



2021-2022 Voter Friendly Campus Designation End-of-Year Reports

Report prepared by University Relations and Communications, Director of External Relations Keri Duce (2/2/2021)

UWM's Coalition

Our multidisciplinary team includes representatives from across campus who share the goals of raising civic engagement and campus buy-in. Members are selected by the Chancellor's Cabinet and the group is co-chaired by University Relations and Communications and Student Affairs. The committee meets monthly to assess progress and plan and implement action steps. This is a working group, so all representatives assist with implementation of tactics, evaluation of data and success of the action plan. Our coalition was expanded in 2018 to include more student representatives, staff from admissions, international education, athletics and our multicultural offices. These staff were deliberately selected to assist in achieving our 2020 goals and to diversify our group. We also added additional student members, so we had multiple perspectives on how to best reach out and engage students.

In 2021 many members of our work often switch to budget advocacy for our state biennium budget. However, this group still meets periodically to review the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) reports and add additional planning elements as we move towards the 2022 governor's election. We also continue to host polling sites on our Milwaukee campus for local primary and general elections. We keep our voter website up-to-date and communicate with students via email, social media and print marketing about local elections. The coalition continues to be led by our executive sponsors and our project manager to ensure new representatives are added as needed. The coalition is part of our institution's missions and values and has support from our Chancellor. UWM is part of the All In Challenge Presidents' commitment.

Representatives include:

- Executive Sponsors: Vice Chancellor for University Relations Tom Luljak and Chief Student Affairs Officer Kelly Haag
- Action Plan Facilitator/Project Manager - Director, External Relations, Keri Duce
- Registrar, Kristin Hildebrand
- Director, Center for Student Involvement, Eric Jessup-Anger
- Dean of Students Office Representative, Domonique Smith
- Director of Facilities Peck School of the Arts, Randall Trumbull-Holper
- Integrated Marketing & Communications – Erika Kramer, Lesley Kelling and Kathy Quirk
- UWM Police Department - Joseph LeMire and Brian Switala

- Student Union Facilities and Marketing - Mike Schmit, Jessica Wegner, Brandon James, Amanda Elliott
- University Housing – Paul Dixon
- Panther Card Office – Richard Haskey
- Executive Director Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership & Research Laurie Marks
- Waukesha and Washington County Campus Representatives - Courtney O’Connell, Tima Guled, Sue Kalinka
- Center for International Education Representative – Sharon Gosz
- Athletics Representatives Adam Schemm
- Multicultural Student Office Representative Alberto Maldonado
- Admissions and Orientation Representative – Colin Daly
- Student Association Professional Staff – Quincy Kissack
- Student representatives – Brian Barber Jr, Emma Mae Weber, Clarence Kinnard
- Faculty representative – Paru Shah (Political Science)

Community and External Partners

Our most important partner is the City of Milwaukee Election Commission. Working with them on polling locations and ensuring access to ballots are cornerstones of our work. Alumni groups like the Panther Advocates and Panther Promoters assist us in spreading the word about the importance of voting and civic engagement. The League of Women Voters and Common Ground are also very active on our three campuses and both assist with registering students to vote.

For 2020, we added a partnership with the Andrew Goodman Foundation, the National Conference on Citizenship/Students Learn Students Vote Coalition, the Campus Vote Project, Campus Compact, and All In Campus Democracy Challenge/Civic Nation. Several groups provided grant funding, which allowed for us to greatly expand our marketing and communication efforts.

Overview and Executive Summary

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) has a long history of student, faculty and staff involvement in civic and community engagement. Our [Guiding Values](#) prominently feature community engagement, reflecting their deeply rooted role in the actions and environment of UWM. Our students, faculty and staff are involved in a wide range of civic engagement projects at international, national, state and local levels, while maintaining partnerships with a large number of Milwaukee-area community organizations.



