



Illinois State University

ALL-IN VOTER ENGAGEMENT PLAN 2020-2021

Executive Summary

Illinois State University's Voter Engagement Coalition developed the All-In Voter Engagement Plan to create a coordinated campus effort for the 2020 elections. The coalition is made up of a diverse set of stakeholders including representatives from the student body; faculty; staff from student affairs, university housing, academic affairs, and academic departments; and the community, including the McLean County Clerk's Office. Before finalizing the plan, the coalition sought feedback campus wide. Our plan segments the election season into voter registration, voter education, and voter turnout. Each aspect of the plan has specific action items, and all of this is undergirded by the development of student and faculty/staff advocates to assist in the implementation. The plan also sets the stage for long-term and year-round democratic engagement.

Overview

One of [Illinois State University's](#) core values is civic engagement. Illinois State University (ISU) prepares students to be informed and engaged global citizens; ethical leaders who will craft, promote, and further positive goals for the betterment of society. The University promotes active learning experiences, through which students gain an awareness and understanding of civic engagement as a lifelong responsibility.

For many years, ISU's political engagement was led by the [American Democracy Project](#). This was a cooperative effort by students, faculty, staff, and administration to ensure all Illinois State students are fully prepared to assume a responsible role as contributors to civic society. The work of ISU's American Democracy Project (ADP) led to being named a Political Engagement Project campus by AASCU. The individuals involved laid the groundwork for a greater institutional commitment.

Created in 2017, ISU's [Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning \(CESL\)](#) builds on the past work of the ADP and supports and enacts the institution's core value of civic engagement. CESL brings coordination and a shared purpose to the numerous civic engagement

efforts already occurring throughout the University and creates new opportunities as well. The scope of CESL is broad and involves supporting all forms of civic engagement through in-class and out-of-class learning experiences along with facilitating mutually beneficial community partnerships. The work of ADP is being woven into the work of CESL for greater cohesion and coordination of all civic engagement efforts.

ISU's Student Government Association (SGA), specifically the civic engagement committee, has been the key student voice to encourage student electoral involvement. In the 2018 mid-term election, they designed a Get Out The Vote group with representation from a wide group of student organizations. They have also partnered with ADP for several years to purchase TurboVote, making voter registration very easy for students.

Building on the past work of ADP and SGA, CESL now offers the coordinating infrastructure to take student democratic engagement to the next level. All of the key stakeholders agree that it is important for students to learn both the process of political participation and engagement in democracy. While much of this plan focuses on the 2020 elections, this is not about voting in single elections, it is about creating an identity of being an engaged citizen over a lifetime. Voter engagement efforts at ISU take a non-partisan approach where everyone can talk about political engagement and be inclusive. By developing a clear plan for voter engagement, we can better address the ideals described above.

National Affiliations

- American Association of State Colleges and Universities' American Democracy Project/Political Engagement Project
- Carnegie Foundation's Elective Classification for Community Engagement
- National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Lead Advisory Institution
- Campus Compact/Illinois Campus Compact
- National Study of Learning and Voter Engagement
- Democracy Works/TurboVote
- Students Learn Students Vote
- All-In Challenge

Landscape

The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) provides data on voting rates. NSLVE is a signature initiative of the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. The voter registration and voting rates

reflect the percentage of Illinois State students who were eligible to vote and who actually voted in the 2018 and 2016 elections. These results are based on enrollment information ISU submitted to the National Student Clearinghouse (FERPA-blocked records excluded) and publicly available voting files collected by Catalyst.

2018 Mid-term Elections

Voting in the 2018 midterm election rose to around 31% at Illinois State, a jump from a 13% turn-out in the 2014 midterms. This matches the increase in voting rates, with 99% of all schools surveyed saying they saw a rise in students casting ballots in the latest midterm elections.

When looking at the age of voters at institutions, all age groups showed an increase from 2012. In summary, 27% of students age 18–21 voted, 30% of those 22–24 voted, 37% of those 25–29 voted, 51% of those 31–39 voted, 62% of those 40–49 voted, and 67% of those students 50+ voted. Twenty-eight percent of all undergraduates voted and 43% of graduate students voted. Data for rates by race/ethnicity was incomplete from the NSLVE report. Higher voting rates were noted among certain majors such as history, English, legal professions while other majors noted lowest rates such as business, parks & recreation, and liberal arts.

