

Voter Friendly Campus

Final Report

SUNY Buffalo State College
December 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 civic, urban-engaged institution. In the last two decades, our campus has seen significant 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 identified specific goals for civic learning and democratic engagement.

For fall 2020, our top three goals were:

- 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%.

In Spring 2020, SUNY Buffalo State's Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan was developed by a team of staff and students who reviewed current activities and identified gaps. The action plan sought to create a roadmap for the college to expand civic engagement activities throughout our students' academic and co-curricular experiences. The action plan also aimed to deepen institutionalization efforts of civic engagement. In collaboration with campus and community partners, the college's action plan began being implemented in summer 2020 and will continue until August 2025, with adjustments as needed.

Strategies for action outlined in the plan were carried out and evaluated in this final report in collaboration with individuals and campus offices.

Overview

As an institution, we saw the strategies and activities of our Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan coalesce into six themes for 2020-2025. Over the long term, the institution seeks to educate and mobilize student voters, knowing that voting at a young age is habit-forming and an attribute 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.

As there are many Buffalo State students who are immigrants, refugees, and undocumented, a long-term goal of the institution's Voter Friendly Campus initiative is to ensure that all students, regardless of citizenship status, are able to learn how they can amplify their voice and engage in civic learning 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 following six themes were woven into the specific goals for Fall 2020 action plan activity efforts:

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.

Fall 2020 Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan Goals

Goal #1: By September 29, 2020, increase the number of students registered to vote by 2% (71% → 73%), measured by NLSVE data in Spring 2021.

The exact results of Goal #1 will be known when the NSLVE data are shared with the campus in Spring 2021; however, our campus did make significant efforts to increase the number of students registered to vote, especially since 75% of classes were remote/online in Fall 2020. Those efforts are outlined in the "Analysis of Work" section.

Goal #2: By November 3, 2020, expand programmatic opportunities so that students can build civic skills, measured by comparing fall 2020 programs to 2019-2020 academic year programs.

Goal #2 had outstanding results. Compared to civic learning and democratic engagement programs hosted in 2019-2020, Fall 2020 saw an increase in programs offered from five to 19 (280%). Efforts are outlined in the "Analysis of Work" section.

Goal #3: By November 3, 2020, increase the voting rate of Buffalo State students from 42% to 50%, measured by data from NSLVE in Spring 2021.

To ascertain if Goal #3 was achieved, the campus awaits data shared in the NSLVE reports in Spring 2021. Again, significant efforts were undertaken in this area to increase the voting rate of students who were living across the state, as 75% of classes were remote/online in Fall 2020. Efforts are outlined in the "Analysis of Work" section.

Analysis of Work

At this time, the institution seeks to learn how many students were registered, educated, and mobilized for the 2020 election. In utilizing the tools and collection methods described in the following tables, Buffalo State will know if it is making progress toward achieving these goals. With this evaluation of fall 2020 efforts, the Voter Friendly Campus initiative will be able to improve civic and democratic engagement efforts on the campus and achieve the long-term goals identified on the Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan in May 2020.

Continuous evaluation and process improvement will allow the Voter Friendly Campus initiative to adjust short- and long-term goals to embed civic learning and democratic engagement in the curricular and co-curricular activities across college departments. Our efforts in Fall 2020 were measured using a baseline from 2019-2020 activities and will be compared to voting rates in the 2018 and 2016 elections, taken from NSLVE data.

Voter Registration

245 students were registered during seven in-person voter registration drives hosted by Buffalo State's New York Public Research Interest Group (NYPIRG) chapter. These voter registration drives were held outside in the heavily trafficked plaza. Since there was a significant decline in the number of students physically on campus this semester due to the pandemic, this number is viewed as a success, as the decline was anticipated. (In 2019-2020 AY, NYPIRG voter registration drives resulted in 1,260 students being registered to vote in 2019-2020 AY.)

Civic and Community Engagement created a "voter station" inside its main office where students could stop in to pick up, complete, and drop off voter registration forms, all while following health and safety protocols outlined by the campus. Through this effort an additional 20 students were registered.

