



Center for Civic Engagement

Northwestern University

All-In Campus Challenge Action Plan 2016

Background

Northwestern University's Center for Civic Engagement founded NU Votes in an effort to go beyond simply providing voter information to students as required of federally funded universities by the Higher Ed Act of 1998. NU Votes is a non-partisan initiative that aims to make voting understandable and accessible to the entire Northwestern community.

In recent years, we have integrated voter registration into Northwestern University's Welcome Week for first year and transfer students - allowing all new students the opportunity to register to vote upon arrival at university.

This year, NU Votes, in partnership with other university officials and offices made special efforts to further expand voter engagement among students, faculty, and staff around the 2016 General Election.

50-State Voter Registration & Absentee Ballots

Since Northwestern is a national university, NU Votes provides students with support for registering to vote in all 50-states, plus the materials they may need to request an absentee ballot (as needed).

Integrated Registration During Orientation

For the past few years, Northwestern has offered an ambitious program to integrate 50-state voter registration into the orientation program for all new, incoming students, each year. This initiative provided the foundation for expanded voter engagement efforts this year. In 2016, we developed several additional tools to expand registration rates among returning students and other members of the Northwestern community.

NUVotes.org

This year, NU Votes launched a new online web tool in partnership with Vote.org. The website enabled students to check their registration status, register to vote, and request absentee ballots in any of the 50 states, on their own. The website also provided resources for students to get help in-person from NU Votes staff members by visiting the Center for Civic Engagement or one of the registration drives put on by NU Votes.

Registration Drives

NU Votes implemented a weeklong Voter Registration Station in Norris University Center, Northwestern's Evanston campus student center. The station was staffed September 26 - September 30 from 10am - 10pm to help students check their registration status, register to vote, update their registration information, request absentee ballots from their home states, and get answers to other questions related to voting.

Additionally, on National Voter Registration Day (September 27), NU Votes set up a registration station at Northwestern University's Downtown Chicago campus - providing the same resources to graduate students.

After the success of NU Votes initial voter registration drives, a day-long "One Last Chance" Drive held at both the Chicago and Evanston campuses on October 10 provided Northwestern community members an opportunity to register just before many states' voter registration deadlines passed.

Continued Registration Support

Voting assistance is available all year-long at Northwestern's Center for Civic Engagement. During the 2016 election season, the NU Votes team made special efforts to advertise the in-person support available for walk-ins - students were provided help with everything from getting answers to complicated voter ID questions to getting stamps to mail in their absentee ballots. The NU Votes team also provided support via email, Facebook message, and tweets to ensure students were provided the resources to answer important voting-related questions.

Voter Education & GOTV

NU Votes was able to engage more than 2,500 students through voter-registration initiatives. The university wanted to encourage the community to go further than the

initial step of registration, and become informed and civically active citizens through various voter education and get out the vote efforts.

Debate Watch Parties

Northwestern University's Department of Political Science, Center for Civic Engagement and Office of Student Engagement partnered together to host watch parties for the Presidential and Vice Presidential Debates held on September 26, October 4, October 9, and October 19. The Debate Watch Parties were hosted by Political Science professors and were held at Norris University Center.

Campus-Wide Emails

Several Campus-Wide emails sent to the Northwestern University community provided timely information about voter registration deadlines, ballot education resources, as well as the procedures for absentee voting, early voting, and voting on the day of the election. Students studying abroad were also provided information specific to voting from abroad.

Social Media

The NU Votes team utilized social media, like Twitter and Facebook, throughout the election season to provide community members with information about voting and researching candidates and initiatives on the ballot. The team also updated the NU Votes website with relevant information to answer potential questions and concerns as the election approached.

Voter Van

NU Votes brought back its Voter Van for the 2016 General Election. NU Votes staff provided transportation to and from the polls to students the week before the election. The Van was in service November 2-4 from 1pm - 7pm, enabling students to vote early or grace period register at the Evanston Civic Center. Students were also able to ask staff members last-minute questions they might have related to voting, and they were provided with ballot information in the van on their way to the polls.