



**PURDUE**  
UNIVERSITY®

Roger C. Stewart Leadership  
and Professional Development  
Department

# **PURDUEVOTES COALITION**

**ALL-IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE  
ACTION PLAN**

**Fall 2022**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Purdue University's Voter Engagement Action Plan was created by members of the PurdueVotes Coalition. After reviewing previous years' data related to registration and voting history at Purdue University's West Lafayette campus, leaders in the campus community committed to moving the world forward through civic engagement in the 2020 election cycle. This document serves two main purposes: to discuss the West Lafayette campus climate related to voting using NSLVE data and to highlight strategies towards improving that climate.

The PurdueVotes Coalition developed this plan in the Summer of 2022, with the intention to implement strategies during the Fall 2022 semester. Through a coordinated effort involving multiple student leaders and student organizations and staff from the Roger C. Stewart Leadership and Professional Development Department, University Residences, Student Activities and Organizations, Student Success, Fraternity, Sorority and Cooperative Life, and a number of academic departments, this plan seeks to increase voter registration, education, and participation. It utilizes a mixed methods approach, with on-line and in-person activities, resources, and engagement opportunities. The success of the plan will be measured by reviewing NSLVE data following the November 2022 elections.

# LEADERSHIP

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Purdue University President, Mitch Daniels, formally joined the Big Ten Challenge in the fall of 2017. With this commitment, a coalition of stakeholders across campus was formed to prepare an action plan for the 2018 mid-term election cycle. We continued to facilitate Voting Engagement through the 2019 municipal election cycle, worked collaboratively for 2020, and will continue to do so until the end of his term in December 2022.

Jointly chaired by Melissa Gruver, Senior Associate Director of Civic Engagement & Leadership Development, and Logan Faircloth, Undergraduate Director of PurdueVotes, the PurdueVotes Coalition is comprised of staff, undergraduate, and graduate students invested in voter registration, education, and participation. The Coalition meets monthly to review previous NSLVE data, determine goals for All In and Big Ten Challenges, and strategies to register faculty, staff, and students to vote. Additionally, members brainstorm creative tactics to increase overall engagement in the democratic process- from information gathering to casting ballots on Election Day.

## **PurdueVotes Coalition Members**

Melissa Gruver, Co-Chair  
Roger C. Stewart Leadership and Professional Development

Logan Faircloth ('23), Co-Chair  
Political Science Honors Society

Viviana Tsangaropoulos, Coordinator for Civic Engagement  
Roger C. Stewart Leadership and Professional Development

Jenna Campbell  
Political Science Honors Society

Christina Galiatsatos  
Political Science Honors Society

Ethan Goldfish Vinson  
Purdue Student Government

Brian Kocher, Staff  
Housing & Residential Life

Allison Maldonado-Ruiz, Staff  
Student Activities and Organizations

Donnie Otto, Staff  
Fraternity, Sorority and Cooperative Life

## **Campus Partners**

Office of the President

Purdue College Democrats

Purdue College Republicans

Purdue Young Democratic Socialists of America

Black Cultural Center

Latino Cultural Center

Asian and Asian American Resource & Cultural Center

Native American Educational and Cultural Center

LGBTQ+ Center

Residence Hall Association

Fraternity, Sorority, and Cooperative Life

Student Activities and Organizations

The Purdue Exponent

## **Community Partners**

City of West Lafayette

City of Lafayette

League of Women Voters

The Journal and Courier

Community-Engaged Alliance

# COMMITMENT

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Purdue University is committed to civic and democratic engagement of students. The curriculum and co-curriculum serve to highlight and uphold this as a value of the institution, and works to infuse experiences and learning opportunities with it. Measured formally through course, program, and department outcomes and evaluations, and informally through anecdotal encounters with faculty and staff, Purdue University is highly committed to cultivating informed and engaged agents of change.

