

# **BUTLER UNIVERSITY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN**

ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE

**BU** | **BEWELL**  
THE BUTLER  
STUDENT EXPERIENCE



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## Executive Summary

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Butler University Student Government Association, in partnership with the Division of Student Affairs, the Center for Citizenship and Community, faculty members, and University Marketing & Communications, is capitalizing on the momentum of the 2020 election to create a pervasive and sustained culture of active citizenship.

This is the University's first year participating in the ALL IN Campus Democracy project, but its roots in community engagement date back to its founding. Butler was the first institution to admit women and people of color, dismantling barriers to providing community members with a liberal arts education. Over the years, Butler's commitment has strengthened, resulting in curricular requirements that connect students to service-based learning, and co-curricular engagement that connects students to political activism.

As the student-led Civic Engagement Steering Committee looked to grow its commitment, it identified strengths and opportunities based on student responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Diverse Learning Environments (DLE). Data showcased that Butler students have a strong commitment to volunteerism, but desire more spaces to explore, understand, and act upon political ideology.

Survey data drove the team's creation of key goals and objectives, but it was critical that this action plan went beyond voter registration and education. The strategy addresses engagement holistically to align with BU| BeWell, the university's framework for a holistic student experience. Our desired outcomes work towards moving students along a continuum of awareness, understanding and involvement in areas-- whether that be local, national, or global-- that are meaningful to them. Ultimately, when a student graduates Butler, we hope we have prepared them through curricular and co-curricular opportunities to be an active and involved citizen, regardless of profession or passion.

## Leadership

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<b>Students</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Faculty</b>
<b>Amy Thompson - Chair</b> Student Government Assoc. Political & Community Affairs Liaison	<b>Dr. Frank E. Ross</b> Vice President of Student Affairs	<b>Dr. Donald Braid</b> Director of the Center for Citizenship and Community
<b>Sam Varie - Co-Chair</b> Student Government Assoc. President	<b>Chasmine Anderson</b> Associate Director of Civic Engagement	<b>Dr. Terri Jett</b> Associate Professor of Political Science Special Assistant to the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs for Diversity & Inclusion
<b>Alex Kassan</b> Student Government Assoc. Chief of Staff	<b>Gina Forrest</b> Executive Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	
	<b>Michael Kaltenmark</b> Director of External Relations	

The steering committee for this initiative is comprised of students, faculty, and staff across the University who are involved with community and civic engagement. The committee is responsible for the creation and implementation of the action plan on campus. Upon partnership with other campus and external entities, the steering committee will guide and work with other offices in achieving the objectives laid out in the plan.

Our committee is unique in the fact that it is led by Student Government leaders Amy Thompson and Sam Varie. This student-led perspective ensures that the action plan will be both accessible and engaging for all students on campus. Upon both students' graduation from the university in May 2020, their student government successors will resume implementation of the initiative on campus.

## Commitment

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### *Founding and Evolving Institutional Mission*

Butler University's commitment to civic engagement and community engagement resonates eloquently and profoundly and across its one hundred and sixty-four-year history. Founded in 1855 (then, North Western Christian University) by attorney and abolitionist Ovid Butler, its charter proclaimed a “non-sectarian institution free of the taint of slavery offering instruction in every branch of liberal and professional education”—a vision which translated into the admission of women and persons of color on an equal basis and the first endowed chair in the United States for a female professor, despite widespread perspectives in the pre-Civil War era. These earliest acts of engagement inform the current trajectory of our university as we strive to enlarge the definition of a university as a locus of learning for scholars, students, and the communities that lie beyond our campus. As populations and education have evolved over time, the Butler community strives to adhere to its roots of civic learning and engagement.

The Butler University mission statement states:

*“Our mission is to provide the highest quality of liberal and professional education and to integrate the liberal arts with professional education, by creating and fostering a stimulating intellectual community built upon interactive dialogue and inquiry among students, faculty, and staff.”*

The institution's mission, coupled with the wide array of curricular and co-curricular programs that are offered, shows the level of commitment and dedication that faculty and staff have towards developing students to become responsible, engaged, global citizens.

In 2019, Butler University unveiled a new strategic direction titled Butler Beyond, which outlines new priorities for the university, including student access and success, innovations in teaching and learning, and community partnerships.

