



Southwest Minnesota State University  
Division of Student Affairs  
Co-curricular Assessment

Date: August 1, 2024

---

Center for Civic & Community Engagement  
Melissa Scholten, Director

---

## DEPARTMENTAL MISSION

In support of the SMSU Mission, the Center for Civic & Community Engagement connects academic programs with community needs to use scholarship and action for the mutual benefit of the University, its communities, and its diverse peoples. The Center serves as the intersection between student learning, faculty research, and community engagement. It is committed to illuminating the variety of ways in which SMSU strives to make civic and community engagement integral to learning experiences campus-wide.

## GOALS

**Develop Civic Awareness.** Students will recognize themselves as a member of a larger social fabric and considers social problems to be at least partly their own.

**Integrate Civic Responsibility.** Students will see the moral and civic dimensions of issues, to make and justify informed moral and civic judgments, and to take action when appropriate.

**Connect to Available Resources.** Students will make use of resources available to them and determine which items are best suited. Students will also recommend improvements to resources.

## Co-Curricular Activity #1: Voter Education and Engagement

### Identify and briefly describe the activity.

Academic year 2022-2023 was an election year with midterm elections for Congressional seats and a gubernatorial race in Minnesota. SMSU continued its voter engagement initiative, Mustangs Vote. Students will utilize available resources to discern their options for voting (early, absentee, or in-person on election day, etc.) and voter education resources to exercise their right to vote.

Academic year 2023-2024 included a local special election and Mustangs Vote, SMSU's voter engagement initiative, was completed. Quantitative results have been received for the 2022 midterm elections from The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) at Tufts University and are the focus of this assessment.

**Identify the intended learning outcomes.**

**Develop Civic Awareness.** Students will recognize themselves as a member of a larger social fabric and considers social problems to be at least partly their own.

**Integrate Civic Responsibility.** Students will see the moral and civic dimensions of issues, to make and justify informed moral and civic judgments, and to take action when appropriate.

**Connect to Available Resources.** Students will make use of resources available to them and determine which items are best suited. Students will also recommend improvements to resources.

**Describe the methods and measures used to assess student learning.**

**Method.** Organized the SMSU voter engagement initiative, Mustangs Vote. In August 2022, grant applications opened via Lead MN for applications for election engagement. The CCCE director applied and received a grant of \$4000 to be spent on increasing voter engagement on-campus. Three student election fellows were hired and on boarded in September. The fellows ran several events regarding voter registration, voter education, and get out the vote activities. Particular days were highlighted such as- National Voter Registration Day, Voter Education Week, Vote Early Day, Local Candidate Forums, and Legislative Candidates Forum.

**Measures.** In summer 2024, the Student Voting Rates Report for Southwest Minnesota State University from The National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) at Tufts University was received. Full report provided.

**Summarize findings: to what degree did students attain intended learning outcomes?**

- The report shows an increase in registered voters from 2018 (72.3%) to 2022 (76.3%). ***The increase is above the national average.*** This number is lower than the 83.1% registration rate for the 2020 presidential election.
- The report shows a decrease in voting rate of registered students from 2018 (66.4%) to 2022 (58.3%). ***However, both percentages are well above the national average.*** This number is also lower than the 85.9% voting rate of registered students for the 2020 presidential election.
- The report shows a decrease in the overall voting rate from 2018 (48.1%) to 2022 (44.5%). ***However, both percentages are well above the national average and higher than all peer institutions in all categories.*** This number is also lower than the 71.4% overall voting rate for the 2020 presidential election.

**Identify improvements in response to assessment data. What changes, if any, will be made to the activity to improve student learning?**

- The fellows provided excellent feedback to increase SMSU's efforts regarding voter engagement. The fellows were well-received by campus and their peers. The CCCE director has continued to participate in meetings for the MN Student Voting Coalition and will have student fellows for 2024 presidential elections. There are still funds available from Lead MN that did not need to be returned that will fund the fellows.
- A decrease in voting rates and voter registration is a common trend for non-presidential election years. Academic year 2023-2024 included a local special election, but the Mustangs Vote, voter engagement initiative was still completed to continue to focus on this type of civic awareness.
- Academic year 2024-2025 is a presidential election year. The State of Minnesota has added additional Postsecondary Institution Requirements laws related to voter engagement. The Minnesota State System also has a board policy and procedure to follow. The additional voter engagement requirements are being incorporated for this election cycle's Mustangs Vote plans. Branding is also being updated and incorporated for the initiative. The full voter engagement plan will be posted to the University's website as required.