

Brown Ivy League Challenge Action Plan

I. Introduction

Brown University students have often distinguished themselves with a fierce social conscience and an interest in pursuing justice; indeed, our students' passion for social change is one of the University's hallmarks. For more than 30 years, Brown's Swearer Center for Public Service has asked what civic responsibility do we have as scholars, students and community members to tackle the new and long-standing challenges of our changing world? How do we build the democratic practices, between scholars and practitioners, and among all community members, that will be needed to navigate this world? What obligation does higher education have to prepare ethical, effective, and engaged community members? (Swearer Center 2016 Strategic Plan).

Brown University is dedicated to increasing civic engagement for the 2020 election and beyond. Through our recent engagement with the Ivy League Votes Challenge we realized Brown University was lacking a core structure for promoting voter engagement and communicating with our partner institutions. Therefore, students and administrators collaborated to develop "Brown Votes."

As always, the Swearer Center seeks to promote the role of higher education in cultivating deep democratic values, skills, and behaviors and to establish Brown as a university community that cares about civic engagement. At its core, this plan brings into action our belief that universities — and Brown in particular — are uniquely positioned to emphasize and support the bedrock elements of a successful democracy.

II. Brown Votes Structural Breakdown

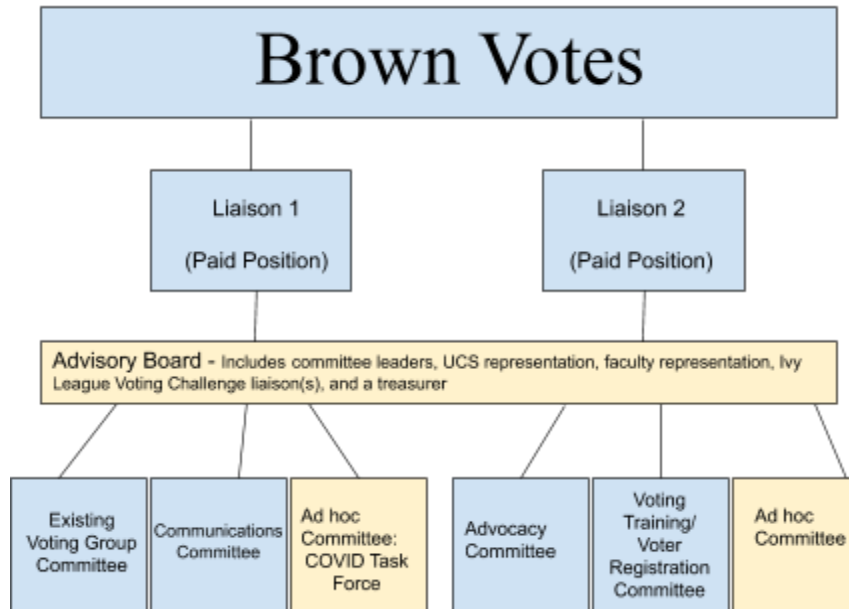
What Is Brown Votes?

Brown Votes is a new student-led initiative supported by the Swearer Center designed to conduct and coordinate efforts to improve voter registration, voting participation, and civic engagement at Brown University.

Why Do We Need Brown Votes?

Brown Votes will fill the gaps that are currently missing to strengthen pro-voter efforts on campus. Brown Votes will streamline pro-voter initiatives at Brown University by providing a hub for resource-sharing, communication, and coordination between all student groups, while creating the name recognition and legitimacy necessary for effectively collaborating with the administration and other universities.

How Will Brown Votes Work?



