

VOTER FRIENDLY CAMPUS REPORT 2018

www.VoterFriendlyCampus.org
Prepared in May 2019



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Voter Friendly Campus Designation Program

www.voterfriendlycampus.org

The Voter Friendly Campus designation program was started through the partnership of Campus Vote Project and NASPA in 2016. The goal of the program is to help institutions develop plans to coordinate administrators, faculty, and student organizations in civic and electoral engagement. Follow us on Twitter @VFCampus.



Campus Vote Project

www.campusvoteproject.org

In 2012, the Fair Elections Center launched Campus Vote Project (CVP) to expand its work around student voting issues. CVP works with universities, community colleges, faculty, students, and election officials to reduce barriers to student voting. Our goal is to help campuses institutionalize reforms that empower students with the information they need to register and vote.



NASPA
Lead Initiative

NASPA Lead Initiative

www.naspa.org/constituent-groups/groups/lead-initiative

The NASPA Lead Initiative on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (Lead Initiative) comprises a network of NASPA member colleges and universities committed to encouraging and highlighting the work of student affairs in making civic learning and democratic engagement a part of every student's college education.

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ABOUT THE VOTER FRIENDLY CAMPUS DESIGNATION

Dear Voter Friendly Campuses,

When NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education and the Fair Election Center's Campus Vote Project began our partnership in 2016, we had two goals: establish and support a network of institutions and individuals committed to translating higher education's civic mission into action, and assist campus communities in developing students' knowledge and skills to engage in democratic processes. We are proud to present the lessons and accomplishments of the 2019-2020 Voter Friendly Campus cohort to mark this milestone in our partnership.

This report represents collective strategies from the 124 colleges and universities participating in the second cohort of the Voter Friendly Campus program. These institutions vary in terms of type, diversity of their student population, geographic location, and relevant election laws. They employed an innovative array of tactics to increase voter education, access, registration, and turnout, and they also focused on addressing structural barriers to students' civic engagement. The 2018 report also highlights leadership challenges and accomplishments such as coalition-building, diverse and inclusive representation, and short-term and long-range goal-setting.

We are incredibly proud of the work we all accomplished in 2018, which built on lessons shared by the first cohort in 2016, and yet we know more remains to be done leading up to November 2020. In 2018, we saw youth voter turnout sky rocket from a historic low in 2014 to an estimated 31% in 2018.¹ The 2020 election will feature key federal races at a time of incredible polarization and partisanship. State-level races will determine who sets the rules and leads redistricting efforts after the decennial census, thus impacting political engagement for the next decade.

After reading this report, we hope you continue to collaborate with us in actualizing higher education's civic mission to help students be active in the democratic process while on your campuses and for the rest of their lives.

Thank you.

In Solidarity,



Robert Brandon
President and CEO
Fair Elections Center



Kevin Kruger
President
NASPA

¹ <https://civicyouth.org/young-people-dramatically-increase-their-turnout-31-percent-shape-2018-midterm-elections/>



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2018 Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) report reflects on the program's second designation process. The 124 institutions that received the designation for 2019-2020 were chosen because of their commitment to promoting democratic engagement at their college or university. Participating institutions of higher education (IHEs) were required to complete four steps to receive the designation.

Step 1: Submit a Statement of Interest (Early Spring Semester)

Statements of Interest detail current democratic engagement efforts at their institution, what the institution hopes to accomplish through the Voter Friendly Campus designation process, and identifying key points of contact.

Step 2: Write a Democratic Engagement Action Plan (Late Spring Semester)

In line with the Students Learn Students Vote coalition, we encourage IHEs to utilize [Strengthening American Democracy: A Guide for Developing an Action Plan to Increase Civic Learning, Political Engagement, and Voting Rates Among College Students](#).² To support the action planning process and make it engaging for action planners, our partners at Democracy Works created [Votes and Ballots](#)³ also consistent with the guide.

Step 3: Demonstrate Commitment to Democratic Engagement (Fall Semester)

The VFC designation program encourages IHEs to utilize the energy and momentum in the months leading up to elections to engage students in the democratic process in four pillars of democratic engagement: voter registration, voter education, voter turnout, and developing students as voter advocates.

² www.studentslearnstudentsvote.org/resources

³ <https://www.democracy.works/votesandballots>

Step 4: Submit a Follow-up Report and Analysis (January, the Following Year)

It is critical that IHEs take the time to analyze the effectiveness of programs they carried out leading up to the election. The reports also require participating campuses to explain how they will continue their work into the next year for year-round engagement.

At each step in the process, IHEs receive feedback from NASPA and Campus Vote Project staff via group and one-on-one opportunities to share promising practices and ask for help with sticky issues. They also receive monthly communications with important reminders and opportunities. Our webinars and resources are made available in the Resources section of the [Voter Friendly Campus website](#).⁴

This report takes an in-depth look at what current designees have accomplished, common barriers, and solutions for improving future democratic engagement activities. After reviewing all the campuses' democratic engagement plans and their follow-up reports we decided to focus on three key areas for this report: Leadership, Goal Setting, and Evaluating Strategies and Tactics.