The division of student life makes this apparent in two of its major principles: Student Learning and Leadership Development. Additionally, the Purdue Code of Ethics details the aspirations the institution has for its members:

“At Purdue, integrity is indispensable to our mission. We act with honesty and adhere to the highest standards of moral and ethical values and principles through our personal and professional behavior. We demonstrate our understanding of these values and principles and uphold them in every action and decision. Trust and trustworthiness go hand in hand with how we conduct ourselves, as we sustain a culture that is based upon ethical conduct. We expect our actions to be consistent with our words, and our words to be consistent with our intentions. **We accept our responsibilities, share leadership in a democratic spirit, and subject ourselves to the highest standards of public trust. We hold ourselves accountable for our words and our actions.**

**We champion freedom of expression. To ensure our integrity, we safeguard academic freedom, open inquiry, and debate in the best interests of education, enrichment, and our personal and professional development.** We embrace human and intellectual diversity and inclusiveness. We uphold the highest standards of fairness, act as responsible citizens, respect equality and the rights of others, and treat all individuals with dignity.” ([http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/about/integrity\\_statement.html](http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/about/integrity_statement.html); added emphasis)

The Roger C. Stewart Leadership and Professional Development Department, a standalone department in the division of Student Life, has cultivated explicit learning outcomes addressed through the work of the PurdueVotes Coalition:

“Students who participate in the programs, courses, and initiatives offered by the Roger C. Stewart Leadership and Professional Development Department will ...

3. demonstrate how one’s social identities intersect with the practice of leadership and civic engagement behaviors
4. analyze critical societal issues and community needs in the context of community assets
5. describe the connection between their academic discipline and vocation to the leadership process and social responsibility”

These outcomes are met through a variety of curricular offerings including, but not limited to: multiple sections of Foundations of Leadership and Leadership for Social Change in partnership with the College of Education, which count towards general education requirements for students; the Boiler Serves: Community Engagement Residential Learning Community; LEAP,

specifically for new Purdue Students; and a Citizens Academy course that pairs students with local community members as they learn about local government together. The department also sponsors programs such as Women in Leadership Institute; Elect Her; Community Organizing Institute; and the Campus-Community (C2) Forum dedicated to civic engagement in all levels of the democratic process.

The aims and outcomes outlined here are all available on Purdue's official web presences, allowing those within and outside the institution access at any time. Additionally, the Division of Student Life hosts division-wide meetings, always beginning with a review of the principles that should guide the work of staff in the area. The Roger C. Stewart Leadership and Professional Development Department is highlighted as a premier area within the division for the work they do to further service, citizenship, and participation in the democratic process at the local, state, and national level. Specifically, the department's commitment to bridging town and gown relations, by taking the work off campus and into the streets of Greater Lafayette, does more to communicate the institution's commitment to developing civically minded students, than the static web presence.

# LANDSCAPE

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## 2014 NSLVE Data

During mid-term elections the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) data indicates a drop in voter registration (58.7% registration rate in 2014 midterm) and participation (9% voting rate in 2014) than in Presidential elections (69.3% registration rate and 37% voting rate in 2012). There is a small dip in the national rate during the 2014 mid-term election, with a 19.2% voting rate among public research institutions, so the lower number is not unexpected. However, the large departure from the average of peer institutions is concerning.

Students aged 18-21, the largest demographic of students at Purdue in 2014, only had a voting rate of 4.8% compared to 27.2% two years earlier. Only 6.0% of undergraduate and 11.4% of graduate students voted in the 2014 election. Of those that voted, the three lowest racial demographics were:

- Asian 1.6%
- Hispanic 5.8%
- Black 7.2%

These data indicate a rift in participating in these communities during the 2014 mid-terms, when Purdue boasts a significant Asian student presence. The voting rates among Hispanic and Black voters in 2012 was higher (25.4% and 38.6% respectively), but the Asian rate was still below ten percent at 7.4%. An encouraging trend in the 2014 data indicates parity among men and women voters, where men were outvoted by women in 2012 by 6%.

STEM majors, specifically those in Computer and Information and Library Sciences (5.3%) and Biological and Biomedical Sciences (5.2%) were among the lowest voter rates in 2014. Purdue has large enrollments in these areas, making them key indicators of success for the PurdueVotes Coalition.

## 2016 NSLVE Data

The NSLVE indicates civic engagement is higher at Purdue during Presidential election years (47.9% voting rate in 2016), and near the average for all public research institutions (51.9% voting rate). This data indicates that it is possible to close the gap in voting rates with peer institutions that existed in 2014.

