

# CAL STATE LA CIVIC & VOTER EMPOWERMENT ACTION PLAN 2024 - 2026

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A photograph of a multi-story building with a grid-like facade of windows and balconies. The building is identified by a sign at the top that reads "Cal State L.A." in yellow and white lettering. The building is set against a backdrop of mountains and a clear blue sky. In the foreground, there are green trees partially obscuring the lower part of the building.

**Cal State L.A.**

OCTOBER 1

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CAL STATE LA  
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# Executive Summary

Cal State LA is the premier comprehensive public university in the heart of Los Angeles and is dedicated to engagement, service, and the public good. Our vision is to prepare students to be innovative leaders in both their professional and civic lives. Our Engagement, Service, and the Public Good strategic priority area goal is to graduate civic-minded students equipped for and committed to engagement, service, and the public good. One key initiative to achieve this goal is to develop cross-campus capacity to support civic learning. One metric of our progress toward this goal is increased faculty participation and expertise in civic engagement.

***“Overall Goal: Graduate civic-minded students equipped for and committed to engagement, service, and the public good.”***

The Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan is a living document providing a centralized point for aligning our campus efforts. It is facilitated by the Career Center and is implemented by a growing list of campus-wide partners. Our collaboration is centered on amplifying the unique strengths of departments, faculty, and students in a joint effort to widen our impact. This includes leveraging discipline-specific skills and community-aligned partnerships, including community engagement, civic education, community polling/surveying, marketing, design, publication, research, political science, history, ethnic studies, student involvement, and student government, to name a few. Our strategies involve meeting students where they are at. This means bringing civic and voter empowerment into the classrooms, including student voices, surveying our community, inviting our local community leaders to amplify the message, and communicating through multiple channels to foster a campus spirit and commitment. Our 2024 to 2026 plan focuses on three key performance metrics. The first is to minimize the gap in our voting rate compared to other institutional highs reported in the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) report. The highest voting rate was 30.6% in 2022, while Cal State LA was 25.5%. The second is to increase the voting rates of our students aged 18 to 21 (currently at 18%). The third is to increase the voting rate of first-year undergraduate students (currently at 12%).

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# Leadership

## Central Team

The central team developing the Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan involves four key campus departments: Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs, Associated Students Inc. (ASI), Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, and Center for Student Involvement. The central team meets each semester to stay on track with our action plan. During election season, the team meets more frequently in the semester to ensure efforts are aligned toward our action plan goals. The team actively communicates real-time updates through a group email thread.

The Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at Cal State LA (the Institute) is dedicated to “unleashing the power of participation.” Programs are designed to motivate young people to be engaged in their communities, raise awareness about timely policy issues, bring public officials closer to their constituents, and support Cal State LA’s mission to serve as an anchor institution for the region. The Institute’s Candidate Debate Program aims to provide civic education to the public about candidates for elected office. Civic University© (Civic U©) educates community members, public officials, and their staffs about the workings of local government agencies. The Institute’s polling project explores the social and political orientation of racial and ethnic groups in Los Angeles County. The Institute’s Public Policy Program encompasses public policy forums, issue debates, and our signature annual policy conference. The SELA Initiative seeks to revitalize the civic engagement landscape in Southeast Los Angeles County (SELA). The Institute invests in youth by developing new leaders in high school and college to become changemakers in their communities. The Institute leads our efforts in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. Their programs and support play a significant role in shaping and advancing the impact of our action plan.