Total voter registration in Fall 2020: 265 students

| Intended Outcome | Strategies (2020-2025) | When | Effort | Effort Coordinated By | Effort Result |
|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| 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. | Summer 2020 | Include voter registration and absentee ballot information in Civic and Community Engagement presentation. | Student Leadership and Engagement (SLE) Civic and Community Engagement (CCE) | 1,639 first-year students 598 transfer students |
| | Create programming/opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction during National Voter Registration Day efforts. | September 15- October 9 | Seven in-person voter registration drives | New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) | 245 registered |
| | Identify, train, and promote offices/individuals where students can register to vote. Offer further trainings as necessary (e.g., 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. | Fall 2020 and continuous | Drop-in “voter station” created | CCE | 20 registered |
| Promote voter registration. | Provide information for students to determine where (location/address) it is best for them to be registered to vote (i.e. residence hall address vs. home address). | Summer 2020 | Two virtual voting workshops | CCE | 10 attendees |
| | | | Create four videos to guide students through registering process. | CCE | 227 views |
| | | | Resources on website | CCE | 881 unique views July 2020- November 2020. (compared to 242 unique views January-April 2020) |
| | Promote voter registration and share with students the process on multiple mediums (i.e. in-person NYPIRG class visits, Blackboard announcements, <i>Daily Bulletin</i> posts, social media posts). | Fall 2020 and continuous | Five <i>Daily Bulletin</i> posts | CCE | Faculty/staff shared with students |
| | | | Social media campaign June-November 2020 re. voter registration, education, and mobilization on @buffalostatecce Instagram account | CCE | Of 33 posts: - 6,934 users reached; -33 saves; - 92 shares. |
| Send an email to all students re. voter registration information and process. | September 2020 | Email campaign with voter registration information | CCE Dean of Students | Email sent to 8,339 enrolled students. | |

Voter Education

The area in which the most significant growth was witnessed during the implementation of the Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan was in voter education. This is also the area the workgroup felt we needed to make more concerted efforts, as previous registration efforts had yielded positive numbers, but students we spoke with said they felt stalled about what to do after they registered.

Across the campus, in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, students were targeted for 19 different virtual program opportunities (an increase of 280% from 2019-2020 civic learning and democratic engagement programs), including programs that addressed what to do after the election season ended.

Significant efforts were made on the Civic and Community Engagement's social media platforms (specifically, Instagram and YouTube). With the assistance of an intern over the summer, six short (two minute-nine minute) videos were created and closed-captioned for IGTV (Instagram) and YouTube to educate student voters. This digital strategy included significant efforts to educate students through a social media campaign on Instagram, at a rate of 2-4 per week, from August – November. This campaign saw an increase in civic learning and democratic engagement posts on Instagram from nine in 2019-2020 to 40 from August to November 2020 (an increase of 355%).

Due to the campus coalescing around voter education during an election year and the assistance of the summer intern, the Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan saw implementation of measures within this pillar beyond our anticipated goals for Fall 2020.

Details of voter education-focused programs/events can be viewed on in the Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) [Google Drive folder](#).

| Intended Outcome | Strategies (2020-2025) | When | Effort | Effort Coordinated By | Effort Result |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| Voter Education | | | | | |
| Create and promote accessible and digital resources for voter education. | Link websites on CCE webpage so students can search for information about candidates, polling location, early voting, advocacy, etc. | Fall 2020 | Redesign of website pages for digital tools and resources | CCE | 881 unique views July 2020-November 2020. (compared to 242 unique views January -April 2020) |
| | | | Door hangers in residence hall rooms | Open Buffalo | Distributed to 1,000 residence hall rooms |
| | Create, upload, and promote 5-10-minute videos about parts of the voting process (i.e. registration, absentee ballot, looking up candidate information, finding your polling location, early voting). | Spring 2021 | Hosted 8 virtual voter workshops. | CCE | 30 attended |
| | | | Created 6 digital videos. | CCE | 384 views |
| | | | Weekly virtual office hours twice a week | NYPIRG | - |
| | | | One Love 10 Signs workshop | Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator | - |
| | Educate on issues and candidates. | Host issue forum or educate re. ballot measures and state-wide issues. | Fall 2021 | Restorative Justice Circle | Student Conduct and Community Standards |
| For Freedoms | | | | Student Leadership and Engagement (SLE) | 88 participants |
| Bengal Stripes Leadership Program | | | | SLE | 67 students |
| Election Debrief and Self Care During a Stressful Time | | | | Counseling Center | - |
| Post-Election Community Circle | | | | Student Conduct and Community Standards | - |
| Election Results Watch Party and Roundtable | | | | Dean of Students | - |
| Breaking Barriers: Understanding Your Ballot | | | | NYPIRG | Students were educated on the ongoing struggle for universal suffrage and against voter suppression. |
| Conversations with 'Hef' | | | | Dean of Students | - |
| Buffalo State Talks Freedom of Speech, Civil Discourse, and Civil Disobedience | | | | Political Science | - |
| Constitution Day | | | | SUNY | 300 across SUNY |
| Voting, Civil Rights, and Racial Justice | Bengals Dare to Care, Civic and Community Engagement, Open Buffalo | 80 during virtual session; 455 views of recording | | | |