In 2016, the majority of the VFC report focused on evaluating strategies and tactics thinking specifically about how campuses approached voter registration, tackling the information deficit, and reducing barriers to voting. Those findings are still pertinent, and we recommend reviewing the [2016 VFC Report](#)⁵ for a more in-depth look at specific methods you can utilize to engage student voters at your college or university.

The 2018 VFC Report emphasizes leadership and goal setting, taking a big picture look at what IHEs are doing to institutionalize their democratic engagement efforts, consider equity and inclusivity in their process, and think long-term in their programming. It also discusses individual programs that address the four pillars of voter engagement, and how they encourage students to participate in democracy well after they graduate.

The Voter Friendly Campus team continues to be grateful to all the institutions that stepped up and dedicated their time and efforts to create cultures at their institutions that let all students know they attend a Voter Friendly Campus. We could not have gathered the knowledge and lessons of this report without their steadfast dedication to fulfilling the civic mission of higher education to continually prepare generations of students for empowered civic lives.

⁴ www.voterfriendlycampus.org/resources

⁵ www.voterfriendlycampus.org/resources

WHY DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2018 was a landmark year for youth voter turnout with an estimated 31% of 18-29-year-olds voting in the midterm election. This is over a 10-point increase from 2014 which was a historically low year.⁶ Every state (reporting as of May 2019) saw an increase in young people voting, many surpassing the general population's increase in turnout.⁷

However, 31% is still significantly less than half of eligible 18-29-year-olds. We have seen youth turnout jump to around 50% for presidential elections, but the fact remains, there is a lot of room for growth. Colleges and universities can play a critical role in preparing active and engaged citizens.

Civic learning and democratic engagement have always been central to the mission of higher education, and the low voter turnout in this demographic is a reminder of how important it is to integrate democratic engagement programs on higher education campuses. It is important to encourage discussions and create educational programming that will provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to practice engaged citizenship. Campus Vote Project and NASPA partner to coordinate the Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) designation to promote institutionalizing civic learning and democratic engagement.

There are many ways to begin engaging students in the democratic process and each institution has a unique set of circumstances they will need to consider. In their report "Election Imperatives," The Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE), part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University, outlines 10 big picture topics to consider and act on to engage students in democracy.⁸ The Election Imperatives resource offers a collaborative practitioner-focused resource that can be utilized by many campus stakeholders to holistically engage a campus community in civic learning and democratic engagement efforts. As such, we encourage participating Voter Friendly Campus institutions to utilize this resources' 10 recommendations while developing and implementing their campus democratic engagement action plan.

⁶ <https://civicyouth.org/quick-facts/2018-election-center>

⁷ <https://civicyouth.org/quick-facts/2018-election-center>

⁸ <https://idhe.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/ElectionImperatives.pdf>

COALITION LEADERSHIP

In 2016, VFC program leaders saw that institutions with strong coalitions had more comprehensive democratic engagement action plans, carried out their programs more successfully, and were more likely to have considered the long-term impact of their actions than peer institutions without coalitions. That also proved true for campuses in the 2018 VFC cohort, yet many find the process of building and maintaining a coalition challenging. The VFC program has always highlighted having a coalition as an important aspect of the institutionalizing process but is making it a focus of our analysis and report. You can see our most recent [webinar on Building Coalitions on the VFC website](#)⁹.

The role your coalition will play depends on the structure at your institution. If your college or university has a central office responsible for democratic engagement, your coalition may play a more advisory role; if the work is decentralized, your coalition may be more active in coordinating and executing programming. Either way, having a diverse set of views from key stakeholders from on- and off-campus groups influencing your democratic engagement program will ensure you have a more robust program meeting the needs of all students.

Spotlight - Mesa Community College (Arizona) - Civic Action Team and Operation Votes Coalition

In addition to their “Civic Action Team,” the core leaders responsible for carrying out democratic engagement at their college, Mesa Community College has a large network they call the “Operation Votes Coalition.” The coalition differs from the action team because it includes key stakeholders who do not need to be a part of the day-to-day democratic engagement work but are still critical to successfully engaging students on their campuses. This group includes critical faculty, administrators, and students as well as local and national partners not directly affiliated with the institution that help support their events and activities. These groups can also help enhance their long-term activities and efforts.

On-Campus

Center for Community and Civic Engagement Civic Action Team
Library
Student Life and Leadership
Student Government
MCC Veterans Services

Local Partners

Maricopa County Recorder
Mesa City Council
Channel 3 and Channel 5 News in Phoenix

⁹ www.voterfriendlycampus.org/resources

COALITION LEADERSHIP

Secretary of State's Office
Citizens Clean Election Commission

National Partners

Andrew Goodman Foundation
Campus Election Engagement Project
Campus Compact
Campus Vote Project
Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)
All In: Campus Democracy Challenge
Voter Friendly Campus

Part of the reason we chose to highlight Mesa Community College is their choice of local partners. Working with the Maricopa County Recorder and Secretary of State's Office is integral to having and providing accurate election information and by working with Mesa City Council and local news channels they ensure they can amplify their efforts.

