



Democratic Engagement Action Plan 2023-2024 Academic Year

Executive Summary

The University of North Florida is entering its second year of formalized democracy education centered in the Center for Community-Based Learning, which works as both a partner to initiate in various divisions around campus and creating new programming.

This action plan was developed by a coalition of campus leaders and community partners with a shared passion for civic engagement. This working group proposes the plan to communicate our strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at University of North Florida (UNF). The planned activities outlined here will be carried out over the 2023-2024 Academic Year, on and around our campus in Jacksonville, Florida.

Students, faculty, and Academic & Student Affairs division staff, led by the Center for Community-Based Learning, will be working to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize the UNF commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections.

Leadership

The Civic Education Action Plan Steering Committee, chaired by Susan Trudeau, Co-Curricular Coordinator in the Center for Community-Based Learning, has been charged with implementing work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement on campus. The committee is comprised of campus leaders who have demonstrated active commitment to student success and civic and community engagement:

- Dr. Moez Limayem, President
- Dr. Justin Sipes, Director, Office of Experiential Learning
- Dr. Gordon Rakita, Associate Vice President of Faculty Excellence
- Dr. Brandi Winfrey, Director, Inclusive Excellence
- Dr. Sean Freeder, Professor, Political Science
- Dr. Amy Lorenz, Director of Residence Life
- Dr. Gordon Rakita, Associate Vice President of Faculty Excellence
- Susan Trudeau, Assistant Director, Office of Service Learning and Civic Engagement

- Bethley Lucama, student; Student Government Senator; Osprey Community Ambassador
- Rachel Paul, student; Osprey Community Ambassador; President, Students United for Workers' Advocacy; Newman Fellow
- Aryssa Najmi, student; GivePulse Ambassador; Osprey Community Ambassador
- Amirah Higgens, student; Campus Vote Project intern
- Madeline Trudeau, student; President, Ospreys 4 Change; Osprey Community Ambassador
- Jaylene Cabrera, student; Osprey Community Ambassador
- Ysabella De Lauro, student; Osprey Community Ambassador
- Rhona DiCamillo, Voter Registration Director, Jacksonville League of Women Voters

This coalition is a diverse and inclusive representation from different parts of campus, including student leadership, representation from different perspectives and areas of expertise, trusted leaders and organizations who support communities that are historically underrepresented in democracy, and leaders who can help with outreach and power building by bringing more people across campus into our work. It is hoped that the coalition continues to grow and evolve as the work gains momentum, and new members will be invited regularly.

Our group plans to meet once a month via Zoom and conduct most business through Microsoft Teams; using these online collaboration tools facilitates participation by our diverse group when they are unable to gather in person. We are also partnering with the following organizations from the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition to support our efforts on campus:

- All In Campus Democracy Challenge
- Campus Vote Project, Campus Compact
- League of Women Voters
- Miami Dade College
- Motivote
- NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators)
- Pizza to the Polls
- Unify America
- Vote Early Day
- Vote Riders

In addition to the members of the Coalition, we are grateful for the participation of additional members of the UNF community: Jamie Harrell, Visual Developer & IR Analyst, and Matthew Grandstaff, Institutional Effectiveness Specialist, from Institutional Research, provided data. Rob Rose, Instructional Designer, Center for Instruction and Research, provides ongoing support for the UNF Asks Every Student Canvas module. James Fahey, assistant professor, Sean Freeder, assistant professor, Adrienne Lerner, associate instructor, and Seth Warner, assistant professor UNF Department of Political Science and Public Administration, presented at a Constitution Week Event.

Commitment

Our institution and our campus leadership demonstrate commitment to improving civic learning and democratic engagement by recently purchasing and implementing including the purchase of Motivate and agreeing to participate in National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). We also see this same commitment reflected in our institution's values, listed on the UNF website. They are as follows:

Integrity	We do the right thing for the right reason at the right time.
Respect	We treat everyone with kindness, we are informed by the perspectives of others, and we draw strength from our differences.
Accountability	We are responsible for how the outcomes of our actions affect others and our environment.
Innovation	We harness creativity and talent to turn challenges into opportunities and problems into solutions in a uniquely UNF way.