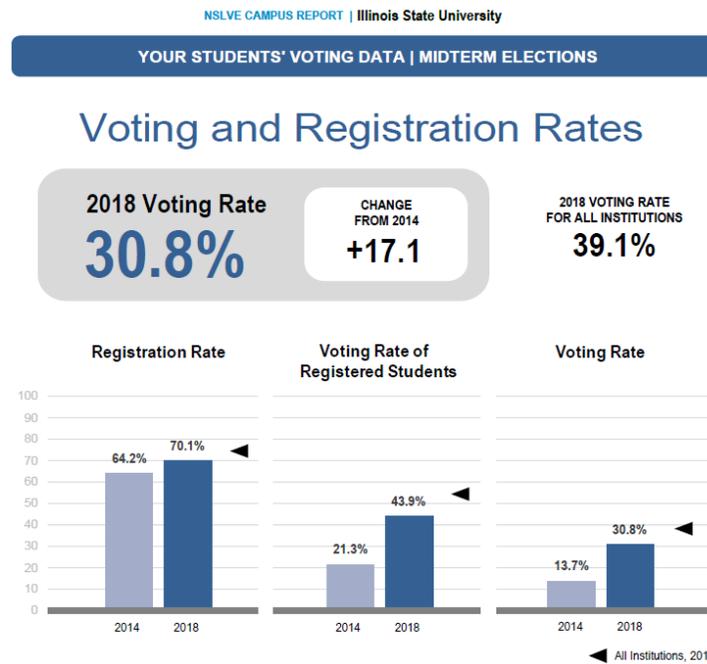


Figure 1 – 2018 NSLVE Data Summary

2016 National Election

In the 2016 election, Illinois State University had a voting rate of 50.7% which was a 15.6% change from the 2012 national election. It was comparable to the rate of other institutions

which had an overall rate of 50.4%. The voter registration rate was 67.8% compared to the national registration rate of 77.7%.

When looking at age of voters at our institutions, all age group showed an increased from 2012, In summary, 48% of students 18–21 voted, 48% of those 22–24 voted, 53% of those 25–29 voted, 68% of those 31–39 voted, 81% of those 40–49 voted, and 87% of those students 50+ voted. Forty-nine percent of all undergraduates voted and 60% of graduate students voted. Data for rates by race/ethnicity and by major was not available from NSLVE report.

