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Best Practices for Voter Engagement Within Higher Education

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Honors Project Spring 2021

Introduction

The 2020 General Election was the first election where Generation Z and Millennials made up a significant portion of all eligible voters compared to the older voting blocs. Younger generations are expected to continue to make up larger shares of the electorate and will eventually outgrow the voting blocs of groups that traditionally turn out at higher rates in elections. Additionally, young voters are the most racially diverse voting bloc in our country. Young people are known to vote at lower rates, yet their voices are becoming increasingly significant as their share of the electorate grows. Therefore, it is imperative that we learn more about how to recruit members of these younger generations to participate in future elections. Colleges and universities are in a unique position to encourage their students to vote and to change the narrative that young people are unconcerned with our elections. Many academic institutions, such as BGSU, promote active citizenship to their students and have a vested interest in encouraging their students to be civically engaged. More institutions are starting to dedicate staff and spaces to voter engagement initiatives on their campuses, such as the BGSU Votes initiative. It is incredibly important that colleges and universities continue to build on their work to increase voter engagement among their students after the 2020 General Election. Researching voter engagement practices on college campuses is timely, relevant, and will lead to the continued success of increasing voter turnout among college-aged people.

For this project, I am studying the practices and strategies used by other colleges to promote voting and civic engagement on their campuses. I will be asking these institutions to complete a survey with information about the types of civic engagement programming they do on their campuses, and how they utilize social media to spread messages about civic engagement. Youth.gov, the official government website promoting youth programming, defines civic engagement as, "working to make a difference in the civic life of one's community and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and nonpolitical processes." Therefore, participating institutions will be asked to complete the survey regarding their civic engagement programs on their campus to help evaluate their effective strategies.

Research Question

What best practices and strategies have other academic institutions implemented to increase civic engagement and voter participation among their students?

Literature Review

The voting trends among college students and young people have been studied extensively in recent years as more emphasis is being placed on civic engagement in popular culture. As such, the need to engage with college students in politics and voter turnout continues to be a pressing issue in political science and higher education. Research has indicated that voting laws have a huge impact on college students trying to vote, as was discussed in *State Laws and Mobilizing College Student Voter Turnout* (Hester, 2019). Student affairs professionals play an important role in reducing barriers to voting for college students through increased programming and the institutionalization of voter registration.

Many academic institutions have published scholarly articles regarding their civic engagement practices and research, which vary from student-led voter engagement initiatives to in-class projects, and other programming. In *Engaging a Campus During a Tumultuous Election: A Case Study*, the researchers discuss Elon University as a case study on voter engagement among college students (Eaves, 2017). They utilized student leaders in their undergraduate student government and their Andrew Goodman Foundation campus ambassadors to plan programming around the 2016 Presidential Election. One of their outreach strategies that has a lot of potential at BGSU is their effort to mail postcards with voter registration information to every on-campus student.

Other universities seem to collaborate with their residence life office to facilitate voter outreach, such as Northwestern University. In *College Leaders, It's Your Duty to Get Students to Vote*, they discuss the campaign Northwestern University implemented to interact with every new incoming student and ask them about their voter registration status. This university worked with their residence life office to build this campaign into every "welcome station" on move-in day (Bennion, 2018).

Additionally, some universities have sought to introduce voter engagement strategies to their classroom curriculums, such as with Simpson College. In *Fact Checks, Voter Guides, and GOTV: Civic Learning Projects in American Politics Courses*, researchers discuss "civic learning" projects for a class at Simpson College that were designed to help students develop civic and analytical skills (Bardwell, 2011).

Overall, the strategies used by academic institutions to influence the voter participation rate among their students vary greatly. Many universities have found success in student-led programming, while others have sought to institutionalize voter registration by making it part of the new student orientation process. These voter engagement strategies vary from institution to institution, so it is important to learn more about what best practices and strategies have been successful at increasing civic engagement among college students. Each academic institution has different leaders in their civic engagement efforts. Some universities have created offices specifically for these efforts, while other institutions allow their upper administration to lead this program (Eaves, 2017).

Literature Review Continued

With regards to the program management side of voter engagement initiatives, there are several areas of research to look for. When looking at samples of strategic communication guides created by higher education institutions, they all contain similar elements. The Maryland Institute College of Art Office of Strategic Communications put together a communications toolkit for students to use when planning events on their campus.
This communication toolkit is comprehensive and covers much of the event planning and promotion process (MICA Office of Strategic Communications, 2020). The communication toolkits published by other universities demonstrate different focuses on the event planning and promotion process, such as with The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. Their communications toolkit focuses on the many aspects of program and event management, such as timelines, branding, and publicizing (The Wharton School, 2020). Having an established strategy for event management is a key element of program management.

