



BGSU Votes Action Plan

2022-2023

Bowling Green State University
*C. Raymond Marvin Center for
Student Leadership & Civic Engagement*

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Executive Summary

Bowling Green State University's C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement has recently undertaken BGSU Votes, a student-led initiative dedicated to increasing students' civic engagement and education at Bowling Green State University since 2012. Through a variety of on-campus partnerships with Residence Life, Undergraduate Student Government, and the Department of Political Science, as well as off-campus relationships such as the Wood County Board of Elections, Bowling Green League of Women Voters, the Andrew Goodman Foundation, Campus Vote Project, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, and the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), a strong foundation has been established that will allow BGSU Votes to increase student political engagement and education at the university during the 2022-2023 academic year and beyond. According to BGSU's NSLVE data, student voter participation for 2020 showed an increase of 11.9% at the institution since the 2016 general election. This increase allowed for BGSU to be recognized as a Silver Campus by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, with an overall voting participation rate of 67.6% in 2020 — 1.6% higher than the national institution voting average. In 2021, BGSU's commitment to institutionalizing the voting process also garnered the Voter Friendly Campus designation from Campus Vote Project. BGSU Votes is dedicated to keeping these designations, as well as continuing to increase voter engagement rates at Bowling Green State University. During the 2022-2023 academic year, the BGSU Votes Leadership Team has committed itself to maintaining high rates of student voter registration and participation, establishing the organization on campus through interactions with students both off and on-line, solidifying relationships with other student organizations (with a special focus on diversity and inclusion of BGSU's students), and educating students and faculty about the importance of voting.

Leadership

The BGSU Votes Leadership Team is led by the staff and student leaders of the C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement. Additionally, the BGSU Votes team has recruited volunteers in order to reach more students on campus, as well as to maintain a plan for leadership succession.

This leadership team is anticipating a change at the end of Spring 2023, with one of the two student leaders and the graduate assistant graduating from their programs at BGSU. In preparation for this, the team will compile a variety of transitional documents, such as key contacts, important event information, social media and communication passwords, access to the OneDrive, and the general structure of the organization. In order to maintain this organization through these transitions, BGSU Votes and the Marvin Center try and hire new leaders through an application and interview process prior to the older staff's leave, so that there may also be direct training. Similarly, any supporting staff that transitions is left with information about the organization, and BGSU Votes will reach out to them hoping to form a connection with the new member(s).

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Coalition & Commitment

The BGSU Votes Coalition is a group of partners from the community and on campus. Coalition members keep in regular contact with the leadership team as well as attend meetings to assess progress and develop new strategies to complete the goals of the coalition. With the help of these coalition members, the BGSU Votes team hopes to make full student political participation a priority at the University. As of the 2022-2023 academic year, Bowling Green State University has also joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Presidents' Commitment to achieve 100% student voter registration. The university has communicated this to students in a myriad of ways, including work through BGSU Votes, direct vocalized support from President Rodney Rodgers, and BGSU's "Falcon Media," which includes print, web, and other modes of publication.

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Landscape Analysis

Bowling Green State University is comprised of just over 15,000 undergraduate students, with only about 2.4% of those students being international (according to BGSU's Office of Institutional Research). Additionally, about 16.2% of these students are minority students, and 57.4% are female, both groups which have historically been denied access and positions within the United States' governmental systems. BGSU Votes aims to emphasize the importance of every vote, especially those who have been historically barred. With most students at BGSU eligible to vote in Ohio or another state, it is of the utmost importance that they have access to information about democracy and ways to be involved civically. BGSU has emphasized the importance of service learning and community engagement and leadership through many different programs, including The C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement, which supports volunteer opportunities, leadership certificates, and civic engagement programs such as BGSU Votes.

BGSU has participated in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) by Tufts University since 2012, which provides a report including information about voter participation and registration at the university. The 2020 election report demonstrated that BGSU has made substantial improvement in political participation, with the voter turnout rate in the 2020 General Election increasing by 11.9% compared to the 2016 general election. BGSU also passed the voter turnout rate by all institutions by 1.6%, a substantial achievement. This assessment data also unfortunately demonstrates a consistent lack of voter turnout among STEM and business students at BGSU, which we hope to address over time by implementing more strategies to engage these students.

BGSU Votes is currently in the process of incorporating a new challenge to unify students of all political parties. We will begin collaborating with Unify America to incorporate the Unify Challenge for our students to ensure that all ideas and thoughts are being heard. We would like to

offer this challenge to professors to allow their students to participate, along with other students in the Marvin Center. Additionally, there are several areas where democratic engagement is incorporated into extracurriculars. BGSU has a wide variety of student organizations dedicated to advancing social justice initiatives and to provide support to different identity groups. One of BGSU Votes' goals is to improve the collaborative relationship with these identity-based and advocate groups and organizations in order to help support marginalized communities on campus and help to bolster the voices of passionate students. The Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement also incorporates civic engagement into their leadership development programs open to all students.