Our action plan is our template for increasing student voter engagement and outreach. Guided by the student voting work group, tasks are assigned to committee members with the goal of increasing voter turnout so eligible voters know how to register, find their polling location or absentee ballot and ultimately vote. This is a non-partisan initiative.

2018 was UWM's first year with a coalition across campus and we learned a lot. We set goals for 2020 and were still able to meet many of them even with the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic also allowed us to add new outreach that otherwise might not have happened before. We increased our consistent marketing efforts on all three of our campus locations – Milwaukee, Waukesha and Washington County. We created two new voting videos focused on students that were shared on social media, the voting website and via email. We encouraged students to vote during New Student Orientation and voter registration information was included as part of our Fall Welcome programming. This was a huge goal to get checked off the list and institutionalized. All 2600 new freshmen were told about voting during the Virtual Panther Hangout portion of their New Student Orientation program. Seventy percent of first year students completed the online Panther Academic Welcome (PAW) course. There was a whole page in the "Other Tools to Help You" module dedicated to Panthers Vote.

A dedicated link was available in our weekly student email "Student News and Stuff" throughout the fall semester. Students received four emails specifically around voting initiatives. The first email focused on Constitution Day and voting as a civic duty (33.8% open rate). We were able to feature our newly created "This Is Why I Vote" video and highlight the need for poll workers. The second voter email (28.3% open rate) highlighted how to register to vote online and request an absentee ballot. We also shared the National Voter Education Week checklist. The third student voter email (25.6% open rate) included information highlighting that early voting was ending in our student union that week, showcased how to access your voter ID enrollment letter to receive a free voter ID from our Panther Card Office, and highlighted how to check if your absentee ballot had been received. The final voter email (25.9% open rate) included free Lyft codes to get students to the polls, included last-minute, in-person voting tips and highlighted a "I Love Milwaukee So I Vote" poster that students could request as part of our partnership with the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition. A fifth email also went out the day after the election highlighting the importance of self-care post-election.



For the first time ever, we utilized our campus text messaging system to notify students of voting deadlines by sending two different text messages over the course of the fall. One message went out reminding students the deadline to register online and request their absentee ballot. The other was sent the day prior to the election and featured a free Lyft code to get students to the polls and shared what you needed to bring to vote in-person.

Emails went to faculty and staff providing resources for integrating voter registration activities into the classroom. Announcements were available on the campus news page and the provost announcements around our early voting site and available campus resources to promote voting. A presentation was also shared with all advisors and counselors during their monthly meeting.

Physical print marketing was placed on all three campuses. We utilized window clings, yard signs, banners, posters and quarter sheets in highly trafficked areas even though our on-campus student population was down to about 20%. We also placed digital marketing in our virtual Student Union. This was important as large-scale events were not allowed because of the pandemic, so all efforts needed to be focused on print and digital marketing and engagement.

Social media was highly utilized across several platforms – Twitter, Instagram, Instagram stories, and Facebook. During all of 2020 we had 121 total posts, 716,157 impressions, 520,896 reach, 1381 link clicks and 4630 video views.

Panther Athletics was new to the coalition this year. They produced 400 Panther-branded VOTE t-shirts for our student-athletes, coaches, and staff to wear leading up to Election Day. This was a donor-funded initiative. A social media campaign centered around student-athletes wearing their VOTE t-shirts from the middle of October through Election Day. And, through sponsorship dollars, they were also able to work with the Andrew Goodman Foundation to promote voting.



The Registrar's Office and UITS worked together to email every enrolled student a PDF of their Voter ID letter. For a number of years, students have been able to view and print their personalized Voter ID Enrollment letter from the Student Center homepage in PAWS, but it can be confusing. If students did not remember to do this prior to arriving at their polling location, they sometimes had difficulty accessing the letter via a mobile device. The emailed PDF letter ensured that all students had this information, if needed. These were sent not once, but twice: the weekend before the early voting deadline and the weekend before the general election.

