

Carlow University's Voter Education and Engagement Plan

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Voter Education and Engagement Steering Committee

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Community Partners

NextGen America

Allegheny County Office of Violence Prevention

Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network

About Carlow University and the All In Challenge

Carlow University is a small private, liberal arts university located in Pittsburgh's Eds, Meds, and Tech corridor with an undergrad population of 1300 students. For nearly 90 years, Carlow has provided exceptional educational experiences rooted in the heritage of our sponsors, The Sisters of Mercy. To that end, the difference between Carlow and other universities is that at Carlow, we aren't satisfied with our alumni simply *doing well*, they must also *do good*.

At Carlow, we live each day knowing that if we want our world to be different, truly better, then it is up to us to make it happen. At Carlow, we believe that being an active and highly-informed voter is not only an act of service but also an act of mercy. This is why we are launching the All In Challenge in Fall 2018 in an effort to increase student voting and democratic engagement.

The Goals

1. Build a sustainable network of politically engaged students, faculty, and staff on campus.
2. Provide students with the tools and trainings to become civic leaders on campus and in their communities.
3. Make resources on political processes readily available and accessible.
4. Help faculty, staff, and students make informed political choices.

How It Will Work

As noted, at Carlow we believe that voting is an act of service. Our belief is that if we can move students beyond the action and help them to see that being a voter is a desired and socially valued identity, our students will not only become more engaged in many aspects of the political process, but also highly-informed voters.

Our programming will fall into 4 categories as listed below:

1. Voter Registration Drives

This initiative is focused on making sure that all students know their registration status. Staff and faculty will support students through their initial voters' registration as well as work with them to update their registration if needed. For students that are not from the local area, we will work with them to either update their registration and/or apply for an absentee ballot.

Events included:

- Weekly tabling events during lunch
 - We hosted 10 weekly tabling events every Thursday in the University Commons. Attendance averaged 50 students each week.
 - We hosted a week long "registration extravaganza" the last week of registration
- We attended campus-wide Bingo Nights, freshmen fairs, orientation events, and more
- We hosted a "We're All In" campus party on October 8th, the day before voter registration deadline in PA
 - Students made buttons, shirts, had free food, and wrote on a mural about "why they vote"

2. *Preparing to Vote*

Utilizing technology such as TurboVote, we will work with students to ensure that they receive frequent and timely reminders as the next Election Day draws near. We will also make resources available across campus to ensure that all students know where their polling place is and have access to the materials/information needed to submit an absentee ballot.

Resources will include:

- A handout distributed to all first year students about how to get registered to vote when they take the pre-survey

3. *Becoming a Highly-Informed Voter*

Throughout the course of the semester the Social Justice Institutes, the University Common Reader committee, and the University Center for Mercy Heritage and Service will host workshops with the goal of helping students gather information in advance of the 2018 General Elections. The week of September 17th is Carlow Week and we plan on taking advantage of the time by hosting two events that will teach voters about the history of voting and how voting can be an act of mercy. These events will have student and faculty speakers and free food.

Topics and Events will include:

- Voting as an Act of Mercy
- A Discussion on Bryan Stevenson's *Just Mercy*
- Gun Violence in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County

Resources/Actions will include:

- Posters and facebook events for each of these events
- A pocket-sized zine that will include information about polling days, locations, and non-partisan information about candidates and ballot measures
 - Over 400 zines were printed out and distributed around campus
- Door knocking and text banking students
- Over 20 classroom visits to talk to professors and students about the importance of voting and getting students registered to vote during classtime

4. *Recruiting others and building coalition*

By organizing students around campus, there will be a strong foundation for sustainable civic engagement. We will do this through 1:1 interactions, talks with classes and student groups, and social media. We will encourage students to use our hashtag on social media to build the awareness of other students and members of their personal networks to also accept the challenge. There will be contests throughout the course of the academic year to encourage students to engage in this way.

Methods will include:

- Recruiting volunteer student leaders from student groups and classes on campus

- Train volunteers in campaign skills
- We had a team of 10 committed volunteers and interns
- Volunteers were split into three separate groups: social media, research, and advocacy. All volunteers were asked what their preferences were and what skills they wanted to build in order to build accountability and motivation. All students also participated in planning events and outreach to students.
- Running social media campaigns highlighting students and faculty members
 - Short video clips or photos with a sign that says “I vote because...”
 - Recruiting students who register to take a picture and post on social media
- Working with other college campuses in Pittsburgh who are also participating in All In Challenge
 - Invite community leaders to speak at an event
 - Networking opportunity for students
 - Builds strong foundation

Events will include:

- Party on election day with free food music for students who bring their “I Voted” sticker

Materials Made:

- Carlow University 20 page mini voter guides with information on candidates and ballot initiatives as well as information on voting
- Handout explaining registration process for freshmen and others
- 500 Carlow specific #BeAVoter stickers
- Carlow University #BeAVoter shirts for volunteers and interns
- A new Instagram page for the campaign
- Social media graphics posted on instagram

Timeline and Summary

End of Summer (August 1st – August 21st)

- Confirm the remaining members of the Steering Committee
- Present the plan to University Faculty Assembly to recruit Champions and Volunteers
- Confirm events and timeline

Move-in and Opening Week (August 22nd – September 2nd)

- Create a registration fact sheet
- Host a Voter Registration Drive in University Commons

Pre-Election (September 3rd – November 5th)

- September 3rd – October 9th : Voter Registration Drive
- September 14th: Distribute pre-surveys to incoming freshman class to determine baseline of engagement

- September 17th: “The 15th Amendment and the Voting Rights Act” in partnership with the Common Reader Committee
- September 20th 12:30 – 1:45 PM: “Voting as Mercy in Action” - a student panel discussion.
- Oct 1st – 7th: Voter Registration Extravaganza Event → tabling in different places around campus
 - Registered over 100 students during this week
- October 8th: All In Campaign Event hosted and planned by students
- October 24th: Election Carnival
 - Hosted a “What’s on the Ballot” event for all Carlow students
 - Game night was bingo style – we wrote up 50 facts and distributed them onto bingo sheets so students were always reading the facts, and received facts when they played games.
 - Approximately 70 students attended the event.
- October 25 – November 5th: Absentee Ballot mailing reminders, canvassing and passing out zines to voters

Week of Election (November 1st-November 6th)

- Student led community lunch for political discussions
- November 5th: Hosted a pre-election night event for volunteers and other students to attend. Wrote on all whiteboards in classrooms, chalked campus, made posters and balloons to lead students to election day party and to polling place
- Election Day Party – approximately 200 students were engaged at event
 - Free food, music, costumes, photobooth, voter guides, stickers

Post-Election (November 7th – Spring Semester)

- Host focus group for students and faculty to gather feedback to inform decisions on civic engagement in the future
- Review NSLVE data as soon as it becomes available
- Update the plan in preparation for the 2020 Midterm elections
- Volunteers with the campaign are planning on starting the first ever **Advocacy Group** on Carlow’s campus.
 - There are at minimum 10 interested students currently
 - Events will include – guest speakers, advocacy campaigns, social media awareness campaigns, and coalition building with other groups on campus