Voter rates increased across all demographic indicators in 2016. However, graduate students were outvoted by their undergraduate peers (33.7% compared to 37.9%), a reversal from the 2014 mid-term election data. When considering age groups, the 18-21 demographic exceeded their 22-24 and 25-29 peers, in a near 10% increase from 2012. This indicates a shift the PurdueVotes Coalition hopes to capitalize on for the 2018 mid-terms.

Hispanic (36.7%), Black (41.6%), and Asian (14.8%) voters were underrepresented at the Purdue polls in 2016. Nearly 15% of student enrollment at Purdue consisted of Asian, Hispanic,



and Black students, demonstrating a need for engagement around voter registration and participation.

Computer and Information Science majors were one of three disciplines with less than 30% voting rate in 2016 at 28.4%; the other two areas of study included Mathematics and Statistics (27.1%) and Physical Sciences (30.7%). These areas comprise slightly more than 10% of Purdue's total enrollment in 2016, another large population to target with 2018 mid-term election efforts.

## **2018 NSLVE Data**

For the mid-term election, Purdue had a registration rate of 76.9%, which was an increase of 14.3% from the last mid-term election (2014). The goal of increasing the voting rate to 40% was not met but with a voting rate of 31.2% it was more than a 20% increase from the 9.4% voting rate in 2014. There was a large increase in the national rate for the 2018 mid-term election with a voting rate of 39.1% while the average for public research institutions was 40.8%. The gap in voting rates with peer institutions is closing but this is an area of growth.

Voting rates increased across all demographic indicators, with the biggest disparity being by gender 27.6% for women and 22.2% for men. However, there was a significant increase for both women and men compared to the last mid-term election (in 2014 the voting rate for both women and men was equal at 7.2%). The goal of increasing graduate student mid-term voting rate to 20% was exceeded at 26.7%. Graduate students outvoted undergraduates by 3%, which shows the efforts of the PurdueVotes Coalition to increase graduate student participation were successful.

There were large increases in the voting rates for Hispanic (25.4%), Black (27.6%), and Asian (9.6%) voters compared to the 2014 mid-term election. The goals of the PurdueVotes Coalition to increase the mid-term voting rate for all three groups were either met or exceeded. However, both Asian and Hispanic voting rates have the most potential for growth.

Computer and Information Sciences (5.3%) in addition to Liberal Arts and Sciences/Humanities (5.5%) had among the lowest voting rates by field of study during the last mid-term election. The PurdueVotes Coalition worked closely with the College of Liberal Arts and Department of Computer Science to register its students. As a result of those efforts, the voting rates for both field of study increased significantly to 19.3% for Computer and Information Sciences and 22.9% for Liberal Arts and Sciences/Humanities.

## **2020 NSLVE Data**

As indicated by previous Presidential election year NSLVE data, civic engagement was higher in 2020 than it was in 2018. In 2020, Purdue had an overall registration rate of 86.4%, which was an increase of 7.1% from 2016. As a result of PurdueVotes Coalition's tactics to raise voter registration, we were able to exceed our goal of 85% registration rate in 2020.

Voting rate also increased across demographics. Our overall voting rate increased to 67.2%, 20% higher than 2016 and exceeding our goal of 55% by 12.2%. The undergraduate voting rate increased from 37.9% (2016) to 59% in 2020 and the graduate voting rate increased from 33.7% (2016) to 44% in 2020. Voting rates also increased for all underrepresented groups on

campus. PurdueVotes also exceeded its goals of raising the Asian, Black, and Latinx voting rates. On a particular note, the voting rate for Asian voters in 2020 increased to 28%, 13% higher than 2016. Black voters increased to 59%, a 17% increase from 2016, and Hispanic voters increased to 54%, 18% higher than 2016. Though these increases in turnout are significant, there is still room for growth when it comes to voting rates of underrepresented groups at Purdue.

Computer and Information Sciences (45%) and Physical Sciences (50%) had the lowest voting rates by field of study in 2020. Due to our targeted voter registration and education efforts, we were able to raise the rate from 2016 by 20.2% in Computer and Information Sciences and by 24% in Physical Sciences. By increasing accessibility through new polling locations and transportation to the polls, voting rates increases across the board.

