

Alfred University recognized for efforts to increase voter student voting

2/12/20



ALFRED, NY – Alfred University has earned national recognition for its efforts to increase student voting rates. The ALL-IN Campus Democracy Challenge awarded the Silver Seal to Alfred University, which saw a nearly four-fold increase in voter participation over a four-year period.

The ALL-IN Campus Democracy Challenge is a nonpartisan national initiative recognizing and supporting campuses as they work to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and full student voter participation. The Challenge encourages higher education institutions to help students form the habits of active and informed citizenship, and make democratic participation a core value on their campus.

More than 560 campuses, enrolling more than 6.2 million students, have joined the Challenge since its launch in summer 2016. Alfred University's efforts to improve student engagement in election has paid significant dividends: In 2014, the student voting rate was slightly more than eight percent; in 2018, that figure had climbed to 30 percent, a 375-percent increase over the four-year period.

Student participation rates are included in the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) – an initiative of Tufts University Institute for Democracy & High Education – which takes into account voter turnout at more than 1,000 participating institutions nationwide. The most recent NSLVE report shows that the average

institutional voting rate on participating campuses increased from 19.7 percent in 2014 to 39.1 percent in 2018.

The study provides reports to participating colleges and universities, which use them to support political learning and civic engagement initiatives on campus, as well as to identify and address gaps in political and civic participation.

The ALL-IN Campus Democracy Challenge recognized colleges and universities for their on-campus voting rates. The Silver Seal, awarded to Alfred University, is presented to institutions that post a voter participation rate of between 30 and 39 percent.

“We were so excited to see the Silver Seal award after all the work and planning we had put in to help make sure our students were registered to vote,” said Tricia Debertolis, associate dean of students at Alfred University, who along with Corey Fecteau, service learning coordinator, and Abby Griffith, former director of the Judson Leadership Center, helped lead efforts to increase voter participation rates on campus.

Debertolis said those efforts included sponsoring tables at various events and locations across campus, where students were given information on how to register to vote; meeting annually with the Allegany County Board of Elections to ensure students were properly completing voter registration paperwork; and using campus communications to encourage faculty and staff out help get the word out on the importance of voter participation. The University was assisted by representatives of the local League of Women Voters. “We worked as a team to create a lot of buzz about voter registration,” Debertolis noted.

Engaging students in the democratic process is an important part of Alfred University’s heritage, Mark Zupan, Alfred University president, pointed out.

“Alfred University’s history of supporting voter enfranchisement includes Abigail Allen’s 1887 arrest and subsequent indictment for illegally casting a ballot,” Zupan said. “Abigail Allen, the wife of then-Alfred University President Jonathan Allen, was one of 22 female students in our inaugural class (versus 14 male students) and an outspoken advocate for women’s rights, including the right to vote.”