Voter Turnout/Voter Mobilization

To encourage student turnout to vote, we continued with a multi-pronged approach to communication. The Civic and Community Engagement Office led with a significant social media campaign that focused heavily on voter education and voter turnout, mostly supplying tools and resources to ensure students felt confident going to the polls. This included sharing the polling location look-up tool available to all New York State registered voters, text reminder tool available through Vote.org, and information about early voting and absentee ballot opportunities and procedures.

As Election Day approached, social media campaign efforts transitioned from education to turnout – how to find an early voting location, why vote early, how to make a voting plan, how to protect yourself at the polls during Covid-19, etc. We also shared stories of students and staff who voted early or who voted on Election Day to further encourage students to turn out at the polls. One student recording a video sharing her voting plan for Election Day was released on Civic and Community Engagement’s Instagram and Facebook accounts, garnering 413 views.

| Intended Outcome | Strategies (2020-2025) | When | Effort | Effort Coordinated By | Effort Result |
|---|---|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Voter Turnout/Voter Mobilization | | | | | |
| Facilitate voter mobilization efforts. | Provide opportunities for students to learn how to apply for and submit an absentee ballot, vote early, and vote on Election Day. | Fall 2020 and continuous | Election Day Call-In Assistance Line all day | NYPIRG | - |
| | | | Early Voting Office Hours every day during Early Voting Period - Oct. 26 through Nov. 1 | NYPIRG | - |
| | | | Phone and text blast to get out the vote. | NYPIRG | Reached over 3,000 students. |
| | | | Analyze posts on Election Day and during Early Voting Period on Instagram made by campus constituents as a demonstration of a voter mobilization culture on campus. | Academic Affairs/ Student Affairs | 4 athletic teams; 6 campus offices; twelve student organizations; 9 fraternities/ sororities |
| | | | Bengals Voting Project – sharing student and faculty/staff stories of voting experiences on social media | CCE | 1,000 users reached |
| | | | Election Day virtual office hours to support students going to vote | Dean of Students | - |
| | | | Virtual Voting Workshops | CCE | 30 attendees |

Student Voting Rights

Since college students are a group identified by many voter rights organizations to be vulnerable, we took care to reinforce the message to our students that their voice matters. Civic and Community Engagement highlighted their voting power as a generation block during the Virtual Voting Workshops facilitated by a Buffalo State undergraduate student. The CCE also created a video that spoke to 6 tips for first-time voters, recognizing that the majority of our target audience were first-time voters. Resources to support voters when they arrived at the polls were shared daily on Instagram posts and in Instagram Stories, such as the National Voter Hotline, NYPIRG's college student voter hotline, and Dean of Students' Election Day office hours.

NYPIRG and the dean of students hosted various drop-in hours for students to gain support when preparing to vote and when they left for the polls. Student Conduct and Community Standards and NYPIRG discussed voter suppression efforts taking place across the country, to make students aware of the barriers and situations they might encounter when arriving at the polls and provided tools and resources to ensure that they were able to cast their vote. Civic and Community Engagement featured opportunities through the Virtual Voting workshops, Bengals Dare to Care's Voting, Civil Rights, and Racial Justice workshop, and on social media, to encourage students to make a plan for voting – arming them with the tools to ensure their access to vote.

The college continues its pursuit of a polling location to be established on our campus. More details of these efforts are outlined in the “Barriers” section. Our students who are registered using their campus address are fortunate however, as the polling location is less than one block away, making it easy to find and visit on Election Day. Civic and Community Engagement also highlighted the ten Buffalo locations for Early Voting in the city, of which 2 locations were within a 15-minute walk from the campus and on a bus line that departed from the campus.

Full Voter Participation

While our updated NSLVE data will provide a full picture of this analysis, we believe that our campus still has work to do to achieve full voter participation. An analysis of our NSLVE data indicates that, historically, about 42% of our students are mobilized and turn out to vote in mid-term and presidential elections. Significant efforts to infiltrate the campus culture and remove registration, education, and mobilization barriers will need to be completed before the SUNY Buffalo State campus has full voter participation.