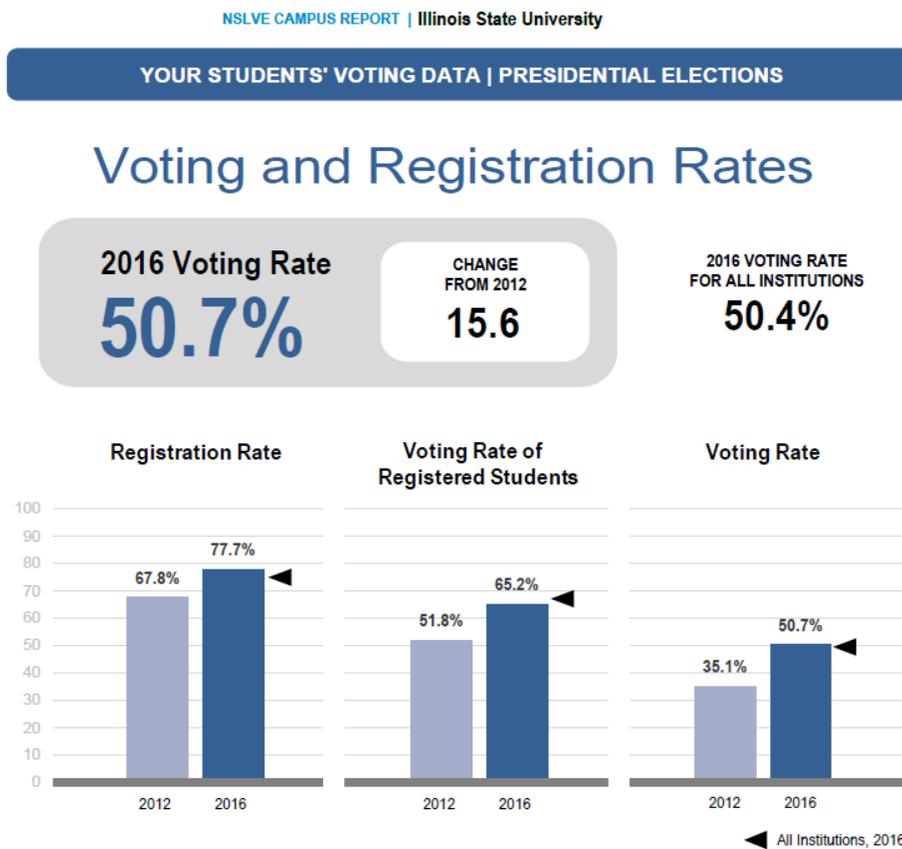


Figure 2 – 2016 NSLVE Data Summary

Campus Climate

As part of a joint initiative between AASCU’s American Democracy Project and the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education at Tufts University, a research team conducted assessment and collected data at Illinois State University from fall 2017 to the spring of 2019. The initiative, “Examining Campus Climates that Foster Student Political Learning and Engagement in

Democracy,” sought to answer the following research question: What structures, norms, human characteristics, and political forces affect campus climates for political learning and engagement in democracy? (Lippert, 2019)

The main strengths at ISU were found to be:

- Commitment to teaching and learning
- Community coexistence and working community ties
- Infrastructure and mechanisms are in place for some civic and political engagement

The main challenges at ISU were found to be:

- Not meeting full potential for civic and political engagement
- Disconnection among ISU stakeholders
- Isolation of political perspectives
- Lack of integration of political learning across curriculum
- Institutional representation of cultural issues.

Goals

Short Term (2020 Election)

ISU would like to build on current civic engagement efforts. For the short term, we are focused on the 2020 presidential election. As data shows above, higher voter turnout happens during a presidential election than at mid-term. As voter turnout in non-presidential elections is lower than in presidential elections, we chose data from the last presidential election in 2016 as the baseline for setting goals.

The goals are:

- To increase our 2020 Voting Rate by 10 points, from 50% to 60%.
- To increase our 2020 Registration Rate by 10 points, from 77% to 87%.
- To increase our 2020 Rate of Registered Students who Voted by 10 points, from 65% to 75%

Long Term (2021 and beyond)

ISU would like to move political engagement beyond major election semesters. To achieve that goal, the following action items have been identified:

- Increase student registration, education, and participation in the spring 2021 municipal elections and subsequent municipal elections.

- Develop resources for faculty to incorporate political engagement into curriculum during any semester.
- Advocate for learning outcomes associated with democratic engagement for core courses in the general education curriculum as the general education update is occurring.
- Establish a long-term structure for the voter engagement coalition, term of service, and succession plan.

Strategies

There are 4 pillars that will focus this plan:

1. Students and Faculty/Staff as Advocates
2. Voter Registration
3. Voter Education
4. Voter Turn-out

Students and Faculty/Staff as Advocates

Students

- Recruit and train student ambassadors to promote voter registration and voting turnout (TurboVote Liaisons); help with tabling events and attending student group meetings.
 - Special emphasis for recruiting student ambassadors from majors with low voter participation (per the NSLVE data) and minoritized students.
 - Outreach to include non-political Registered Student Organizations, Greek Life, Club Sports, Minority Students for Political Action, Student Wellness Ambassadors, and STEM groups.
 - Connect with minoritized students and national initiative such as Black Voters Matter and Voto Latino. Visit Diversity Advocacy Organizations to get perspective on voting through listening sessions.
- Develop student leadership opportunities/internships (Democracy Fellows) through national associations such as Campus Vote Project, Campus Election Engagement Project, or Students Learn Student vote (Young Invincibles). Compensate through stipend or hourly wage.

Faculty/Staff

- Utilize civic engagement ambassadors. This group, coordinated through CESL, represents all 35 academic schools/departments as well as representatives from key Student Affairs departments and other units such as Financial Aid, Graduate School, Athletics, and the

Honors Program. Each ambassador will be asked to present information about voter registration, education, and turn out along with their relevant NSLVE data. Departments will be encouraged to develop department-level strategies and action items to engage their students through the support of the voter engagement coalition.

