

Emerson College ALL IN Challenge Action Plan – Fall 2016

#EmersonVotes Campaign

The Elma Lewis Center for Civic Engagement, Learning, and Research at Emerson College seeks to empower Emerson students, faculty, staff, and alumni to vote. We are committed to fair and meaningful elections, and campaigning for greater voter engagement across our campus community. Through our #EmersonVotes campaign, the Elma Lewis Center aims to register Emersonians to vote, and encourages registered voters to bring their voice to the polls. For Election 2016, our campaign's approach included voter registration, voter education/engagement, get out the vote efforts, and post-election engagement.

A Multi-Prong Campaign Approach

We designed a (4) part campaign to tackle the various aspects of electoral engagement during this election cycle. Additionally, we designed a logo for social media and t-shirts to brand the campaign and increase campus awareness.

1. Voter Registration

Orientation Service Project - During orientation week, two student leaders coordinated the annual Orientation Service Project in which they engaged 50 first-year students in completing a voter registration form and making posters to spread across campus encouraging students to vote. Resources about the candidates, voting, and how our democracy works were also provided.

National Voter Registration Day - The goal of participating in this nation-wide event is to increase our voter registration rate among students, faculty, and staff for the 2016 Federal Election. On September 27th, we engaged community members in 2 ways: tabling in 3 locations across campus to get people registered in passing between classes or meals, and to get faculty to bring their class to our Center during the day; and through "Floor Storming" (or door-to-door knocking) in our largest residence hall on campus during the evening. Throughout the day, we provided information about absentee registration/voting, in-state voter registration, and how to find your polling location, as well as non-partisan information about our state ballot questions and the main party presidential candidates. In total, we engaged 30 volunteers in assisting 238 Emersonians in completing a voter registration form or absentee ballot application. A summary of the event can be found [here](#).

Partnering with Residence Life - We partnered with RA's from three out of the four residence halls on our campus to register on-campus students to vote. One RA led a Floor Storming activity on National Voter Registration Day in which ten of her residents joined her in knocking on doors, assisting with voter registration and absentee ballot applications, and providing nonpartisan information about the presidential candidates and state ballot questions. The following week, the other two RA's engaged four additional residents in tabling within their residence halls to do the same. (These total engagement and registration numbers are included in the NVRD totals).

2. Voter Education and Engagement

Online Communications - In the months leading up to the election, electronic communications were used to reach our students, staff and faculty. A link with information about voter registration, absentee voting, finding your polling location, and early voting in Massachusetts was placed in the Announcements section of our school's online portal and calendar from September through November. Additionally, two all-campus emails were sent to provide information. The first was sent the day before National Voter Registration Day encouraging people to register and to fill our last volunteer openings. The second email was sent the day before election day to encourage people to vote. All events throughout the campaign were also included in the weekly school-wide events newsletter, as well as featured prominently on our Facebook page and those of the other offices in our division. The College's official Facebook page posted our events and announcements as well.

America Will Be Panel Discussion - On Wednesday, November 2nd, the Elma Lewis Center convened 20 staff, faculty, students, and community members to discuss and explore the ways in which Boston community members have contributed to furthering Langston Hughes' call for a new "America" in his 1938 poem, *Let America Be America Again*. In this poem, Hughes is critical of imperialism, settler colonialism, white supremacy, and capitalism, but maintains hope in America's future by reminding us throughout the piece to dream. The purpose of the event was to explore through the panelists' practice in activism, media/technology, and the arts what America will be in the coming years. Panelists included: Heather Watkins, Emerson alumna and disability advocate; Darius Watford, Press Pass TV youth program alum; and Dr. Nettrice Gaskins, Boston Arts Academy STEAM Lab Director. A summary of the event can be found [here](#).

3. Get Out The Vote

Election Day Walk Groups - In order to make voting easy for on-campus students, we offered volunteer-led Voting Walk Groups to meet up at residence halls at designated times throughout the day on November 8th to walk with students to their polling location so they didn't have to go on their own or make their own plans to get there. Based on the locations of our residence halls, our students had 2 designated polling locations in reasonable walking distance from our school, but not easily accessible by public transportation. We offered 4 designated meeting times, including before early classes at 8am, and a "last call" meet-up at 7pm before the polls closed at 8pm. Only six students took advantage of this opportunity, but many more that spoke with our volunteers throughout the day told us that they voted early or absentee. We engaged 8 volunteers in this activity.

Election Day Tabling - During lunch and dinner, 6 volunteers tabled outside our dining area to provide off-campus students with information about finding their polling location online, along with #EmersonVotes cards that they could write the polling address and directions on for the students to take away with them. We also provided a list of businesses that were offering deals and discounts that day if you presented your "I voted" sticker. Additionally, we continued to share nonpartisan information about the major party candidates and the state ballot questions.

4. Post-Election Activities

The Morning After - We held space in the Elma Lewis Center for Emerson community members to gather to reflect, celebrate, mourn, or otherwise process the results of the election on Wednesday, November 9th. We provided breakfast and kept the space open throughout the day as we had many folks upset by the results, or whom had already experienced bias incidents or threats of violence since the results had been announced early that morning.

New Citizens Voter Registration – To close our campaign, Elma Lewis Center staff will participate in a voter registration clinic with our community partner, MIRA (Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition). On December 15, we will register newly sworn-in citizens at Faneuil Hall in downtown Boston, empowering them with the first rite of passage to becoming an active and engaged citizen.

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