Successes

SUNY Buffalo State's top successes for implementing civic learning and democratic engagement in 2020 include:

- increased communication;
- increased efforts to educate student voters;
- evidence of campus culture that strives to support student voting efforts.

Communication

Communication increased to all campus stakeholders in Fall 2020 related to voter registration, education, and mobilization (turnout). To faculty/staff, for 11 weeks of the fall semester, a total of 21 posts were shared with them, encouraging them to relay the voting-related message to students in their classes or networks. In 2019-2020 academic year, only one communication was made to faculty/staff related to these topics.

Social media campaigns featuring messages for voter registration, education, and mobilization increased over 500% from 2019-2020, including the addition of 12 digital video/audio resources. In total, this campaign reached over 6,000 accounts and resulted in nearly 100 shares by students and other campus offices that follow Civic and Community Engagement's Instagram account.

Educating Voters

While Buffalo State has for many years educated its students on the importance of being civically and community-engaged active citizens, in 2020, efforts were made by multiple offices, including those not within the original workgroup, to educate student voters. In total, 19 voter education program/events were held, compared to five in 2019-2020. These programs/events covered issues of voter suppression, methods to cast a vote (absentee ballot, early voting, and Election Day voting), how to learn what candidates are on a student's ballot, and conversations about the relationship between racial justice and voting.

Campus Culture

Despite the physical distancing that took place on our campus and in our community since March 2020, there were numerous demonstrations of the ways in which creating a voter-friendly campus is a significant goal of multiple offices, faculty/staff, and students. We see this evidenced by the number of offices that developed and facilitated various voter education and turnout programs throughout the Fall 2020 semester that had not previously picked up the torch of talking about voting or civic learning and democratic engagement with students in previous years. It is also evidenced by the significant "turnout" and mobilization efforts made by campus offices, athletic teams, student organizations, and fraternity/sororities to encourage their members and social media followers to vote during the Early Voting period or on Election Day. In total, 31 different accounts shared messages of voter mobilization efforts during this period. In examining these Instagram accounts' history, this level of voter mobilization messaging was not shared in 2016 or 2018.

Civic learning and democratic engagement have been manifested in the curriculum at SUNY Buffalo State through service-learning pedagogy since 2003. It now appears that the significant efforts to build community-engaged co-curricular efforts and the partnerships between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs have found common ground in civic learning and democratic engagement activities and messaging.

Sharing the Final Report

The Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan and Final Report will be available and shared with the campus and larger community. The final report will be forwarded to the provost and president of the SUNY Buffalo State, who have been kept up-to-date since the action plan's formation in Spring 2020.

A digital copy of the final report will live on the Civic and Community Engagement Office's website under the [initiatives](#) section. The NSLVE data that helped to inform the goals of the action plan and are discussed in this final report will also be shared on this website once it is received. In addition, the Voter Friendly Campus Final Report will also be submitted as part of the Civic and Community Engagement's annual report and Civic Action Plan biennial report. 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.

Barriers

Our Voter Friendly Campus Action Plan distilled our activities into six overarching themes:

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.

Taken in full view, our institution was able to achieve these themes through the programs, activities, and goals discussed above in "Analysis of Work". Despite the barriers outlined below, we were able to create a robust digital campaign and virtual activities to educate students about the processes and implications of engagement and non-engagement in civic learning and democratic engagement. Support for students who wanted to engage in civic activities and be educated active citizens was provided in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement and conversations were visible in formal programming and informal social media posts distributed by campus departments, student organizations, and athletic teams.

A full evaluation of the college's efforts to register and mobilize student voters will be possible with NSLVE data reports in Spring 2021. However, significant efforts to increase these data points, despite the barriers outlined below, were taken by internal and external partners.

Fall 2020 Barriers

Specifically, in Fall 2020, we faced the following barriers when implementing our goals for civic learning and democratic engagement work:

- significant decrease in physical presence of students on campus;

- reimagining ways to connect and inform students;
- polling location effort stalled.