While they do not explicitly reference democratic engagement and education, the values reflect the requirements of responsible stewardship of global resources, and certainly civic engagement fits into that paradigm. In particular, the expectation that UNF graduates are informed by the perspectives of others and understand the impact of their actions are primary characteristics of an engaged citizenry.

In recent years, the state of Florida has taken action to require that postsecondary students complete a course in civic literacy as a requirement for graduation. This requirement may be satisfied by taking one of two courses, either US History Since 1877 (AMH2020) or Introduction to American Government (POS2041). At UNF, faculty in both departments are currently working to ensure compliance with this requirement and develop plans for dealing with the resulting significant increase in student enrollment in their departments.

UNF provides students with several opportunities to get engaged democratically and politically, such as the following:

- Voter education resources provided in partnership with Campus Election Engagement Project (now Civic Influencers), the Campus Vote Project (CVP), the Center for Community-Based Learning, and the League of Women Voters;
- Political clubs or student organizations, both partisan and non-partisan;
- Voter registration tables hosted by both partisan and non-partisan registered student organizations and by community partners such as the League of Women Voters
- Voting in student body elections and by faculty as members of the UNF Faculty Association;
- Opportunities to register to vote co-hosted by partner agencies and campus offices and registered student organizations;
- Civic Holiday events such as National Voter Registration Day, National Voter Education Week, and Vote Early Day co-hosted by the Center for Community-Based Learning and Campus Vote Project.

- Robust Constitution Week programming, including opportunities to register to vote and annual events offered by the Center for Community-Based Learning in partnerships with campus partners like the College of Arts and Sciences and community partners such as the League of Women Voters.

While UNF is facing some new and continuing challenges as we embark on this endeavor, notably, no mention of civic engagement in the UNF Mission statement or strategic plan, the university has renewed its commitment to civic education. The Center for Community-Based Learning has been restructured and the student-facing activities will be moved to student affairs in the coming months. The person charged with leading these activities has been promoted, and greater financial resources will be allotted to support programming. Significantly, this new office will be called the Office of Service Learning and Civic Engagement, formalizing this aspect of UNF’s community-based transformational learning programming. The budget for this new office will be established for July 1, 2024, the new fiscal year, in time to plan programming to increase student engagement for the 2024-2025 academic year.

It should be noted that progress toward the goals stated in the 2022-2023 Action Plan was made despite significant staffing and budget challenges; the CCBL/OSLCE professional staff numbers only one. However, with highly motivated student staff and volunteers, we have made incredible progress, so we anticipate continued support from the administration. For example, beyond the impending office restructure, in Fall, 2022, the UNF president, Dr. Moez Limayem, signed the President’s Pledge, donated a prize to the Osprey Vote Prize Store, funded a Vote Early Day party, supported UNF’s first Newman Foundation Fellow nomination and emailed the entire student population about engagement opportunities. We doubled Motivote participation by embedding enrollment in new student orientation, and we will continue to leverage the platform as we develop new programming. UNF Marketing and Communications chose to highlight the work of the center and specifically, the Newman Fellow, in UNF’s episode Amazon’s *The College Tour*. Student staff was selected to represent the college student perspective in a presidential debate watch party. We are in partnership with both Student Government and the Florida State College at Jacksonville to work toward an on-campus voting site. In short, civic education has become a priority for the campus community.

Landscape

The following tables provide a brief overview of the landscape of our campus. This information is based on data collected from 2023 when our total student enrollment was 16575.