University Housing also provided a huge amount of support in training their RAs and staff, promoting voting to students and adjusting as regulations came down around Isolation and Quarantine (I&Q) voting requirements. Signage was placed throughout all residence halls, including large lobby window clings, large posters, lobby door signage, polling place directions and suite door signage. RAs (Resident Assistants) and staff tabled in main areas and provided in-person and virtual programming around voter register and early voting. This was a difficult shift because normally we would send outside groups in to assist, but because of COVID, Housing staff had to be trained to assist students instead. In the long-term, we hope to continue this,

but it was a difficult staffing ask in addition to all the work they were already doing with the pandemic.

We also had to pivot quickly as rules developed around Isolation and Quarantine voting procedures with the Election Commission. We created specific marketing and an email reflector to assist students in I&Q. Taxi transportation was available to students and a plan was in-place for any student who might be too sick to make it to their polling place on Election Day. In the end, only a few students needed this service, but it was an important process to put in place during the pandemic.



RAs helped with a variety of outreach including election education emails, bulletin boards, duty rounds while wearing VOTE t-shirts provided by Athletics, peer interactions, door knocking and social hour programming with informational handouts. Service desk and full-time professional staff in Residence Life and Business Administration trained on early voting process, proper documentation needed for voting, how to access PAWS documentation, and assisting students entering and/or leaving Isolation and Quarantine.

We were unable to print Grind Coffee shop stickers as many of the campus food locations were closed or extremely restricted because of COVID. Proactive efforts will continue around student IDs to ensure all students who need a voting ID can get one. Large group registration efforts (athletes, service learners, housing floors, etc.) will also be reviewed after COVID restrictions are lifted. We'll keep all these efforts on the list for the future.

As for our 2020 goals, we await our NSLVE reports to see if we were able to improve our student voting rates by ten percent. Of course, we're hoping to reach full voter participation over the next four years. We were able to provide additional opportunities for students to register to vote prior to election day through weekly tabling in the student union, tabling in the residence halls and email and social media outreach on how to register online. Including this information during orientation and Fall Welcome also provided additional awareness to our newest students.

A very important goal moving forward is working to embed voter registration and voting into more classes utilizing Canvas and classroom discussion. We did provide sample text for faculty and staff to include in their Canvas course, but we can't track how many took advantage and shared that information with their students. Typically, there would be more service-learning opportunities embedded in courses, but that was highly restricted because of COVID. We also have anecdotal reports of guest speakers coming to class to present (how is healthcare policy impacted through voting, impacts on urban planning through voting, etc.) but these efforts will need to be greatly expanded to reach full voter participation.

We actively promoted UWM as an early voting site for the whole City of Milwaukee. Students, faculty, staff and community members all took advantage. Our partnership with the election commission continues to be positive and the collaboration is seamless. Finally, all three campuses really operated in lockstep as each campus had representatives on the committee and access to all the marketing collateral. It was a great collaboration as this was the first cycle where all campuses were fully under the leadership of one Chancellor.

Chancellor's Commitment

UWM continues to deepen its positive impact in the city and region through community and business partnerships. Through this work, UWM boasts a strong and long-established track record of pervasive community partnerships, community-driven research, educational and research collaborations, student experiential learning opportunities, contributions to economic development and enhancements to cultural and environmental quality-of-life.

UWM is proud to have been recognized among the nation's top universities for community engagement by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The foundation created its [Community Engagement Classification](#) to recognize colleges and universities that benefit their communities in ways not reflected by the national educational data typically used to compile lists of top colleges.

Analysis of Our Work

We are looking forward to reviewing our NSLVE reports this year. Because of such high rates of early or absentee voting, we don't have a guess if we've met our goal or not. We have a way to go to achieve full voter participation, but each year we take steps to get there. The Chancellor's cabinet receives this report and reviews it through our executive sponsors. The report is also posted to our voting website and is shared with faculty and staff through email announcements. Student leaders have an opportunity to review and discuss the report to provide feedback. Finally, the committee will also spend 2021 analyzing NSLVE data and planning for 2022.