In addition, there are many programs and communication resources available from nonprofit organizations, such as the Colorado Nonprofit Association. Their *Communications Toolkit – Samples* demonstrates the different ways that nonprofit organizations might approach creating their communication strategy. They provide worksheets for organizations to define their goals, identify audiences, and craft messages to fit them (Colorado Nonprofit Association, 2011). Having a communication strategy is a key part of program management. Additionally, CIVICUS designed an internal communication toolkit to help civil society organizations with their communication and strategic planning process (Hume, n.d.). Their resources are incredibly helpful in improving the strategic planning process for an organization.

Overall, the available research indicates that voter participation among college students is a major concern for many higher education institutions who wish to increase their voter turnout rates. Universities may implement a variety of strategies to increase civic engagement on their campuses, and the office or person responsible for overseeing the civic engagement programming differs by university. There is further room for research into successful voter engagement programming among academic institutions. Regarding program and communication management, there are numerous resources available from higher education institutions and nonprofit organizations to help develop a program and communication plan specific to another organization.

Benefits of the Study

As stated earlier, the 2020 General Election was the first election where Generation Z and Millennials made up a significant portion of all eligible voters, and their share of the electorate is expected to grow. Therefore, it is imperative that we learn more about how to recruit members of these younger generations to participate in future elections. Young people have historically voted at low rates, but that trend has started to change in recent years as more resources are being devoted to voter engagement among young people. The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University estimates that 52-55% of youth voted in the 2020 Presidential Election compared to 42-44% for the 2016 Presidential Election (Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement).

Colleges and universities are uniquely positioned to help change the narrative that young people are unconcerned with civic engagement. It is important that we continue to build off the success of the 2020 election voter turnout by studying the effective strategies for engaging with young people. More institutions are starting to dedicate staff and spaces to voter engagement initiatives on their campuses, and there is much to learn from how these various institutions are recruiting their students to vote. Colleges and universities have a vested interest in preparing their students to be civic learners and participants for the rest of their lives, and there is no better time than now to study successful organizing on college campuses. Researching voter engagement practices are timely, relevant, and will lead to the continued success of increasing voter turnout among college aged people. This research will be beneficial to any academic institutions hoping to start or improve their voter engagement practices on their campus. The results will be made available to any participating school that would like them and will be shared with The Andrew Goodman Foundation, which provides support to schools for their voter engagement programs. The individual participants will receive the benefit of the results of the survey if they choose to opt into them, and society will receive the benefit of younger generations being empowered to vote for the rest of their lives.

Methodology

The survey was administered online using Qualtrics at BGSU. The subjects consisted of the students and staff members at the 84 colleges and universities who are members of The Andrew Goodman Foundation (AGF) Vote Everywhere program. The Andrew Goodman Foundation sent the online survey link by email in the Vote Everywhere weekly newsletter, followed by targeting outreach from the AGF staff to their campus portfolios. The first page of the online Qualtrics survey displayed the consent statement for the participants to read through before choosing either "I consent" or "I do not consent" to participating in this research. The subjects who selected the first option indicating their consent were then asked to continue through the survey questions. The subjects who indicated they did NOT consent were redirected to the end of the survey. The estimated completion time for the survey was approximately 20 minutes.

Participants were not asked to provide their name. However, they were asked to indicate whether they were a student, staff member, or faculty at their academic institution. They were also asked to indicate what academic institution they were completing the survey on behalf of to ensure they were a participating Vote Everywhere campus. The names of the academic institutions are not shared with any of the final reports for this project. As the researcher, I do not have access to the identities of the participants, but I do have access to some identifying information, such as the school and the role of the participant as a student, staff, or faculty. The research findings from the data will be shared with The Andrew Goodman Foundation and any participants who request copies of the results at the end of the survey. The data is stored on a password-protected private computer for at least a minimum of three years, as is required by the Institutional Review Board.