There have historically been barriers to voting access across the United States and at BGSU. However, the NSLVE data shows that absentee voting, or voting by mail, increased by 10% since the 2016 general election. This is valuable information for BGSU Votes and shows that our students are interested in voting by mail and may need more information on it. We will also be sure to have an increased focus on providing students with request forms and means to vote by mail. Our goal is to ensure that BGSU students know of their voting options for all future elections.

Lastly, BGSU is well-positioned to increase democratic participation thanks to the wide variety of resources from our national partners. Both funding and educational resources have been instrumental in growing the BGSU Votes team and making BGSU a more civically engaged campus.

COVID-19 Impact

Like many institutions, COVID-19 has affected our campus and our team's plans. Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, our team has been relegated to reacting to the world around us rather than being proactive. Our goal is to continue using what we have learned from the pandemic in future events and how we reach our students. We will continue to utilize social media, campus updates, and emails to reach students and get information to campus about future elections, as these modes of communication showed great efficacy throughout the pandemic and continue to prove very useful.

Although BGSU is back to 100% in-person capacity, our leadership team feels that it is necessary to keep this online presence to ensure that we are reaching the highest number of students as possible, and to be prepared in the case that our university is shut down again due to COVID-19 or other extenuating circumstances.

Overall Objective

Create a positive climate for political engagement and civic learning at BGSU.

Areas of Focus

1. Voter registration
2. Voter education and skill development
3. Get out the vote
4. Removing barriers to voting
5. Civic engagement and political participation
6. Reaching more diverse students

Long-term Goals (3-5 years)

1. Continue to grow democratic and political engagement as a priority on campus by inviting more faculty, staff, students, and community members to lead and be a part of this work.
2. Continue to get into classrooms to give presentations and inform students about the importance of voting.
3. Build stronger collaborations and relationships with advocate, identity-based, and underrepresented groups and organizations on campus and increase diversity of both our leadership team and volunteer base.
4. Position BGSU as a leader and resource for voter engagement work regionally and nationally.
5. Remove voting barriers by providing education about how to get off-campus students' proof of address, revisiting conversations about allowing rides to the polls, and ensuring that we are using all mediums to provide information to students, faculty, staff, and our community.
6. Establish the Unify Challenge on our campus as a regular part of BGSU Votes, the Marvin Center, and classroom experience.

Goals and Strategies for 2022-2023

The following are the specific goals we hope to accomplish with the initiatives outlined in more detail below:

1. Voter Participation
 - a. 50% voter participation in 2022 midterm election
 - i. Our voter participation rate for the 2018 midterm election was 35%
 - b. Maintain 75% voter registration, but aim for 85% voter registration rate
 - i. Our voter registration rate for the 2018 midterm election was 75.8%, and tends to be closer to 85% during presidential election years
 - c. Increase outreach and participation for students, especially STEM students
 - i. Data from NSLVE on the 2018 midterm election shows only 3 out of 27 fields of study met or surpassed a 50% voting rate, and many STEM fields did not even meet 30%

2. Classroom & Community Outreach
 - a. Present to at least 500 people through classrooms or organizations over the course of the 2022-2023 year
 - b. Engage with over 2,000 people through presentations, voter registration efforts, orientations, and events over the course of the 2022-2023 year
 - c. Begin communications with department heads to make civic engagement a more integrated learning outcome for students in all fields of study
3. Social Media
 - a. Increase Instagram followers to 600
 - b. Ensure that media posts are accessible and easy to understand for students who may not have experience with civic engagement or the voting process
4. Volunteers
 - a. Continue growing our volunteer base by reaching out to service-based organizations and groups such as the Thompson Family Scholarship and Greek Life
 - b. Reach 200 total volunteer hours during the 2022-2023 year
 - c. Have a total of 70 of individual volunteers
5. Leadership
 - a. Develop plan for succession of leadership within the BGSU Votes team by creating materials and training for new student leaders
 - b. Solidify structure and leadership roles on the BGSU Votes team
 - c. Work towards a more diverse leadership team
6. Communications
 - a. Begin to utilize Andrew Goodman Foundation texting platform once again and create a texting schedule
 - b. Begin sending out monthly emails and campus updates to students as reminders for deadlines and election information
 - c. Updating BGSU Votes website to ensure all information is up-to-date and accurate
7. Faculty Engagement
 - a. Create running list of all current BGSU teaching faculty in order to more efficiently get into classrooms to present on civic engagement and voting topics
 - b. Send out Canvas portal for voting and elections for professors to use in their classes
 - c. Present to faculty, especially STEM and business faculty, to explain the importance of students voting
8. Coalitions and Collaborations
 - a. Collaborate and work more closely with diverse student leaders and student organizations
 - b. Attend more national partner events and advertise events to campus

NSLVE Data (2020)

Tufts University provided BGSU with student voting rate data from their National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement.