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***“The Institute’s Public Programs create opportunities for balanced and meaningful dialogue about key public affairs issues. These conversations are both thorough and accessible and influence how policy is shaped and whose voices are heard. Through conferences, forums, and film screenings, the Institute reaches policymakers, researchers, journalists, civic leaders, community activists, and students.”***

Associated Students Inc. (ASI) at Cal State LA is a student-run auxiliary governed by a Board of Directors elected by the campus student body. Since 1959, ASI has promoted the establishment of and provided an opportunity for students to gain experience and training in responsible political participation and civic leadership. The Vice President for External Affairs and Advancement takes the lead on the Civic and Voter Empowerment Action Plan. ASI leads our efforts in the College Involvement and Values Impacting Communities (CIVIC) Challenge and regularly hosts National Voter Registration Day. They offer student-centered guidance in developing and implementing the plan and event facilitation, and they ignite our campus energy for the Ballot Bowl competition.

The Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management focuses on guiding students through a meaningful college experience toward a bright and rewarding future. The division’s learning domains include community engagement and social justice. Under the community engagement domain, Cal State LA students prepare themselves as leaders by participating in meaningful engagement opportunities civically and are informed, engaged, and make a positive impact on our city, state, nation, and world. Under the social justice domain, students understand and articulate how the intersectionality of multiple identities shapes people and their experiences, which empowers students to engage with others in more meaningful ways. The division’s strategic communications manager distributes our voter empowerment communications across campus in coordination with our campus Office of Strategic Communications and Public Affairs. Communications and relevant dates are published through social media, student and faculty/staff campus-wide emails, the academic calendar, physical posters, and the web.

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The Center for Student Involvement (CSI) provides student leadership initiatives, student organization development, and programs and services that foster campus involvement, personal growth, and student learning. The center's programming staff maintains an active role in shaping and supporting Cal State LA's signature events. Their support helps the team distribute communications through student engagement activities.

## Ancillary Team

### **Cal State LA Partners**

The Department of Graphic Design/Visual Communications enhances our voter empowerment events by providing student-created voter education zines and hosting t-shirt screen printing about voter empowerment.

The Office of Students with Disabilities provides voter registration information during every new student intake appointment.

### **Community Partners**

The Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk provides a physical vote center and official ballot drop box at Cal State LA. They speak and table on campus to provide information on the voting process.

The Los Angeles City Clerk's Office participates in our events to provide information on the voting process.

The League of Women Voters of Greater LA (LWVGLA) regularly participates in our events to provide insight into local ballot measures.

CalMatters participates in our events to discuss state-level propositions.

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# Landscape

## NSLVE October 2021 Report

Our prior action plan from 2022 to 2024 was shaped by data during record-breaking outcomes from the 2020 election. In 2020, Cal State LA exceeded the average voting rate of all institutions by 5.8 percentage points. Additionally, we increased our students aged 18 to 24 voting rate by 19 percentage points from the 2016 presidential election year. When we examined the data more closely, we observed that compared to the highest voting rate for all institutions, we were behind by 17 percentage points. As we considered our student demographics, we found that students aged 18 to 24 voted slightly less than our students aged 25 and older, and first-year students voted slightly less than students further in their academic studies (three percentage points less than second-year students and three percentage points less than upperclassmen). This data set influenced our goals for the prior action plan.

## NSLVE June 2024 Report

Our action plan for 2024 to 2026 considers data after the 2020 presidential election year. In 2022, Cal State LA was behind the average voting rate of all institutions by 5.1 percentage points and 37.4 percentage points behind the highest voting rate. Our voting rate of students aged 18 to 21 was behind that of those aged 21 to 24 by 7 percentage points, and the difference between those aged 25 and older grew slightly larger. Our voting rate for first-year students was five percentage points behind second-year students and 13 percentage points behind upperclassmen. We also considered our voting rate following the presidential election years. When we compare our results from 2022 to those from 2018, we find that our voting rate declined by 19 percentage points while our registration rate declined by one percentage point. When we compare our results from 2022 to those from 2014, we find that our voting rate and registration rate improved by 12 percentage points. In conclusion, we have improved and remain steady in registering students to vote, and we can improve our voting rates, particularly between presidential election years.



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# Reflection

Cal State LA strongly started the 2022 academic year with our voter empowerment efforts. The Pat Brown Institute was granted two student fellowships under LEAD California's Youth Voice Youth Vote program.