Common Challenges

Common Challenge #1: Building the coalition

We developed “Coalitions 101”¹⁰ to supplement the “Strengthening American Democracy” template and provide insight into how to build and maintain a coalition focused on democratic engagement. “Coalitions 101” defines coalitions and outlines the importance of having a coalition, who should be involved, how to identify and recruit members, setting up an initial meeting, what a successful coalition looks like, and some common pitfalls.

We recognize there is not just one way to build and activate a coalition for your campus. We encourage you to reach out if you have questions about the process and engaging partners into your work.

Common Challenge #2: Having a coalition representative of your campus and student population

Throughout this report, we discuss the importance of your democratic engagement activities being inclusive and equitable. This is incredibly important when it comes to who is involved in your coalition. The coalition is at the forefront of your planning process. If the coalition not inclusive and equitable, it is likely that your plan will be lacking in these areas as well. For our purposes, we use the following definitions:

¹⁰ Coalitions 101 - www.voterfriendlycampus.org/resources

COALITION LEADERSHIP

- **Inclusive:** Brings the traditionally marginalized into the overall planning and decision-making process
- **Equitable:** Has an aim to address systemic injustice, inequity, or oppression¹¹

We recognize that many institutions may be newer to the process and considering what an equitable and inclusive coalition may look like for the first time. That is okay. We encourage you to use tools (such as your NSLVE report¹²) to help identify under-served communities on your campus.

Spotlight - The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life at the University of Texas at Austin - Civic Engagement Alliance

Their coalition was first conceived in 2015 by the president and program coordinator of TX Votes¹³ after attending the Harvard IOP National Campaign Conference. A new leadership position, Civic Engagement Alliance (CEA) Chair, was added to TX Votes to oversee the work of the coalition. The first year, about 20 organizations joined. In the beginning cultural and degree-area based organizations were actively recruited.

“

Participation in the coalition was described simply as one meeting per semester, one person from your organization is trained to be able to register their members to vote, and with the request to disseminate nonpartisan voting information to their members.

In 2016, the organization grew to approximately 35 members, as they opened it up to partisan organizations and nearly every student organization at UT-Austin was invited to join. In 2016, members of the CEA were helping write the campus democratic engagement plan for the first time.

During the summer of 2018, they saw their greatest increase in membership, now with over 100 student organizations represented. This resulted primarily from two things: CEA capitalized on interest in the competitive 2018 election, and the CEA Chair sent an individual invite to join to each

¹¹ These definitions are loosely drawn from The Management Center - www.managementcenter.org/tools/equity-and-inclusion

¹² If you are not signed up for the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, you can learn more about it at Tufts' website: <https://idhe.tufts.edu/nslve>

¹³ TX Votes is a student organization at the University of Texas at Austin that invites students campus wide to increase electoral participation and create more voters and better citizens. <https://moody.utexas.edu/centers/strauss/tx-votes>

COALITION LEADERSHIP

of the over 900 student organizations for which UT-Austin had contact information.¹⁴

The coalition was opened to all student organizations because TX Votes and CEA knows reaching students where they already are is the best way to reach the most students, while avoiding some of the bureaucratic issues that are unique to UT-Austin. The most difficult aspect of organizing a coalition of this size was maintaining contact lists because students graduate or leave their organizations. CEA understood that some student organizations will be more active than others on democratic engagement efforts and tracks and utilizes that information in their efforts as well.

Political Organizations (Candidate/Party/Issue)

314 Action	Longhorns for Voting Reform
Campus Environmental Center	Move Texas Longhorn Chapter
College Republicans	NAACP at UT Austin
Feminist Action Project	Texas Civic Tech Project
Feminist Latinx Organization Empowering Society	Texas Political Union
Feminist Policy Alliance at the LBJ School	Texas Rising
Generation Citizen	The Texas Orator
Health Advocacy Student Coalition	TX Votes
Hook the Vote	University Democrats
Ignite	UT LULAC
Jolt at UT	Voting Graduate Student Agency
League of Women Voter AA - Longhorn Unit	Women in Foreign Affairs
Liberal Arts Refugee Alliance	Young Invincibles

Cultural Organizations

Asian Desi Pacific Islander American Collective	Caribbean Students Association
Black Student Alliance	Hindu Student Association

Degree-Specific

American Library Association/Texas Library	International Affairs Society
Association School of Information	Liberal Arts Council
American Medical Student Association	Natural Sciences Council
Asian Business Student Association	Net Impact
Association of Black Psychologists	Society of Hispanic Engineers
Austin Collegiate DECA	Student Engineering Council
CLUTCH	Texas Electronic
CNS Honors	The Language Campaign

¹⁴ UT-Austin had contact information for their student groups through Hornslink, a website where all the organizations are listed along with contact information for each student group. Their CEA Chair sent a personal email to each of the over 900 student groups on campus.

