



All-In Campus Democracy Challenge
Southwestern Oklahoma State University 2020-2021 Action Plan

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Executive Summary

The Democratic Engagement Action Plan for Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) was developed through the collaborative efforts of staff, faculty, and students. The purpose of the plan is to further the university's mission: *Southwestern Oklahoma State University supports students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement.* This plan will guide the implementation of guided activities by Student Affairs, academic departments, and student organizations beginning in the fall semester of 2020.

Goal include educating students on voter registration, deadlines, and voting options. Short-term goals are intended for immediate implementation, while long-term initiatives will influence work over the next three years. This plan will be reviewed annually to determine strengths and weaknesses and to modify goals and actions accordingly.

Leadership

Plan goals and strategies were developed through contributions by students, faculty members, student affairs professional, and the officers from the Custer County election office. Resources from reputable national organizations, including Civic Nation, Campus Compact, the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), were used for strategy development.

Team Members

Dr. Ruth Boyd
Vice President for Student Affairs

Natalie Kinder, President
Student Government Association

Mr. Joshua Engle
Dean of Students

Jaycee Brown, Chair
SGA Civic Engagement Committee

Mr. Oliver Willis
Coordinator, Student Activities

Lisa Boye, Chair
SGA Diversity Committee

Dr. Heather Katz
Department of Social Sciences

Breanna Jones & Chloe Turlington,
Co-Directors
Collegiate Activities Board

Dr. Allen Boyd
Department of Education
Service Learning Coordinator

Ms. Ann Brown, Secretary
Custer County Election Board

Commitment

SWOSU's mission within the Regional University System of Oklahoma is to support students and community through its integration of effective teaching, scholarly and creative endeavors, and civic engagement. In pursuing the university's mission, SWOSU faculty and staff are guided by a shared commitment to:

1. **students**, by providing high-quality instruction, involvement, services, scholarly endeavors, creative activities, and service learning.
2. **achievement**, by establishing a foundation for student success.
3. **knowledge**, by pursuing the exchange of ideas, research, and leadership for the public good.
4. **respect**, by fostering a safe, healthy, and diverse intellectual, cultural, and social environment that encourages emotional well-being.

The university's vision statement states that *SWOSU will foster an inclusive environment that inspires intellectual excellence, responsible citizenship, professional development, and personal growth.*

Revisions to the General Education (GE) curriculum were approved by the GE Committee in 2019 in order to align with the university mission and strategic plan. By completing the general education curriculum, SWOSU students demonstrate proficiency in five goals:

- 1) Communication and Computer Literacy,
- 2) Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning,
- 3) Aesthetic Experience, History, and Humanities,
- 4) Social Groups, Social Issues, Cultures, and Globalization, and
- 5) Intellectual and Professional Aptitudes.

The student learner outcomes for general education courses are defined by the university, but outcomes are addressed at the course level by the academic departments. Democratic engagement outcomes are often aligned with GE Goal Four: Social Groups, Social Issues, Cultures, and Globalization.

Co-curricular programming targeting democratic engagement, largely planned and implemented by Student Affairs, is aligned to GE Goal Five: Intellectual and Professional Aptitudes.

Landscape

SWOSU participates in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), an initiative of the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. The mission of IDHE is to shift college and university priorities and culture to advance political learning, agency, and equity.

IDHE contracts with a third-party vendor who collects public voter registration and voting records nationally. The information collected includes whether an individual registered to vote, whether they voted, and where they voted. Study results will cover election cycles for 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022.

Over the past 15 years, SWOSU has implemented a voter registration strategy, targeting both incoming freshmen and returning students. On the day of mass orientation, a time when all freshmen students gather prior to the beginning of the fall semester, they received information from Student Government

leaders regarding voter registration. At subsequent “welcome back” events on campus, freshmen and upper classmen were encouraged to complete voter registration information at events sponsored by New Student Orientation, the Collegiate Activity Board, and Student Activities throughout the weeks leading up to Fall Break. With the seemingly abundant opportunities to *register* to vote, why did actual *voting rates* of students (36.2% in 2012 and 43.3% in 2016) fall so far below the national average of 50.4%?

