ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Strategic Plan
Emory University – Atlanta Campus
DRAFT: November 3, 2020

Background and Summary
Voter turnout among young people, including college students, often lags overall voting eligible population turnout in elections. Emory students are no exception. In recent years, the turnout rates for eligible Emory students have been below or at the national average for colleges and universities in each year. Many members of the Emory community have been aware of this problem and engaged in addressing it. Going back at least to the 2008 elections, students and staff have set up voting registration tables, organized debates and candidate appearances, canvassed for candidates, and helped people get to the polls. These efforts were, however, fairly fragmented and short-lived.

In response to heightened political awareness and the need to strengthen student voting and related civic engagement efforts, a group of Emory staff, faculty and students began coordinating under the loose umbrella of what would become the Emory Votes Initiative (described in greater detail below). Initially, their focus was on assisting Emory students on the Atlanta campus to register and turn out to vote in the 2018 midterm election. The group of over thirty interested campus members, mainly from the Atlanta campus at first, met monthly to increase student voter registration events, assist students with registration issues, communicate about where and when to vote through signage and emails, walk voters to the polls, transport voters to polls on shuttles, and identify more community members across the campuses who would help all individuals at Emory to "operationalize their civic duty."

The experience of the 2018 election is reflective of the substantial efforts in the past in our community to make sure that voters are registered and that they are able to access their polling places. Our community, from students to faculty to administration, is broadly supportive of civic engagement and voting efforts; however, attempts to institutionalize this support on an ongoing basis have largely been absent. To leverage and coordinate the immense enthusiasm across the university for civic engagement, Emory University joined the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in July 2019. Participating will have myriad benefits for the campus in line with the university's recent strategic framework. Most immediately, increasing efforts to facilitate student engagement through voting and civic participation will enrich student experience and help to make Emory an "academic community of choice," in line with Pillar 2 of Emory's 2018 strategic plan. It will also serve to amplify the voice and impact of the Emory community in Atlanta, Georgia, and beyond. Finally, working to increase student engagement promotes the university's commitment to producing critically thinking, ethical citizens and nurturing future leaders in the public and private sectors.

This document, developed by the Emory Votes Initiative, outlines our strategy for increasing our campus turnout for the 2020 primary and general elections.

Organization and Personnel
The development and implementation of this strategic plan will be led by the Emory Votes Initiative (EVI). During the fall of 2018, a grassroots group of staff, faculty, and students came

together to coordinate voter registration and turnout efforts in the midterm elections. After the election, participants sought to institutionalize the knowledge and experience that had been gained from 2018 election. The Emory Votes Initiative is dedicated to fostering a more civically engaged campus by increasing voter education, providing awareness programs, and empowering our community with informed political resources. Emory students, staff, and faculty developed this non-partisan initiative to strengthen and centralize voting efforts on campus. Since its inception, EVI has received strong support from the Office of the Provost and the Office of Campus Life which has lent critical administrative and financial support to the group and allowed it to hire a temporary, part-time dedicated staffer.

The group is led by a steering committee with representation from staff, faculty, and students. As of fall 2020, it consists of Alex Bolton (Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science), Hayden Davis (student, Emory College), Hallie Dowling-Huppert (Assistant Director, Center for Civic and Community Engagement), Rick Doner (Professor, Department of Political Science), Ricardo Horne (Assistant Director, Student Involvement and Leadership, Oxford College), James Roland (Director, Center for Civic and Community Engagement), Mike St. Louis (Rollins School of Public Health), Katie Vigilante (Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Oxford College), and Sarah Zaslaw (Assistant Coordinator, Emory Votes Initiative). The steering committee is supported by part-time undergraduate student interns on both the Atlanta and Oxford campuses.

The steering committee meets on a biweekly or weekly basis. The entire EVI group meets about once per semester to discuss ongoing issues, communicate about opportunities to become involved, brainstorm about outstanding issues, and develop the group's overall priorities.

Goals
Our specific goals for the 2020 election are:
- Voter registration rate of 85% among undergraduate and graduate students
- Voter turnout rate of 65% among undergraduate and graduate students
- 4,000 TurboVote signups

In the longer term, we see our efforts as an integral part of Emory's commitment to educating civically engaged and ethical global citizens. Our students will go on to become leaders in the public and private sectors. In fostering a culture of civic engagement on campus, we can help our students to develop the skills ensure their voices will be heard now and into the future.

Landscape
Emory University has roughly 15,000 students, about half graduate and half undergraduate. The undergraduate student population is divided between Emory College at the Atlanta campus and Oxford College of Emory University in Oxford, Georgia. Our NSLVE reports provide a number of important insights into recent voter turnout that can help to guide our efforts. The table below lists the registration and turnout rates for Emory and all universities that participate in NSLVE.