COALITION LEADERSHIP

CommSGC
Communication Council
CRPSO
Dean's Scholars

Service

Amnesty International
Austin's Bright Future
Doctors Without Borders at UT Austin
Orange Jackets
Orange Outreach
Oxfam UT
Seva Charities
Socks for the Sole
Student Council for Exceptional Children

Greek/Spirit Orgs

Alpha Phi Alpha
Delta Epsilon Mu
Lambda Alpha Nu
Sigma Delta Tau
Tejas Club
Texas Belles Event Planning Organization

Honors Orgs

Honors Quad RHC
Kappa Rho Pre-Medical Honor Society
Texas Friar Society

Dance/Music/Sports Clubs

Dance Action
Euphoria ATX
Hockey Horns
Longhorn Band Student Association
Longhorn Kiva
Mixed Martial Arts at UT Austin

The Student Association of the School
of Information
Women in Computing

Students Expanding Austin Literacy
Texas Circle K International
Texas Health Promotion Club
Texas Nutrition
Texas Public Health
Texas Tower PR
UT National Association of Black Journalists
UT Service Scholars

Texas Blazers
Texas Blue Bonnets
Texas Ladybirds
Texas Lonestars
Texas Spirits
Theta Tau

One Note Stand A Capella
Punjabawockeez
Texas Ballroom
Texas Water Ski
Texas Women's Rugby
UT Ukes

Religious Organizations

Nueces Mosque

Secular Student Alliance at UT Austin

Texas Hillel

Legislative Student Organization (Related)

Longhorn Legislative Aids

Student Conduct Advisory Committee

Student Government

Graduate Student Assembly

Senate of College Councils

Other

Keep Austin Wizard

Texas Girl Gang

UT-Austin has an expansive student-based coalition because their campus is not ready for full institutionalization. Some administrators and faculty are happy to champion the work, but they recognize a need to engage many student groups to reach a large student population. In building a coalition at your IHE, you may consider what the bureaucratic hurdles are you may face and who can be involved to help overcome them.

GOAL SETTING

Goals are an incredibly effective way to drive the day-to-day activities of an IHE's commitment to democratic engagement on their campus. Goals pertaining to democratic engagement should fit into the overall civic mission and objectives of your IHE. We encourage you to consider making your objectives SMARTIE goals,¹⁵ or:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Ambitious
- Realistic
- Time-Bound
- Inclusive
- Equitable

As outlined in the “Strengthening American Democracy” template, the Students Learn Students Vote coalition¹⁶ encourages campuses to consider both long-term goals (where will your IHE be in the next 3-5 years) and short-term goals (what needs to get done in the next 6 months or the next year). The VFC program leaders are contributors to the template and believe both short- and long-term goals are critical to making decisions to guide planning and decision-making.

Spotlight - Washington University in St. Louis (Missouri) - Short-term Goals for Voter Registration, Education, and Turnout

Washington University in St. Louis is an excellent example of setting short-term goals. Utilizing their National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) data, they provided detailed information about where they were at as an institution in 2014 for student voter registration and turnout rates, and how they wanted to improve that in 2018.

The Gephardt Institute for Civic and Community Engagement led their process to set and define university goals, and then vetted their goals with their voter engagement steering committee and WashU Votes groups. The goals were then used to guide the planning process for events, voter registration drives, where on campus they conduct outreach, and how they engaged graduate and undergraduate populations.

¹⁵ In the 2016 report, we encourage goals to be SMART but believe it is critical to think about inclusivity and equity at every stage of programming.

¹⁶ www.studentslearnstudentsvote.org



With this in mind, our WashU Voter Friendly Campus Initiative goals were as follows:

Voter Education:

- Offer nonpartisan, educational tools to students around voter ID laws, voting rights, ballot issues, voting methods, candidates, voter registration, polling place locations, and participation in elections
- Communicate broadly and regularly about Engage Democracy opportunities and events
- Collaborate with campus partners including to hold Engage Democracy events leading up to midterm elections in November 2018
- Plan and lead events for Constitution and Citizenship Day, as well as National Voter Registration Day

Voter Registration:

- Increase our total eligible student voter registration rate from 79.6% to 84% by 2020 during the next presidential election
- Increase the registration rate from 63.2% in 2014 to 68% in 2018 or during midterm election years
- Complete 50% of all new voter registrations using the online TurboVote platform (an increase of 14% from 2016)

Voter Turn Out:

- Host an absentee voters celebration for 200 students and cover the cost of postage for the 19.3% of students who mail in ballots
- Increase the overall voting rate from 15.7% (2014) to 20% in the 2018 midterm election
- Maintain the 2012 on-campus voting rate of 95% for those living in campus dorms on the North side and voting in Missouri, and 85% for those living on campus in the South 40 and voting in Missouri during presidential election years

Their goals covered three important aspects of voting: registration, education, and turnout to ensure their eligible students had the resources needed at every step of the voting process.

Common Challenges

Common Challenge #1: Setting long-term goals for democratic engagement efforts

Many colleges and universities only focused on the upcoming election, thinking about what they were going to do in the next few months to increase turnout in the midterms. While an emphasis on these goals helps create a sense of urgency leading up to an election, it often takes more time to institutionalize these practices.

By thinking about what they want democratic engagement to look like 5, 10, or even 20 years down the road, and the knowledge and skills students need to be successful in that political engagement, IHEs can better frame their efforts leading up to specific elections.

Common Challenge #2: Expanding their democratic engagement goals beyond voter engagement

The VFC program has traditionally focused on four pillars of engagement:

1. voter registration,
2. education,
3. turnout, and
4. students as voters advocates or ballot access.

All of these areas are critical to helping increase student participation in elections, but it is important to take a broader look at engaging students in the democratic process on campus.

