal courts. This led to a belief that North Carolina's congressional districts would remain untouched. Asheville was one of the cities most affected by these gerrymanders. In fact, CNN recently ran an op-ed that went viral about gerrymandering in Asheville.<sup>10</sup> Further, UNCA's campus was affected by the redistricting plan put in place after the 2010 Census. Asheville was previously split between the 10th and 11th congressional districts and those district lines cut through UNC Asheville's dormitories (and even particular apartments and suites on campus). This made registering voters on campus difficult to navigate and also had an effect on student voters' feelings of efficacy. However, as of November 2019, state courts have struck down our previous maps and approved new ones for the state.<sup>11</sup> Under the new maps, which will be in place for the 2020 primary and general elections, Asheville (and thus UNCA's campus) is contained entirely in the 11th congressional district. This change should increase voting power of our campus, and there is no incumbent running for office. As such, this should hopefully increase turnout.

While some of these changes may encourage mobilization and engagement, we have had a lot of big electoral changes occur in a very short period of time. As such, one of the most important efforts we will have to make going into the 2020 election is one of information provision—we need to spread the word about the status of the voter ID law and the new districts.

## Initiatives for the 2020 Election Cycle

In the following section, we lay out and explain the goals we hope to accomplish during the 2020 election cycle. Then, we provide a tentative plan for how to accomplish each.

### Goals

Our goals for the 2020 election are to:

1. Maintain/increase the voter *registration* rates on campus, relative to 2018—the registration rate on UNCA's campus was 75.7% in 2020 (which was higher than in both 2012 and 2016). We believe that if we can make registering easy enough and pervasive enough on campus, we can maintain our levels of registration and possibly increase them. Our ambitious goal is to aim for 78-80% registration, but we understand that a 75.7% rate is already very high and that there may be diminishing returns on efforts at some point. However, this will not temper our efforts. Focusing on registration rates is one of our major goals, given that among registered voters, turnout was over 75 percent in 2016, which is a very high rate.
2. Improve voter *turnout* rates on campus, which we believe requires a multi-tiered approach:

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<sup>9</sup><https://democracync.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/WhoVoted2016.pdf>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.cnn.com/2019/11/23/opinions/gerrymandering-voting-districts-america-daley/index.html>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/12/03/north-carolinas-new-congressional-map-shifts-two-seats-toward-democrats/?arc404=true>

- Maintain/increase aggregate voter turnout rates on campus, relative to 2012 & 2016—in 2016, the voter turnout rate on campus was 51.8%, which was significantly lower than the aggregate state average and lower than the state average for voters between 18 and 25. As such, our goal is to have campus turnout rates increase in 2020 and to hopefully reflect or exceed the state and national averages for voters in the 18-25 age bracket. Given the surge we saw in voting and registration rates in 2018 (especially impressive for a midterm year) and the national increase in college student voting<sup>12</sup>, we believe this goal is within reach.
  - Increase turnout among groups of students with lower rates—We aim to increase turnout among the demographic groups with the lowest turnout rates on campus, as described above (18-21 year olds, racial and ethnic minorities, etc). Further, there are some trends from the NSLVE reports that indicate that students in certain fields of study are less likely to vote than are others, and we aim to take measures to combat these trends.
  - Pledging at least 500 students to vote—While pledges are not a true commitment device, we do think that they have a psychological effect on potential voters and can help encourage turnout in the election. Further, when we pledge students, we intend to give them an option to sign up for an email listserve that provides important election-related updated and information, which can help increase mobilization. For the 2018 midterm election, we pledged over 300 voters. On National Voter Registration Day in 2019, a non-election year, we were able to pledge over 400 potential voters to vote in the 2020 primaries and general election. If we can get that kind of interest in an off-year, we should be able to increase that during a high profile election year.
3. Reduce barriers/obstacles to voting for our campus community—we perceive that there are some institutional and informational barriers to voting on our campus that should be addressed in any plans to increase civic engagement and voter participation among our students and the wider UNCA community. First, we believe there may be a lot of uncertainty, confusion, and misinformation about recent electoral changes. This may produce anxiety in students considering voting, so we will aim to spread accurate information and to provide resources for students to turn to in order to have their questions answered. Further, in 2018, our campus was not an early voting location, due to construction on campus and anticipated low turnout in midterm elections. This created potential barriers for students being able to vote, as the closest early voting location was over 2 miles away (and most of our students utilize early voting options) and many of our students either do not or cannot have cars.<sup>13</sup> We offered free shuttles and transportation for the polls, but we believe turnout would have been higher if there was early voting on campus, as there was in 2016.
  4. Provide opportunities for students to get engaged in the wider community, model civil discourse, & promote a culture of engagement—For those students who are particularly interested in politics and democracy and want to get involved, we hope to provide greater information on and opportunities for students to get involved in the election both on and off campus. We hope to have at least 50 students volunteer for campus registration events and another 40-50 volunteer with the Buncombe County Board of Elections, primarily as poll workers. We also hope to sponsor a series of talks, parties, and events on campus to attract attention. We believe this is key to fostering well-rounded citizenship and we think that the involvement of students in the process can positively affect and influence other students to get involved, creating an atmosphere of engagement.