Institutional Voting Rate

Bowling Green State University's voting rate for the 2020 General Election was 67.6%

1. The institutional average for this same election nationwide was 66%, putting BGSU 1.6% above the national average.
2. This is also up 11.9% from BGSU's voting rate for the 2016 General Election (55.7%)

Age Groups

	<u>Enrolled</u>	<u>Voted</u>	<u>% Rate</u>
18-21	11,104	7,189	65
22-24	2,937	1,955	67
25-29	1,291	794	62
30-39	1,103	710	64
40-49	457	341	75
50+	183	160	87

Fields of Study

<u>Fields</u>	<u>Enrolled</u>	<u>Voted</u>	<u>% Rate</u>
Architecture	287	159	55
Diversity Studies	114	80	70
Bio. Sciences	845	547	65
Business, Mgmt., Mktg.	2,009	1,270	63
Communication and Journalism	391	293	75
Communication Tech.	226	166	73
Computer/Information Services	111	76	68
Education	3,598	2,510	70
Engineering and Engineering Tech.	1,116	644	58

English Language and Literature	509	336	66
Family and Consumer/ Human Sciences	221	138	62
Foreign Language and Literature	57	46	81
Health Professions	1,785	1,163	65
History	105	80	76

Protection Services (Law, Fire, Etc.)	539	344	64
Liberal Arts/Sciences, Humanities	909	552	61
Mathematics and Statistics	240	110	46
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	217	150	69
Natural Resources and Conservation	131	107	82
Parks, Rec., Leisure, and Fitness Studies	484	291	60
Philosophy and Religion Studies	49	31	63
Physical Sciences	410	249	61
Psychology	638	402	63
Public Admin. and Social Services	317	222	70
Social Sciences	331	229	69
Visual and Performing Arts	1,047	712	68
Unknown	30	18	60

Initiatives for 2022-2023

To make improvements in our focus areas and to help achieve our various long and short-term goals, the BGSU Votes Coalition will continue the following initiatives:

Summer 2022

University Orientation

Description: Interact with new students and their guests during university orientation, which takes place throughout the summer. Educate families about voting procedures, options available to students, and upcoming issues and elections.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, civic engagement, voter education

Ohio Campus Compact

Description: Develop a presentation about BGSU Votes and our voter participation efforts throughout the pandemic to present at the Ohio Campus Compact alongside other voter engagement organizations or institutions.

Coalition Members: Ohio Campus Compact

Focus Area(s): Voter education, civic engagement

New Student Move-In

Description: Provide a one-sheet resource to all students moving in about BGSU Votes, how to register to vote, and who to contact with any questions. Also providing a space for students to come and register to vote in person or ask questions in person while they are getting settled at BGSU. Ensure that new students are aware of our presence on campus.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, voter education, civic engagement

Student Leader Retreat

Description: Create a resource for student leaders describing what resources BGSU Votes provides for them. Go over what BGSU Votes is and does, what their roles will be for the academic year, and go over any concerns they may have.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter education, skill development

BGSU Votes Website Updates

Description: Update voter information and hyperlinks to ensure that the BGSU Votes website (www.bgsu.edu/bgsuvotes) serves as a hub for BGSU student voter information. Add new resources including:

- Ballot information for Bowling Green residents for 2022 midterm election

- Highlights of political engagement on campus and upcoming events/opportunities
- List of potential ways to increase understanding of political engagement
- BGSUServes, the new mode of tracking and registering volunteers

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter education, skill development

Fall 2022

Campus Fest & Expand Your Horizons Fair

Description: Have a BGSU Votes table during these events, which typically attract over 5,000 students looking to join organizations or just to see what is going on around campus.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement

Focus Area(s): Voter registration, voter education, civic engagement

Civic Holidays

Description: Have BGSU Votes tables across campus to either register voters, educate students about voting, help them request absentee ballots, or guide them to their local board of elections to vote early during the civic holidays, which include:

- National Voter Registration Day: September 20, 2022
- National Voter Education Week: October 3-7, 2022
- Early Vote Day: October 28, 2022

National Voter Education Week will also include several events surrounding voter education including:

- The Unify Challenge
- Election information session with the Jerome Library at BGSU

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, Undergraduate Student Government, other student organizations

Focus Area(s): Voter education, voter registration, civic engagement, GOTV

Unify Challenge

Description: The Unify Challenge is a challenge hosted by Unify America to facilitate an online video conversation between people who vote differently than each other to have a guided discussion about certain topics. This helps students better understand each other and where people who are different from them are coming from.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement, Unify America, BGSU faculty and staff

Focus Area(s): Voter education

Civic Discourse Event

Description: The topic of discussion will be determined closer to the date of the event. Civic discourse events give students a safe environment to discuss difficult topics without judgement and a space to learn and hear new perspectives.