“Politics 365”¹⁷ and “Election Imperatives”¹⁸ from the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education (IDHE) at Tufts University, were developed from studying campuses that were outliers in NSLVE from their projected student voting rights and from campus climate studies. IDHE wanted to know what made it possible for these IHEs to have such high student voter registration and turnout rates. They identified five major factors:

1. social cohesion,
2. diversity as realized practice,
3. pervasive political discussions,
4. students with shared institutional responsibility, and
5. political action.

These findings pointed to the necessity of having a campus democratically engaged beyond just focusing on the upcoming election and led to the 10 recommendations in “Election Imperatives.” Including actions like deliberative dialogues help foster a more engaged climate as well.

¹⁷ <https://idhe.tufts.edu/research/politics-365>

¹⁸ <https://idhe.tufts.edu/electionimperatives>

Spotlight - East Carolina University (North Carolina) - Short-term Goals building to Long-term Goals

East Carolina University took a comprehensive approach to their goal setting by diving into short-term and long-term goals through 2024. Their goals included both voter engagement outcomes for students as well as goals for institutionalizing democratic engagement at their institution.

Their short- and long-term goals demonstrated how an IHE and their democratic engagement coalition can work to overcome both the challenge of setting long-term goals and democratic engagement goals. Their goals demonstrated a thoughtful commitment to political engagement.



#VoteTogether Party at East Carolina University

East Carolina University Short-Term Goals

- Solidify an on-campus one-stop early voting location in the new student center for the 2020 election (in progress)
- Increase the voting rate to 50% between 2016-2020 for presidential elections (in progress)
- Increase the voting rate of students ages 18-21 to 40% between 2016-2020 for presidential elections (in progress)
- Conduct eight voter registration drives per semester, equally distributed across East and West Campus (complete)
- Advocate for the inclusion of election dates and deadlines on the university calendar by 2020 (in progress)
- Develop a Democratic Engagement Coalition, comprised of faculty, staff, students, and community members, to advise and institutionalize democratic engagement efforts on campus (complete)
- Collaborate with Student Activities and Organizations (SAO) and Greek Life to facilitate at least one voter engagement workshop per year (not started)
- Expand election shuttles to include one-stop early voting, in addition to Election Day (complete)

East Carolina University Long-Term Goals

- Increase the student voting rate by 10% between 2016-2024 for both presidential and midterm election years (in progress)
- Add at least one civic education/democratic engagement learning outcome to the COAD 1000 curriculum by 2022 (not started)
- Institutionalize voter registration on campus by adding voter registration information into Pirate Port¹⁹ (not started)
- Expand programming for STEM majors, females, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Hispanic students (not started)
- Graduate 160 “Citizens” from Citizen U by 2022²⁰ (in progress)
- Facilitate two faculty development workshops per year focused on incorporating civic learning and democratic engagement into their curriculum (in progress)
- Establish a liaison model for democratic engagement outreach to departments and divisions on campus (not started)
- Lobby for the inclusion of race and ethnicity data to the National Student Clearinghouse so ECU’s NSLVE report reflects these demographics by 2022 (not started)

Another point East Carolina University demonstrates is the importance of tracking and measuring goals. Not every goal has to be addressed at once. As you can see from their list, some goals are complete, some in progress, and others haven’t been started yet. Being strategic about how and when goals are carried out helps alleviate the pressure of accomplishing everything you set out to do.

¹⁹ Pirates are their mascot and Pirate Port is their online class portal.

²⁰ Citizen U is a program designed to educate students about how to be responsible, engaged citizens and to inspire them to be involved in their communities and our democracy. It is a cohort-based program where students meet once a week for ten weeks. Through these weekly workshops, community partnerships, field trips, and reflection, Citizen U participants will be more knowledgeable in topics such as personal financial literacy, voting, local government, media literacy, and civil discourse.

EVALUATING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

The majority of this report encourages colleges and universities to take a step back and think about the bigger picture of democratic engagement on their campus. Having strong coalitions and goals make a lasting impact. The strategies and tactics used to achieve those goals is also important to setting a standard.

The remainder of this report is focused on discussing what we call four pillars of voter engagement:

1. voter registration,
2. education,
3. turnout, and
4. students as voting rights advocates.

You'll find highlights from campuses who exhibited excellence or unique ideas in these categories and information on important tactics that can deepen or expand this work at your campus. If you want more in-depth information on common challenges campuses face, please refer to the [2016 Voter Friendly Campus report](#).

Voter Registration

The first step to being able to cast a ballot is registering to vote (in every state but North Dakota). According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), “Registration is sometimes a larger hurdle than the act of voting itself. Thus showing young people where to get reliable information on registration is helpful.”²¹

Spotlight - Cuyahoga Community College (Ohio) - The Voting Experience

In 2018, Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) and its Democracy Fellows utilized the spotlight of National Voter Registration Day²² to pioneer a new event dubbed “The Voting Experience.” The event was created in response to campus listening sessions that identified a need to help first-time voters understand the whole voting process.