### *Curricular*

There are clear commitments to civic learning within curricular areas of the university. Within Butler's liberal arts framework, are several areas which advance the mission of civic learning: Social World courses; Social Justice and Diversity courses; and the Indianapolis Community Requirement.

Students are currently required to take three credit hours in the Social World category, where one learning outcome is that “students will study selected questions about human beings in the social, cultural, economic, and/or political world in which they are embedded.” The university curriculum committee has also approved the addition of a set of Social Justice and Diversity courses, for which one learning outcome that “students will recognize and critique local,

national, or global conditions that enable, perpetuate, and/or challenge social injustice and inequity.”

Butler University’s Center for Citizenship and Community (CCC), established in 1996, is charged with providing campus leadership for developing and maintaining effective and sustainable service-learning and civic-engagement initiatives within the curricular and academic culture of Butler University. The CCC’s mission states, “our method is not charity or volunteerism, but civic engagement, which makes teachers and learners of all involved...our goal is to help students discover new perspectives, explore ways to sustain healthy communities, and fully consider what it means to be local and global citizens.” The CCC coordinates the assessment of curricular service activities in coordination with Butler’s office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

The Center for Citizenship and Community also coordinates the campus-wide Indianapolis Community Requirement (ICR) of our core curriculum—a civic and community engagement requirement that involves all Butler students in academic work with civic-learning outcomes. Two learning outcomes of this requirement are 1. “Students will connect the active learning experience to enlarge their understanding of community and public good in a pluralistic society,” and 2. “Students will demonstrate a commitment to ongoing community involvement and citizenship.”

Additionally, Butler University’s Center for High Achievement and Scholarly Engagement offers students with the opportunity to apply and participate in the Butler Washington, D.C. Program. This program allows students to earn Butler credits as they take classes on various political topics while participating in an internship at various organizations and entities around the DC area. The Butler DC seminar is available to juniors and seniors with a minimum of a 3.0 GPA. This seminar is only available during the Fall and Spring semesters.

### *Co-Curricular*

Alongside a strong commitment to curricular opportunities for civic learning, there are myriad co-curricular opportunities available for students to explore civic engagement in several capacities.

In 2018, the university implemented a framework for holistic student wellbeing, called BU | BeWell, which outlines eight dimensions that serve as the foundation of the student experience. University initiatives and offices work towards supporting each dimension. One of these eight dimensions is Service & Community, which is described as “strengthening community through service and shared interests, both within Butler and the greater Indianapolis area.” This framework continues to be integrated in all facets of the university, including both curricular and co-curricular offerings.

The Office of Civic Engagement encompasses student-run and staff-led service and philanthropy opportunities. The Office of Civic Engagement seeks to connect Butler students with service and philanthropy opportunities in the Indianapolis community and beyond, and strives to engage in meaningful work and education around social justice issues and personal development.

Two overarching learning outcomes for the Office of Civic Engagement are:

1. Students will learn ways to recognize local and global community needs
2. Students will learn ways to ethically address local and global community needs

The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life is home to fourteen Greek-lettered organizations, where members contribute more than 20,000 hours of service to over 200 Indianapolis area nonprofits, while also fundraising year-round for their respective philanthropies. Sigma Gamma Rho, a historically Black sorority, was founded on Butler's campus in 1922. It seeks to enhance the quality of life for women through community service, civic and social action.

The Department of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) has a mission to foster a sense of belonging where all members of the Butler community feel welcome, to enhance the learning of oneself and others, and to promote the development of intercultural competence.

By interacting with the Department of DEI, we strive to accomplish the following three learning outcomes.

- Individuals will learn about themselves.
- Individuals will learn how to listen to a diverse range of thought.
- Individuals will develop the skills for having discussions around DEI topics.

This office is housed within the Efroymsen Diversity Center (DC), which serves as an open and inclusive symbol to the Butler University campus, that fosters contributions of intercultural engagement, support, guidance, and a home to the Butler community committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The DC opened on December 6, 2006, made possible by a generous gift from Lori Efroymsen-Aguilera and the Efroymsen Fund of Central Indiana Community Foundation. The center provides office space to seven cultural and social awareness student organizations, and celebrates the achievements and continued opportunities of students, staff, and faculty in furthering an inclusive campus community.