Year	Emory Reg. Rate	Nat'l. Reg. Rate	Emory Turnout	Nat't. Turnout
2012	72.7%	69.0%	40.6%	46.9%

2014	62.1%	64.9%	17.9%	19.1%
2016	75.1%	70.6%	47.4%	50.4%
2018	76.4%	73.3%	41.1%	39.1%

The 2018 NSLVE reports also provide additional insights that will guide our efforts moving forward about the state of voter engagement in the Emory community:
- Graduate student turnout significantly exceeds undergraduate turnout.
- About half of students that voted in the 2018 midterm elections voted by absentee ballot.
- While registration rates are generally high, there is a significant drop-off from registration to voter turnout, emphasizing the need to ensure students not only register but have the information and resources necessary to get to the polls.

Support and Partnerships
EVI has received strong support from our administrative, academic, and student partners around campus. EVI has in the past and present received significant financial commitments from the Office of the Provost and Campus Life as well as the Center for Community and Civic Engagement to fund its operations. In the 2018 election, Transportation and Parking Services also provided substantial support to run shuttles to the polls.

The academic administration beyond the Office of the Provost has also taken actions that materially support EVI's efforts. EVI has reached out to all of the academic deans across the university seeking their support for the initiative and their affirmation of support for faculty in their units that are engaged in EVI's work. All of these communications have been well-received, suggesting strong support the different schools for EVI and a broader commitment to Civic Engagement.

Student groups have also been important partners for EVI, particularly the undergraduate and graduate student government associations. We hope to expand the reach of our student outreach efforts in the future, with a particular eye toward including groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in civic engagement on our campus.

The Plan
Technology: TurboVote
In July 2019, with financial support from the Center for Community and Civic Engagement, EVI contracted with TurboVote, a technology platform created by Democracy Works that facilitates voter registration, disseminates information about deadlines and polling places, and helps people vote by mail. Emory has a dedicated TurboVote portal (emory.turbovote.org) that allows members of our community to sign up.

We saw TurboVote and its integration into our activities as central to the success of our plan even before the pandemic began, and even more so since. As the numbers from NSLVE suggest, the proportion of Emory students that are registered to vote is relatively high, generally close to or above the national average (though there is still clearly room for improvement). This is a testament to the successful past efforts at registering voters by student and staff groups. However, there does appear to be a disconnect when it comes to actual turnout. This suggests there are other intervening factors between registration and turning out to the polls that lead

registered students to not cast a ballot. We hoped TurboVote would help bridge that gap, at least in part, by providing information that lowers the "costs" of voting. It is especially useful insofar as it sends reminders about absentee voting, including about deadlines for requesting ballots and information about how to do so, given that approximately half of Emory students used this method of voting even before 2020.

One goal that our group has is to seek out ways to integrate TurboVote into existing academic technology. A link to the portal has already been integrated into OrgSync, and we are exploring ways to further embed TurboVote into other student-facing platforms such as OPUS and Canvas.

Communications Strategy

EVI recognizes that communicating with the Emory community is key to achieving the goals we have set out, and as such this is an area where we are actively seeking to improve our efforts. Communications about registration and voting, the events we are having, and how to become involved with the group itself are essential for ensuring our community is aware of the opportunities for civic engagement on our campus and why it is important for everyone's voice to be heard in the political process.

Our communications activities take several forms:
- Our website (http://campuslife.emory.edu/about/initiatives/evi/index.html) is the central public repository for information we want to distribute to the Emory community. Among other resources, it houses:
  - The "Path to the Polls" guide, which takes the reader step-by-step through the process of registering to vote and the different ways they can then vote.
  - Calendar of voting, election-related, and civic engagement events across the campus
  - Transportation information for getting from campus to local polling places
  - Faculty toolkit for incorporating voting and civic engagement into the classroom
  - Archived newsletters
  - Link to TurboVote portal
  - List of nonpartisan opportunities for engagement with other groups focused on civic engagement around and beyond campus, including working the polls
  - Information on voter rights
- Biweekly newsletter, Emory Votes Notes, which communicates with our listserv about election-related tips and information, volunteer opportunities, and events happening around campus.
- Videos about the importance of voting featuring students, staff, and faculty (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iDaNGdpkNQ&t=16s) and using TurboVote (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCia5TpHTbs&feature=emb_title)
- Social media (@EmoryVotes on Instagram and Facebook)
- Ad hoc emails to students, faculty, and staff in advance of important deadlines
- Email address where members of the Emory community can ask questions about voting
- Yard signs around campus encouraging voting
- Engaging with Emory University communications/media as well as student media, such as the Emory Wheel