- Research indicates that students respond positively when faculty encourage voter registration in classrooms and explain how public policy impacts the discipline/profession
- Develop a toolkit available for all faculty to use in classrooms – send one email and one postcard about the resources
 - Slide(s) with key registration and education information to be shown before class starts, posted in ReggieNet (learning management system), or incorporated into synchronous or asynchronous online classes
 - Guest presenters/presentations available in person, via Zoom, or recorded; delivered by voter engagement coalition steering committee members or students
 - Image and text/link to be included in email signature
 - Link to up-to-date Redbird Voter Guide website
 - Provide Civically Engaged Learning Goals documents for faculty to consider incorporation into course content.
- Share NSLVE data with all department chairs
- Targeted outreach to low voting departments based on NSLVE data and STEM departments
- Targeted outreach to Athletics, WGLT (local NPR station), and Student Affairs
- Partner with Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology to offer faculty workshop centered on voter/political engagement in the classroom for early Fall 2020
- Provide information about the elections during New Faculty Orientation (August)
- Provide information to academic advisors electronically and through a brief presentation at fall advisor training day; encourage University College (freshman advisors) to discuss voting with advisees during the required October advising appointment
- Encourage faculty to put key dates/information in syllabi

Voter Registration/Voter Education

- TurboVote (<https://illinoisstate.turbovote.org/>)
 - Illinois State University partners with TurboVote to bring voter registration and assistance to ISU students, faculty, and staff. Individuals can register to vote online if they are a first-time voter and if they are already registered, change current registration, request a mail-in ballot, or sign up for election reminders in [TurboVote](#).
 - A laptop station with TurboVote will be available at the CESL office, August through October
 - Discuss possibility of having a laptop station with TurboVote in the Bone Student Center and Student Fitness Center, August through October

- Utilize customized link feature for student organizations and departments by request
- Multi-Campus Competition
 - Friendly voter registration competition between ISU, Illinois Wesleyan University, and Heartland Community College (all located in Bloomington-Normal). The competition will run from National Voter Registration Day (September 22) to the end of the voter registration period in October.
 - A kickoff event will be held on September 22 with each school's mascot registering to vote at a press conference.
 - ISU will host voter registration September 22 on campus and include "celebrities" such as President, Vice Presidents, or football coach working small shifts to draw attention to registration. We will set a goal for number of students registered this day and also register the event as participation in National Voter Registration Day.
- Preview (Freshman Student Orientation)
 - CESL add TurboVote information into current presentation given at Preview
 - Follow up Preview email will include voter registration info
- Welcome Week
 - Tabling: Quad, Bone Student Center, residence hall lobbies, Student Fitness Center, key events
 - Remind returning students to change their address in TurboVote
- Tabling
 - Key campus events: Festival ISU, football games, Family Weekend (September 25–27)
 - CESL/ADP events: Constitution day, films, dialogues
 - Regular weekly schedule
 - Purchase feather flags/signage
 - Laptops and tablets available to register on-site
- Electronic information/communication/marketing
 - E-postcard for distribution to student government email lists
 - Campus-wide e-mails from President Dietz conveying the importance of registration and voting
 - News Hub story
 - All-student email from Student Body President reminding students to vote
 - Digital signage in residence halls and academic buildings
 - Announcements in My.IllinoisState student portal
 - Announcement in Redbird Life student organization management platform
 - Add election dates as events and deadlines
 - A pop-up notification in Fall (September) that links to TurboVote, successfully piloted in Spring 2020
 - Parent and Family Newsletter message to parents

- Partner with apartment management companies to get information to off-campus students
- ISU homepage banner on National Voter Registration Day
- Explore places to include “Next election” countdown clock such as <https://www.electioncountdown.us/>
- Develop video
 - Could feature President Dietz, Reggie, Student Body President, notable faculty, staff, and students
 - Ask students what is important to them as way to encourage them to register and vote; leaders from Student Government Association and student coalition members
 - Individuals pledge to vote during video
- Comprehensive social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, Tik Tok, and YouTube) campaigns led by various student groups promoting voting
 - #ISUVotes hashtag
 - Student coalition members share content
 - RSO takeovers to talk about why voting is important to them
 - Key social media days with campus departments and influencers committing to promote voter registration and voting
 - Get your fast pass, register in advance (promoting voter registration)
 - Others TBD
- Printed information/communication/marketing
 - Buttons for coalition members and to give away at education events
 - Utilize existing pockets of students and popular hashtags for customized buttons e.g. #RecBirds (Student Fitness Center), #GradBirds, #BandBirds, #NerdBirds (Honors Program)
 - Utilize major on-campus employers for students to display a voting button as part of their uniform – Bone Student Center, Campus Dining, Student Fitness Center
 - Posters in every residence hall during move in
 - Posters in Athletic Study Center
 - Quad chalking and classroom board messages
 - “Why Vote” mural displays around campus, possible partnership with a Wonsook Kim School of Art class
 - CESL window display (in highly visible area)
- Registered Student Organization (RSO) and Fraternity/Sorority Outreach
 - Message in monthly RSO newsletter and Sorority and Fraternity Life presidents’ email
 - Redbird Life story, announcement, and events
 - RSO Competition using TurboVote referral links
 - Students from voter coalition will go to RSO meetings and help them register onsite or talk about voting