In addition to housing student organizations, the office oversees the Morton Finney Scholarship program. The program is named after Dr. John Morton Finney, a Butler University alumni who led his life through the values of education, social justice and identity. The program is dedicated to holistically developing 120 scholarship recipients through the lenses of identity, cultural and social awareness, service and diversity, equity and inclusion. The program is divided into four cohorts; the sophomore cohort has a special focus on providing students with cultural and social awareness immersions around the city of Indianapolis, while the junior cohort has a special focus on service work with a social justice emphasis.

In addition to these initiatives, this office works with the Center for Faith and Vocation on an initiative called “Brave Dialogues,” which is a dialogue event that happens twice a semester where students have the opportunity to talk through prominent issues that are highlighted in the news around topics of immigration, the 2020 election, LGBTQ rights, climate change and more. The Department of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) also works with the Social Justice and Diversity committee (comprised of faculty and staff) alongside the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Board (housed within SGA) to host monthly luncheons open to students, faculty and staff that are facilitated around various social justice-centered topics such as healthcare disparities amongst different identity communities, religion and gender identity.

The Desmond Tutu Peace Lab is an innovative think tank dedicated to undergraduate research, activism, dialogue, and advocacy around peace and social justice issues. The Peace Lab is designed to

1. Develop and disseminate innovative and strategic approaches to peace education, leadership, policy, practice, and advocacy, while
2. Developing capacity among students for peace and justice activism and innovative peace and justice leadership, including religious peacebuilding.

Students work alongside faculty and community partners to offer trainings in mediation, activism, interfaith engagement, and writing for social justice.

Butler University is a member campus of Indiana Campus Compact, which serves as a catalyst for Indiana institutions of higher education to leverage their knowledge, resources, and power for the public good. Through this, faculty, staff, and students are able to attend conferences, apply for grants, and earn recognition around community engagement and civic learning.

Finally, the University is seeking the NASPA Voter Friendly Campus Designation. To receive designation, universities must demonstrate an effort to “help students overcome barriers to participating in the political process and develop a culture of democratic engagement on campus.” The Civic Engagement Steering Committee applied for this designation in January 2020.



## Landscape

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### *Institutional*

Butler's commitment to civic and community engagement has deepened in the last two decades under the leadership of presidents Geoff Bannister, Gwen Fountain, and Bobby Fong. Their legacy to the university includes the creation of the Indiana Campus Compact, a consortium of private and public institutions that promote excellence in teaching, scholarship, and community networks; the founding of Butler University's Center for Citizenship and Community in 1996, a dedicated office of academic community engagement; the implementation of The Indianapolis Community Requirement in 2010, a core curriculum requirement for all Butler students based on civic learning outcomes.

Under the leadership of Butler's 21<sup>st</sup> President James Danko, the university reaffirmed and strengthened its commitment to civic and community engagement and its future through a campus-wide visioning process that involved students, faculty, staff, alumni, and trustees. In 2013, the Board of Trustees approved a final articulation of the Butler 2020 vision statement that includes among the six strategic platforms:

*Distinguish Butler among peer and aspirant universities by creating innovative academic programs while strengthening our commitment to community engagement, experiential learning, and international education.*

Based on this history and commitment, Butler University applied for and was awarded the Carnegie Elective Community Engagement classification in 2015.

In 2016 the university redrafted its university-level student learning outcomes. Outcome number four reads: "a capacity to help shape our local and global communities through civic understanding and an appreciation of diverse perspectives."

This legacy of inclusion and commitment to civic and community engagement and action carry an inherent responsibility—one that has translated into a dynamic vision of a contemporary urban university that strives to engage students, faculty and the community and to imagine and achieve through a recognition that learning is the most powerful tool for connecting our shared aspirations with the public good.

### *Student Programming*

In order to assess the current level of civic engagement on campus, the steering committee created a civic engagement inventory. This inventory included student organizations, academic offerings, and community partnerships.

The Office of Civic Engagement sponsors a number of civically minded programs for students to take part in. These programs include Bulldogs into the Streets (BITS), a day of service during Welcome Week which has mobilized over 1,000 volunteers in one day; Ambassadors of Change,

a five-day pre-Welcome Week program which connects 66 incoming students with 22 upper-level mentors and service at over 10 unique non-profit organizations in Indianapolis; the student-run Volunteer Center, in which six student staff plan biweekly service projects, provide consultations and reflection about meaningful service, and plan educational events centered on active citizenship; and Butler Alternative Breaks, which offers service opportunities for 30 students each fall and spring break outside of Indiana.