Barrier 1: Significant Decrease in Physical Presence of Students on Campus

Due to the pandemic, we anticipated that there would be a decrease in our ability to register students to vote, as part of our main goals of Fall 2020. In fact, in 2019-2020, NYPIRG was able to register over 1,200 students to vote through in-person tabling events. In Fall 2020, the number of students who were registered using in-person processes on the campus (NYPIRG tabling and CCE office registrations) resulted in a decrease of about 75%. This is due to health and safety protocols moving upwards of 75% classes to remote/online instruction in the fall semester, thus limiting the number of students physically coming to campus. However, as described below, efforts to register and communicate with students were shifted to utilize platforms and strategies that would be more effective in a remote environment. While the measurements to compare new strategies to more traditional ones are difficult to compare in equal measure, the time invested into these efforts have proved impactful by the data that are available.

Barrier 2: Reimagining Ways to Connect and Inform Students

Tied to Barrier 1, with significant numbers of students learning remotely in Fall 2020, the traditional ways of informing students, such as flyers, tabling, chalking, and other campus signs, were minimized. Significant efforts had to be made to convert messages across multiple digital platforms, such as social media, email, video, and digital announcements, without overwhelming or tiring the student audience.

Barrier 3: Polling Location Effort Stalled

The college has sought to take on the role of polling site. While the proposal to serve as a polling location was supported by multiple campus stakeholders, including President Conway-Turner, 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 being a civic, urban-engaged institution. The effort to move the polling location will continue into 2021 and beyond, and we are hopeful that the request will be approved in advance of the next general election.

Barriers Beyond 2020

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 significant budget deficit that is growing due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The college administration has confirmed the importance of Buffalo State's civic engagement efforts as a priority moving forward, as it is key to the college's mission and long-term vision. Budget cuts to the Civic and Community Engagement Office may occur, but the college administration has assured the Director that these will be minimized to every extent possible. Although funding will not be increased, continued efforts to implement the Voter Friendly

Campus Action Plan beyond 2020 will be maintained. With an organic coalition of interested parties who see themselves interested in this type of coalition and programmatic offers to students, the work can and will continue even in the face of budget shortfalls.

Beyond 2020

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. 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.

A long-term goal of the institution's Voter Friendly Campus coalition is to ensure that all students, regardless of citizenship status, are able to learn how they can amplify their voices 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 coalition.
- 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 residence halls 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.

A recent donation to the CCE is resulting in the development of a Social Justice Faculty Externship program, which will also add to the opportunities to expand civic engagement on campus. The Social Justice Faculty Externship program will engage faculty members in learning opportunities with community organizations that provide leadership in addressing issues of social justice and subsequently working to extend that learning to students through curricular change. Faculty will utilize their skills and background to assist the community organization with priority projects while also ensuring students benefit by connecting students to the work of the organization, which may include civic engagement, voter engagement, service-learning, or other community-engagement opportunities.

As the college's civic engagement efforts deepen and additional external funding requests for this work are expanded by the Institutional Advancement Office at Buffalo State. 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.

Beyond 2020, partnerships with NYPIRG, Open Buffalo, and Student Leadership and Engagement will continue through programs such as National Voter Registration Day, social justice and advocacy efforts, and the [Bengal Stripes Leadership Program's Purple Stripe and Civic Track workshops](#). Civic and Community Engagement will continue to host a Civic Engagement Week and explore opportunities to connect civic learning and democratic engagement with the Community Academic Center and West Side Promise Neighborhood.

The coalition has identified that students are a significant source of energy and capacity and opportunities for students to do direct work on the campus will be continued, based on the significant success of 3 interns since January 2020. The coalition will also seek to expand beyond its current confines and work with other campus staff and faculty who have an interest in or connection to students to carry this work forward on the campus.

NSLVE Data

When you receive your campuses' NSLVE report, what plans are in place with your coalition to evaluate this data and to inform future initiatives? How will you use information about participation based on demographic characteristics such as gender, race, and ethnicity to inform future efforts?

Once the NSLVE data have been shared with the campus, our coalition leader, the Civic and Community Engagement Office, plans to use this to open the door to invite other campus stakeholders to the coalition. We see this as a way to share information about not only what efforts we observed/were informed of in 2020, but also as a way to build coalition of like-minded individuals on the campus who are interested in informing and providing future initiatives on the college.

This area of the NSLVE data in the past has been left blank. We plan to work with the reporting area of the college to ask them to report out on these demographics and share how the coalition can and will use this information to better inform our voter engagement and democratic engagement strategies. Now that the Community Academic Center is reporting to the Civic and Community Engagement Office, we would also like to focus our attention on students who are not able to vote and expand opportunities and education around civic engagement regardless of legal status.