Enrollment Data:

Undergraduate	Graduate	Full Time	Part Time
86.80%	13.20%	29.00%	71.00%

In-State	Out-of-State	International Students	On-Campus Residents	Commuter
91.00%	9.00%	.002%	%21	79%

Gender Demographics:

Men	Women	Non-Binary*	Transgender*
40.50%	59.50%		

Age:

18-21	22-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50+
57%	22%	9.5%	6%	3%	2%

Racial Demographics:

Asian	American Indian / Alaska Native	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	2 or More Races
5.69%	0.20%	12.33%	15.60%	0.14%	56.90%	5.25%

*These categories are not measured in the Florida State University System.

Our institution has also utilized the following data gathering tools:

- Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement
- National Survey of Student Engagement

They help to inform our institution's civic learning and democratic engagement efforts by providing context for student engagement and student satisfaction with campus life. This context allows us to tailor our civic education programming toward areas with the greatest need.

We know our campus faces following challenges internally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- Our institution's mission statement, values, and strategic plan do not mention civic learning and democratic engagement.
- The voter engagement work on our campus is very siloed within one office which is being restructured without a clear commitment to democracy education efforts.
- We do not have sustainable or consistent funding.
- Voter engagement is politicized, resulting in administrative reluctance to engage.
- We have trouble engaging student leaders for the leadership of our initiative.

We also know our campus faces the following challenges externally when it comes to get out the vote efforts and registering voters:

- Our state laws make it challenging to support student voter registration efforts.
- Our state laws restrict the way that funding can be used to support voter registration efforts among certain populations.

With that said, we know our campus has the following strengths when we approach our voter engagement work:

- We have someone whose job responsibility is to foster civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- We have a coalition of people positioned to implement civic learning and democratic engagement on campus.
- We have processes in place for registering large percentages of our students.
- We have ways in which we communicate voting information to our students.
- We use the resources readily available to develop and implement civic learning and democratic engagement on our campus.
- Voter engagement efforts on campus are nonpartisan.
- We have a working relationship with our local election office.
- We have working relationships with community partners who are invested in civic learning and democratic engagement.

With this in mind, we have set the three goals that we would like to achieve over the next academic year:

- Restore a polling place to campus, a project supported by UNF's Newman Civic Fellow;
- Establish a student-centered physical space for civic engagement work;
- Add civic engagement to the mission statement and/or strategic plan.

We have also set three goals that we would like to achieve over the next five years:

- Grow the staff dedicated to civic engagement;
- Partner with other local colleges and universities to promote voting among students;
- Engage a wider range of student affinity groups in a coalition in a variety of roles

Strategy

Below, we have outlined a strategy describing how we will bring this vision to life in the coming months and years.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** in the **short term** (within the next year):

- Grow student engagement in Motivote, branded as Osprey Vote;
- Continue to promote voter registration in new student orientation;
- Continue to sponsor community partners the League of Women Voters and National Organization of Women to promote voter registration at Market Days, UNF's weekly open-air event.
- Offer 70 courses that address civic engagement spread across the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Education and Human Services, Brooks College of Health, and Coggin College of Business.
- Continue to seek a more active role in the Students Learn Student Vote Coalition;
- Participate in a seat on the Vote Early Day Advisory Committee
- Continue UNF's membership with Campus Compact, including proposing a conference session which was accepted, and successfully nominating a GivePulse Ambassador;
- Enlist Spinnaker Media to promote Osprey Vote in an article and social media posts;
- Continue to offer the Ask Every Student Canvas module to faculty for distribution to students;
- Recruit candidates for a new Federal Work Study position dedicated to supporting civic education;
- Provide basic education around what it means to be civically engaged beyond just voting;
- Produce social media content introducing basic terms and examples
- Host tabling events where students can ask questions and receive information about voting
- Partner with additional student organizations and additional community agencies to host and promote events;
- Maintain a democratic engagement header/link on the My Wings landing page for students;
- Continue to ask the president to commit to the ALL IN Presidents' Commitment;
- Enlist the support of the President's Office, demonstrated by an email to all students, a donation to the Osprey Vote prize store, and monetary support for an event;
- Create a new voting information website reflecting the new office and staff as well as new programming;
- Participate in NSLVE with the aim of establishing baseline information;
- Recommend a student to the university president for nomination for the Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellows program for the next cycle;
- Host multiple events for Civic Holidays;
- Attend virtual trainings and webinars to improve our voter education/registration events;
- Maintain Osprey Vote on the myWings Student Portal Landing Page;
- Increased participation in the Unify Challenge College Bowl by more than 200% by enlisting faculty; continue participation.