Perhaps the answer resides in the report of voting methods used by students. In both 2012 and 2016, only 15.1% and 15.9%, respectively, voted by absentee ballot. In 2016, and only 1.1% of students took advantage of early voting and only 0.6% voted by mail. The majority of registered students (82%) voted in-person on election day. Anecdotal data indicates that many SWOSU students prefer to remain registered at their permanent addresses so that they may participate in local elections, such as those for mayor. However, this can prove problematic for busy university students due to the travel required to do so. This information will inform two goals stated in the next section.

A bit of promising news was found in SWOSU’s 2014/2018 report of students’ voting data for midterm elections. The report indicated an 11% increase in voting rate, from 14.9% to 25.9%. While this rate is significantly behind the 2018 voting rate for all institutions (39.1%), the increase is favorable and gives the institution momentum going into the 2020 general election. Accordingly, the university appreciates the recognition it received, in the form of a bronze seal, at the 2019 ALL IN Challenge Awards Ceremony.

Goals and Strategies

Short-Term Goals

1. Advocate for the inclusion of election dates and deadlines on the university calendar.
 - a. The Vice President for Student Affairs will coordinate this effort.
2. A Sample Voter Registration FAQ sheet prepared for distribution (see Appendix A).
 - a. County election board officers indicate that students residing in residence halls often use the university’s generic address on their voter registration applications, rendering them invalid.
 - b. The Dean of Students will spearhead the FAQ sheet with distinct addresses for each hall and will provide the information at voter registration booths during “welcome back” activities at the beginning of the fall 2020 semester.
 - c. The Vice President for Student Affairs will ensure that the FAQ is published in an email to all students and published on the Student Government Association’s webpage.
3. Conduct a minimum of four voter registration drives during the fall 2020 semester.
 - a. Work with Leadership Team members to brainstorm best locations and times with high student traffic.
 - b. Partner with campus academic departments and student organizations to incorporate voter registration at various campus events.
4. Collegiate Activities Board promotes Constitution Day on September 17, 2020.
 - a. A week of activities, including the signing of a large replica of the U. S. Constitution, continued voter registration, free pocket-sized Constitutions, and the promotion of a patriotic art contest for local elementary students.
5. Engage the university social media accounts to promote National Voter Registration Day (with web links) on September 22, 2020.

- a. Coordinator of Student Activities work with Web/Graphics Designer for a graphic, with registration links.
 - b. Coordinator of Student Activities forwards the graphic to all student activity presidents so that they may post on group social media accounts.
 - c. Vice President for Marketing posts on official SWOSU social media accounts and designs a press release for print media.
6. Plan a “Party at the Polls” event for mailing absentee ballots at the SWOSU mailroom.
- a. Collegiate Activity Board and Student Government Association collaborate to provide food, music, and give-aways to all who mail in ballots or commit to voting in person.

Long-Term Goals

1. Expand student diversity programming on campus.
 - a. Collaboration between team members, academic department, Student Affairs, Student Government Association, and student organizations.
2. Increase student voting rates between 2016-2024 for both presidential and midterm election years.
3. Incorporate review of the Democratic Engagement Action Plan into the Student Affairs Student Engagement Model.
 - a. This will ensure that it is reviewed annually as part of the Student Affairs assessment cycle.
 - b. This will ensure that the initiative will remain active, even with inevitable changes in leadership and/or team members.
4. Establish annual June meeting date for team members.
 - a. New Student Government Association (SGA) officers will be engaged in planning.
 - b. New SGA committee chairs will be engaged in planning.
5. Collaborate with New Student Orientation to include democratic engagement as a SWOSU Serves opportunity.
 - a. Identify service learning activities that include a democratic engagement component as part of SWOSU Serves (freshmen day of service during First Year Experience course).

Other Activities

Census 2020

SWOSU participate in the *2020 U.S. Census Complete Count Efforts* sponsored by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Census worker recruitment events were held on campus and positions were posted on the Bulldog Job Board. Emails and social media posts were targeted at students, employees, and community members in order to encourage completion of the census.