***“The Institute hosted a Youth Voice-Youth Vote fellow in fall 2022 as part of the LEAD California Community Engagement Student Fellowship. The student conducted community outreach in Southeast Los Angeles, assisted the League of Women Voters with outreach, and helped with voter engagement activities on the Cal State LA campus.”***

Our National Voter Registration Day hosted by Associated Students Inc., the Institute, and the League of Women Voters of Greater LA received local television news coverage. The event included our Department of Art faculty/members of Artists 4 Democracy, who helped participants decorate t-shirts designed by our art students as part of the campus Get Out the Vote efforts. In October, the Institute, ASI, and the LWVGLA hosted a “Ballot Measures” event to better understand the voting process and ballot initiatives. The Institute also hosted “The How and Why: Voting in the 2022 General Election” event. For the November general election, Cal State LA opened the Vote Center to students and the community, where the Institute tabled to answer questions about voting. The Institute and ASI hosted eleven tabling outreach sessions before, during, and after elections to encourage students to register to vote, assist with understanding the voting process, and evaluate the next steps from the voting outcomes. As the academic year progressed, the Institute fellows conducted voter registration and empowerment social media campaigns under the hashtag Golden Eagles Vote.

In our 2023 academic year, the Institute's Youth Voice Youth Vote fellows continued the Golden Eagles Vote social media campaign. The Institute added the PBI-Manatt Civic Quiz in English and Spanish to their social media and electronic newsletters to increase awareness about local government and how its agencies work. In September, ASI and the LWVGLA hosted National Voter Registration Day. In October, the Institute,

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ASI, and the LWVGLA hosted “The Power of Participation for Inclusive Governance,” a panel discussing campus and community civic engagement and participation. In February, The Institute’s social media efforts were expanded in collaboration with the Southeast Los Angeles County (SELA) Initiative under the SELA Votes campaign. The Institute supported the SELA Collaborative in the SELA Votes “Rally for Regional Voting Power” event with community partners at Alliance for a Better Community, AltaMed, Southeast Community Development Corporation, the Council of Mexican Federations in North America, and New Start Housing. For the March presidential primary, Cal State LA opened the Vote Center to students and the community, where the Institute tabled to answer questions about voting. The Institute followed with a social media post about tracking ballots to ensure it’s been counted. In April and May, the Institute’s Youth Voice Youth Vote fellows added a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) campaign about registering to vote and how the primary elections work.

Reflecting upon the past two years, we acknowledge the Pat Brown Institute's key role in our voter empowerment efforts. The Institute’s programs are centered on voter registration and education, which can be amplified to enhance our voter empowerment efforts. This includes increasing the cross-promotion of their activities across campus communication channels throughout the year and aligning the Ballot Bowl initiative with the Institute’s programs.



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# Goals

## Short-term (2-year)

Cal State LA is positioned to expand our voter empowerment efforts from 2024 to 2026. In 2024, we received a bronze seal for the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge for our 2022 midterm election efforts.

***“Cal State LA has earned a Bronze Seal from the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. Bronze Seal Campuses have 20% to 29% voter participation or higher in the 2022 midterm election.”***

Our short-term goal is to strengthen our campus coalition and its engagement to increase our voter participation, particularly between presidential election years. The action plan has provided our campus a focal point for voter empowerment activities, which has increased communication among the central team leadership and brought together other campus community members who are interested and invested in enhancing voter engagement. In the past, we added faculty from the art department, and in the 2024 academic year, we are expanding to include faculty from the library, political science, English, television/film/media, urban ecology, and social work. We are also working with faculty who teach our first-year Introduction to Higher Education curriculum to embed voter empowerment, thus increasing our efforts for early voter participation. We are growing our partnerships with student organizations, including Golden Eagle Radio, the University Times, the Political Science Association, and the Gravitas Animation Society. We are strengthening and expanding our community coalition as we deepen engagement with the Southeast Los Angeles County (SELA) Collaborative and bring new community partners, including the Zócolo Public Square an Arizona State University Media Enterprise, American Communities Project, Calo News, the Latino Media Collaborative, LAist local and national news Voter Game Plan section, and CSSA CIVIC College Involvement and Values Impacting Communities. As we expand our partnerships, we will need to collaborate more closely so that our efforts are directed to the Ballot Bowl registration link during and between presidential election years. We aim to create a centralized online location that lists our shared efforts.

