

Clark Atlanta University Campus Action Plan

2022-2023



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Executive Summary

CAU Votes is a student-centered and student-led non-partisan coalition dedicated to increasing voter turnout and improving voter access for Clark Atlanta University (CAU) students. In an effort to create a truly reflective and representative democracy, CAU Votes prioritizes these four pillars:

1. Providing civic education;
2. Fostering community/democratic engagement;
3. Encouraging legislative advocacy; and
4. Supporting voting reform.

This action plan was developed in August 2020 by CAU Votes to communicate our short-term strategy for increasing both the registration and turnout rates of voters at CAU. The planned activities outlined here will be carried out throughout the 2020-2021 academic year on and around our campus in Atlanta, GA. This plan will be implemented by students, staff, faculty, and other partners recruited by CAU Votes and under the direction of the CAU Votes Steering Committee in order to accomplish our goals and further institutionalize CAU's commitment to civic learning, democratic engagement, and youth participation in elections. This plan will be reviewed and updated annually by current members of the CAU Votes Steering Committee.

Leadership

The CAU Votes coalition consists of a diverse working group of students, faculty/staff members, university offices, and community partners who will meet at least bi-weekly throughout the duration of the 2020-2021 academic year to set strategic goals, share information and resources, address challenges, brainstorm ideas, plan and implement events and programs, and evaluate outcomes. The coalition is primarily led by the CAU Votes Steering Committee, who directly coordinates and oversees CAU's work to increase civic learning and democratic engagement.

CAU Votes Steering Committee

Dr. Teri Platt, Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration; Director, Isabella T. Jenkins Honors Program (Faculty)

Dr. Sabrina Riles, Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration (Faculty)

University Offices and Departments

- Office of the President
- Office of the Provost
- Office of Student Leadership & Engagement
- Office of Communications and Community Engagement
- Office of the General Counsel
- Office of International Programs
- Office of Information Technology
- Isabella T. Jenkins Honors Program
- Department of Political Science
- Department of Public Administration

Registered Student Organizations

- CAU Student Government Association
- CAU House of Delegates
- CAU Royal Court
- CAUSE Leaders
- CAU Orientation Guides
- NPHC

Campus Chartered Organizations

- CAU NAACP
- CAU NCNW
- CAU Political Science Association
- College Girls Rock CAU
- Girls Around the World
- HerCampus CAU
- IGNITE at CAU
- Planned Parenthood Generation Action
- Political Science Pre-Law Society
- Men of CAU
- Young Democrats of CAU

Community Partners

- AUC Votes
- Andrew Goodman Foundation
- Ask Every Student
- ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
- Campus Vote Project
- Every Vote Counts
- Fulton County Department of Registration and Elections
- GA NAACP Youth & College Division

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- Joseph & Evelyn Lowery Institute
- National Urban League Young Professionals
- New Georgia Project
- New Freedom School
- Office of the GA Secretary of State
- RISE
- Students Learn Students Vote Coalition
- Student Voting Network
- Students Vote
- The International Black Women's Public Policy Institute
- TurboVote
- Urban League of Greater Atlanta Young Professionals
- Vote Early Day
- Vote HBCU
- When We All Vote
- Xceleader

The primary point of contact for CAU Votes is: Dr. Teri Platt (tplatt@cau.edu)

Commitment

CAU has articulated its commitment to student voter engagement in a number of ways (1) campus documents and resources that outline a focus and dedication to developing students who are committed to justice and their community; (2) faculty who integrate civic education, values, and information in courses and class activities; (3) student organizations that support social justice, civic engagement, leadership, and community responsibility; and (4) partnerships with community-based, local, and national organizations that support student voting and civic engagement.

Campus administrators partner with faculty, staff, students, and community members to host candidate forums, town hall discussions, rallies, and get out the vote activities. The learning management system, Canvas, is used for in-class engagement of shared modules through the Canvas Commons, and faculty learn how to do this with the support of the Center for Teaching, Innovation, and Engagement. Units across the institution collaborate to provide mission-driven support to students.

The subsections below are institutional resources that undergird our commitment to student civic engagement:

Institutional Mission

Building on its social justice history and heritage, Clark Atlanta University is a culturally diverse, research-intensive, liberal arts institution that prepares and transforms the lives of students.

CAU is located in the heart of Atlanta which is the epicenter of the Civil Rights Movement and the modern center of emerging technologies and innovation. Ignited by its history, CAU is committed to delivering education that is accessible, relevant, and transformative.