Ethics

The consent statement was shared with the participants at the first step of the recruitment process when the survey was sent to the subjects. The students and staff were asked to view the consent statement on the first page of the online survey. They were not asked to sign their name. Instead, they were asked to check a box indicating that they either consent or do not consent to participating in the study, and were then directed through the rest of the survey questions or redirected to the end of the survey. They were provided the primary investigator and advisor contact information for any questions or concerns regarding the survey.

The survey link was sent to the subjects by The Andrew Goodman Foundation and was administered using Qualtrics at BGSU. There was no obligation for the participants to complete the survey once they have started it. They could stop the survey at any time, and they could skip any of the questions in the survey. There were no consequences for declining to participate in the survey. The survey was designed to be mutually beneficial to both the participants and investigators by allowing both parties to learn more about effective civic engagement practices at other academic institutions. The participants received the option at the end of the survey to receive a copy of the research findings, and had the option to include their email address. The participants were asked to contact the primary investigator and the faculty advisor with any questions about the survey, how their answers were to be used, or their consent to the study.

Subjects & Recruitment

The research subjects were the students and staff that are members of The Andrew Goodman Foundation Vote Everywhere (AGF) program. This program includes 84 college campuses ranging from community colleges to public and private universities, with each campus creating a team consisting of students, staff and/or faculty. BGSU is a member of The Andrew Goodman Foundation Vote Everywhere program and is one of their leading campuses. The survey was sent to all the students and staff that are members of this voter engagement network for them to assess what practices and strategies have been effective on their campuses. The names of the subjects and their affiliated institutions in this network are public information available on the AGF website.

The Andrew Goodman Foundation sent the survey by email to the members of the Vote Everywhere program. The members of the AGF Vote Everywhere program chose to participate in the survey after receiving the survey link in the weekly Vote Everywhere program newsletter, followed by targeted outreach from their program managers. The purpose and benefits of the research study were included, along with a description of the project and an introduction from the primary investigator.

Response Rate

The survey was sent to the AGF Ambassadors and Campus Champions at 84 different schools. Each school has two Ambassadors and one Champion for a total of 252 individuals reached. There were 22 individuals that completed the survey (9% response rate). There were 16 distinct institutions that responded to the survey (19% response rate).

Respondent Demographics: Student Population

Answer	%	Count
Less than 5,000	30.00%	6
5,000-9,999	25.00%	5
10,000-19,999	20.00%	4
20,000-39,999	25.00%	5
40,000-59,999	0.00%	0
More than 60,000	0.00%	0
Total	100%	20

Respondent Demographics: Length of Involvement with AGF

Answer	%	Count
Less than 1 year	10.53%	2
1-2 years	0.00%	0
3-5 years	52.63%	10
More than 5 years	36.84%	7
Total	100%	19

Respondent Demographics: Administrative Structure

Answer	%	Count
Student organization	34.48%	10
Faculty-led	6.90%	2
Office or department dedicated to civic engagement	48.28%	14
Dean of Students or other student affiars office	10.34%	3
Political science department	0.00%	0
Other	0.00%	
Total	100%	29

