

Voter Engagement Plan

Bemidji State University

Executive Summary: Voter Engagement Plan for Bemidji State University

This Voter Engagement Plan outlines a strategic initiative designed to increase voter participation and civic engagement among students at Bemidji State University. The plan aims to create a comprehensive, inclusive, and accessible framework for educating, registering, and motivating students to vote, fostering a culture of civic responsibility across the campus community.

Objectives:

- **Increase Voter Registration:** Facilitate voter registration drives to ensure that all eligible students are registered to vote. The initiative will partner with local election authorities, student organizations, and state and community non-profit partners to create and promote registration efforts.
- **Voter Education:** Provide clear, accessible, and unbiased information on policies and voting processes. This will include campus events, digital communication, and resources to inform students about their voting rights and the importance of participating in elections.
- **Targeted Outreach:** Ensure outreach efforts reach underrepresented groups, including first-time voters and students from historically marginalized communities, to ensure equitable access to the voting process.

Strategies:

- **Collaboration with Campus Organizations:** Partner with student government, academic departments, and student organizations to promote voter engagement events, workshops, and forums.
- **Social Media & Digital Campaigns:** Launch a targeted social media campaign to spread awareness about voter registration deadlines, the voting process, and key issues on the ballot.
- **On-Campus Voter Registration:** Set up voter registration tables at strategic locations on campus, ensuring maximum visibility and ease of access for students.

By prioritizing voter engagement, Bemidji State University will contribute to the development of a politically informed and active student body, empowering the next generation of leaders to shape the future of our democracy.

Leadership:

Collaboration from a variety of staff and students will ensure a myriad of perspectives and voices to reach students at all levels of their campus experience. In 2024, the Election Preparation Team included:

- a. Students: Members of Student Senate, led by student body President Darby Bersie
- b. Administration:
 - i. Head of Staff: Henoc Preciado
 - ii. Dean of Students: Kevin Stensberg
- c. Staff:
 - i. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Ashley Gomez
 - ii. Health & Counseling: Hannah Wilson

- iii. Residence Life: Loralyn Kuechle
- iv. Student Union: Nina Johnson (Campus Vote Coordinator)

Due to the time of planning 2024 activities, we were unable to engage faculty partners in our leadership planning but recognize the value and importance of having their voice at the table for long-range planning. We might also involve key student-influencing departments such as Athletics and Communications & Marketing.

Commitment:

Demonstrating a commitment to increasing civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation involves a multifaceted approach that prioritizes education, accessibility, and active participation. Here are several key ways Bemidji State University shows this commitment:

- **Vision, Mission, and Shared Fundamental Values.** Bemidji State University's vision is to "educate people to lead inspired lives." Our mission leads us to "we instill and promote service to others, preservation of the earth and respect and appreciation for the diverse peoples of our region and world." Civic engagement and leadership are etched into our shared fundamental values.
- **Integrating civic education into the curriculum.** In the Bemidji State University general education program, goal area 9 speaks to ethical and civic responsibility and includes courses that "To develop students' capacity to identify, discuss, and reflect upon the ethical dimensions of political, social, and personal life and to understand the ways in which they can exercise responsible and productive citizenship."
- **Fostering a culture of civic responsibility.** In both classroom and out-of-classroom activities, students participate in service and volunteerism. Through student government, students explore their responsibility toward self-advocacy and working with administration to develop a desirable student experience responsive to student needs. We celebrate key events relevant to civic engagement and voting such as Constitution Day, Voter Education Week, Election day and other civic and national holidays that encourage and celebrate democracy.

Landscape & National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE):

Bemidji State University is a public, degree-granting university with an enrollment of 3,211 students. With our regional emphasis, we are largely serving the people of northern Minnesota. Bemidji State is located in the city of Bemidji in Beltrami County. Beltrami County is nestled in the middle of three American Indian tribal nations. With this close proximity to tribal communities, the university has a significant emphasis on serving American Indian students. Our institution also has a strong and long-standing TRIO program which serves first generation students, low-income, and students with disabilities. Our campus serves a unique need in northern Minnesota so a commitment to civic responsibility and voter engagement is paramount to our service to our region.

Our NSLVE report demonstrated an already high commitment to voter registration and turnout, but we believe with more intentional efforts across multiple areas of our students' campus and learning experience, we can increase student voter registration and election participation.

Voting, Registration and Yield Rates

YOUR INSTITUTION

72.7%

2020 Voting Rate

+6.9

Change From 2016

ALL INSTITUTIONS

66%

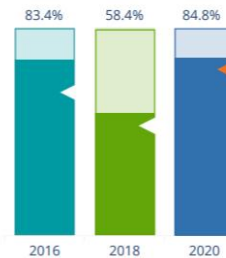
2020 Voting Rate

REGISTRATION RATE



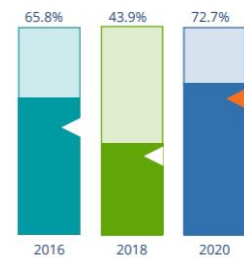
The **Registration Rate** is the percent of your voting-eligible students who registered to vote.

VOTING RATE OF REGISTERED STUDENTS



The **Voting Rate of Registered Students** is the percent of registered students who voted on Election Day. We often refer to this as the “yield” rate.

VOTING RATE



The **Voting Rate** is the percentage of eligible students who voted on Election Day. The voting rate is also the product of the registration and yield rates.

Goals:

Bemidji State seeks to increase voter registration to 90% or more. Of the students who are registered, we will seek that 90% will participate on Election Day or by absentee voting in advance.

The success of the plan will be measured by the increase in voter registration rates, student turnout on Election Day, and overall engagement with voter education initiatives.

Strategy:

Bemidji State intends to build institutional culture and infrastructure that supports civic learning, political engagement, and voter participation with the following activities:

- Create a Voter Engagement Task Force with representation at all levels of the student experience from University Administration, faculty, student support staff, athletics, communications & marketing, and student representatives from student government, identity-based student clubs, and other key student organizations. Use that task force to develop a more comprehensive and robust voter engagement plan with short and long-term strategies.
- Develop both spring and fall semester voter engagement calendars for communication and event series with voter education
- Expand social media and digital campaigns to reach both on-campus and distance learners.