²¹ <https://civicyouth.org/quick-facts/youth-voting>

²² <https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/>

EVALUATING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

According to their report, “The Voting Experience popped the entire voting process to life - from registration through voting (at home, at the Board of Elections (BOE), or at your polling location.” The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections joined Tri-C’s cross-campus coalition of students, staff and faculty. Together, 90 volunteers staffed 11 events across four campuses. In all, The Voting Experience offered four interactive stations for student participation, helping students understand checking in at a polling location and then enabling students to “vote” in an official BOE booth – utilizing a faux ballot customized for the occasion.

The original goal was to have 150 students stop by the events and register at least 50. Tri-C ended up with 635 students at the events and 239 registered – helping the board of elections achieve 25% of its community NVRD goals. Tri-C noted, “Our ultimate goal was to remove the mystery of the voting experience, thereby paving the way for our students to become true Democracy Champions.”

“

Achievements of Voting Goals:

When all was said and done, the mystery of voting registration and voting itself was removed and students could understand a real voting experience. We saw many students move from shyness and uncertainty about the registration and voting process to feeling confident and enthusiastic – perhaps the most gratifying part of this whole experience.

Using the time a student registers to introduce them to the entire voting process helps set them up for success. The interactive element of the voting experience made it fun, educational and engaging.

Spotlight - Stony Brook University (New York) - Integrating Voter Registration into Orientation

As we consider the long-term effects of tactics employed on campus, integrating voter registration into orientation should not be overlooked. As soon as students step on campus at Stony Brook University, they are given critical information about how to successfully navigate their new college or university. Including voter registration in orientation and other new student programs sends the message that being an active and engaged voter is an important part of campus life. It also immediately familiarizes students with the voter registration process so they can more easily update their registrations when necessary.



Our Center for Civic Justice coordinates campus-wide voter registration efforts with our on campus partners to ensure that all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students have an opportunity to register to vote before their first day of classes.

From the second week in June through the second week in August, our team offers voter registration at all 30 new student orientation sessions. For the first time, we offered comprehensive voter registration at all new transfer student orientation sessions, as well as at the orientation programs for our graduate and professional students. Each session is supported by two of our student leaders who are trained to ensure that each student successfully completes their voter registration application.

Additionally, voter registration is available four days each week (Monday through Thursday) in the lobby of our Student Activities Center, which receives the highest student traffic on campus. Furthermore, voter registration is available at all events hosted by the Center for Civic Justice, which included our most successful National Voter Registration Day yet.

Moreover and most recently for the first time, we offered comprehensive voter registration at all new student orientation sessions in December and January. Over 500 additional students had an opportunity to register to vote before their first day of classes.

In total, more than 5,200 students registered to vote at Stony Brook University in 2018 and early 2019.

Starting in June 2019, our student leaders who volunteer to support voter registration at new student orientation sessions will now be paid student staff members. We are grateful that Stony Brook University recognizes the importance of voter registration as a gateway to community engagement and is financially investing to ensure the sustainability of such efforts.

Overall, voter registration activities that focus on clarifying the process and making registration accessible to all students lead to great results.

Voter Education

Voter education is probably the broadest category of the four pillars of voter engagement. Activities can range from providing nonpartisan information on the candidates to holding in-depth political discussion on important issues. Education can be used to raise the visibility of an upcoming election and deepen a culture of democratic engagement on campus.

Spotlight - Berkeley City College (California) - Partnering with Faculty

As a commuter and community college, Berkeley City College utilized the classroom and partnerships with faculty to make sure students were provided with information about voting. They were able to engage in the process in ways that connected it to their studies and met them where they were.

Humanities

An instructor talked about the politics of space and spatial politics by addressing redlining, gentrification, gerrymandering, and the rhetorical justification of inequality in urban environments using art and signs as a tool of power and control.

Multimedia Arts

Involved in a national movement to raise voter education. They created a poster and short videos that were used in different channels nationwide.

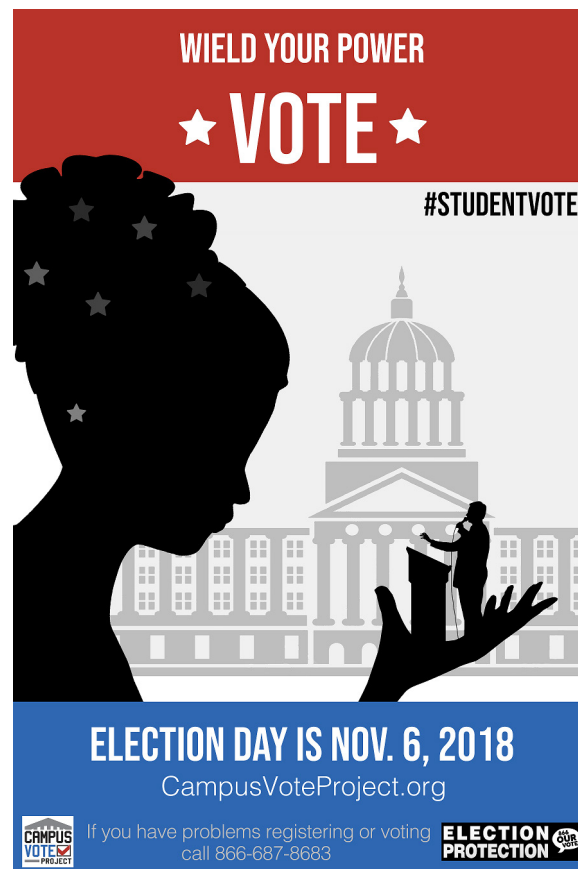
Sociology

Students selected one of 11 state ballot measures in applying the sociological construct of social problem framing. For their selected ballot measure they needed to examine:

- How this measure reflected a social concern rather than just noting a social condition.
- How this measure captured the “reality/ideal” gap that exists for social problems (a discourse about what the society should be like compared to what it is like.)
- Whether the Measure was largely framed as a special interest group issue or as a larger consensus issue.
- Whether the Measure presented one solution to the problem that could be accomplished by collective action.