- *Existing Voting Group Committee*: Composed of representatives from existing student groups
- *Communications Committee*: Handle social media and outreach
- *Advocacy Committee*: Conduct research on voting laws and policies
- *Voter Registration & Training Committee*: Conduct and coordinate voter registration efforts
- *Ad Hoc Committees*: Created as necessary (e.g. COVID-19 Task Force)

III. Communications

- We are communicating with the head of the Swearer Center, Betsy Shimberg, to reach out to the President's Office
 - We have already established a working relationship with Betsy
- The communications committee is working to develop a Brown Votes website in which we will link a voting calendar, voting guides for Brown Students, information to get involved in Brown Votes, and the centralized website for the Ivy League Votes Challenge.
- To get voting dates on university calendars we will work with the Swearer Center to encourage the Brown University administration to make this addition to the academic calendar
- The Brown Votes communication committee will spearhead Brown specific voting social media pages and campaigns to generate awareness and promote Brown Votes' efforts

IV. Engagement of Departments/Groups

- Athletics

- Have a voter registration table present at sporting events as well as flyers with key voting dates and information on local voting and absentee voting
- Brown Votes will have athlete representation in the “existing voting group” committee in hopes to bring athlete voices to our work
- Establish relationships with Athletic Directors to send out emails to athletes regarding key voting dates and information
 - Potentially have an athletic director as a member of the Brown Votes advisory committee
- Faculty/Academic Departments
 - Put a link to TurboVote and Brown Votes on Canvas website (with periodic reminders for students to register to vote)
 - Work with Meiklejohns (student academic advisors) to hand out voter registration information during mandatory introductory student meetings
 - Voter Training/ Voter Registration Committee will communicate with and train the Office of International Programs to ensure that students studying abroad have access to voting information and resources for absentee ballot voting
 - Incorporate voting discussions into Brown international program orientations
 - Voter Training/Voter Registration Committee will ensure that the Swearer Center, Mail Services, popular dining halls, and the athletic center all provide stamps and voting materials.
 - The Communications Committee will promote these various locations on Brown Votes social media accounts and website
 - Work with departments to encourage all professors to include important voting dates (national voter registration day, Rhode Island voter registration deadline and election day) on syllabi
 - Advocacy committee will lobby Brown administration to recognize election day as paid time off and not give major assignments on this day
 - Strategize with departments that have the lowest voter turnout to increase student turnout
 - Create a competition with Brown academic departments (in which the department with the highest voter turnout wins) to hopefully increase engagement in departments that traditionally have low voter turnout
 - To help coordinate these efforts, faculty representation is part of the Brown Votes advisory board to oversee these tasks
 - Communications committee will communicate with DUG (Department Undergraduate Group) leaders to promote key voting dates to the students in their respective departments
- Residential Life

- The Voter Training/Voter Registration Committee will hold a training session for all RPLs (Residential Peer Leaders) and give them flyers to post in dorms about voting
- During mandatory meetings with RPLs and first years, more voting information will be distributed
 - Brown Votes members will attend meetings and briefly discuss Brown Votes initiatives
- At key pick-up locations there will be voter registration tables

- Human Resources

- The Voter Training/Registration Committee will host a workshop for employees

- Student Life

*Brown Votes is a space for all students, regardless of their group affiliations, to engage in civic engagement efforts and connect with other students passionate about civic engagement

- There will be UCS (Undergraduate Council of Students) representation on the advisory board
 - They will send out campus wide emails pertaining to Brown Votes
- There is an existing group committee which consists of leaders of different organizations who want to coordinate with one another on voting efforts
 - They will create a shared calendar of upcoming civic engagement events so there is more efficiency
 - Groupchat and meetings will further encourage collaboration and unison
- Voter Training/Registration Committee will work with groups who are not directly involved with advocacy (like club sports or Greek organizations) to get them engaged through challenges or training
 - Internal voter registration competitions will take place among Greek organizations, sports teams, etc
- Host watch parties for major elections
- Create a Communications sub-committee that specializes in the design of t-shirts, laptop stickers, etc
- Campus Community Stakeholders
 - Work with existing affinity centers/resources (Sarah Doyle Women's Center, the Brown Center for Students of Color, etc) to ensure voting information disseminated amongst traditionally underrepresented groups
 - Host partner events with these centers about voting and civic engagement
 - Steve Pokorny from Swearer Center will engage with outside stakeholders to assess if they are viable partners
- Orientation Staff
 - Orientation Welcoming Committee will partner with Brown Votes to provide important voting information

- Provide each student with a Brown Votes sticker to distribute with student welcome bags