Respondent Demographics: Program Staffing (Multiple Responses)
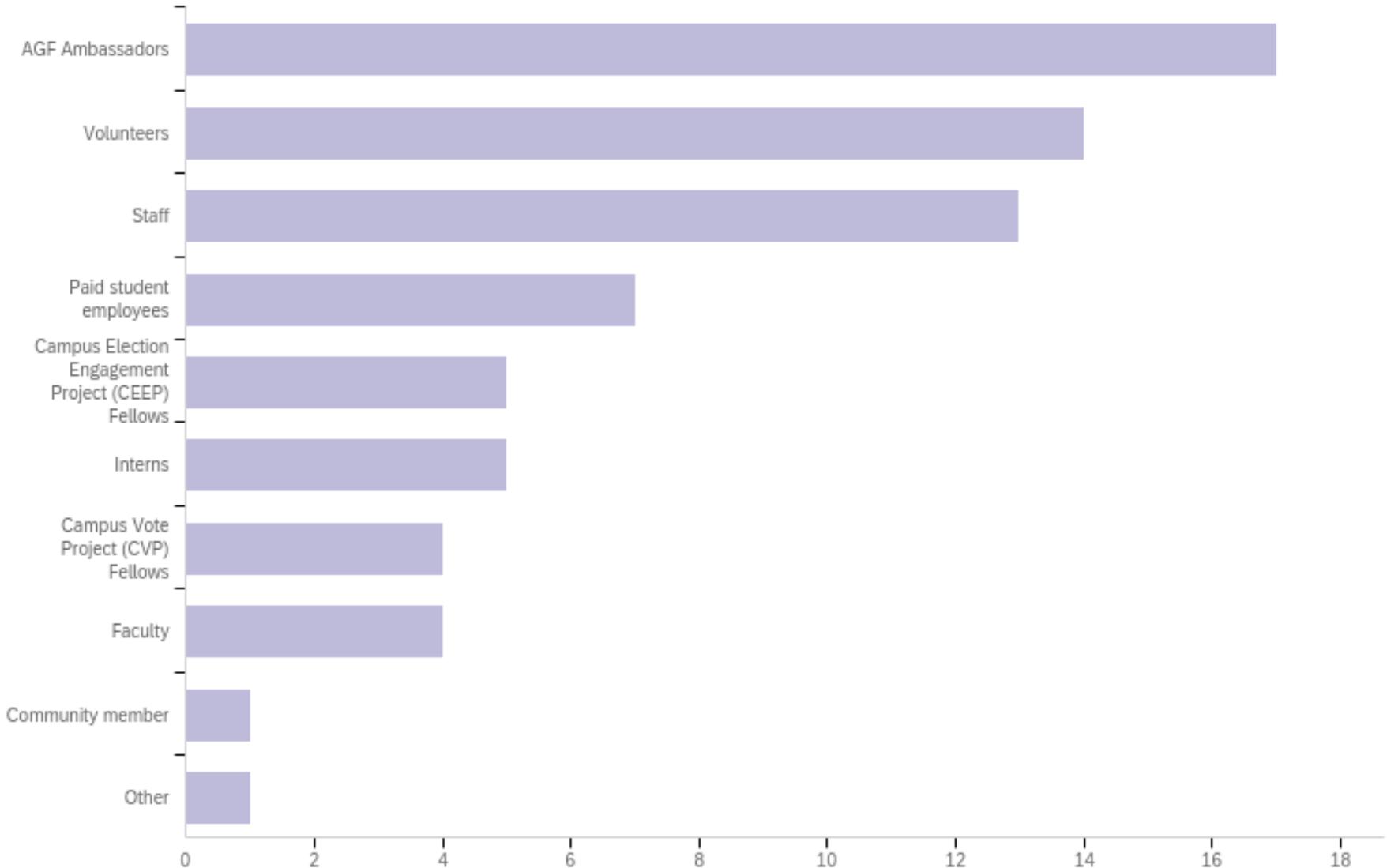
Research Findings

The following slides present the findings from the voter engagement survey that was sent to AGF campuses.

Activities Organized From the Last Four Years (1 of 2)

Answer	%	Count
Voter registration drives	10.63%	22
National Voter Registration Day	10.63%	22
Partnership with other student organizations	8.70%	18
Classroom presentations	8.21%	17
Absentee/mail ballot workshops	7.73%	16
Vote Early Day	6.76%	14
Partnership with off-campus groups or organizations	6.28%	13
Participated in new student orientation	5.80%	12
Partnership with athletic teams	5.80%	12

Activities Organized From the Last Four Years (2 of 2)

Answer	%	Count
Free rides to the polls	5.31%	11
Constitution Day	5.31%	11
Candidate forums/debates	5.31%	11
Partnership with Greek organizations	4.83%	10
Welcome-week activities	4.35%	9
Student debates	2.42%	5
Move-in day for on-campus students	1.93%	4
Other	0.00%	0
Total	100%	207

Voter Registration, Education, and Get Out the Vote Programming

The following best practices for voter registration, education, and GOTV programming were summarized from open response questions. These are the recommendations and best practices suggested by the participants for effective voter engagement programming. This is not a comprehensive list of all responses; rather, it includes the most mentioned activities and themes from the responses.

Top Five Innovative Voter Registration Programming

- Presentations to first-year classes
- Voter registration form & information pick up and drop off location
- Incorporate voter registration and information into new student orientation
- Presence at opening weekend activities
- Tabling with free food and giveaways

Top Five Innovative Voter Education Programming

- Candidate forums, debates, presentations, and debate watch parties

- Creative social media posts about candidates and the election

- Campus-wide email communication

- Mixed media: student news organization partnership, voter education video production

- Dialogue events: workshops, teach-ins, free food and discussion

Top Six Innovative GOTV Programming

- Free transportation to polling locations for either early voting or Election Day

- On-campus polling location for early voting and general election

- Dropbox with free postage, envelopes, registration forms, and absentee requests

- Altered class schedule on Election Day

- "Pledge to Vote" station with free food and swag

- "March to the Polls" with community members

Recommendations from Participants for Starting & Improving Voter Engagement Programs

These recommendations were compiled from the responses of the participants, who were all asked to share their recommendations to other schools starting their voter engagement programs.