1. **Voter Registration Efforts:** Newly implemented voter registration efforts during New Student Orientation and Fall Welcome ensured new students received information on how to register. All students received emails regarding how to register online because of the pandemic. We do not know how many students we registered since all registration was encouraged for students to do online. In-person voter registration was not happening like it might normally because of the pandemic. We did encourage students to register in-person through the early voting location in the Student Union. We also hosted five tabling opportunities in the Union Concourse to answer questions about registration and one early voter event on Spaight's Plaza on 10/27/2020.
2. **Voter Education:** Students receive nonpartisan voter information links through our uwm.edu/vote website and links to see what is on their ballot. Groups like WISPIRG are active on our campus and also take part in social media takeovers and outreach to students. UWM also has student-led partisan groups who provide outreach to their

members. Some classes host guest speakers on topics specific to their coursework that involve how elections impact those special interests.

3. **Voter Turnout:** Students have access to vote because we host a citywide voting site in our Student Union. For students outside of Milwaukee, we encouraged them to register and then order an absentee ballot for the safest option during the pandemic. Students are also provided information on how to find their polling place and day of registration. Finally, this year, we used a grant to provide free Lyft codes to students who needed a ride to the polls.
4. **Student Voting Rights:** Students receive outreach from the campus in many forms assisting them in voting. We offer many free resources. The biggest hurdle is often we have students across seven counties and several states, so it can be confusing for them to figure out where to vote since they can't all vote at the Student Union site. Additionally, college students are often transient, so changing their address often changes their polling location. They may not have an ID with their current address so they might need additional verification. Off-campus students receive additional information on how to update their registration as needed and we provide a PDF via email with their voter ID verification letter.

Top 3 Successes

1. Adding discussion around voter registration to orientation and Fall Welcome programming was a goal from 2018 which we were able to accomplish, ensuring all new students receive information about voting. In four years, we'll be able to ensure every UWM student received this information as they entered the institution.
2. Another success was emailing all students their voter ID verification letter. Knowing voter ID can be confusing for students, this project took a fair amount of IT support but was prioritized and completed because of its importance. We also sent four emails and two text messages specific to voter initiatives.
3. We successfully implemented a Resident Assistant (RA) and student-athlete peer-led voting encouragement campaign. Knowing that students living on-campus were somewhat isolated during the pandemic, hearing directly from their peers via social media and in-person became critical to our outreach strategy. In addition, we were able to recruit a diverse group of students to share their perspectives in our new ["This Is Why I Vote \(UWM Edition\)"](#) video.

Top 3 Challenges

1. Funding. The grant money helped a lot this year to increase marketing and communication efforts. We never would have been able to provide Lyft credits for rides to the polls. And space funding was critical for the handful of engagements we were able to offer.
2. Lack of faculty involvement. We need more faculty members at the table and assisting in promotion if we're going to meet a future goal of all students hearing about voter registration in the classroom and through our course management software.
3. COVID-19. Social distancing, event restrictions and 25% of people actually on-campus weren't the only issues. Faculty and staff were overextended because of emergency operations work, so it was challenging for folks to assist with voting and keep up with all their other tasks.



Beyond 2020

Civic engagement happens year-round. UWM moves seamlessly from work on student voting to work on Wisconsin's biannual budget. We also continue to encourage students to participate in local elections through email and social media. Our committee meets more regularly during general election years but still convenes from time to time in the off year. Students will also receive voter registration at each orientation and during Fall Welcome. Our committee will look for additional options for engagement as we move towards the 2022 midterm election. We certainly plan to implement all the great 2020 tactics once again in 2022.