These are tactics that we **plan to do** in the **short term**:

- Publicize on and off-campus volunteer opportunities for students interested in working for a political campaign (partisan + non-partisan);

- Establish a baseline of voter data utilizing NSLVE, which UNF has recently joined, so that we can track civic participation;
- Identify additional student organizations and other agencies already on campus that can help us increase our outreach.
- Ask faculty to act as ambassadors for Motivote and Unify Challenge College Bowl.

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **short term**

- Hold open discussions about issues and how voting is connected to them, using events such as “Popcorn and Politics,” especially prior to elections;
- Offer additional coursework that addresses civic literacy and engagement;
- Partner with the Office of Public Policy Events;
- Leverage new relationships within our new unit to increase student leader involvement.

These are tactics that we **are already doing** for the **long term** (beyond the next year):

- Increasing opportunities in and out of the classroom to engage students in civil discourse and dialogue, partnering with UNF’s new Office of Public Policy Events.
- Working toward restoring the polling place to campus.
- Strengthening our relationship with the Jacksonville Supervisor of Elections.
- Building relationships with other Jacksonville colleges and universities to create a voter education coalition.

These are tactics that we **want to do** in the **long term**:

- Develop a year-round calendar for civic education with tie-ins to major campus initiatives (e.g., Homecoming, Orientation) and recognition months (e.g., Black History Month, Women’s History Month);
- Increase opportunities in and out of the classroom to engage students in civil discourse and dialogue, partnering with community agencies.

These are tactics that we **hope to do** in the **long term**:

- Publicize on and off-campus volunteer opportunities for students interested in working for a political campaign (partisan + non-partisan);
- Increase offerings of coursework that addresses civic education;
- Help alumni students register to vote once they relocate;
- Add statements regarding civic education to the University mission and value statements.
- Create a physical space on campus for civic education;
- Invite elected representatives/officials to engage in nonpartisan conversations about local, statewide, and national issues
- Socialize voting by hosting on-campus events during election season where students can meet up, socialize, then walk/shuttle to the polls together to vote
- Create a space where students can gather and have open discussions to broaden perspectives.

National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)

We are new participants in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), yet to receive our first report and establish a baseline. However, we intend to use NSLVE data to guide revisions and development of our Action Plan and the mission, goals and budget of the newly created Office of Service Learning and Civic Engagement.

Of utmost concern is our success in engaging a diverse demographic of students. We plan to utilize both NSLVE reports and engagement data from Osprey Vote to determine how our future programming should be targeted to reach the widest number of students as is possible under Florida law, which limits the nature of goal development and programming.

Reporting & Evaluation

This Action Plan will be shared internally and externally. Internally, this plan will be shared through email to members of our campus coalition and campus administration, including the President and Provost. It will be available to students through campus media, and faculty and staff can access it through internal newsletters, emails, etc. This Action Plan is shared on the University of North Florida website.

The Civic Education Action Plan Steering Committee will collect feedback on this plan through multiple avenues. Post-election and post-event surveys will continue to be sent to faculty and students. Frequent regrouping sessions with the campus committee will also continue to allow opportunities to debrief and reflect. Additionally, components of the collected feedback will be integrated into individual campus efforts.

We plan to evaluate our success in several ways. First, we plan to review our NSLVE data and identify opportunities for increased engagement year after year. We will also seek feedback throughout the action planning process by consulting with individuals outside our action planning committee. Lastly, success will be evaluated by revisiting our past goals, identifying which goals were achieved and not, and adjusting our short and long-term goals accordingly. We will also continue to work for an on-campus polling place in response to the survey's findings of student need for convenience.