



ALL-IN VOTER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

OVERVIEW

Students, faculty, staff, and administrators at Duke worked in concert throughout 2016 to encourage student civic engagement and voting on campus. Efforts were anchored by the Duke Voting Coalition, a student-led, 50+ member group consisting of representatives from the most active student groups on campus that coordinated voter registration, education, and mobilization activities.

University partners included a broad array of student groups, the Office of Government Relations, Office of Student Affairs, Office of Civic Engagement, Office of Parking and Transportation, Sanford School of Public Policy, the Department of Political Science, the Duke Program for American Grand Strategy, the Kenan Institute for Ethics, and the Center for Political Leadership, Innovation, and Service (POLIS).

VOTER REGISTRATION, EDUCATION, AND MOBILIZATION

The political climate around voting in North Carolina was highly uncertain for the 2016 general elections. A voter ID law passed by the state legislature was to be in effect for the elections, which would have added a layer of complexity onto explaining the voting process to first-time (and existing) North Carolina voters. A Federal appeals court struck down this voter ID law at the end of July, but legal challenges to that decision kept the status of the voter ID law in limbo for several more weeks.

In this context, University partners took a multi-channel approach to communicating registration and voting requirements, including:

- A centralized, updated voter page on the Student Affairs website with all pertinent information for student voters: how to register and vote for both North Carolina and out of state residents, as well as a voter guide for students studying abroad;
- Campus-wide emails on Constitution Day and prior to Election Day were sent with information regarding where, when, and how to vote;
- A Duke-specific TurboVote site was created to facilitate voter registration and absentee ballot requests;
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) campaigns led by various student groups promoted voting;

- Digital and physical flyering around campus;
- In-person student-led tabling events to help students register and answer questions.
- Student-organized and -led voter education activities throughout the fall semester featured guest speakers, arts events, and other programming related to the elections.

The Duke Voting Coalition and Administration worked hand-in-hand to make getting to the polls possible. The on-campus polling site was not located near major academic and residential facilities, so the Duke Voting Coalition researched and proposed a plan that was approved by the Administration to provide a dedicated shuttle connecting the polling site with East Campus and West Campus. The shuttle location was also placed on the tracking app students frequently use. In addition, one of the main bus lines made an additional stop near the polling site.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In the context of one of the most bitterly contested races in our nation's history, the Duke community has come together under the leadership of POLIS to promote constructive dialogue, starting with a large Election Night gathering at the Sanford School of Public Policy.

Shortly after the election, Sanford faculty led an open and respectful bipartisan community conversation around the momentous result in which students, faculty, and staff across the political spectrum talked about the results and possible implications. The following week, POLIS convened a bipartisan roundtable with faculty which covered what the results meant for the parties and various policies. Additionally, the Sanford School Diversity and Inclusion committee convened a discussion around political discussion at home over the holiday breaks.

LOOKING AHEAD

This election highlighted that the ever-more-apparent dysfunction of American politics is one of the greatest challenges of our time. The election revealed high levels of vitriol, incivility, extreme partisanship, distrust of our political institutions, and profound divides between Americans. The Duke community is united in a belief that we must do better.

Looking ahead, Duke seeks to be a national leader in finding our way out of this morass, a place that thought leaders look to for inspiration, that models how to have informed civil dialogue and respectful disagreement, and that inspires and empowers the next generation of Duke students to lead North Carolina, America, and the world to a better political future.

A common theme we have heard in our conversations, in particular, is that we all need to learn to talk to each other, and to listen. As we enter 2017, therefore, POLIS' primary focus will be on fostering informed, civil discourse and on bridging the divides that separate Americans. In January POLIS will launch "The Purple Project: Bridging the Divide Between Red and Blue America" involving major speakers, student workshops, and other events. The launch is just the beginning of a multi-year project now being planned. A new course this spring called "The Democracy Lab" will be an incubator that will give course credit for student projects that tackle political problems in innovative ways. Efforts will be assiduously non-partisan, but we will not shy away from standing for politics that is informed by facts, that includes diverse voices, that exhibits civility and respect, that builds community, and that calls, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, on the better angels of our nature.