## Action Plan

Below, we include our initiatives to accomplish each of the preceding goals.

1. Maintain/increase the voter registration rates on campus—We believe registering a greater number of students/members of the campus community to vote is a critical step in getting greater numbers to vote and otherwise participate in elections. For these reasons, we plan to do the following:

<sup>12</sup><https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/09/20/massive-surge-college-student-voting-2018>

<sup>13</sup>For example, first-year students cannot have vehicles on campus and are, for the most part, required to live on campus.

- (a) Host multiple registration events around campus—we believe hosting multiple high-profile registration events on campus will be key to getting students registered in time to vote in the November election. These events will involve recruiting volunteers, training volunteers, and tabling at various places around campus. In particular, we would like to strategically host these events before the October 9 registration deadline for the general election. While it is possible for voters to register and vote at the same time during the early voting period, we think that pre-registering voters will make them more likely to turnout and to have the necessary resources to cast informed votes. We will, however, advertise, the same-day registration option during the early voting period, as well.
- Possible events/registration drives (others will be added):
    - RendezBlue (August 2020)—first-year student orientation. Since many first-year students may be first-time voters, we want to particularly focus on getting them registered to vote. Embedding registration into the orientation schedule will be hugely helpful on this front. Previously, we have had student volunteers visiting first-year seminars (required courses for first-year students) but orientation may be a more efficient way to do so, if possible.
    - Rockypalooza (August 2020)—annual picnic and celebration to kick-off the new school year. Many members of the campus community attend this event, including first year students (it is part of their orientation process) and their families. This will be a prime opportunity to register a large group of voters
    - Student Organization Fair (August 2020)—We intend to table at the Student Organization Fair, an annual event that gives student organizations the opportunity to attract new members, in order to register students to vote at a location they will likely visit anyway and as a way to recruit volunteers for our registration drives and election day activities
    - Constitution Day (September 2020)—The office of Student Affairs, often with the help of the Political Science Department, hosts an annual Constitution Day speaker, as well as Constitution week events (movie viewings, trivia, etc). As part of these festivities, we plan to have registration tables at the locations of each of the events and around high traffic areas on campus
    - National Voter Registration Day (September 22, 2020)—This is typically our largest day of registration activity on campus, with over 40 volunteers and hundreds of students registering and pledging to vote. We typically table all over campus, host training sessions for volunteers, and offer incentives to get students, faculty, and staff to stop by to register. We provide free food at these events, information about candidates, sample ballots, and NOW points for those who attend. NOW points are points that students collect for attending events on campus that can be redeemed for various prizes at the end of the semester.
  - Tabling locations— High traffic areas will be the top priority for tabling: outside Brown Dining Hall, both inside and outside Highsmith Student Union, outside Ramsey Library, outside residential dorms, outside Rhoades-Robinson academic building, and by the Rocky the Bull Dog statue. Other academic buildings will be covered, if enough volunteers are recruited
  - Advertising—To advertise these campus-wide registration events, we intend to co-host these events with as many student organizations as possible, use social media pages to post fliers and reminders, post fliers and banners around campus, post advertisements on the digital media screens in dormitory buildings, email student listserves, and hopefully post on a prominent page on the university website.
- (b) Designate “Voter Registration” areas around campus that operate all year long—ideally, we hope to designate a voter registration area in each academic building, each dorm, and in Highsmith Student Union so that students can stop in at any time to register to vote. A designated faculty/staff member will periodically check into to each location to collect and submit any registration forms submitted. This will be done in addition to the advertised events. We already have some of these locations, but we should have more.
- (c) Training as many volunteers as possible—while registering to vote is not necessarily a difficult task, in general, it can be tricky for students who live in campus dorms. Residential addresses

cannot be designated as PO Boxes; however, students who live on campus are assigned a campus PO Box as their address and often use this as their residential address on voter registration forms. When this occurs, the Board of Elections cannot process the form. As such, we will train members of the campus community to instruct students on how to fill out the registration forms, to provide the addresses of the actual dorm buildings (which can serve as the residential address for students), and to explain that PO Boxes can only be used as mailing addresses. We especially intend to train any registration drive volunteers and RAs in the dorms of this. We also plan to post fliers with residential vs mailing addresses at any registration location. This process should be easier now that campus is contained within one congressional district.

