



**ALL IN CHALLENGE
DRAFT ACTION PLAN
May 2018
Brown University**

Swearer Center Planning Team (in formation)

Jenn Steinfeld, Program Manager for Social Innovation and Student Development (lead)
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Other Campus Partners (list in formation)

Student Activities Office
Campus Life and Student Services
Brown College Democrats
Brown University Republicans
Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs
Brown Center for Students of Color
First Generation College and Low Income Student Center
LGBTQ Center
Cogut Center for the Humanities

External Partners

TurboVote
NSLVE

Plan Overview

Our plan is still in the early stages of development, as our campus plans fall activities over the summer. We have noted distinct enthusiasm in our outreach and engagement from both student groups and campus centers. Our NSLVE data demonstrates the importance of focusing not just on registration, but also on voter turnout. Our 2016 data showed that 84% of our campus population is registered to vote, but we only had a 59% campus-wide voting rate in 2016, up from 46% in 2012. In 2016, 71% of our registered students voted, up from 57% in 2012.

When we compare this to our 2014 midterm election period, we see significantly lower voter engagement in midterm years. While 67% of our campus was registered to vote, just over 13% of the campus (20% of registered students) actually voted. Our goal in this

midterm election year will be to double our 2014 midterm participation to 27% voter participation, while also getting 1,000 new sign-ups for TurboVote.

Our plan will focus on three main areas:

- Midterm election voter registration and mobilization
- Campus-wide education on liberal democracy and civic engagement
- Normalizing voting behavior and civic engagement for the long term

This spring, the Swearer Center Student Advisory Committee's Student Learning Subcommittee brainstormed the various “gates” that students pass through during their Brown experience, and ways we might utilize these opportunities to continue to both promote specific voting behavior as well as to normalize voting and civic participation as part of the “brand” of the university.

Midterm Election Voter Registration and Mobilization

The Swearer Center continues to be Brown’s home for [TurboVote](#), providing students with an easy method for registration and absentee ballot requests, signifying Brown's and students' commitment to political and community engagement. In September 2016, the Swearer Center became the campus home for the service, embedding it in our broader civic engagement work. On the back end, TurboVote allows individual groups and centers, like the Swearer Center, to see which type of voter registration tactics are the most successful and keeps track of the total number of registrations and absentee ballot requests. Various student groups, notably the Brown Democrats, send out weekly social media blasts related to voter registration and absentee ballots.

The Brown Democrats, Brown Republicans, and other organizations on campus encourage voter registration and other civic engagement activities, which include but are not limited to phone banking, canvassing, co-sponsoring voter registration tables throughout campus and sponsoring debate viewing parties. These organizations also complement their efforts to increase political education and enthusiasm with TurboVote, which bolsters civil engagement by removing barriers to voter participation. (Note: while some student political organizations support partisan activities in support of particular candidates or parties, the Swearer Center and the University as a whole support nonpartisan civic engagement efforts.)

We have made the commitment with TurboVote to sign up 1,000 new students to TurboVote in 2018. TurboVote not only provides the opportunity to register to vote and request an absentee ballot, but also provides updates and reminders about voting in the

student's state of residence. Thus, students may already be registered to vote and still sign up for TurboVote's additional reminder services.

Registration drives will begin on campus in September and continue through early October, with dates to be determined. Based on our NSLVE data for 2014 and 2016, particular areas for focus for us to improve voter engagement are with graduate students and within STEM disciplines, though our 2014 midterm participation was so poor that any generalized turnout efforts will help improve.