- Constitution Day – Hosted with Office of Campus Activities

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, student organizations

Focus Area(s): Civic engagement

Midterm Watch Party

Description: Work with campus partners including Undergraduate Student Government and University Activities Organization to host a Midterm Watch Party. This will include:

- Watching the results of the midterm election
- Games
- Snacks and drinks
- Other activities

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement, USG, UAO

Focus Area(s): Voter education, civic engagement

Presentations

Description: Give presentations (initiated through our online request form) to classes and organizations about political engagement and voting. Register any students who need to be registered and offer volunteer opportunities to those needing service hours. Additionally, reach out to classes and organizations affiliated with majors with historically lower voter rates as indicated by NSLVE data.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes, on-campus organizations

Focus Area(s): Voter education, voter registration

Spring 2023

MLK Day of Service – Library of Congress Transcribe-a-thon

Description: BGSU holds MLK Day of Service each year, and BGSU Votes started our own project for the day in 2021. The Library of Congress offers on their website a “transcribe-a-thon” for large groups that want to transcribe documents for them. We will be hosting this in the Jerome Library on BGSU’s campus.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement, Jerome Library

Focus Area(s): Civic engagement

Campus Fest

Description: Have a BGSU Votes table during this event, which typically attracts over 5,000 students looking to join organizations or just to see what is going on around campus.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement
Focus Area(s): Voter registration, voter education, civic engagement

I <3 Democracy Week

Description: Share “voting valentines” in person and on social media to show our love for democracy during the week of Valentine’s Day.

Coalition Members: BGSU Votes

Focus Area(s): Civic engagement

Speaker Series

Description: Series of events hosting guest speakers on a panel to discuss topics such as the importance of youth voting.

Coalition Members: C. Raymond Marvin Center for Student Leadership & Civic Engagement, USG, student organizations

Focus Area(s): Civic engagement

2023-2024 Action Plan

Description: Develop an Action Plan for the next academic year. Focus on transition materials for new graduate assistant taking over BGSU Votes.

Coalition Members: All

Focus Area(s): All

Reporting

This action plan will be shared on the BGSU Votes website in Fall 2022 so that it is accessible to all students, administrators, and community members, see [this link](#). The NSLVE reports that were used to inform this action plan will also be available on the BGSU Votes website see [this link](#).

As the BGSU Votes team seeks to grow its relationship with other institutions in the region, this action plan may be shared with other schools. This could include Owens Community College, University of Toledo, and several other institutions. By sharing information and best practices, it would help other institutions increase voter engagement and establish BGSU has a credible model.

Evaluation & Success

The BGSU Votes team has been intentional about reflecting on the work accomplished each election cycle and evaluating our levels of success. This is done frequently throughout the semester, but intentionally at the end of an election cycle to prepare for future events. The BGSU Votes team carries out these reflections and evaluations for the university and incorporates the new information into future strategic plans. A large part of how we evaluate our work is using the NSLVE report to note areas needing improvement, incorporate this information into our goals, and make plans to meet those goals.

As a team, we recognize that a major part of evaluation is receiving feedback from students and faculty at the university. Our team is working on ways to retrieve feedback from members of the BGSU Votes coalition on how these strategies have been effective in their spaces, as well as reaching out to student leaders for feedback on how BGSU Votes can better serve the campus community.

In addition to internal evaluation, since BGSU Votes is currently and historically run by a student in the Master of Public Administration program, the BGSU Votes team would like to collaborate with the program to develop a plan for evaluation of our initiatives. By having the MPA program conduct an external evaluation of our programming, it would add to the credibility and structure of the BGSU Votes team. This campus climate survey would help BGSU learn more about what practices are best for engaging students in political participation and could be an example for other similar organizations on other campuses.

The BGSU Votes coalition will carry out these plans throughout the summer of 2022 and throughout the 2022-2023 academic year. After much success increasing democratic and political participation through the 2018 midterm election and the 2020 general election, this team is hopeful we will meet similar success for the 2022 midterm election. We are thankful for all the support we have received from our national partners, including the Andrew Goodman Foundation, Campus Vote Project, Voter Friendly Campus, SLSV, ALL IN Democracy Challenge, and many more. With their support, BGSU is a more civically engaged university creating public good.