- (d) Apply for external funding to support these efforts—many of the efforts that we are planning (and that have been successful in the past) have required resources and funding that are not always readily available on campus. As such, we plan to continue applying for external grants to support these efforts, while working to secure on-campus funding as well.<sup>14</sup>
2. Improve turnout rates on campus—while we believe registering students is a major step in improving turnout rates on campus, we also recognize that registering a student to vote does not guarantee that they will, in fact, turn out to vote. As such, we plan to do the following:
    - (a) Encourage Early Voting—We believe that informing students and members of the campus community about and encouraging them to vote during the 17-day early voting period can help turnout rates. As we have seen from our NSLVE reports, early voting is overwhelmingly the option our students choose. We want to further emphasize the benefits of doing: fewer/shorter lines, the ability to vote at any early voting location (rather than at a designated voting location), weekend voting, etc. We will have fliers with early voting dates and locations available at all registration drives and in Highsmith Student Union. We believe early voting is especially important on our small campus, since many of our students are commuters and many work off-campus jobs during the work week.
    - (b) Designate campus as an early voting location (or provide transportation to the polls)—UNCA’s campus served as an early voting location for the 2016 election due to efforts of our student body president and SGA. However, due to widespread construction on campus during the Fall 2018 semester, it was not an early voting location for the midterm elections in 2018. While construction is still ongoing on our campus, the student union is now complete and is the ideal space for early voting. As such, we are currently working with the Board of Elections and the university administration to designate campus as an early voting location, which will make it much easier for all members of the campus community to vote. We recognize, however, that there are many other factors, besides increasing turnout, that go into a decision about hosting a voting location. As such, we intend to be flexible if we are not able to designate a campus location as one. We plan to apply for grants to pay for shuttling to early voting locations, if campus does not serve as one. Regardless of the outcome, we will help students get to the polls.
    - (c) Focus on groups with lower turnout rates—Given past NSLVE reports, we believe it is important to focus on certain sections of the study body with lower turnout rates, hoping to improve those rates in 2020 and future elections. We believe the key to success in this area is communication and outreach. The groups we would like to assist are as follows:
      - First-year/younger students: Given the voting rates of 18-21 year olds on campus, we intend to focus many of our efforts on this age group. In particular, we plan to focus some of our activities more particularly around the first-year experience; we believe that first year students are less likely to register and vote because of the difficulty in navigating the process, especially at a new address, and because many are new to voting. Further, our recent incoming first-year classes have been quite large, meaning that they are an increasingly important group on our campus. To help facilitate their participation, we intend to have voter registration tables at move-in and orientation events. Further, UNCA requires all first-year students to enroll in a

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<sup>14</sup>We have been fortunate enough to receive mini-grants from NC Campus Compact and the Alliance for Youth Organizing in the past

First Year Colloquium (FYC), generally during their Fall semester. We will extend an offer to all FYC instructors to have representatives of the Voter Engagement Committee come to each of their class periods for 20-30 minutes to register students to vote, answer any questions about voting/ballots/candidates, and provide voter information guides.