Civic Engagement and Voting in the Classroom
Faculty have a unique role to play in fostering civic engagement on campuses. They have regular times in which they can directly engage with students. During remote learning, this sole point of contact becomes even more important. Educating globally minded leaders in the private and public sectors is an essential pillar of the university's mission. However, not all faculty see clear connections between the work they do in the classroom and this goal of the university. While some in political science may see these connections readily, for example, connections may be harder to make in the natural sciences and mathematics. Indeed, a recent study found that only 18% of surveyed faculty at private and public universities around the country thought "teaching and encouraging students to become agents of social change – which explicitly involves issues of voting and civic behaviors like protesting and organizing" was an essential pedagogical goal.[1]

To address this, faculty on the EVI steering committee have convened a faculty working group with representatives across the university's academic divisions, including in the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Nursing, and Goizueta Business School. Within the College of Arts and Sciences, we have made a special effort to recruit faculty from physics and biology, fields that our NSLVE reports indicate have among the lowest student turnout rates in the university. Members of EVI have reached out to all of the academic deans across the university and the College of Arts and Science Faculty Senate to enlist their support for our efforts and to ask them to encourage their faculty to be supportive more broadly of EVI's goals. The responses to these entreaties have been uniformly positive, and many of the members of our faculty working group were directly recommended by their academic deans. We see this academic administrative support as crucial for gaining buy-in from faculty moving forward.

First, we have created and are working to expand a repository of short modules that faculty across different disciplines can draw on to bring discussions about government, public policy, and civic engagement directly into the classroom. For instance, one member of the faculty working group, Helen Baker (School of Nursing) included several assignments in her course on global public health aimed to educate her students about the importance of voting for nurses. Other modules that we are developing include discussions of funding for scientific research, funding for the arts, the nature of scientific evidence used in the regulatory process, how census categories shape and reflect social and racial identities, and more. Our hope is that by creating these short modules, faculty will more readily see how they can integrate material about civic engagement and voting in the classroom and lower the barriers to doing so. This, we hope, will serve to make these themes more central to the Emory academic experience. The faculty toolkit is available on the EVI website (http://campuslife.emory.edu/about/initiatives/evi/faculty.html).

Second, our group has incorporated TurboVote directly into more classrooms, especially of first-year students, and encouraged faculty to have their students sign up. Some successful pilot experiences last year informed our understanding of how to do this. In the fall of 2019, Goizueta Business School Prof. Allison Burdette offered extra credit to her class for signing up for TurboVote, resulting in over one hundred new registrations at the site. On the Oxford campus, Prof. Katie Vigilante created a competition wherein the first-year discovery seminars that all freshmen are required to take competed for prizes to see which class could have the greatest

---

[1] https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2018/04/25/civic-engagement-and-social-change-not-priority-faculty-members-opinion

numbers of sign ups. This also proved to be successful, particularly when faculty dedicated a small amount of class time to allowing students to sign up for TurboVote and discussed the importance of civic engagement. In 2020 we worked with the Atlanta campus College of Arts and Sciences to incorporate a similar TurboVote encouragement into freshman seminars and orientation classes. We have also reached out to freshman seminars to offer the opportunity to have an EVI student ambassador and faculty member come to talk with students about creating a voting plan. We can measure the success of these efforts by observing whether they lead to greater TurboVote registrations or not, which makes them a particularly valuable part of our efforts.

Third, EVI members have been reaching out to department chairs in the College of Arts and Sciences (which houses the faculty that interact most with undergraduate and PhD students) about EVI and TurboVote. Representatives have given brief presentations at department faculty meetings about these topics as well as to gather information about the types of materials that would be most useful for faculty in those to disciplines for introducing ideas about civic engagement into the classroom.

Finally, we developed and implemented a lesson plan for the 2020 freshman orientation course (called PACE) that all first-year students are required to take. This 50-minute lesson focused on the rights and responsibilities that students have to the communities they are a part of and the importance of civic engagement. Students learned about the history of voting in the United States, how to register to vote, and the process of voting. Additionally, all students were encouraged to sign up for TurboVote during the lesson.