- Meet students where they are at

- Seek outside sources and partnerships for funding and support

- Institutionalization of voter registration processes (move-in day, first-year classes, new student orientation)

- Coalition building across campus and the community

- Understand the legalities of voter registration in your state and for out of state students

- Utilize data from National Study on Learning, Voting, and Engagement to inform action plans and programming

Social Media: Best Platform

When asked which social media platform was most successful for engaging their students, campus teams overwhelmingly responded with **Instagram (IG**). They listed numerous benefits to using Instagram as their primary platform for engaging with students online, and those reasons include:

- Customization and creativity of posts

- Variety of posts (stories, highlights, IG live)

- Larger character limit than Twitter

- Detailed engagement insights and statistics

- Information is easily shared (repost on stories)

- Meet students where they are: Students are more active on Instagram than Facebook, and Instagram is more effective at sharing detailed information than Twitter

Social Media: Best Practices and Recommendations from Participants

- Be consistent with branding and messaging

- Ensure information is accurate before posting

- Post consistently and maintain a constant presence

- Use Canva to create graphics

- Develop a communication plan and social media calendar at the start of the semester

- Hire a student to specifically manage social media

- Be creative and try new things

Social Media: Scheduling Tools

When asked if campus teams have utilized social media scheduling tools, only three respondents indicated that they had, and all used Hootsuite. They each agreed that using a social media scheduling tool made their work easier and more efficient. Their direct comments are included below:

- "Yes! It has allowed us to carry out a lot of social media work without devoting a significant amount of time to it."

- "It is sometimes hard to schedule out posts, but generally it is a helpful tool, if your office had capacity to plan ahead."

- "I think it hasn't increased the number of posts, it's just made posting to all of our platforms more efficient and less time-consuming."

Social Media: Recommendations Based on Findings

Social media should be used strategically rather than as an afterthought for advertising events. Young people consistently use social media as their primary source of up-to-date information on politics and current events. Every single respondent to this survey mentioned somewhere in their response that social media was a main form of organizing in at least one focus area, whether that be voter registration, education, or get out the vote efforts. Many respondents indicated that they thought consistent branding, messaging, and posting was the key to using social media effectively. However, only three of these respondents indicated that they had used social media scheduling tools to maintain posting schedule and a consistent presence online. Therefore, voter engagement programs at colleges and universities need to invest in their social media strategy for voter engagement, and should leverage social media as a tool to reach the widest number of people with this important information.

First, campus teams should dedicate a student role on their team specifically to social media management. Whether this student serves as an ambassador for The Andrew Goodman Foundation, or serves in another compensated role, there should be a student leader dedicated to developing and executing a social media strategy on behalf of the voter engagement initiative.

In addition, campus teams should invest in the tools to help their student social media leader be successful. Subscribing to the premium version of graphic tools like Canva allows students to be consistent with their branding and maximizes versatility of the graphics. Subscribing to a social media scheduling tool, such as Hootsuite, will enable students to plan out their posts in advance and develop a strategy for consistent online engagement.

Finally, campus teams need to train their student social media leaders in using these tools, and allow them to focus their role specifically on the social media side of voter engagement. Training students in how to use these tools is a crucial step in developing an effective social media strategy for voter engagement. Without investing in training, these social media-specific roles and tools will be ineffective.

Best Practices for Recruiting a Diverse Team

When asked how campus teams recruit a diverse team of student leaders, they overwhelmingly responded that using their network was the most effective tool. They suggested reaching out to campus diversity offices, faculty, and intentionally reaching out to specific student groups. One respondent suggested, "Intentional outreach to specific staff, faculty, students, and groups. Go to where they are. Meet where they would like to. Some students of color may not come into office spaces that are predominantly white." The overall takeaway from these responses was that campus voter engagement teams need to build relationships and coalitions broadly across campus, and then utilize that network to recruit a wide variety of students for leadership positions. It is important to coalition build and collaborate with identity-based groups on campus, and to maintain that collaboration throughout the entire school year.