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Berkeley City College's media department was also involved in the process. Students and professors worked together to develop posters, videos, and images they could share across their institution and on social media to engage students in the process.²³ Social media can be an incredibly effective way to reach students. 47% of 18 to 24-year-olds heard about the election over social media. 27% of the surveyed youth only heard about the election over social media.²⁴



Spotlight - James Madison University (Virginia) - Civic Coffee and Donut Discussions

James Madison University was dedicated to creating a space where students could have conversations about difficult issues. Encouraging political dialogue makes the democratic process seem more accessible for college students and encourages them to think critically about issues in our country. It is also an effective way to engage students who are not eligible to vote in the democratic process. The James Madison Center for Civic Engagement solicited conversation topics from students to address issues they wanted to learn more about and discuss.

The Madison Center provided background information and primers that included relevant facts about the issue, related policies on campus, and at the local, state, and national level, and resources for taking action after discussions. Facilitators presented information in a nonpartisan manner to maintain the inclusive and open-minded goals for these discussions. These types of events

²³ Their media was also utilized by Campus Vote Project on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to reach students across the country.

²⁴ <https://civicyouth.org/five-takeaways-on-social-media-and-the-youth-vote-in-2018/>

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demonstrate how people can learn about controversial and pressing public issues, hear what others think about them and engage in respectful and productive discussions that can lead to addressing the issues.



Civic Coffee and Donut Discussions (“C2D2”)

Throughout the semester, Dukes Vote invited students, faculty, and staff to discussions called Civic Coffee and Donut Discussions. Every Friday morning Dukes Vote hosted small-group discussions in order to facilitate talks concerning public and political issues. C2D2s were a huge success this semester because they provided opportunity to tackle tough issues that students wanted to learn more about in a safe environment. We intentionally take on the most controversial issues of the week. We also used social media polls to help determine the relevant topics of interest that students wanted to discuss. Our team develops primers with background information and research on the issues, discussion questions, and with suggestions for what can be done to address the issue. Our goal is for students to take turns facilitating the discussions so they have an opportunity to learn about defining problems and to practice civic skills.

In addition to the more intimate civic coffee donut discussions, the Madison Center organized “Tent Talks” on the Quad, a central location on campus with heavy foot traffic between classes. These discussions were also aimed at discussing and addressing pressing issues and included primers with nonpartisan information. However, the goal was to reach more, and engage a wider array of students. Facilitators invited students to read key facts and information displayed in the tents, to discuss what they already knew or had learned, and then asked them to respond to prompts on 3 x 5 cards which were then placed on tent poles.

The Madison Center also took political education on the road, literally, with its Traveling Town Hall. Political candidates from all parties and in all levels of elections were invited to talk and answer questions at three residence halls in one evening. Candidates with different backgrounds, beliefs and partisan identities rode in the same van to each location, to meet students where they lived.

EVALUATING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Community members also attended, and the news media covered the events. The fall 2018 Traveling Town Hall was paired with a nonpartisan voter education guide prepared and produced by The Madison Center and an honors political science class. Candidates and students were enthused by the opportunity to engage with each other and one student commented that it restored their faith in democracy.

Voter Turnout

Giving students information about voter registration and voter education is not enough. It is also necessary to provide information about how and when to cast their ballot. Turnout campaigns raise awareness of upcoming elections and can create a culture of inclusion. Messages that encourage students to take on an identity of being voters and normalizing student voting are proven tactics for increasing student voting.²⁵

Spotlight - McKendree University (Illinois) - Getting an On-Campus Polling Location

McKendree University initiated the process for adding a polling place because not having one on campus was a barrier that prevented students from voting in past elections. First, students were less likely to vote or show interest in registering to vote or voting if it required a trip off-campus. Students often lack transportation, and have busy schedules balancing coursework, sports, and other activities, so leaving campus posed a challenge. Second, students sometimes felt out of place at the polls, since the age and racial makeup of the outer community is different from our student body. The idea was to make voting more comfortable for students, and to make it easy for them to fit into their schedules. This change encouraged them to vote and provided a great voting experience for the outside community as well.

St. Clair County allows petitions to add or change polling places. There are certain qualifications that must be met for the petition to be considered, for example, accessibility and parking. The timing of McKendree University's petition coincided with the county wanting to consolidate polling places, which made the campus, in the heart of Lebanon, an ideal location. The Hettenhausen Center for the Arts is easily accessible without any barriers or steps, has dedicated parking, and has space for all of the tables and booths the country requires. To make peace with the surrounding community, individuals from campus organized rides for citizens who would like to vote.