NSLVE Data

When we receive UWM's NSLVE report, we actually receive three, one for each of our campus locations. Those reports will go to the committee for review along with this summary and we'll meet to discuss our thoughts and review how we can improve. We'll specifically take a look at demographics of our students related to gender, race and ethnicity, along with what school/colleges and majors had lower participation so we can target those areas. After that, we'll share those updates with the campus (faculty, staff and students). Finally, in hopes we'll also be named a Voter Friendly Campus and receive a badge from the All in Challenge, we'll also produce media releases sharing that information with the community.

2020 Election Dates

Spring Primary – Tuesday, February 18, 2020

Spring Election/Presidential Primary – Tuesday, April 7, 2020

Fall Primary – Tuesday, August 11, 2020

Fall General Election – Tuesday, November 3, 2020

Early Voting Site and Day of Voting Metrics

UW-Milwaukee was selected as an early voting site for the 2020 primary and general elections. Additionally, our residence hall polling location was shifted to our Student Union based on COVID-19 social distancing procedures. Campus signage was spread all around campus to ensure people knew how to find both early voting and day-of locations.

- The November 3, 2020 vote count was 429 for two UWM specific polling wards (127 and 130) with the site hosted in the Student Union.
- For the 11/3/2020 General Election, 1591 people early voted in the UWM Student Union. The early voting time frame in Wisconsin was more limited for this election vs. 2018 based on some legal rulings during that time.
- The August 11, 2020 vote count was 71 for two UWM specific polling wards (127 and 130) with the site hosted in the Student Union. The Student Union also hosted a one-day early voting site on 8/5/2020.

Marketing and Communication Basic Punch List

- Key election dates are posted on the campus events calendar.
- Marketing materials across all three campuses are refreshed and given a similar look and feel, while also being reviewed for consistency and clarity of message.
 - Posters, banners and print marketing is focused on the Student Union, Library and University Housing.
 - Digital signage utilized around campus.
 - Yard signs printed for all three campuses.
 - Initial marketing ready by Orientation.
- Information is housed at uwm.edu/vote, a one-stop website for students with information on registration, voting locations, voter ID and more. This site also includes information on how students can access a customized voter enrollment verification letter. This site is updated by External Relations. Our Action Plan and NSLVE data are also available on this site.
- The social media plan is coordinated through University Relations and Communications, focusing on proactive messaging and response to issues.
- Campus-wide email(s) are sent to students, faculty and staff. It includes the UW System Guidance on Political Campaign Activities guidelines.
- UWM Alumni Association shares voting messages with their population.
- Parents and families receive information through the Panther Family Association so they can assist their students in identifying voter challenges.
- Materials provided to faculty and staff for use in their classrooms and with their student organizations.
- Grind labels and dining area outreach.
- Panther Card Office marketing materials around voter ID.

2014 & 2018 Campus Report: Student Voting Rates for UWM

National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement Summary from 2018 Report

Milwaukee Campus

- The percentage of total students voting rose 16.4 percent.
- In spite of extensive early vote campaigns and a convenient early vote location, in-person election day voting still accounted for 75 percent of all student votes.
- The biggest area of growth continues to be the youngest demographic, 18-21-year-olds, who may be voting for the first time (will be voting for President for the first time in 2020).

Washington County

- Enrollment declined 26.6 percent from 2014 to 2018 but the total number of students voting only declined by 14.6 percent.
- Nearly all students do in-person voting posing a unique challenge for on-campus promotion as most cannot vote on campus (have only their home address).
- Opportunity to promote early voting (if it exists in various communities) as almost no students take advantage. It is likely available in a few larger communities in the county.

Waukesha

- Enrollment declined 25.4 percent from 2014 to 2018 but total student voting only declined 4.8 percent.
- In-person voting remains the nearly exclusive way votes are cast. Similar to the case at Washington County, perhaps there are some marketing ideas for on campus providing info on voting locations just for the few days before election day.
- Early voting would be a growth area though since larger communities within this student body group (Waukesha, Brookfield, Menomonee Falls) could provide realistic opportunities for promoting this.