Summary

In summary, there are several key points to be made from this qualitative research study. The first key finding was that voter engagement programs at academic institutions need to be student centered in everything that they do. From voter registration, education, and get out the vote efforts to social media strategy, all programming needs to be focused on meeting the needs of that specific student population. Each school has its own unique campus culture and student body, and these unique qualities need to be the motivating factor behind every aspect of voter engagement programming. Young people now use social media to obtain information more than they use any other news source, and voter engagement programs need to adapt their means of voter recruitment to reach the widest number of students. Their messaging and programming need to be centered around their student needs, which leads to the next key finding that voter engagement programs need to meet their students where they are. This requires the institutionalization of voter engagement programs at the university or college level. Depending on the school, this may mean implementing voter registration into the new student orientation process or making voter registration and education a part of first-year introduction courses. Ultimately, voter engagement programs need to be willing to meet students where they are on campus or online, rather than leaving it up to the students to seek them out.

Conclusion

I am passionate about voter engagement because I believe that voting is a powerful tool to create change. Voting is not the only way to advance social change and justice, but for many students it is the first step in becoming an active citizen and being a part of a collective effort to create change. I believe in the power of young people to be agents of change in our communities, and it is important to help students recognize their political power. Through effective organizing, colleges and universities can equip their students to be civic learners and leaders for the rest of their lives.

I wanted to do this research project to help facilitate information sharing between campuses which have great ideas and innovative ways of engaging students in voting. By documenting their best practices, I can help these campuses improve their programming and create an even bigger impact on their campuses. These best practices for voter engagement serve to help higher education institutions improve their voter engagement work and improve their strategies for engaging with students. My ultimate goal in conducting this research was to contribute to the continued improvement of youth voter engagement in the United States, and it is my hope that these findings and recommendations will be useful to member campuses of The Andrew Goodman Foundation Vote Everywhere program.

Annotated Bibliography

Bardwell, K. (2011). Fact Checks, Voter Guides, and GOTV: Civic Learning Projects in American Politics Courses. Journal of Political Science Education, 7(1), 1–13. https://doi-org.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/10.1080/15512169.2011.539899. The author of this journal article developed three "civic learning" projects for their class at Simpson College to increase civic skills and attitudes among students, and then tracked the pre- and post-behavior. This author worked with student leaders to develop a collaborative fact-checking weblog, a nonpartisan voter guide on policy issues, and a student-led voter registration drive, all of which were designed to increase civic engagement among students. The results indicated that students who participated in these class projects increased their civic skills and analysis skills. This is an example of something that could perhaps be implemented at BGSU with the help of BGSU Votes.

Benenson, J., & Bergom, I. (2019). Voter Participation, Socioeconomic Status, and Institutional Contexts in Higher Education. The Review of Higher Education 42(4), 1665-1688. doi:10.1353/rhe.2019.0079. This research study examined data from the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), which is the data BGSU Votes uses to create our action plans and develop our programming. The researchers of this study sought to learn more about the relationship between student characteristics and college voting rates. They found that student's major, in or out of state status, institutional structural diversity, and institutional Carnegie Classification all predict voter participation. They did not find a predictive relationship between student socioeconomic status and voter participation.

Bennion, E. A., & Michelson, M. R. (2018, October 26). College Leaders, It's Your Duty to Get Students to Vote. Here's How. Chronicle of Higher Education, 65(8), 1–3. This article from the Chronicle of Higher Education discusses some of the basics of engaging with college students on voting and civic participation. They list some of the basic steps, which the BGSU Votes team already engages in, but then discuss some of the successful strategies of Northwestern University during the 2016 election. They introduced a campaign to interact with every new incoming student to ask them if they were registered to vote and were planning to vote. This was built into every "welcome state" on move-in day for new students. I think this is something the BGSU Votes team could pursue with residence life in advance of the coming year, and could expand to more than just new students, but also reaching returning students to update their registrations.

Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. (2020, November 25). Election Week 2020: Young People Increase Turnout, Lead Biden to Victory. CIRCLE. https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/election-week-2020#youth-voter-turnout-increased-in-2020.