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## Long-term (5-year)

In the long term, we aim to have a coordinated campaign linking the efforts of our campus coalition, including shared messaging, clear communication channels for sharing, and a one-stop location to direct our students and campus community. We also aim to broaden communication about our Ballot Bowl and NSLVE outcomes to include our campus at large, raising awareness about our civic and voter engagement and increasing our students' voting rate across all ages and levels of study. This long-term goal intends to enrich our campus commitment to graduate civic-minded students equipped for and committed to engagement, service, and the public good.

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# Event Requirements

## Fall 2024

- The fall 2024 lead-up to the presidential election brings several campus-wide voter empowerment activities.
- September 10 – Presidential Debate Watch Party with the Cal State LA Library and the American Community Project.
- September 16 – National Voter Registration Day with Associated Students Inc. and the LA County Registrar-Recorder County Clerk’s Office, including sidewalk stickers on the campus main walkway with a QR code to register to vote using the Ballot Bowl URL, which will be displayed up to election day.
- October 3 – Good Jobs: Pathways to Work That Matters with the Pat Brown Institute and Cal State LA alumni highlighting civically engaged career opportunities.
- October 10 – Breaking Down the Ballot: Burritos & Ballot Measures with the Pat Brown Institute, the League of Women Voters of Greater LA, and the LA County Registrar-Recorder County Clerk’s Office to provide key insights into each ballot measure and the voting process during “Voter Education Week.”
- October 13 – PSA Challenge: A Call-to-Action film or audio segment competition encouraging voting and participation in democracy with the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, American Community Project, the Pat Brown Institute, and the Cal State LA University Library.
- October 22 – Voter Fest 2024 with the Pat Brown Institute, Cal State LA Art Department, English Department, Honors College, Library, History Department, Urban Ecology Center, Center for Student Involvement, Political Science Department, Golden Eagle Radio, League of Women Voters of Greater LA, LA City Clerk, and AltaMed, including civic-themed games, selfie station, craft-making, Zine Voter Guides, PSA Challenge, and poster symposium, “Reimagine your Campus with the Center for Urban Ecology.”
- October 22 – Will the Real Young Voters Please Stand Up? with Zócolo Public Square.
- November 20 – Now What? Post-Election Convening with the Pat Brown Institute spotlighting key local outcomes at the local and state levels.

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- The Institute’s survey of civic engagement at Cal State LA. Over 1,000 have participated in the survey so far.
  - The Institute’s work with faculty integration of civic learning in the Introduction to Higher Education curriculum for first-year students.
  - The Institute’s work with the SELA Collaborative for Get Out the Vote efforts.
  - The Cal State LA Library display of civic engagement items from the Special Collection.
  - Civics and Cinema Series with ASI and the American Communities Project.

*“The PBI Fall 2024 Civic Series has three main components: interactive workshops to develop communication and analytical skills; discussion panels with multiple viewpoints to unpack complex issues; and civic engagement through creative expression.”*

## Fall 2025

We will continue to expand engagement through ASI’s National Voter Registration Day, the Pat Brown Institute’s Fall Civic Series, ASI’s involvement with the CSSA CIVIC Challenge, the Pat Brown Institute’s Youth Voice Youth Vote fellowship, the Pat Brown Institute’s Quiz: How Things Work, and shared Get Out the Vote efforts with campus departments and community partners.