Institutional Cultural Creed

Clark Atlanta University is committed to academic excellence, building character and service to others. The University will achieve its mission by cultivating an environment of honesty, kindness, mutual respect, self-discipline, school loyalty, trust, academic integrity, and communal pride. As a member of this scholarly community, I make the following pledge:

- I will work to promote academic honesty and integrity;
- I will work to cultivate a learning environment which opposes violence, vulgarity, lewdness, and selfishness;
- I will embrace the concept of mutual respect by treating others the way I want them to treat me;
- I will support a campus culture of diversity by respecting the rights of those whose views and experiences differ from my own;
- I will honor and care for the sanctity of my body as the temple of God;
- I will commit myself to service so that I can make a difference in the world and a difference for more than just myself; and
- I will celebrate and contribute to the “spirit of greatness” left by those who preceded me and I will work to leave this a better place for those who follow me.

As a member of this community, I am committed to conducting myself in ways that contribute to a civil campus environment which encourages positive behavior in others. I accept the responsibility to uphold these noble ideals as a proud member of the **Clark Atlanta University Family**.

Institutional Mottos

“Find a Way or Make One” and “Culture for Service.”

Landscape

Clark Atlanta University is a private Historically Black College and University (HBCU) located in an urban city in the southern United States, and has an enrollment of approximately 4,500 students (~75% of students identify as female). The campus is a member of the Atlanta University Center Consortium that includes Spelman College, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, and the Interdenominational Theological Center. Morris Brown College, Georgia State University, and Georgia Tech are also in the vicinity.

Student groups within the AUC often collaborate for activities and share ideas for events. University presidents, provosts, and registrars collaborate within the AUC to ensure policy alignment, avoid calendar conflicts, and partner for various initiatives. Often, what impacts one AUC campus impacts the other campuses.

Student civic engagement at CAU has included electoral and nonelectoral activities. Close proximity to the Georgia State Capitol has led to many student organizations to have “Advocacy Days” when they visit the offices of state legislators to raise awareness about issues. Elected officials at the local, state, and national levels visit campus as guest lectures for classes, speaker series, and special events. As a result, many students have a notable level of awareness about social, economic, and political issues.

Not all campus activities relating to student voter engagement are centralized through the CAU Votes Initiative. The university does not have an Office of Civic Engagement, although there is an Office of Student Leadership and Engagement, so faculty, administrators, staff, and students often host events and activities based on communication with those in their networks. The CAU Votes Initiative is an effort to build a robust campus coalition to streamline planning and engagement as well as share resources.

The CAU Votes initiative takes a data-driven approach to civic engagement work on our campus. Our strategic action plan is informed by the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) report. The NSLVE is an initiative by the Institute for Democracy and Higher Education at Tufts University’s Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life aimed to provide campuses with their institutional data (student voter registration and voting rates). The research is intended to assist institutions in creating strategies that increase student participation in the democratic process. Clark Atlanta University is one of thousands of colleges and universities that participate in the NSLVE study.

Institutional Data

Clark Atlanta University Enrollment Data (2016) ¹						
Total Enrollment: 3,884						
<i>Undergraduate vs Graduate</i>	78% Undergraduate	22% Graduate	36% Unknown			
<i>Enrollment Status</i>	91% Full-time	9% Part-time				
<i>Gender</i>	17% Men	45% Women				
<i>Ages</i>	62% 18-21	15% 22-24	11% 25-29	6% 30-39	2% 40-49	1% 50+
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	91% Black/African American	8% International Students	0% White	0% Hispanic	0% Asian	0% Other

NSLVE Data

Clark Atlanta University NSLVE Data ²			
	Election Year		
	2012	2016	Change
<i>Total eligible voters</i>	3,286	3,608	+322
<i>Number of students who registered to vote</i>	2,362	2,301	-61
<i>Number of students who voted</i>	1,352	973	-379
<i>Registration rate</i>	71.9%	63.8%	-8.1
<i>Voting rate (registered students)</i>	57.2%	42.3%	-15.0
<i>Voting rate (eligible students)</i>	41.1%	27.0%	-14.2

While 2012/2016 NSLVE data indicates that CAU's number of total eligible voters increased by 322 students in 2016, unfortunately, that increase was not reflected in either registration or voting rates for the institution. In 2016, the registration rate fell 8.1 percentage points from the 2012 registration rate to a dismal 63.8%. Also in 2016, the voting rate fell 14.2 percentage points from the 2012 voting rate to an even more dismal 27.0% (23.4% short of the average voting rate for all participating institutions). This data directly guides and informs the strategic goals, plans, and actions to increase democratic and civic engagement at CAU. Additionally, the gains made in voter registration and turnout in 2020 are notable, but there are still opportunities for increases in all categories of engagement.