Colorado Nonprofit Association. (2011, July). Communications Toolkit - Samples. Retrieved November 08, 2020, from https://www.coloradononprofits.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Communications-Toolkit_samples-Pt.-3.pdf. This guide includes several samples of communications strategy development from local nonprofits in Colorado. Each of the samples covers different ways that the nonprofits approached creating their communication strategy, such as crisis communications, elements of a strategic communication plan, and worksheets to help other organizations define their goals. There are several worksheets and step by step guides on identifying audiences, crafting messages to fit them, selecting communication channels, and more. There is a lot of really great information to work with from this resource, and it's designed to help other organizations jumpstart their strategic communication planning process. However, this resource is a little bit outdated in that it does not mention social media strategy and was published prior to social media becoming the primary communication medium. Regardless, there is still a lot of information in this sample guide to help define the BGSU Votes communication strategy, which will help us to reach our goals more effectively.

Eaves, C., & Husser, J. (2017). Engaging a Campus During a Tumultuous Election: A Case Study. PS: Political Science & Politics, 50(4), 993-996. doi:10.1017/S1049096517001135. This journal article was written to discuss the impact of civic engagement organizing at Elon University during the 2016 Presidential Election. This case study discusses the different strategies Elon University's Political Engagement Working Group (PEWG) implemented to register and educate students on the election. They relied on the leadership of student leaders in their student government as well as their Andrew Goodman Foundation Ambassadors, whom I share this network with. One of their communication strategies that I think could be helpful at BGSU is their effort to mail on-campus students a postcard with voter registration information.

Annotated Bibliography

Hester, J. A. (2019). State laws and mobilizing college student voter turnout. Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 56(5), 520-534. doi:10.1080/19496591.2019.1671853. This journal article examines the impact of state voter laws on college student voter turnout, and discusses the role that student affairs professionals can play in increasing college student voting. The first takeaway from this study was that student affairs practitioners need to be aware of the state laws that impact the ability of students to vote in that state. Familiarity with these voter registration and ID laws allows student affairs practitioners to effectively mitigate some of the impacts of those restrictions. Another key takeaway was that professionals working in student affairs need to be intentional about increasing voter turnout among underrepresented and low-income college students. Additionally, campuses need to institutionalize civic engagement and build these goals into their programs. Finally, student affairs professionals need to take an active role in removing barriers to student voting at the state level by perhaps working with other campuses and universities effected.

Hume, J. (n.d.). Internal Communication Toolkit. Retrieved December 05, 2020, from https://www.civicus.org/view/media/CIVICUSInternalCommunicationToolkit.pdf. This toolkit from CIVICUS is designed to help civil society organizations with their internal communication and strategic planning process. It covers strategic planning for civil service organizations, program evaluation, action planning, and budgeting information. I plan to draw on this resource primarily for the information on strategic planning and action planning because these are both areas where I think the process used by BGSU Votes could use improvement. Action planning is a major component of what our team does at the end of each academic year, and I think if we could improve our action planning and strategic planning process, then we would be able to maximize our work. Additionally, I think this toolkit form CIVICUS will be helpful in creating a more cohesive communication process between BGSU Votes staff, management, and volunteers. There is a lot of information on internal communications to be gleaned from this toolkit.

Mershon, T. (2020). Strategic Communications Toolkit. Retrieved November 08, 2020, from https://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/b3/dd/b3dd3d9f-7c20-4a5d-87f0-703dbcdab1ff/bcji_strategiccommunications_toolkit.pdf. This source was developed by The Local Initiatives Support Corporation on behalf of the Byrne Criminal Justice Program. This source dives into the foundation for creating a strategic communications toolkit for large organization or nonprofit. It discusses the theory behind creating each aspect of a toolkit, from creating a strong public profile, to developing main messages, to how to handle the news media and interview requests. This source is certainly helpful in understanding the strategic communications within a larger organization such as a nonprofit. Some aspects of this guide are more relevant than others in creating a strategy for BGSU Votes, specifically the information regarding social media, communications planning, and strategy, and developing messages.

MICA Office of Strategic Communications. (2020). About The Toolkit. Retrieved November 08, 2020, from https://www.mica.edu/offices-divisions/division-of-strategic-communications/toolkit/. The Maryland Institute College of Art Office of Strategic Communications put together a communications toolkit for their students and staff to use when promoting their events or highlighting information about the university. This toolkit is extensive and includes detailed information about how to handle various forms of communications. All the information was specific to their students and community, which is similar in concept to what I want to put together for the BGSU Votes team. This toolkit provided information about effectively planning and promoting events, which is highly relevant to the BGSU Votes team transition. There also were sections dedicated to public relations, social media (also highly relevant), and branding. There is a lot of information in this toolkit to gain inspiration on how to create a program management toolkit for the BGSU Votes team.