- Racial and ethnic minorities: As noted above, voter turnout among UNCA students that identify as racial and ethnic minorities tend to be lower than the university average and the average for white students. To help increase those rates, we intend to work with the Multicultural Affairs office and Student Organization Council on campus to reach out to these groups. We hope to cosponsor voter registration and election-related events with student organizations that represent these groups. Further, we intend to have open conversations with student groups on campus to identify the issues that students find the most pressing and to see how we can foster greater engagement and inclusivity. We believe this communication is critical.
  - Certain fields of study: According to NSLVE reports, we have some fields of study with low turnout rates (some natural sciences, for instance) and others with decreasing turnout rates (such as history). We intend to reach out to these departments (faculty, department chairs, etc) and extend the offer to visit classes to register students. We also plan to have voter registration tabling events in these academic buildings. In 2018 and 2019, we tabled outside of Rhoades-Robinson, a main science building on campus, on NVRD and this was, by far, one of our busiest registration locations.
- (d) Ask students to pledge to vote & send follow up emails: While many of our efforts will be focused on registering new voters, we are aware that we also must foster a sense of engagement in those who are already registered to vote. As such, we will offer voter pledges at all registration events and will offer incentives for students who agree to pledge to vote. When a student pledges to vote, we will also offer to sign them up for a listserv that will exclusively be used to send reminders about upcoming deadline and dates, political events on campus, and updates/changes to election law.
- (e) Access to absentee ballots—At all voter registration events on campus, we intend to provide absentee ballots for our students, so that they have ample time to fill out their ballots and send them off to the appropriate county board of elections. While a large proportion of our students are from the state of North Carolina, they do represent the entire state geographically. A decent number of our students choose to stay registered in their home districts and about 10 percent of those who voted in 2012 and 2016 voted absentee. For students who wish to do so, we aim to make this as easy as possible and to walk them through the process
- (f) Election Day/Early Voting Period reminders— We believe one of the reasons young voters turn out to vote at lower rates is the fact that they have so many other things going on in their lives; college students, in particular, can be overwhelmed by the amount of information and number of events that are available to them. For this reason, we think that reminding students about the early voting period and about election day can be a huge step in increasing voter turnout on campus. We can easily accomplish this goal by emailing student listserves and posting fliers around campus. Further, we intend to offer students the possibility to sign up for a reminder listserv when they register or pledge to vote at our registration drives. When a student pledges to vote, we inform them that this will automatically sign them up to receive 1-2 email reminders about the upcoming election, close to the voting period. We also offer this possibility to those who are newly registered as well.
- (g) Advertise same day registration—Many of our efforts on campus will encourage students to pre-register to vote before the state's October 9 registration deadline. However, we do not want members of the campus community who miss that deadline to think they will be unable or ineligible to vote. As such, after October 9, many of our efforts will switch gears to start advertising same day registration possibilities, which are available to them during the day early voting period. We plan to use social media, email, and fliers to advertise this information.
- (h) Host a Party At (or To) the Polls—In 2018, we received a small grant to host a Party to the Polls. This event provided food, music, activities, and voter resources to the campus community, while

free shuttles transported students back and forth the closest early voting location. This event was very well attended and brought a lot of attention and excitement to voting. We hope to do this again in 2020. If campus is an early voting location, we will host the party in the same building as the voting location (though, not immediately next to the polling location, of course). If it is not an early voting location, we will emulate our plan from 2018 and provide shuttles during the party.

3. Reduce barriers/obstacles to voting for our campus community—We believe that there are various potential barriers that may prevent, discourage, or depress turnout among the campus community that we can take measures to alleviate, if not resolve:
  - Now that congressional districts have been redrawn in the state, Asheville, in its entirety, lies within one congressional district. This is a huge change for those of us spearheading registration efforts. Previously, when campus was split into two congressional districts, students had to be very careful in filling out their voter registration forms, and were required to know not only their dorm address, but their specific room/suite numbers and letters. Many students would neglect to fill out the form properly and would have troubled getting their forms processed. However, now the process should be significantly streamlined. The pressure on volunteers to make sure that students provide their room number is also lessened as they all will be in the same congressional district if they live on campus, and forms should be more easily processed. This will make the process much easier for those filling out forms, those volunteering to help register voters, and the Buncombe County Board of Elections.
  - As mentioned above in more detail, we want to make voting as convenient as possible for the students. We're hoping to make campus an early voting location, or to at least provide free transportation to the closest early voting location.
  - Information also tends to be a significant barrier to voting. If voters feel that they cannot easily access information on candidates or the election to cast informed votes, they may not bother to vote at all. Given all the recent changes to electoral laws, we believe that spreading accurate information will be key to turnout in 2020:
    - Voter ID laws—as mentioned previously, in the past 6 years, NC has enacted two different voter ID laws, one of which was struck down by the federal courts and the other of which is temporarily blocked. As it stands currently, voters will not need a photo ID to vote in 2020, but that is subject to change. As such, the onus is on us to follow the litigation on this front and to keep the campus community informed as to the status of the law. While voter ID laws can generally have a depressing effect on turnout, we hope that if it is re-instated, it will not have such an effect on campus. Before the recent decision to block the ID law, our campus worked very hard to have our campus IDs approved as official forms of ID for voting purposes, and we were successful. As such, if the law is re-instated before November 2020, we will make major efforts to ensure that the campus community knows that they can use their university IDs, which all students, faculty, and staff have.
    - Asheville recently voted to move our local elections to national election years (previously they were held in so-called “off-years”). However, it is very possible that many potential campus voters are not aware that the 2020 ballot will not only have presidential and congressional candidates (we have a Senate seat up for election, in addition to a House race with no incumbent) but will also have city and county officials as well. As such, we want to spread information about the down ballot so that voters can get informed. We plan to provide sample ballots and non-partisan candidate information (often provided by local chapters of Democracy NC or the League of Women Voters, etc) at our registration drives and other events to help inform voters and lower that information barrier.
4. Provide opportunities for students to get engaged in the wider community, model civil discourse, & promote a culture of engagement—The overarching goal behind all of our actions is to foster a sense of community and civic mindedness on our campus and to create a norm of engagement and participation. Towards that end, we seek to take action to imbed these actions into our curriculum, our extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, and our community outreach projects:

- **Curricular Efforts/Engaged Learning:** In 2020, multiple classes will be offered to specifically encourage democratic participation. The political science department will be offering at least one service learning course, which will be designated to involve a large component of community outreach and require students to work with a community partner, each semester. In the Spring, they will offer a course on the 2020 Census and will work with the Census Bureau. In Fall 2020, a course on US Elections will be offered and will have students working with a variety of community partners, such as the Buncombe County Board of Elections. The political science department is also considering offering a first-year seminar on electoral politics and voting in the US. Another course, offered in the math department and Honors program, will focus on voting theory and will similarly be working with the Board of Elections to get students involved in voter registration and poll working. While this is not an exhaustive list of such courses, by any means, it is a snapshot of how civic engagement is increasingly intertwined into the curriculum.
- **Hosting candidates on campus:** We intend to follow our trajectory of inviting candidates of all political parties to our campus to share their views and policy stances. In the past, we have had vice presidential candidates (Tim Kaine) and congressional and local candidates of both parties visit our campus. We think this is an important way to increase information and foster civil discourse. We also hope to invite sitting politicians and political experts to campus well after the election, to keep such conversations going. We believe this will be a critical step in helping younger voters to be heard and to realize that their votes matter.
- **Election Night Party:** We will host an election night results-viewing party, as a culmination as many of the efforts that we will engage in the Fall. We will open this party to the whole campus (and outside) community, provide refreshments, and will invite faculty members to give context to and discuss the results. We believe that this activity will show students that politics can be fun and educational at the same time. Further, we think that having a group viewing of the results will foster a sense of political and democratic community and that having faculty participate can elevate the conversation to facilitate responsible discourse
- **Community Outreach:** Beyond all the efforts we will be embarking upon on campus, we also strive to provide opportunities for students to volunteer and work with outside organizations to increase voter registration, turnout and mobilization in the wider Asheville and Western NC areas. We already have contacts with Democracy NC and other groups to participate in voter registration drives off-campus. Further, we hope to do outreach to local high schools to host voter registration drives.
- **Continue having student fellows work with engagement organizations—**We currently have two students who are serving as fellows with the Campus Vote Project and the Campus Election Engagement Project. These organizations have been providing resources and training to help these students lead voter engagement efforts on campus. We would like to continue to support students in pursuing these opportunities and get more students involved in such projects.

## Longer Term Goals

Beyond the (relatively) short-term goals addressed above, we have some longer term goals that we hope to accomplish in the new few years:

1. Ensure campus as an early voting location from here on
2. Have election-related information included on the university calendar
3. Reach a voter turnout rate of 60 percent across campus and increase turnout among segments of campus with lower rates
4. Develop and maintain relationships with local high schools to host voter registration and election-rated events, especially political candidates/politician visits, to increase the 18-21 turnout rate in Asheville
5. Further embed community/civic engagement, democratic participation, and political inclusivity in future iterations of the university's strategic plan

6. Secure greater university and outside funding for voter mobilization activities

## Key Partnerships for Success

Faculty and Staff Members of the Voter Engagement Committee (as of January 2020):

- Ashley Moraguez, Political Science
- Patrick Bahls, Mathematics and Honors Program
- Kenneth Betsalel, Political Science
- Heidi Kelley, Sociology and Anthropology
- Robert Straub, Student Affairs
- Kate Johnson, director of the Key Center for Community Engaged Learning

On-Campus Partnerships:

- Student Affairs and the departments therein:
  - Housing and Residential Life
  - Key Center for Community Engaged Learning
  - Multicultural Affairs
  - Student Involvement, Activities, and Leadership
- Student Government Association
- Political Science Club
- Political Science Department
- College Democrats and College Republicans (to sponsor non-partisan events)
- Political Science Department
- Honors Program

Off-Campus Partners:

- Buncombe County Election Services
- Democracy NC
- NationalVoterRegistrationDay.org
- NC Campus Compact
- Campus Vote Project
- Campus Election Engagement Project

Potential Off-Campus Partners:

- Buncombe/WNC Voter Engagement Coalition
- League of Women Voters
- American Association of University Women