The department of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion houses and supports a number of socially and civically-minded student organizations. These student organizations include Students for Justice in Palestine, Butler Alliance, Gender Equity Movement, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Board, Asian Pacific Islander Alliance, Latinos Unidos and Black Student Union. These student organizations have provided various forms of educational programming centered around mental health, culture, heritage months and more.

In addition to departmental initiatives, there are a number of student-led programs and services around civic engagement. One branch of Student Government Association is the Service and Philanthropy board, which is home to two philanthropic efforts which benefit Riley Hospital for Children and Special Olympics Indiana and collectively raise over \$450,000 each year. There are also various student organizations which are both civic-minded (College Democrats, College Republicans, Dawgs Vote, League of Women Voters, etc.), and service-oriented (Alpha Phi Omega, Circle K, Food Recovery Network, Timmy Global Health, etc.). This list is ever expanding as student commitment to civic engagement continues to grow.

### *Student Engagement*

Data taken from two student surveys showcase the level of student engagement in regards to civic engagement at Butler University. These surveys are the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) completed in Spring 2017, and the Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey completed in Spring 2019.

From NSSE:

- 66% of first-years and 52% of seniors thought Butler emphasized attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues quite a bit or very much.

From DLE:

- Butler students perform community service and discuss politics at higher rates than their peers.
- 85% of Butler student respondents believe or strongly believe that Butler encourages public voice and expression of ideas, and 87% of respondents agree or strongly agree that there is strength in seeing others' viewpoints.
- 67% of respondents reported voting in a national, state, or local election since beginning their time at Butler
- 87% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students at Butler are willing to talk about equity and injustice.

### *Location*

Butler University's location in Indianapolis allows students to gain access to state level government. The Political Science department has an informal relationship with the internship program at the Indiana State House, and a number of students have completed internships with the Republican and Democratic caucuses. As the capital of Indiana, the city of Indianapolis is also home to a number of civically minded nonprofits and government related entities that students have access to.

### *Barriers*

One of the greatest barriers for students is Indiana election law. Challenges of this law include:

- **Voter ID requirement:** In order to vote in Indiana, a photo ID is required. This ID must include a picture of the voter, a name that matches the voter registration record, and an expiration date. A student ID that fits these criteria is able to be used as a form of identification. However, students at Butler University are not eligible to use their student ID as a means of identification because there is no expiration date on the ID, and it is issued by a private institution.
- **Early registration deadlines:** The deadline to register or change registration is 30 days before an election. Indiana does not allow for same day registration.
- **Absentee request:** Students who wish to vote absentee in the state of Indiana are required to provide valid reason as to why they are unable to make it to the polls on election day

For students who have registered to vote and have an adequate form of voter identification, voting at Butler University is made easier by the fact that Hinkle Fieldhouse is a polling location.

### **Goals**

The goals for voter registration numbers are dependent on results from the NSLVE study. Butler University has committed to join NSLVE, but at the time of writing this action plan, did not have data from NSLVE about current voter registration numbers on campus. Once we receive these numbers, the steering committee will evaluate them, and create a goal for the number of students we want to register.

In the DLE survey completed in Spring 2019, 67% of respondents reported voting in a national, state, or local election since beginning their time at Butler.

A number of data points taken from NSSE and DLE are being used to guide our overarching goals (for more data points, see the NSSE and DLE data on pages nine and ten).

- 59 percent of respondents have respect for expression of different beliefs compared to 65% at Butler's peer group.
- 46 percent of respondents have been discriminated against\* because of their political affiliation compared to 34% at Butler's peer group.

- 85 percent of respondents seldom or never think about their political beliefs
- 40 percent of respondents perform community service very often or often compared to 28% at Butler's peer group
- These data points show that:
  - Half of Butler students don't feel we have an atmosphere that supports political differences, but much greater numbers discuss politics, are open to being challenged, and want to hear others' viewpoints.
  - Our students aren't particularly politically active, though social issues are important to them. Significantly more Butler students feel they are discriminated against\* for their political beliefs here than students at other campuses
    - *\*this language is taken directly from the survey question given to students. As of December 2019, there have been no reports of bias against political beliefs from students at Butler.*

**Based on this data set, our commitment, and landscape, we created the following overarching and holistic goals:**

1. Foster a safe and equitable space to express, discuss and act on political participation.
2. Create long term student and community relationships through robust, intentional, and centralized volunteerism.
3. Move students along a continuum of awareness, understanding and involvement on a civic engagement topics that is meaningful to them.