Internal

- Civic engagement needs to be further institutionalized
 - Election days should be a university-wide break to support voter turnout
 - Transportation to polling locations could be regularly provided by the University
 - There is a need to centralize information shared about registering and turning out to vote (i.e., academic buildings and classrooms, consistently on university website)
- Continue to develop a "culture of voting" among students and student organizations
 - Civic engagement is not explicitly promoted by the majority of campus chartered organizations and registered student organizations
 - Increase the number and frequency of social events and gatherings centered on civic engagement

External

- Voting laws
 - Confusion around whether or not student IDs are acceptable forms of identification
 - Confusion around whether students should register in home states or in Georgia
 - Confusion about registration deadlines
 - Voter purges
 - Long lines at the polls
 - Campus is split among separate polling locations

Strengths

Through the creation of the CAU Votes coalition and initiative, CAU has taken several steps to institutionalize civic engagement and democratic work on campus:

1. Partnership with Campus Vote project (and on-boarding of Democracy Fellows)
2. Partnership with Ask Every Student (and on-boarding of Democracy Fellows)
3. Chartering of and sustaining civic engagement campus organizations (IGNITE at CAU, CAU Political Science Association, CAU NCNW, Young Democrats of CAU, etc.)
4. Collaborating with staff and administrators to support campus-wide activities
5. Monthly meetings with Office of the Provost to provide updates about student voter

activities

6. Established a direct relationship with Office of General Counsel to streamline review of contracts, agreements, and proposals
7. Gaining faculty support for the regular inclusion of civic and voter education information in courses

Goals

CAU Votes envisions a campus culture where students take pride in being actively informed and civically engaged members of a larger community. We have identified several short-term and long-term goals that are necessary to achieving this outcome.

Short-term

- Increase voter registration rate to at least 90% in the 2020 Presidential Election
- Increase voting rate (among eligible students) to at least 70% in the 2020 Presidential Election
- Establish a working relationship with the Fulton County Department of Registration and Elections and invite them to join the CAU Votes Coalition
- Make voter registration applications readily available in the Office of Student Leadership & Engagement
- Increase faculty and staff participation in the CAU Votes Coalition
- Increase RSO and CCO participation in the CAU Votes Coalition
- Build a social media presence for the CAU Votes initiative
- Establish and fill a civic engagement appointed student leadership position within SGA
- Establish and maintain a civic engagement/voting information page on the CAU website
- Include election dates and voter registration deadlines on the official university academic calendar

Long-term

- Increase voter registration rate to at least 90% in the 2022 Midterm Elections
- Increase voting rate (among eligible students) to at least 70% in the 2022 Midterm Elections
- Increase participation in state and local elections
- Incorporate mandatory civic engagement modules into all FYS courses by 2024
- Institute time off to vote (all university courses and events paused for a several hour period on election day to encourage students to go vote) by 2022
- Institute mandatory civic engagement workshops for all student leaders
- Include a voter registration drive and civic engagement informational workshop as a part of New Student Orientation by 2022.

Strategy

The CAU Votes Strategic Action Plan involves a multifaceted approach centered around previously

outlined goals for maximizing the civic engagement and voter participation of our institution. We expect the various Democracy Fellows to spend 10-15 hours per week planning and carrying out activities. Previously mentioned coalition members will be encouraged to assist with planning and carrying out activities. At present, CAU Votes does not have an institutionally provided budget, so fundraising and grant writing are necessary to cover costs of materials, food, printing, personnel, etc.

Voter Registration

Short-term

- Along with the AUC Votes coalition, we co hosted a panel on National Voter Registration day on the topic of voter suppression
- We will recruit the Fulton County Election Clerk to come to campus and train students on how to register voters
- We will host a voter registration table at every Market Thursday in the months leading up to Election Day

Long-term

- We will collaborate with the Office of Student Leadership & Engagement to incorporate voter registration into CAU Experience Week
- We will work with the Office of the Registrar to incorporate voter registration into BannerWeb
- We will collaborate with the Office of Student Leadership & Engagement, SGA, and the Campus Activities Board (CAB) to plan and host a free Voter Registration Rally (concert/party) on the freshman quad
- We will encourage a commitment from Dr. French and the current SGA Undergraduate & Graduate Presidents to send out a yearly campus wide email about the importance of voting during the first week of classes
- We will collaborate with the Office of Residence Life to incorporate voter registration into mandatory residence hall meetings