Coalition

As the campus grappled with increased health and safety measures of the Covid-19 pandemic, our coalition's plan worked to continue with the goals as best as possible as we were all pulled in different directions. The Civic and Community Engagement Office continued to partner and communicate weekly with NYPIRG and joined informal coalition by areas within the Student Affairs division of the college to encourage and mobilize student voters.

Despite the pandemic, the campus was able to carry on with our democratic engagement work and it adopted new delivery methods to engage students and other campus members.

As a coalition, we were effective in meeting our goals and beginning efforts on the campus in a direct way that connected to voter mobilization and democratic engagement. We pivoted and adopted new technologies to educate, engage, and mobilize student voters, including hosting weekly workshops, proceeding with a long-term social media campaign, and recording how-to videos to answer questions from new voters.

It was apparent during the "election season" of the fall semester that there are many other areas of the campus that are interested in highlighting and uplifting this work on the campus, including the assistant dean of inclusion and equity, dean of students, athletics, and EOP. With this knowledge, we'd like to expand our coalition to include other areas of the campus in new and unique ways to leverage their resources, relationships with students, and trusted voices.

As the campus turns its attention to planning for the 2022 mid-term election season, we have learned many lessons in 2020 that will aid us in building coalition across the campus and being propelled forward from our momentum in 2020.

We were able to identify "who" on our campus engages in this work and where additional inroads might be made. Through conversations and other communication efforts, we learned that the following areas of the campus should be tapped as we create a plan to educate, engage, and mobilize student voters in 2022:

- Athletic teams
- United Student Government
- Student organizations
- Dean of Students
- Equity and Campus Diversity Office
- Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)
- Honors Program

As planning for Fall 2020 activities and goals progressed, we organically came into partnership with several new partners.

In early September, we partnered with the Student Conduct Office to host and provide resources for students attending their Restorative Justice Community Circle program. Their theme for the month of September was on voting and voter suppression. The Civic and Community Engagement Office compiled [resources](#) and articles about voting, voter suppression, and why voting matters.

As part of a presidential program, we partnered with Open Buffalo, a local non-profit organization committed to creating an empowered democratic society by training individuals to identify problems and create solutions in public policy and public systems. Through this partnership, we hosted a Voting, Civil

Rights, and Racial Justice workshop that was virtually attended by over 60 participants and whose recording was viewed by more than 400.

We continued our partnership with NYPIRG, as it onboarded a new program coordinator on our campus. Our partnership with this external/internal partner has developed throughout the years and it is certainly a strong partner that we will continue to leverage and work alongside. NYPIRG assisted with the National Voter Registration Day efforts of our campus, registering students safely in the campus plaza in September and hosting state-wide voter drop-in sessions and a hotline for college student voters.

Student voice was extremely critical to the success and inclusivity of the spring work group that developed the campus plan. Particularly important was the input of students who had not been active in voter education and mobilization efforts prior. 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.

Throughout the summer and fall, student interns played a significant role in compiling the information and implementing some of the strategies outlined in the action plan and final report.

Beyond 2020, we will need to recruit more students to this coalition and increase efforts to support their becoming peer-leaders in this work. The coalition has been successful in utilizing interns from the higher education student affairs administration graduate program and undergraduate business majors, but to continue to be successful we will need to organize a program or opportunity for students with knowledge and interest re. voter information and policies, social justice, community organizing, and communication.

Collaborating with Open Buffalo in Fall 2020 demonstrated the need for community organizations and other external stakeholders to be involved in our campus civic education and democratic engagement strategies, especially those that are targeting college-aged students in the community to mobilize and educate on voting rights and activities.

As the campus office designed to support and promote civic engagement activities, the Civic and Community Engagement Office will continue to lead the coalition for the campus, while engaging with internal and external stakeholders.

Members of the campus community who assisted by contributing information and activities outlined in the final report include:

- Aurora Schunk, Assistant Director, Civic and Community Engagement
- Irene Scott Nkrumah, intern, Civic and Community Engagement
- Ada Garcia-Poll, intern, Civic and Community Engagement
- Kevin Dugan, Regional Coordinator, NYPIRG
- Dia Mayberry, Program Coordinator, NYPIRG
- Janelle Brooks, Assistant Dean, Student Conduct and Community Standards
- Luke Haumesser, Associate Director, Student Leadership and Engagement