Student Organizations

All recognized campus organizations are coordinated through the Dean of Students’ office. Current student organizations with a political classification include the Student Government Association, the Political Science Club, the Criminal Justice Students’ Association, the Pre-Law Student Association, SWOSU Young Democrats, and SWOSU Young Republicans. All recognized student organizations are eligible to seek University funding through the annual Student Allocations process during the month of October.

Community Civic Club Partnerships

The SWOSU Student Government Association will reach out to civic groups such as the Rotary International and Kiwanis International in order to sponsor candidate presentations on campus or to facilitate virtual presentations (Appendix B).

Campus Compact and NIIICE

SWOSU is a member of the Campus Compact consortium and participates in the annual National Inventory for Institutional Infrastructure on Community Engagement. The university implements the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) as an indirect measure of student engagement through service learning courses. The NSSE is administered annually to freshmen and seniors at SWOSU. Recent NSSE data indicated that 48% of SWOSU freshmen reported participating in at least one HIP and 7% reported participating in two or more. A majority of senior students, 60%, reported participating in two or more HIPs, while 30% participated in at least one high-impact practice.

During the previous academic year, a total of 471 students completed service-learning reporting forms. This computes to roughly 10% of full-time equivalent students. Approximately 8% of full-time faculty members led service-learning courses. SWOSU's B.L.U.E. Cord Initiative – Bulldogs Learning, Understanding, Empowering – continues. Students may earn the B.L.U.E. graduation honor cord by completing 9-credit hours of service-learning courses.

Appendix A – Sample Voter Registration FAQs

VOTING FAQs

1. Not sure if you're registered to vote? Check your voter registration status [here](#).
2. Phase One of Oklahoma Online voting registration is now live! Oklahomas who are already registered to vote may [update their registration information online](#).
3. If you change your voter registration to reflect your **SWOSU residence hall address**, you will vote at the Methodist Church – across the street from the SWOSU football field (817 N. 7th Street). Be sure and use the following mailing addresses and **include your room number!**

Oklahoma Hall Rm #
104 E. Davis
Weatherford, OK 73096

Mann Hall, Rm #
111 E. Davis
Weatherford, OK 73096

Black Kettle Hall Rm #
1120 N. Broadway
Weatherford, OK 73096

Neff Hall, Rm #
221 W. College
Weatherford, OK 73096

Jefferson Hall, Rm #
113 E. Davis
Weatherford, OK 73096

Stewart Hall, Rm #
215 E. College
Weatherford, OK 73096

4. If you wish to maintain your voter registration at your permanent address, you may request an Oklahoma Absentee Ballot at the Oklahoma State Election Board [website](#). Or, pick up your Absentee Ballot Application in the Dean of Students' office! The deadlines to request an absentee ballot are as follows:

August 25 Runoff Primary Election	Last day to register to vote: July 31	Last day to request absentee ballot: Aug. 18, 5:00 p.m.	Early Voting: Aug. 20-22
November 3 General Elections	Last day to register to vote: Oct. 9	Last day to request absentee ballot: October 27, 5:00 p.m.	Early Voting: Oct. 29-31

5. Need to register to vote for the first time? [Start the process!](#)



Appendix B – Sample Letter to Civic Groups

July 1, 2020

Todd Earp, President
Rotary International Club
100 Campus Drive
Weatherford, OK 73096

Dear Mr. Earp:

As the state of Oklahoma prepares for the 2020 elections, the SWOSU Student Government Association would like to express our interest in partnering with the Weatherford Rotary Club in order to bring candidates to our community. We know that this will be a busy election season in the midst of a pandemic; however, we can also collaborate in order to share speakers virtually with the campus community.

SWOSU policy states that outside speakers must be sponsored by the University or a recognized University organization. If candidates request to present at Rotary Club, will you please let us know? If possible, SGA would like to extend invitations for candidates to speak on campus as well.

Thank you for your continued support of SWOSU students.

Sincerely,

Natalie Kinder, President
Student Government Association
Southwestern Oklahoma State University