Some activities being currently planned:

- Voter Registration with Graduate Student Orientation, August 26th and 27th
- Voter registration with First Year Orientation, Sept 1 to Sept 8
- Swearer Center voter registration table at the Fall Community Engagement Fair
- Mock Voting Booth with RI Secretary of State, September 2018
- Registration and Mobilization on Wednesday, September 12th (Rhode Island Statewide Primary)
- Tuesday, September 25th (National Voter Registration Day)
- Sunday, October 7th (Rhode Island General Election registration deadline)
- Election Day special events on Tuesday, November 6th

To get out the vote, the Swearer Center will serve as a coordinating hub for activities across campus. We are in the process of developing a single page on our website to host TurboVote signups, share events, and otherwise cross-promote activities. The Swearer Center has been and will continue to publicize voter registration deadlines and absentee voting information as well as in person local voting through our campus newsletter and social media outlets. We will work with our Student Advisory Committee and Swearer Center Peer Advisors to host regular Absentee Voting Info Tables at the mail room, with TurboVote sign up and mailing parties for voter registration and absentee ballot forms. We will work with campus political and civic organization to coordinate and actively promote GOTV efforts on Brown's campus. We are developing a hashtag and social media filter to promote voting behavior, and will work with student groups like sports teams, a capella groups, social organizations, and other influential groups to take and post photos promoting voter behavior. We will work with our newly hired Director of Faculty Engagement to develop an outreach plan focusing on STEM faculty to promote voting and participation in liberal democracy within the sciences.

We will support campus student political and civic organizations and our Student Advisory council in developing an outreach plan for undergraduate students in the STEM disciplines, through Departmental Undergraduate Groups and other clubs.

Liberal Democracy and Civic Engagement

Brown's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs and Cogut Center for the Humanities have been engaging in a multi-year strategy of education and exploration of the role of liberal arts education in liberal democracy. Both centers are still working on their fall lecture lineup; we will work with them to pull the promotion of these events into our new voting page on the Swearer Center website.

This past year, Brown President Christina Paxson charged the Swearer Center to pilot a new Higher Education and Democratic Practice (HEDP) Initiative. Across the year, the Swearer Center explored the role of higher education in cultivating deep democratic values, skills, and behaviors and established itself as a university entity that cares about democratic scholarship. The HEDP initiative was originally launched based on a belief that universities in general - and Brown in particular - are uniquely positioned to (re)advance public understanding of the bedrock elements of successful democracy. The activities this year have demonstrated higher levels of interest, both at Brown and across the country, than the pilot had anticipated. We are currently awaiting word from the President's office about future funding for this initiative and its role in the broader campus conversation.

Normalization of Voting Behavior

Our campus is engaged in a broader, more long-term conversation about our role in fostering engaged citizens of liberal democracies.

We are in the midst of planning and organizing a pilot first-year seminar faculty cohort focused on fostering innovative and intensive learning experiences for first-year students aimed at developing the knowledge and skill sets necessary for engaged and active citizenship. We are working with faculty members whose courses are already focused on engaging local issues, investigating root causes of public challenges, and/or incorporating approaches to debate and dialogue involving diverse perspectives and viewpoints.

We will provide faculty members significant support, including funds for course development, guest speakers, field trips, and other events. We will also provide significant pedagogical support, including a training focused on deliberative dialogue. The series will begin in the fall of 2018.

We have also made some simple changes to our communications, making it a practice to include voter registration deadlines and upcoming elections into our newsletters.

TurboVote's Ace the Midterms project has been providing upcoming electoral deadlines in an engaging format that we have been including in our newsletters; we will work with the

campus-wide communications staff group to encourage other departments and centers to incorporate this into their communications. We are early in a collaboration with campus life around incorporating voter registration and voting behavior intentionally into orientation, where civic participation becomes part of the “Brown brand” as new students are oriented to campus. We hope to have it become a part of the online First Year at Brown (1stY@B) e-learning program that was developed last year to orient incoming students to our values, a liberal arts education, and our open curriculum. We are also in early stage conversation with TurboVote about integrating a linkage to their platform into Banner, enabling students to click directly from course registration to voter registration and furthering the integration of civic engagement into the expectations for Brown students.

This longer term aspect of the work will continue to shape up beyond the midterm election as we continue to work with the President and across the University.