The result was mostly positive, with room for improvement. Students responded a lot better to the voter registration process when they learned that they could vote on campus, and McKendree University received a lot of good feedback from students about the voting process.

²⁵ www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Students_into_Voters.pdf

However, a few issues arose. The polling place was very busy during certain times of the day, creating a bottleneck. Some students reported they were asked for photo ID, which is not required under Illinois law. Other students were told they could not register on Election Day, which is also incorrect. We had a large number of students request absentee ballots, and some of them never received their ballots. The St. Clair County Clerk's office was receptive to opening a dialogue about these issues, and the university is working with them to improve processes and training for poll workers for upcoming elections.

Students as Voter Advocates

Students are and should be leaders in creating and sharing their own political media with their peers, developing plans to broaden engagement at their colleges and universities, and leading efforts on their campus, as well as engaging election and elected officials to improve the voting process. This ensures democratic engagement programs fit the needs of the student population and normalizes students being a part of the political process. As mentioned previously, 47% of 18- to 24-year-olds got election information from social media in 2018, often from what their peers shared.²⁶

Spotlight - The College at Brockport, State University of New York - Students as Poll Workers

The College at Brockport partnered with other area colleges to pilot the “Monroe County Election Fellows” program. The cohort of institutions partnered with the local board of elections office to get students to work as poll workers. By having students serve as poll workers at locations near campus, they made sure young people were represented and visible at the polling site. They also demonstrated how partnering with local election officials can be useful to advancing work at your college and community. Students involved in the process gained deep knowledge about the election process and were able to view themselves as active facilitators, rather than just participants. Most

“

Monroe County Election Fellows:

This pilot program was incredibly successful in its first year. We ended up with more than 30 students actually spending Election Day (from 5am - 9pm) working at the polls, but moreover, there was increased knowledge and attention paid to this opportunity. More than 40 students attended the poll worker training, and more than 70 initially signed up as interested. In the future, we anticipate this program to continue to grow, provided we are able to partner with Monroe County again.

²⁶ <https://civicyouth.org/five-takeaways-on-social-media-and-the-youth-vote-in-2018>

EVALUATING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

of these students indicated they plan to work as poll workers in the future.

Students serving as poll workers is proven to be effective in engaging students in the democratic process and making students casting a ballot feel more comfortable in the process. This, along with other issues, is addressed in Fair Elections Center's "Democracy's Future" document.²⁷

Spotlight - Winthrop University (South Carolina) - Voting Ambassadors

Winthrop University makes sure students, administrators, and faculty are equipped with the knowledge and information they need to help their peers, family, and community members through the voting process.

Partnering with local elections officials and empowering students with the information they need to share with their peers about elections is an effective way to share information. Students are more likely to take information from their peers than they are from other sources.

Students as Voting Advocates

Using peers to influence other students is a proven method to influence behavior. Winthrop partnered with the York County Election Commission to train student Voting Ambassadors, as we did in 2016. This year, we invited Faculty and Staff to participate as well. A total of 50 students and employees participated in this training, creating a network of individuals who could answer the most commonly asked questions about South Carolina election law. The Winthrop employees who completed this training were provided a sign that they could affix to their work space identifying themselves as Voting Ambassadors.



Training members of the campus community as "Voting Ambassadors" is also a great way to engage members of your coalition.

²⁷ www.fairelectionscenter.org/democracys-future

CONCLUSION

In 2016 we started the Voter Friendly Campus (VFC) designation program as a collaboration between the Fair Election Center's Campus Vote Project and NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education with the hope of increasing understanding and innovation at higher education institutions regarding civic and electoral engagement. Primarily, it was our hope to expand resources and support for the enactment of The Higher Education Act of 1965's (HEA) requirement which states institutions are to distribute voter registration forms to their students.

With the minimal guidance provided in the HEA, our respective organizations saw an opportunity to more intentionally assist institutions with developing coordinated plans for administrators, faculty, students, election officials, and community partners to institutionalize civic and electoral engagement, and foster a true civic ethos as part of an institution's culture. While we've seen the byproduct of increased student voter registration rates between 2016 and 2018 and an increase in campus participation since the VFC program's inception (84 campuses in 2016 to 124 campuses in 2018), our true success comes from the campus stories that demonstrate how they are championing civic participation. It goes to show that everyone has a role to play in enacting a thriving democracy - whether it is by registering voters, supporting community members in the absentee voting process, lobbying for legislation that makes voting more accessible, or providing civic education opportunities like who's on the ballot and what's the process. Every person and role are important.

As national organizations and individuals committed to a healthy democratic process, we are humbled by the opportunity to support a diverse group of campuses and individuals that believe, as we do, everyone should have access and the opportunity to engage in our democracy. Thank you for sharing your campus stories with us, allowing us to be a part of the conversations and processes that overcome obstacles in your communities related to voting, and engaging us in the celebrations of civic and electoral accomplishments.

At the outset of the third iteration of the Voter Friendly Campus designation program - we thank you for engaging us in the process. We've learned a lot in the past few years and know there is more of a journey ahead.

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www.VoterFriendlyCampus.org