Events and Programming
Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the safety rules on campus, almost no in-person programming is possible in the fall of 2020. That said, we have put on several virtual events to spread information about voting and generate interest in the election:
- We hosted a National Voter Registration Day celebration webinar that featured student, faculty, and staff voices from across the campus, including Emory President Greg Fenves.
- In partnership with the Commission on Presidential Debates, we hosted virtual debate watch parties for the presidential and vice-presidential debates. These feature a moderated one-hour conversation with people from across campus about the election prior to the debate and then live streaming of the debate with an open chat for participants to discuss the debate in real time.
- We also used our platforms to amplify programming by groups around campus centered on the election, including the James Weldon Johnson Institute, the Barkley Forum, Emory College, and more. We also helped to publicize information about other resources on Emory's campus relevant for the election, such as Counseling and Psychological Service's guide to coping with stress caused by the political climate (https://counseling.emory.edu/resources/political-climate.html).
- EVI members collaborated with the Center for Faculty Development and Excellence and the Laney Graduate School to create a guide for election discussions in the classroom (http://campuslife.emory.edu/_includes/documents/sections/about/Guidance-for-Election-Discussions.pdf)

Transportation to the Polls
As our NSLVE report suggests, there is a relatively large drop off between our registration and voting rates. One effort that we first undertook in 2018 was to have Emory Cliff Shuttles operate from central campus locations to polling places near campus while the polls are open. In October 2020 we chartered shuttles to the closest early voting location to campus on all available weekend days of early voting at both campuses. Additionally, we offer customized transportation plans for students that cannot use those shuttles to get to their polling place or ballot dropoff location.

Engaging the Staff Community
Civic engagement in the broader staff community is also central to building our campus's culture of political participation. Students interact on a regular basis with staff all over the campus and view them as role models. By exemplifying Emory's commitment to civic engagement and voting, Emory's staff can play an integral role in increasing voter turnout throughout our entire community. Their full participation is also, of course, an end in itself. The steering committee has identified a number of opportunities that may serve to increase voting among staff members:
- Transportation and Parking Services gladly stocks voter registration forms in their offices. When not working remotely, all staff and faculty that park on campus interact directly with this office, so this is an ideal place to have information about voting.
- Signs at parking garages and in building common areas that have information about TurboVote and voter registration as well as QR codes that allow people to easily access links with more information
- Emory Human Resources now offers all new hires a brief orientation program. We are hoping that civic engagement can be included within that orientation, either as part of the program, or in materials distributed to new employees (e.g., voter registration forms, flyers about TurboVote).
- Two presentations to the Employee Council to enlist their civic engagement and turnout.
- Occasional bulletins in the weekly staff newsletter *News You Can Use.*
- Promoted and publicized a change in Emory's policy that allows employees to use up to four hours of paid time to vote during the early voting period or on Election Day.

Outreach to Student Groups
We hope to plan events where possible to inform students about voting, how to register, and important deadlines. A central goal of these events is to introduce students to TurboVote, support groups in their civic engagement efforts, and help connect people across campus who are interested in increasing voter participation at Emory. Some examples of these ongoing connections and partnerships inside and outside the university include:
- ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
- College Republicans
- Young Democrats
- Fair Fight Emory
- Georgia 55 Project
- Voting is Healthy
- Rollins Election Day Initiative (School of Public Health)
- Voting Champions (School of Nursing)
- Athletic teams

- Fraternities and sororities
- Residence halls
- Barkley Forum
- Commission on Presidential Debates

We also hope to use the data from our NSLVE reports to target outreach to groups that traditionally vote at lower rates on our campus.

In addition to our interns, EVI also has a group of volunteer student ambassadors who are trained in voter registration and turnout. We make these ambassadors available to groups and classes that want them to come to a meeting or class and give presentations about the mechanics of voting and making a voting plan.

Election Day Activities
Due to COVID-19 restrictions on events on campus, we are limited in the Election Day activities we can implement. However, we plan to have a presence on both campuses and at local polling stations to celebrate and encourage student voting:
- Emory Votes T-shirt giveaways
- "I Voted" cookies at Oxford College's Tuesday Take a Break
- Selfie signs for student voters to use
- Transportation information and plans for on- and off-campus students

Metrics for Success
To measure the success of our efforts, we plan to rely primarily on registration and turnout estimates from NSLVE as well as TurboVote sign-up data for our campus. These will inform our evaluations of our success in achieving our top-line goals.

We will also seek to track as best as possible engagement with our social media posts, newsletters, and online events, with a goal of growth throughout the election season.

In a nonpandemic year, we would have been able to measure the voter registrations and TurboVote signups that took place at in-person events, meetings in RA groups, and other in-person encounters. Many of these routes were closed to us in 2020.

Much of what we have accomplished so far, however, is to be measured in more qualitative terms: the unnumbered relationships built, name recognition, questions answered, and a strong uptick in mentions in communications from university administration and links to the Emory Votes website.