Moving forward, we want to create qualitative short term and long term goals. We intend to meet with the steering committee to create and discuss these goals to ensure they are able to be met on our campus.

The framework used to implement these pillars on campus are taken directly from Butler Beyond, the strategic campaign for Butler University. They are:

- Student Access and Success
- Innovations in Teaching and Learning
- Community Partnerships

## Strategy

Strategy	Functional Area	Objective
<b>1. Foster a safe and equitable space to express, discuss and act on political participation.</b>	Student Access & Success	-Host or co-program three campus programs each semester between Spring 2020 thru Fall 2021 related to political engagement. -Implement TurboVote on campus in SP20 and host monthly voter registration days thru F20 -Provide financial and marketing

		partnership to College Republicans and Democrats and Dawgs Vote in SP20 and F20 to support pre-election education and momentum.
	Innovations in Teaching & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provide faculty with pertinent voting information to share with students in SP20 regarding voter registration deadline and in F20 prior to November election</li> <li>-Connect with faculty involved in integrating the Social Justice and Diversity core requirement</li> <li>-Integrate faculty experts into at least one student program each semester</li> <li>-In conjunction with monthly voter registration tables, provide state and federal candidate guides for the general election in November 2020.</li> </ul>
	Community Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Create integrated community event calendar housed on the SGA website that promotes civic engagement events.</li> <li>-Provide free transportation to two of the off-campus events</li> </ul>

<b>2. Create long term student and community relationships through robust, intentional, and centralized volunteerism.</b>	Student Access & Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Capitalize on Butler's day of service, BITS, to ensure we are using it as a platform for education and sustained engagement.</li> <li>-Strategize with University student-led Volunteer Center by March 2020 to identify collaborations and partnerships.</li> </ul>
	Innovations in Teaching & Learning	-Align and highlight the Indianapolis Community Requirement partner organizations with primary

		nonprofit partners
	Community Partnerships:	-Establish a list of primary nonprofit partners by March 2020 that we will invest time, talent and treasure in conjunction with the Indy Positioning Project.

<b>3. Move students along a continuum of awareness, understanding and involvement on a civic engagement topic that is meaningful to them.</b>	Student Access & Success	-Create an online resource hub (extension of SGA website) by March 2020 that houses education on a myriad of topics. -Attend the NASPA Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting in June 2020
	Innovations in Teaching & Learning	-Publish an inventory of courses related to active citizenship for the following semester. Publish in SP20 prior to first registration period for F20. - Post civically minded internship opportunities on the online resource hub as they become available
	Community Partnerships:	-Integrate/list community nonprofits related to civic engagement within resource hub -Each semester from SP20 to SP21, co-program with two different organizations that represent different purposes and appeal to diverse groups.

Throughout the Spring 2020 semester, we finalized our contract with the online voter registration platform, TurboVote, and now have our own personalized webpage for students to register to vote and request absentee ballots online. The website also provides relevant information for students about voting in Indiana. The TurboVote webpage will allow us to

continue voter registration efforts, whether they be in person or solely online.

Additionally, we want to engage Butler University leadership with this initiative, and would like to find ways for leadership to commit to supporting full student voter participation.

## **Reporting**

This Action Plan will be shared with members of the Butler University community, on the SGA online resource hub, and on the webpage for the Office of Civic Engagement. Additionally, it will be shared with the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge and other campuses involved in the challenge.

## **Evaluation**

The steering committee will continue to meet throughout the Spring 2020 semester to ensure that the strategy is being implemented and the objectives are being completed. There will be monthly formative evaluations of outcomes, as well as a summative evaluation in Spring 2021.

In order to evaluate the progress of this action plan, we will assess the effectiveness of on campus events and programs, based on the number of students attended and voters registered. We will also use data provided from our TurboVote page in order to further evaluate our initiatives. Evaluation of the efforts will be completed by the steering committee throughout the academic year.

After Butler University moved to online courses as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic, we were required to shift our focus regarding civic engagement on campus. We adjusted our work accordingly, and moved forward in creating a solid platform for the initiative to continue into the next academic year.