Niemi, R. G., & Hanmer, M. J. (2010). Voter turnout among college students: New data and a rethinking of traditional theories. Social Science Quarterly, 91(2), 301-323. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6237.2010.00694.x. These researchers conducted phone surveys with college students after the 2004 Presidential Election to learn more about the factors that affect college student's voter participation rates. They found that many of the usual demographic factors that determine the likeliness of adults to vote were irrelevant when it came to college students, with the exception being that female college students still voted at higher rates than their male counterparts. Several college-specific factors impacted likeliness to vote, such as proximity to home and major. Those closer to home or were not transfer students were more likely to vote, and those majoring in math, science, and engineering voted at lower rates.

Annotated Bibliography

Ohme, J., Marquart, F., & Kristensen, L. M. (2020). School lessons, social media and political events in a get-out-the-vote campaign: Successful drivers of political engagement among youth? Journal of Youth Studies, 23(7), 886-908. doi:10.1080/13676261.2019.1645311. This study examines the use of get-out-the-vote (GOTV) campaigns to influence voter turnout among young people. Looking at high school and college students in Denmark, the researchers studied the effects of GOTV efforts in classroom interventions, political event participation, and social media use. They found that students who engaged in political events and classroom civic education were more likely to strengthen youth political engagement than social media.

Rice, L. L., & Moffett, K. W. (2019). Snapchat and civic engagement among college students. Journal of Information Technology & Politics, 16(2), 87–104. https://doi-org.ezproxy.bgsu.edu/10.1080/19331681.2019.1574249. This journal article was published after the 2016 Presidential Election and examines the relationship between Snapchat use and political participation among college students. I though researching this topic would be helpful to understand how different social media tools can increase civic engagement among college students, such as those at BGSU, and to see if any of these social media platforms were worth pursuing in this program management plan. Overall, the research in this article indicated that students who used Snapchat to send pictures or messages about candidates, political parties, political issues, or interest groups were more likely to be politically engaged when they were offline. This means that if the BGSU Votes team could enhance its social media presence, we may be able to help increase political participation among BGSU students.

The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, Marketing & Communications. (2020). Wharton Event Toolkit. Retrieved 2020, from https://marcomm.wharton.upenn.edu/event-toolkit/. This event planning toolkit was created by The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania for students and departments planning events. This toolkit includes detailed step-by-step processes for planning in-person and virtual events, including information on suggested timelines, event checklists, branding and publicizing the event, and executing the event. They recently added to this toolkit with a virtual event planning guide to help students navigate planning virtual events, which I think would be a great thing to touch on a bit in this program and communication management guide for BGSU Votes.

University of Miami Student Affairs Communications and Marketing. (2020, August 7). Campus Marketing Toolkit. Retrieved 2020, from https://communications.studentaffairs.miami.edu/_assets/pdf/campus-marketing-toolkit.pdf. This toolkit was developed by University of Miami for their student organizations and campus partners to use when promoting and branding their events. There are several samples within this toolkit of what a communication/marketing plan for events looks like. I think the sample planning timeline will be incredibly helpful if I can create something similar to it specific to the BGSU Votes team. There also are several worksheets on setting the foundation for events and campaigns that student organizations plan, which would be incredibly helpful in setting a solid foundation before planning events. As our team transitions to new leadership, these resources would be very helpful. The toolkit also covers a social media strategy with a worksheet to help students map their strategy out, as well as tips on developing this strategy.

Wells, S. D., & Dudash, E. A. (2007). Wha'd'ya Know?: Examining Young Voters' Political Information and Efficacy in the 2004 Election. American Behavioral Scientist, 50(9), 1280–1289. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764207300053. This journal article discusses the behaviors and civic attitudes of young voters and conducted a study to learn more about how young people prefer to receive political information. There were three main conclusions of this study. First, young people learn more about politics and candidates when they talk with others, as opposed to learning from traditional news media. Conversations with other people are one of the best ways to connect with potential voters. Second, most young people claim they have some knowledge of politics, or that they wish to learn more. This increased learning can also increase a young person's political participation. Finally, we need to learn more about how to communicate with young people on political issues in a way that doesn't lead to more confusion or uncertainty. Making political conversations clear and easy to follow is a great way to do this, and I think a lot of this background information will be helpful in writing this report.