## **Resources and Barriers**

The institution funds the Roger C. Stewart Leadership and Professional Development Department on campus, committed to voter engagement and education. The staff create meaningful programming addressing the importance of democratic engagement as citizens of the United States, specifically at the local level. Signature programs in this area include Elect Her and the Women in Leadership Institute, hosted with support of AAUW and the Student Government; Community Organizing Institute; and the Campus-Community (C2) Forum in partnership with the Indiana Campus Compact.

The Roger C. Stewart Leadership and Professional Development Department also takes the lead with curricular offerings, teaching multiple sections of Foundations of Leadership and Leadership for Social Change in partnership with the College of Education. Melding curricular studies with community, the Boiler Serves: Residential Learning Community “offers a year-long guided experience for students as they connect deeply with the surrounding Greater Lafayette community.” Both of these courses satisfy general education credits for Purdue University students. The department also hosts LEAP, specifically for new Purdue Students.

Purdue University also hosts a number of student organizations tied to specific political parties and ideological sets. These groups host campus events such as debates, watch parties, workshops, and informational sessions, creating peer-to-peer political discourse. The America Association of University Women (AAUW) chapter, College Democrats, College Republicans, Democratic Socialists, Purdue Feminist Action Coalition for Today (FACT), Purdue Discourse Club, Young Democratic Socialists of America, and Campus Freedom Alliance stand out as active and engaged groups doing the work on campus.

Some resources already exist to continue building momentum towards the Coalition’s goals. These include button makers, access to printing, and a dedicated office space to house all materials necessary for success. The addition of a second polling place closer to the residential side of campus was established for the 2018 election and benefitted the overall voting rate of the campus, by creating closer proximity to students voting for the first time. Additionally, the use of Turbo Vote or a similar software platform would allow the PurdueVotes Coalition to send targeted text and email reminders to students related to voter registration deadlines, early voting dates and locations, and Election Day polling locations on campus. We plan to partner with the Indiana Citizen to accomplish this.

In addition, the Coalition worked with the Purdue administration to address the necessity for Purdue IDs to contain an expiration date in order to be accepted at the polls. Now all incoming

First-Year students have what we call the Vote-Ready ID and as of Spring 2020, all new Purdue ID cards include an expiration date.

Barriers exist related to our current resources and abilities post-COVID, which are important to the success of the PurdueVotes Coalition. The primary challenge is burnout, specifically due to the effects of the pandemic. Burnout has proved to be an obstacle when it comes to partnerships with student organizations and departments across campus. We are fighting this burnout by engaging students in various programming centered around voter registration and education leading up to the election. By addressing this burnout and imagining ways to excite our students about civic engagement, we can work through this barrier.

# GOALS

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The PurdueVotes Coalition crafted the following goals after careful review of the 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 NSLVE data for the West Lafayette campus, with a focus on the 2018 data. Accomplishing these would likely impact the voting- and larger civic engagement-landscape at Purdue University. An increased number of faculty, staff, and students registered and voting on campus would meet the charges of Student Life and the Roger C. Stewart Leadership and Professional Development Department, inspiring a lifetime commitment to the democratic ideals of our nation. Individuals will develop the ability to critique platforms and proposed legislation, another ideal expressed in Purdue's Code of Ethics. While lofty, the Coalition members strongly believe that all metrics are attainable by the end of 2022.

- Increase voter registration among the following populations in 2022:
  - Increase overall voter registration rate to 80% (2018: 76%)
  - Increase College of Science voter registration rates
- Increase voting rates among the following populations in 2022:
  - Increasing Asian student population voting to 18% (2018: 9.6%)
  - Increasing Latinx student population voting to 30% (2018: 25.4%)
  - Increasing Black student population voting to 33% (2018: 27.6%)



## **Voter Registration**

### **Programmatic Tactics**

- Host National Voter Registration Day event across campus
- Host Couch Parties that utilize peer-to-peer texting
- Participate in Constitution Day by setting up a table to register voters at the university-wide event