- Targeted classroom presentations
 - IDS 128: Thriving in College and Career (freshman transition class); COM 110: Communication As Critical Inquiry and ENG 101: Composition as critical inquiry (half of incoming freshman take one class in the fall while the other half take the other class); POL 106: United States Politics and Civic Practices (two large lecture sections, common general education course)
 - Consider other first-year seminars and large lectures to target
 - Connect with instructors to determine appropriate opportunities to share information about registration and election participation
 - Class presenters
 - Video to be shown in class

- Updated website
 - Redbird Voter Guide (<http://illinoisstate.edu/vote>)
 - Relevant content from ADP webpages will be migrated to CESL website
 - Will serve as a clearinghouse of information related to 2020 election to include links to candidate websites/social media, current issues, etc.
 - Information on accessible voting (https://www.ada.gov/ada_voting/ada_voting_ta.htm)
 - “Can’t Vote” and “Can Vote” tabs on website on how to get involved
 - <https://www.thelovevote.org/>
 - A statement about nonpartisanship and what it means on the first page
 - <https://www.studentslearnstudentsvote.org/>

- Residence Halls
 - Bulletin board packets will be pre-made and available for any RA by request
 - Tabling in lobbies
 - Why Vote? Post-it notes murals in hallways
 - Present to RA’s/CA’s and floor presidents and ask them to serve as election ambassadors to their floor in September

- Communicate and liaise with community based voter engagement initiatives on campus efforts
 - League of Women Voters McLean County
 - McLean County Clerk’s Office

Voter Education/Voter Turnout

- Student coalition members and Student Government Association encourage student participation

- Write Letters to the Editor for the *Daily Vidette*
- Possible campaigns:
 - I Vote Because. . . campaign for students to articulate issues that are important to them
 - “When We All Vote” pledge <https://www.whenweallvote.org/>
 - Voting early—Be an Early Bird, special early voting sticker
 - Ways to vote: early, mail-in, in person day of
- Voter machine demonstrations or videos
- Debate watch party in multiple campus locations simultaneously
 - Partner with faculty to provide commentary
 - Partner with Social Media Analytics Command Center (SMACC Lab) to monitor
- Deliberative dialogue
- Give away bookmark with voting information
- Customized Google map for available voter locations for students
- Improve and monitor on-campus voter experience for students
 - Watterson Towers and Bone Student Center (both on campus polling places) and Methodist Church (near campus polling place for off-campus students)
 - Set up command center at CESL (piloted in spring)
 - SMACC lab monitor social media
 - Coalition members to monitor lines and redirect students between Watterson Towers and Bone Student Center and Methodist Church
 - Manage misinformation with real time social media posting, coordinate key student facing social media account to share this information
 - Develop strategic path and have focused response team ready if issues arise
 - Coordinate volunteers to drive a University mini-bus to Government Center to vote if lines are too long; share information about Connect Transit to get to Government Center
 - Work with League of Women Voters as they coordinate poll watchers
- Celebrate voting/the election
 - “I voted” stickers, first time voters, early voter stickers
 - Photobooth at Bone Student Center for students to document an important civic moment
 - Election night event to watch returns
 - Partner with University Program Board and SMACC Lab



Post-Election Activities

Based on the student response and needs after the 2016 presidential election, ISU would like to be prepared to support students regardless of the final result.

- Identify safe spaces, brave spaces, and dialogue spaces
 - Strategically select spaces within residence halls, multi-cultural center, etc.