Voter Education

Short-term

- We added a page to the CAU website dedicated to nonpartisan student voter education
- We co hosted debate watch parties and will co host an election night watch party with the AUC Votes Coalition and Spelman & Morehouse College Chapters of National Action Network
- We will collaborate with staff/faculty to host lunch & learns about issues affecting the community
- We will work with HerCampus CAU and the CAU Panther to launch a series of articles about youth voting and FAQ

Long-term

- We will create a nonpartisan student voter guide to distribute during CAU Experience and Move In Week; we will also make the guide available in the Student Center

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- We will collaborate with civically minded CCOs to host a speaker series featuring candidates running for office
- We will partner with the Fulton County Election Clerk to recruit students to be poll workers on election day
- We will incorporate lobbying for student-friendly voting laws into CAU Day at the Capitol
- We will collaborate with civically minded CCOs, RSOs, and community partners to host an annual Civic Engagement Week

Voter Turnout

Short-term

- We met with faculty to encourage them to remind students to vote after every class the week leading up to election day and to post voting related announcements in their virtual classrooms

Long-term

- We will collaborate with SGA to organize a walk to the polls on election day
- We will work with the Office of the Registrar to add election day and important voting deadlines to the university academic calendar
- We will post flyers in academic buildings, residence halls, the student center, the dining hall, and the honors lounge containing information about upcoming elections
- We will do a social media takeover on the SGA Instagram account to promote voting content
- We will have the Panther mascot lead a team of spirited students around campus on election day
- We will organize a campus-wide pledge to vote campaign
- We will decorate the cafe on every election day
- We will host a #VoteTogether party at the Morehouse College polling location

Institutionalization

Short-term

- We have partnered with TurboVote
- We have joined the All In Campus Democracy Challenge
- We are working with Campus Vote Project and on-boarded 3 Democracy Fellows
- We are applying to become a Voter Friendly Campus
- We joined the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE)
- We are joining the monthly calls of the Students Learn Students Vote (SLSV) Coalition
- We attended the GA Student Voting Summit
- We will start a conversation with faculty about flexible attendance standards on election day (ex. Excused absences, no exams, recorded lectures, etc)
- We will start a conversation with faculty about academic rewards for student voting (ex. Extra credit, dropping a low assignment grade, etc.)
- We will work with the Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP)
- We will expand the AUC Votes Coalition to include for CAU CCO Representatives

- We will coordinate monthly trips to city council meetings/hearings
- We will host off-campus Voter Registration Drives at local west-end businesses and community centers

- We will work with SGA establish a permanent Civic and Community Engagement Committee as a branch of SGA and appoint a student chair yearly

Long-term

- We will work with faculty to incorporate civic education and democratic learning activities into the general FYS curriculum
- We will collaborate with the Office of Student Leadership & Engagement to institute a mandatory civic education module (similar to EVerFi) for all freshman and transfer students, as well as all student leaders
- We will work with the Fulton County Election Clerk to establish an on-campus polling location at CAU
- We will collaborate with the Office of International Studies to host a roundtable discussion for International Students to share their experiences with political engagement in their home countries

Reporting

The Campus Action Plan will be shared with the members of the CAU Votes Coalition, community partners, and research stakeholders and partners. The plan will be filed with the Office for Planning, Assessment, and Reporting along with the NSLVE data. The original NSLVE data will be made available upon request. We have not yet been authorized to publically share the action plan or NSLVE data through the university website with the public. The Campus Action Plan and NSLVE information will be shared with student voter organizations with whom we have a Memorandum of Understanding.

Evaluation

The Clark Atlanta University action plan will be evaluated by examining percentage changes in registration and voting rates year over year. The goal of this action plan is to encourage the student body to partake in civic learning and democratic engagement. Attendance data, event registration counts, and satisfaction surveys will be used to evaluate and improve activities. Democracy Fellows will track interactions with peers and others using an interaction survey in Google Forms. Data will be compiled and discussed among coalition members, The CAU Votes Committee will conduct a yearly review and reevaluation of the plan in order to determine whether or not these goals are being effectively met, which will result in any necessary adjustments. Adjustments will also be guided by the most current NSLVE reports as well as results from intermittent student body surveys. Additional evaluation methods and procedures will be identified as new goals are determined.