### **Campus and Community Partner Tactics**

- Sponsor voter registration at the following locations:
  - Krach Leadership Center
  - Schleman Hall
  - Purdue Memorial Union and Stewart Center
  - Dining Courts
  - Engineering Mall
  - Memorial Mall
- Provide voter registration materials and training to the following departments/offices:
  - Latino Cultural Center
  - Black Cultural Center
  - Native American Educational and Cultural Center
  - Asian American and Asian Resource and Cultural Center
  - LGBTQ+ Center
  - University Residences
  - Residence Hall Association
  - Honors College
- Create and distribute voter video to professors throughout campus who commit to showing it during the first few minutes of their class
- Create and deploy voter registration toolkits to students, student organizations, and departments requesting them until the voter registration deadline
- Partner with cultural centers and sponsor voter registration tables at their locations
- Partner with University Residences to table outside residence halls during week of National Voter Registration Day
- Partner with Boiler Gold Rush (BGR) and sponsor a voter registration table during Week of Welcome
- Participate in Residence Hall Association (RHA) Day and register voters
- Have Resident Assistants (RA) sign a pledge committing to registering students and attending trainings and

## **Voter Education**

### **Resource Development Tactics**

- Create a student voter guide in collaboration with Vote411.org
- Provide sample ballots at event and through PurdueVotes Coalition web presence

### **Programmatic Tactics**

- Host Debate Watch and Discuss gatherings throughout the Fall 2022 semester
- Create and Host Absentee Ballot Workshops

### **Peer-to-peer Tactics**

- Create and promote videos and Frequently Asked Questions sheets for student use and distribution

## **Voter Participation**

### **Programmatic Tactics**

- Host an election party as votes are tallied on November 8, 2022
- Provide envelopes with stamps for students who need to send absentee ballot applications

### **Campus and Community Partner Tactics**

- Offer transportation to campus polling locations via golf carts
- Offer transportation to campus polling location via Boilermaker Express
- Host an on-campus voting location near the Residential side of the West Lafayette Campus in Krach Leadership Center
- Host an on-campus early voting location at Mackey Arena

### **Communication Tactics**

- Send email reminders with information about on-campus polling locations, early voting, and election day voting



# REPORTING

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This action plan will be primarily used by members of the PurdueVotes Coalition and community partners. Internally, it will guide and shape our work over the coming year, and will be distributed to representatives present at the PurdueVotes Coalition monthly meetings, resuming in September 2022. However, we recognize the benefit of sharing portions of the plan with the public. Sections of the goals and strategy section will be made available on the Roger C. Stewart Leadership and Professional Development Department website as well as any voter registration platform used to register individuals to vote.

NSLVE data points will also be shared widely with the public and posted where relevant. This will provide context for our goals and objectives, further demonstrating the need for registration, education, and participation from the Purdue University community. Points discussed in the Landscape portion of this document will be used in a narrative form, as grounding framework for participating in the All-In for Democracy Challenge.

# EVALUATION

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The PurdueVotes Coalition will assess and evaluate its successful completion of the stated goals by reviewing the NSLVE data available for Purdue's West Lafayette campus during the summer of 2023. While we would count any increase in registration and participation a success, we are most interested in comparing our 2018 and 2022 midterm datasets. These data points will be of interest to the PurdueVotes Coalition, Purdue Government Relations, Student Life, and the Office of the President. Additionally, the results of the Coalition's efforts will be shared as part of the Big Ten Challenge with Purdue's peer institutions. Some of the results will also be shared in a more public form once the NSLVE comparative data becomes available in the summer of 2023. Likely, this will be hosted on the Provost's website along with voter registration information.

Voter education will be evaluated through pre and post assessment during education events. These will be administered by the facilitator(s) of the educational events, and designed to seamlessly integrate into the program. Additionally data collection may take the form of post-election surveys for students who registered to vote on campus, asking about where and how they were educated on candidates, ballot measures, and voting process.

By evaluating the efforts of the PurdueVotes Coalition, the institution can make better informed decisions about when and in what matter to connect students with the learning outcomes defined in the landscape section of this document. Stakeholders can adjust programming to better fit the needs of the students on the West Lafayette campus.