- Provide food
- Faculty/staff and student facilitators trained and readily available

General Timeline

November 2019—February 2020

Build the Voter Engagement Steering Committee and solicit input for the Voter Engagement Plan

January 2020—April 2021

Offer communication reminders for voter registration and participation in March elections

May 2020

Solicit input on the Voter Engagement Plan

May 2020—August 2020

Connect with campus partners to plan fall events, confirm plans for polling places, prepare election and fall communications

May 2020—October 2020

Build student and faculty/staff coalition

August 2020—November 2020

Implementation of strategies

November 2020—December 2020

Debrief results and envision the future

January 2021

Write and submit final report

Evaluation and Ongoing Planning

The Steering Committee will lead the evaluation process. Evaluation measures will include:

- Numbers of students that sign-up via TurboVote
 - Will be reviewed at each coalition meeting as formative assessment to inform future efforts or modify plans
- Attendance at events/programs

- Will be reviewed at each coalition meeting as formative assessment to inform future efforts or modify plans
- Number of students and faculty/staff engaged in coalition
- Work with McLean County Clerk's Office after the election to debrief and plan future improvements, obtain data on number of voters at relevant polling places
- Obtain NSLVE report
 - Disseminate report via CESL website and ISU News Hub story
- Share data with key stakeholders and University leaders
- Solicit feedback from key partners involved with voter engagement events to continuously improve efforts
- "Why Vote" murals provide information on student motivations

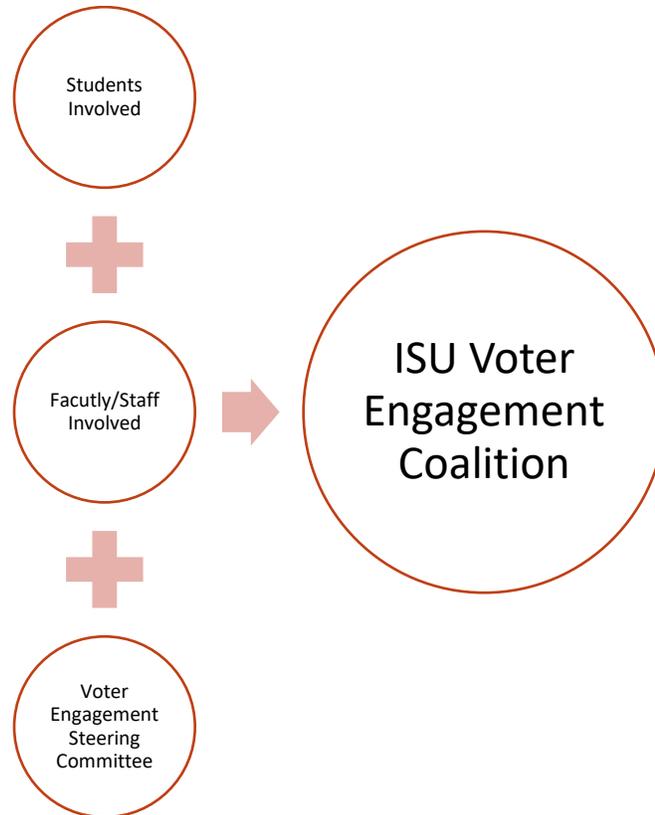
Voter Engagement Coalition Steering Committee

The Voter Engagement Steering Committee is made up of representatives from students, faculty, and staff from student affairs, university housing, academic affairs, and academic departments all working to develop this engagement plan to build on the successes of ISU's current civic engagement efforts.

- Ce-Ce Brookins, University Housing Services (through March 2020)
- Christine Bruckner, Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (beginning June 2020)
- Emily Nafziger, Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning
- Hannah Beer, Student Government Association (through May 2020)
- Harriett Steinbach, Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning*
- Jackie Lanier, Department of Health Sciences, ADP Faculty Co-Leader*
- John Davenport, Dean of Students*
- Josh Crockett, Student Government Association
- Katie Pratt, University College (through June 2020)*
- Lauren Harris, Student Government Association
- Liz Thomason, University Housing Services (beginning March 2020)
- Magalie Baker - Graduate Assistant, ADP (through May 2020, new GA selected in July)
- Megan Taylor, University College*
- Nathan Carpenter, School of Communication
- Olivia Butts, School of Kinesiology and Recreation*
- Samiat Solebo, Student Government Association (through May 2020)
- Stephen Hunt, School of Communication
- McLean County Clerk's Office representative TBD June 2020

- Milner Library representative TBD June 2020

*denotes executive team



Leadership Succession Planning

Every May, the Executive Team will review the coalition membership. They will check in with current members to:

- review how to best retain strong leaders by asking how they would like to continue to serve,
- if no longer able to serve, how best to replace those that may need to step off or away from coalition (such as students graduating or faculty/staff taking on new roles), and
- assess gaps in the coalition so that the coalition is best meeting the needs of current and future roles to keep the coalition moving forward to meet its goals.